

The Headship of Christ, and the Rights of the Christian People: A Collection of Essays, Historical and Descriptive Sketches, and Personal Portraits, ... Author's Celebrated Letter to Lord Brougham

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ADVERTISEMENT TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

This volume, like the previous works of Hugh Miller, is issued by special arrangement with the author's family; while Mr. Bane, the editor, in a note to his Preface to the English edition, presents in brief the historic facts that caused the division of the Scottish Church, and has thus rendered the entire discussion more intelligible to American readers, and at the same time developed the great importance of the principles involved. Hitherto the author has been chiefly known for his writings on Geology, and in some other departments of secular literature, where he has won a distinguished name and achieved a prominent place among the lights of his age; in this work he is presented in a new character, as *the champion of the Church* in the exciting period of her history to which these articles refer. In this field of effort, no less than in those more quiet walks in which he delighted to range, he exhibits a fresh, vivid, and natural style, and that wonderful skill in description which Dr. Buckland said he would give his left hand to possess. The celebrated letter to Lord Brougham, which first directed public attention to Mr. Miller as a powerful writer, and as the man best fitted to espouse and maintain the cause of the Church, will be found at the opening of the volume; and the papers, generally, prepared by Mr. Miller in this cause, which enlisted his warmest interest and engaged his best powers, are characterized by Mr. Bane, in his Preface, as "noble in eloquence, keen in satire, powerful in invective, and masterly in argument." Though written with primary reference to the Church of Scotland and the spiritual welfare of the Scottish people, the great principles advocated in the work lie at the foundation of all religious prosperity, while those against which it contends are inseparably associated with spiritual torpor and death; and the discussion is thus appropriate to all times and places. The English edition of this work contains an Appendix on "the Car dross Case," embracing the address of Dr. before the Commission of the General Assembly in relation thereto. As the address is of considerable length, and its details of no special interest to American readers, instead of this Appendix will be found a brief outline of the more recent history of the controversy, including a statement of the Car dross case, and of the present aspect of the whole question. The work will secure many readers on this side of the Atlantic, and add to the author's great popularity.

American Publishers B08Ton, October 1, 1863.

PREFACE.

To enter into the spirit of this book we must distinctly apprehend the conception formed by its author of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Throughout her entire history the Scottish Church has been distinguished by two leading characteristics, seldom found in combination. First: She has assumed a high and commanding ecclesiastical position, claiming a jurisdiction in spiritual concerns independent of and coordinate with the jurisdiction of the civil magistrate. She has declared Christ the Head of the Church, not in any abstract and inconsequential sense, but to the clear practical effect of having given his Church upon earth a code of law, "the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament," and of empowering and requiring her to regulate her affairs by that code alone. Secondly: She has been eminently a Church of the people. What she claimed, she claimed not as a hierarchy, not as a clerical corporation, but as a congregation of Christians. The minister

had his place; the member had his place. The powers and rights of each were held equally from Christ the King. By both these characteristics the Church of Scotland has been distinguished from the Church of England. The southern Establishment was the work of kings and statesmen. The constitution of the Church grew gradually into shape and form as part of the civil constitution of the realm. Slight share in its construction was taken by divines; â€” no share at all by the people. It was Henry, it was Burleigh, it was Elizabeth, who were the nursing fathers and nursing mothers of the Church of England. Ecclesiastical personages aspired to nothing higher than being their recognized and rewarded functionaries. From their position as divines they derived no commanding or regulating authority. The mechanism of the Church of Rome occupied the land, and they complacently lent their aid while it was adapted to the circumstances of a civil The question of the original constitution of the Christian Church was not forced upon them by circumstances, and they were well content to evade it. The result was, that independent spiritual jurisdiction was conclusively withheld from the Church of England. The Act of Supremacy bound her to the state. The part played by the people in the construction of the Church of England was still more insignificant than that played by divines. The Tudor sovereigns â€” able, energetic, imperious, proud by nature, proud in virtue of their prerogativeâ€” thought little of the feelings of the commonalty in promulgating their haughty decrees. The English â€” the most peaceable, long-suffering, and loyal of European nations â€” had not yet dreamed of asserting their dignity and rights against the majesty of monarchs. They did, indeed, at last awaken. When the sceptre was held by a race intellectually and morally inferior to the Tudors; when loyalty and reverence had been sapped by contempt; when nearly half a century of treacherous oppression had roused to irresistible fury the tremendous instincts of religion and natural justice,â€” the people of England showed themselves. The Puritans engaged in a struggle for two objects: civil liberty, and the reformation of religion. The civil constitution of England they vindicated in its ancient principles, and placed impregably on its modern basis. But when the long and eventful conflict was at an end, the constitution of the Church of England remained essentially unchanged, and the Christian people were *not* recognized as one of its integral parts. The history of Scotland presents an entirely different ecclesiastical prospect. The vehement and impetuous nation north of the Tweed embraced the Reformation with a decision and enthusiasm which brooked no half-measures. The Church of Rome was first of all overthrown from base to turret, and a platform found for a new construction. In rearing the new edifice, divines bore a chief, and statesmen a subordinate part. And these were divines who magnified their office! They had learned in the school of Calvin to see the glitter of earthly crowns pale in the light of the sanctuary, to exalt the Church as the city of God upon earth, to set small store by human authority against the voice which they believed they heard speaking direct from heaven. They invoked their Divine King to lay the foundation of His House. Ten centuries of prescription were less to them than one promise of Christ. They have been accused of narrowness, of fanaticism, of violence; but all the world has recognized them as men of intrepid courage, of iron will, of high devotion, who quailed not in the presence of kings. Knox, Melville, Henderson, were very different personages from those politic and temporizing prelates who showed a courtier like subservience to Henry, or trembled lest Elizabeth should unfrock them. As churchmen, they would have no king but Christ. They practically vindicated the doctrine of Christ's Headship, by securing that no Act of Supremacy was inscribed in the statute-book of Scotland. And they had a nation at their back, â€” an earnestly, ardently believing nation, â€” "a nation," says Carlyle, "of heroes." The circumstances of their position were such that they could not, and their character and the doctrines of their Church were such that, under any circumstances, they assuredly would not have overlooked the people. The consent of the congregation â€” laid down by Calvin in the Institutes as an essential element in the appointment of ministers â€” was given effect to in the ecclesiastical constitution by means of the Call. And thus the Church of Scotland became known to

history and to fame as having reconciled the seeming contradictions of an intensely ecclesiastical and a broadly popular character. Under these auspices the General Assembly of the Kirk came into existence. Implicitly confided in by the people,

and representing even the laity to a far larger extent than the Scottish Parliament, it exercised throughout the seventeenth century a commanding influence in all the affairs of the kingdom. The objects for which it contended were the same as those of the early English Puritans; but its victory was more complete than theirs. At the Revolution settlement, it appeared that both the civil and religious liberties of Scotland were vindicated. In the Treaty of Union, which speedily followed, the constitution of the Church of Scotland was carefully guarded. The Act of Supremacy was confined to the southern part of the island, and no provision was made for the introduction of patronage into Scotland. In possession of a spiritual independence never claimed by the sister Establishment, and with the rights of the Christian people intact, the Kirk of Knox and Melville, the Kirk of the 'Westminster Confession and the Solemn League and Covenant, "the old, indomitable Kirk of Scotland," rested from her labors. All this was to Hugh Miller a faith deliberately ratified by his intellect, and enshrined with dearest and most exalting associations in his heart of hearts. Patriotism and affectionate reverence "the feeling with which an Englishman regards the Long Parliament, and the feeling with which a Jew of old regarded the Temple on Mount "were combined in the emotions with which he contemplated his Church. To stand in spirit by the side of her great men; to follow her with compassionate or exulting sympathy from reverse to reverse, from triumph to triumph; to draw his breath deep in unutterable execration at thought of the apostate Lauderdale or the bloodhound Claverhouse; to know her for his country's Church, when her canopy was the mist of the hill, and the trampling of the troopers broke in upon the lifted psalm, as well and as proudly as when she bearded monarchs, and set her foot on the necks of her enemies, "this seemed involved in the fact of his being a Scotchman. That a fundamental principle of her constitution, such as the right of the Christian people to have no minister intruded upon them, after being preserved through the storms and treacheries of a century, should be set aside by a Patronage Act smuggled by Tories through the British Parliament in contravention of the Treaty of Union, was to him an absurd idea. He looked upon the Patronage Act as a galling fetter, which her creed and her history pledged the Church to cast off. He sympathized with the Seceders of the last century in their refusal to wear it. He assented to the petition against it sent up year by year to Parliament from the General Assembly, until Moderate ascendancy culminated under Robertson, and the Church, for the first time in her history, winked at her own humiliation. In the evangelical minority of the eighteenth century, headed by Erskine, he recognized his beloved Church as cordially and as confidently as in the homeless hill-men who clung to Peen and to Cameron in the seventeenth. "When that minority swelled into a majority, "when the ancestral principles of the Church of Scotland shone out once more broad and clear," there was no man better fitted to understand the position of the Establishment"no man more ready to support and defend her "than Hugh Miller. The struggle between the Church of Scotland and the civil authority, which ended in the Disruption, was inaugurated by the passing of the Veto Act by the Church. The conflict took shape and character throughout from that celebrated enactment. In daring to put into the hands of the people a veto on any minister presented to a charge, but not accepted by the congregation, the Church vindicated both her ancient and distinctive principles. She

proclaimed that the rights of the Christian people were inalienably secured to them; and she asserted her power, in face of an existent act of Parliament, to give those rights effect. Non-intrusion and spiritual independence were thus linked together throughout the Ten Years' Conflict. That Hugh Miller viewed the contest in this manner, we know from his own words. "The contending of the Secession in the last century," he wrote, shortly before the Disruption, "involved mainly the Non-intrusion principle. The contending of our Presbyterian fathers in the century previous involved mainly the great doctrine that Christ is the only Head of the Church, and that, in the things which pertain to his kingdom, she owns no other Lord but Him. And in our present struggle, *both these twin principles of strength are united.*" The present volume consists of two celebrated pamphlets written by Hugh Miller in defence of the contending Church, and of a gleanings "a scanty and desultory gleanings" from his articles in the *Witness* newspaper on the Church question. These will assuredly convey no adequate idea of his part in the Disruption controversy. It was only here and there that an article could be selected. To have taken all that displayed high excellence, "all that were noble in eloquence, keen and brilliant in satire, powerful in invective, or masterly in argument," would have been to fill many volumes. It is likely that articles which created a particularly wide and deep sensation at the time, and are still vividly remembered, will be missed. To revive the interest which made them effective, "to call from oblivion some speech, pamphlet, or party manoeuvre, agitating all minds at the time, and now everlastingly forgotten," was impossible. It has been carefully endeavored, also, to avoid inflicting pain upon any still alive who were engaged in the conflict, or upon the surviving relatives of those who have died. Controversy is controversy; and Hugh Miller fought for his Church with the earnestness and vehemence of his covenanting fathers at Mars ton Moor or Drum clog. But when the dust of the fight is laid, and its din is over, "when the grave has closed over so many of the combatants," "it would be useless, and it would be ungracious, to reawaken its animosities. Of the influence exerted upon the public mind of Scotland by Hugh Miller's articles in the *Witness* on the Church question, there are thousands still living who can speak. A year or two before the Disruption, I passed a winter in a Highland manse. I was too young to form a distinct idea of the merits of the dispute. But there was a sound then in the air which I could not help hearing. It seems as if it were in my ears still. Never have I witnessed so steady, intense, enthralling an excitement. And I have no difficulty, even at this distance, in discriminating the name which rung loudest through the agitated land. It was that of Hugh Miller, "the people's friend, champion, hero. There are men, there are family circles, to whom certain of these articles will suggest pathetic recollections. A sentence, a word, will recall the olden time, with its hallowed, its tender, its stirring associations: the fireside of the manse, round which member after member of the family grew up; the garden, with its old fruit-trees and familiar walks; the broad, bright, placid landscape, stretching from the manse-door; the unadorned church close at hand, with the household graves around it;" and then the eye will see to read no more. With all its defects, this volume will illustrate with some comprehensiveness the manner in which Hugh Miller took part in the Disruption Controversy. It will show to what a marvellous point of perfection he was equipped for the work he had to do: how familiar to him was the whole range of Scottish history, ecclesiastical and literary; how accurately he had appreciated Presbyterianism as an influence in all provinces of Scottish life; how perfectly he understood the relations of parties in the Church and kingdom of Scotland, at every stage of the national history. He is seen assailing patronage from every point, "exposing its unconstitutional introduction, its disgraceful history, its pernicious practical effects. The volume contains also his deliberate and emphatic testimony to the doctrine of the Headship of Christ. Though dead, he may still be heard speaking to the people of Scotland on that sacred and momentous theme. The following sentences, in which he described the impression made upon certain persons by attempts practically to insist upon the doctrine in question, read in the light of present occurrences and prevailing

frames of mind, may seem almost prophetic: "As a practical rule of conduct, that sets itself in opposition to secular interests, judicial interdicts, and the decisions of magistrates, they cannot and will not tolerate it. Their merely nominal belief in Christianity held as so respectable and so praiseworthy at other times always puts on, in such circumstances, its true character as simply no belief at all. Christ becomes to them a mere phantom King, unreal and invisible; and his kingly authority appears but as a mischievous and repulsive fiction, subversive of the principles of good government." And are these questions of spiritual independence and of non-intrusion, after all, but lingering phantoms, paling gradually, and sure to pass away in the light of progress? Many think so, many able, and not a few devout men. I think they err. That, in face of all the coercion which can possibly be brought to bear upon the subject, the genuine Presbyterians of Scotland will maintain both, need not be doubted. But may not England awake to a new interest in the rights of the Christian people, and in the independence of the Church? May not the liberal and thinking part of the community, scandalized and distressed by such scenes as have recently occurred in a London church, ask whether the just and rational remedy for such a state of things is not to give congregations a voice in choosing their own ministers? And may not those in the Church of England who hold most closely by the principles of the Puritans bethink themselves whether they have not

wisely lost sight of one doctrine professed by Cartwright in England, and by all the reformers in the northern part of the island, the doctrine that Christ is King and Head of his Church, and that it is in the prince's province "to exercise no spiritual jurisdiction"? It is hardly necessary to add a single word to the preceding, in order to render this volume intelligible to American readers. Stated in the simplest form, and apart from technical phraseology, the principles for which the Church of Scotland contended in the years preceding the Disruption of 1843 were these: the right of congregations to choose their pastors, and the competence of a Church of Christ to manage her spiritual and distinctive concerns in her own courts. In 1834 the Church of Scotland decreed that the will of congregations should form an essential element in the settlement of pastors. In the same year Lord Kinnock, patron of the parish of in Perthshire, presented that living to Mr. Robert Young, preacher of the Gospel. The Call, or document signifying the assent of the congregation to the appointment of Mr. Young, was signed by three persons, only two of whom belonged to the parish. Dissatisfaction with the appointment was expressed by two hundred and eighty-seven out of three hundred and thirty, who, as being in full communion with the Church, were entitled to exercise the privilege. To install Mr. Young, therefore, as minister of would have been a clear case of *intrusion*, exactly such a case as the Church had guarded against by her act of 1834. The Presbytery, in obedience to the law of the Church, refused to ordain him. Lord Kinnock and Mr. Young had recourse to the Court of Session, to compel the Presbytery to proceed with the ordination. The court granted their request by a decision pronounced in 1838. The House of Lords confirmed this judgment in the following year. Between the decision of their Lordships and the occurrence of the Disruption no new principle emerged. A civil court had undertaken to force the Church of Scotland to ordain a minister, and to ordain him against the will of the people. Rather than submit, the Church cut her state moorings, and became free. To recount the incidents of the conflict would be neither interesting nor useful. For several years State and Church in Scotland were continually in collision. Many attempts at reconciliation were made. But to understand the position taken up by each we need only to understand the case.

PETER BANE. Lott dos, October 2, 1863.

THE

HEADSHIP OF CHRIST. LETTER TO LORD BROUGHAM. A Volume consisting of the principal contributions made by Hugh Miller to the literature of the Ten Years' Conflict cannot be more appropriately introduced than with the celebrated pamphlet in which he first stepped forward to take that lead in the lay and popular championship of the Church which he thenceforth continued to hold. Having, as he informs us in the "Schools and Schoolmasters," been deeply moved by the decision, adverse to the claims of the evangelical majority, delivered by the Court of Session in March, 1838, and by that of the House of Lords in 1839, he experienced an ardent aspiration to offer some aid to his Church in her hour of peril. The speech of Lord Brougham in the Upper House furnished the occasion required. "I tossed wakefully," says Mr. Miller, "throughout a long night, in which I formed my plan of taking up the purely popular side of the question; and in the morning I sat down to state my views to the people, in the form of a letter addressed to Lord Brougham." He was at the time occupied with the duties of a bank office, but in the fullness of his heart the words flowed apace: in about a week the composition was finished. Being transmitted to Edinburgh, and brought by Mr. Robert Paul under the notice of Dr. and other evangelical leaders, its immediate result was the appointment of Mr. Miller to the editorship of the then contemplated "Witness" newspaper. On being published, it ran rapidly through four editions, and was referred to in terms of high encomium by Mr. O'Connell on the one hand, and by Mr. Gladstone on the other. It is beyond doubt one of the most masterly performances of its illustrious author. The eloquence, at once impassioned in its earnestness and majestic in its calmness, and the comprehensiveness and clear depth, worthy of the statesman or the philosophic historian, by which it is characterized, impart to it an interest superior to all local or temporary circumstances. It is an essay, and one of high and permanent value, upon a question inextricably associated with what is noblest and most instructive in the history of Scotland. "Ed. My Lord : I am a plain working man, in rather humble circumstances, a native of the north of Scotland, and a member of the Established Church. I am acquainted with no other language than the one in which I address your lordship; and the very limited knowledge which I possess has been won slowly and painfully from observation and reflection, with now and then the assistance of a stray volume, in the intervals of a laborious life. I am not too uninformed, however, to appreciate your lordship's extraordinary powers and acquirements; and as the cause of freedom is peculiarly the cause of the class I belong, and as my acquaintance with the evils of ignorance has been by much too close and too tangible to leave me indifferent to the blessings of education, I have been no careless or uninterested spectator of your lordship's public career. No, my lord, I have felt my heart swell as I pronounced the name of Henry Brougham. With many thousands of my countrymen, I have waited in deep anxiety for your lordship's opinion on the Such- retarder case. Aware that what may seem clear as a matter of right may be yet exceedingly doubtful as a question of law, aware, too, that your lordship had to decide in this matter, not as a legislator, but as a judge, I was afraid that, though you yourself might be our friend, you might yet have to pronounce the law our enemy. And yet, the bare majority by which the case had been carried against us in the Court of Session, the consideration, too, that the judges who had declared in our favor rank among the ablest lawyers and most accomplished men that our country has ever produced, had inclined me to hope that the statute-book, as interpreted by your lordship, might not be found very decidedly against us. But of you yourself, my lord, I could entertain no doubt. You had exerted all your energies in sweeping away the Old S arums and East of the constitution. Could I once harbor the suspicion that you had become tolerant of the Old S arums and East of the Church? You had declared, whether wisely or otherwise, that men possessed of no property qualification, and as humble and as little taught as the individual who now addresses you, should be admitted, on the

strength of their moral and intellectual qualities alone, to exercise a voice in the legislature of the country. Could I suppose for a moment that you deemed that portion of these very men which falls to the share of Scotland unfitted to exercise a voice in the election of a parish minister? or, rather, "for I understate the case," that you held them unworthy of being emancipated from the thralldom of a degrading law, the remnant of a barbarous code, which conveys them over by thousands and miles square to the charge of patronage-courting clergymen, practically unacquainted with the religion they profess to teach? Surely the people of Scotland are not so changed but that they know at least as much of the doctrines of the New Testament as of the principles of civil government, and of the requisites of a gospel minister as of the qualifications of a member of Parliament! You have decided against us, my lord. You have even said that we had better rest contented with the existing statutes, as interpreted by your lordship, than involve ourselves in the dangers and difficulties of a new enactment. Nay, more wonderful still, all your sympathies on the occasion seem to have been reserved for the times and the memory of men who first imparted its practical efficiency to a law under which we and our fathers have groaned, and which we have ever regarded as not only subversive of our natural rights as men, but of our well being as Christians. Highly as your lordship estimates our political wisdom, you have no opinion whatever of our religious taste and knowledge. Is it at all possible that you, my lord, a native of Scotland, and possessed of more general information than perhaps any other man living, can have yet to learn that we have thought long and deeply of our religion, whereas our political speculations began but yesterday; that our popular struggles have been struggles for the right of worshipping God according to the dictates of our conscience, and under the guidance of ministers of our own choice; and that, when anxiously employed in finding arguments by which rights so dear to us might be rationally defended, our discovery of the principles of civil liberty was merely a sort of chance-consequence of the search? Examine yourself, my lord. Is your mind free from all bias in this matter? Are you quite assured that your admiration of an illustrious relative, at a period when your judgment was comparatively uninformed, has not had the effect of rendering *his* opinions *your* prejudices? Principal Robertson was unquestionably a great man; but consider in what way: great as a leader, "not as a "father in the Church," it is not to ministers such as the Principal that the excellent among my countrymen look up for spiritual guidance amid the temptations and difficulties of life, or for comfort at its close; great in literature, "not, like Timothy of old, great in his knowledge of the Scriptures," aged men who sat under his ministry have assured me that, in hurrying over the New Testament, he had missed the doctrine of the atonement; great as an author and a man of genius, "great in his enduring labors as a historian," great in the sense in which Hume, and Gibbon, and Voltaire were great.¹ But who can regard the greatness of such men as a sufficient guarantee for the soundness of the opinions which they have held, or the justice or wisdom of the measures which they have recommended? The law of patronage is in no degree the less cruel or absurd from its having owed its reenactment to so great a statesman and so ingenious a writer as nor yet from its having received its full and practical efficiency from so masterly a historian and so thorough a judge of human affairs as Robertson; nor yet, my lord, from the new vigor which it has received from the decision of so profound a philosopher and so accomplished an orator as Brougham. I am a plain, untaught man; but the opinions which I hold regarding the law of patronage are those entertained by the great bulk of my countrymen, and entitled on that account to some little respect. I shall state them as clearly and as simply as I can. You are doubtless acquainted with I Is the writer's estimate of Dr. Robertson's religious character too low? Take, then, the estimate of William Wilberforce "a name to which even the high eulogists of Lord Brougham can add nothing. In the "Practical View," chapter vi., there occurs the following passage: "It has also been a melancholy prognostic of the state to which we are progressive, that many of the most eminent *literati* of modern times have been professed unbelievers; and that others of them

have discovered such lukewarmness in the cause of Christ as to treat with especial good-will, and attention, and respect, those men who, by their avowed publications, were openly assailing, or insidiously undermining, the very foundations of the Christian hope — considering themselves as more closely united to them by literature than severed from them by the widest religious differences. It is with pain that the author finds himself compelled to place so great a writer as Dr. Robertson in this class. But, to say nothing of his phlegmatic account of the Reformation (a subject which we should have thought likely to excite in any one who united the character of a Christian divine with that of a historian, some warmth of pious gratitude for the good providence of God), — to pass over, also, the ambiguity in which he leaves his readers as to his opinion of the authenticity of the Mosaic chronology, in his *Disquisitions on the Trade of India*, — his letters to Mr. Gibbon, lately published, cannot but excite emotions of regret and shame in every sincere Christian." — Page 304, fifth edition.

that beautiful little piece of antique simplicity, drawn up by Knox, on the election of elders and deacons. It forms an interesting record, by an eye-witness, of the earliest beginnings of reformation in Scotland. At first, pious individuals, "brought, through the wonderful grace of God, to a knowledge of the truth, began to exercise themselves by reading of the Scriptures secretly," and to call the members of their own households around them to join with them in prayer. In the next stage a few neighboring families of this character learned to assemble themselves together to pray and to exhort, sometimes under the cloud of night in houses, sometimes in lone and sequestered hollows in the fields. Their numbers gradually increased, and that diversity of talent so characteristic of the human family, and so nicely adapted to man's social nature, began to manifest itself in this first germ of the Reformed Church in Scotland. To assign to individuals among them by the general voice that place for which nature and the Holy Spirit had peculiarly fitted them, was but a giving of effect, through the agency of man, to the will of God, and essentially necessary for the maintenance of decency and good order. "And so began that small flock," says the reformer, "to put themselves in such order as if Christ Jesus had plainly triumphed in the midst of them by the power of the Evangel; and *they did elect* some to occupy the supreme place of exhortation and reading, and some to be elders and helpers to these for the oversight of the flock, and some to be deacons for the collection of alms to be distributed to the poor of their own body. And of this small beginning is that order that now God, of his mercy, hath given unto us publicly within this realm." One stage more, and the history is complete. The devotions of the closet had passed into the family; the members of Christianized families had formed themselves into a church. But this process of germination and growth had not been confined to a single locality. The long winter was over; the vital principle was heaving under the clods of separate fields and widely distant valleys; the deep sleep of ages had been broken; the day-star had arisen; the Spirit of God had moved upon the face of the waters; many families had been enlightened — many churches had been formed. How was "the bond of unity" to be best preserved, and wise and equal laws established for the good of the whole? "Wisdom," saith the Saviour, "is justified of her children." The churches instructed their best and wisest to deliberate in council, — their learned and strong-minded, their tried and venerable men, whom they had chosen to be their guides and leaders, because God had chosen them first; and these met in assembly, each recognizing in each an equal and a brother, and in Christ the Head and Governor of the whole. The Scriptures were opened, that the "mind of God" might be known. They sought advice of the Reformed Churches abroad; conferred with princes and magistrates at home; enacted wise laws; drew up books of order and of discipline; framed Catechisms and Confessions of Faith. The God in whom they trusted breathed a spirit of wisdom into their counsels; and the inestimable blessings of a pure and scriptural religion were thus secured to our land. Is the picture faithfully drawn? Look at it, my lord. The Presbyterians of Scotland deem it a picture of their Church in her best estate; and believe

that the one great object of her saints and martyrs in all their struggles with kings and patrons, priests and curates, leaders in the General Assembly and dragoons on the hill-side, has been to restore what of the original likeness had been lost, or to preserve what had been retained. Now, with many thousands of my countrymen, I have been accustomed to ask, Where is the place which patronage occupies in this Church of the people and of Christ? I read in the First Book of Discipline (as drawn up by Knox and his brethren) that "no man should enter the ministry without a lawful vocation; and that a lawful vocation standee in the *election of the people*, examination of the ministry, and admission by them both." I find in the Second Book, as sanctioned by our earlier Assemblies, and sworn to in our National Covenant, that as this liberty of election was observed and respected so long as the primitive Church maintained its purity, it should be also observed and respected by the Reformed Church of Scotland; and that neither by the king himself, nor by any inferior person, should ministers be intruded on congregations contrary to the will of the people. I find *patronage* mentioned in this Second Book for the first time, and mentioned only to be denounced as "an abuse flowing from the Pope and the corruption of the canon law," and as contrary to the liberty of election, the light of reformation, the word of God. Where is the flaw in our logic when we infer that the members of our Church constitute our Church, and that it is the part and right of these members in their collective capacity to elect their ministers? I, my lord, am an integral part of the Church of Scotland, and of such integral parts, and of nothing else, is the body of this Church composed; nor do we look to the high places of the earth when we address ourselves to its adorable Head. The Earl of is not the Church, nor any of the other patrons of Scotland. Why, then, are these men suffered to exercise, and that so exclusively, one of the Church's most sacred privileges? You tell us of "existing institutions, vested rights, positive interests." Do we not know that the slaveholders, who have so long and so stubbornly withstood your lordship's truly noble appeals in behalf of the African bondsmen, have been employing an exactly similar language for the last fifty years; and that the onward progress of man to the high place which God has willed him to occupy has been impeded at every step by "existing institutions, vested rights, positive interests"? My grandfather was a grown man at a period when the neighboring proprietor could have dragged him from his cottage, and hung him upon the gallows-hill of the barony. It is not yet a century since the colliers of our southern districts were serfs bound to the soil. The mischievous and intolerant law of patronage still presses its dead weight on our consciences. But what of all that, my lord? Is it not in accordance with the high destiny of the species that the fit and the right should triumph over the established? It is impossible your lordship can hold, with men of a lower order, that there is any necessary connection between the law of patronage and our existence as an Establishment. The public money can only be legitimately employed in furthering the public good; and we recognize the improvement and conservation of the morals of the people as the sole condition on which our ministers receive the support of the state. Where is the inevitable connection between rights of patronage (which, as the law now exists, may be exercised by fools, debauchees, infidels) and principles such as these? Nay, what is there subversive of such principles in a Christian liberty of election as complete as that enjoyed of old by the first fathers of the Reformation, or exercised in the present day by our Protestant Dissenters? I may surely add, that what is good for the Dissenters in this matter cannot be very bad for us; that I can find none of the much-dreaded evils of popular election — the divisions, the heart-burnings, the endless lawsuits, the dominance of the fanatical spirit — exemplified in them; and that there can surely be little to censure in a principle which could have secured to them the labors of such ministers as Baxter and Bunyan, Watts and Robert Hall, and Thomas Even you yourself, my lord, will hardly venture to assert that our Scottish patrons could have provided them with better or more useful clergymen than they have been enabled to choose for themselves. But on these points we are not at issue with your lordship. You tell us, however, that we are protected against the abuses of patronage by

the provision that patrons can present only qualified persons, "clergymen whose literature the Church has pronounced sufficient, and their morals not bad. And when, under the suspension of our higher privileges, we challenge for ourselves the *right of rejecting ministers thus selected without assigning our reasons*, you ungenerously insinuate that we are perhaps anxious to employ this liberty in the rejection of good men, too strict in morals, and too diligent in duty to please our vitiated tastes. "Have a care, my lord." You are a philosopher of the inductive school. Look well to your facts. Put our lives to the question. Ascertain whether we are immoral in the proportion in which we are zealous for this privilege; determine whether our clergymen are lax and time-serving in the degree in which they are popular; and see, I beseech your lordship, that the scrutiny be strict. We challenge, as our right, *liberty of rejection without statement of reasons*. What is there so absurd in this as to provoke ridicule? or what so unfair as to justify the imputation of sinister design? It is *positive*, not *negative*, character we expect in a clergyman. We are suspicious of the "*not proven*/" we are dissatisfied with even *the "not guilty:"* we look in him for qualities which we can love, powers which we can respect, graces which we can revere. It matters not that we should have no grounds on which to condemn: we are justified in our rejection if we cannot approve. But we are aware, my lord, that there is a noiseless though powerful under-current of objection, which bears more heavily against us in this matter than all the thousand lesser tides that froth and bubble on the surface. We are opposed by the prejudices of a powerful party, who see an inevitable connection between the exercise of the popular voice and what I shall venture to define for them as *a fanaticism according to the standards of our Church*. We have but one Bible and one Confession of Faith in our Scottish Establishment; but we have two religions in it; and these, though they bear exactly the same name, and speak nearly the same language, are yet fundamentally and vitally different. They belong, in fact, to the two very opposite classes into which all religions naturally divide. The one is popular, and has ever contended for the infusion of the popular principle into the Church as a necessary element; the other is exclusive, and has as determinedly struggled against it. The Logan s, Homes, B lairs, Robert sons, of the last age, may be regarded as constituting the fit representatives of the latter class. The other recognizes its master spirits "its beloved and much honored leaders" in our Thomson s and our Knox es and Melville s, the fathers of the Secession, and the champions of the Covenant. The infusion of the popular principle, while it would mightily strengthen the one class, would assuredly diminish, if not altogether annihilate, the other; and while the thousands which form the one reckon on it as their friend, the hundreds which compose the other hate and oppose it as their enemy. Now, there are important, though perhaps somewhat occult, principles couched in this circumstance, regarding which your lordship's opinion, as a philosopher, would be of great value, had you not already foreclosed the question in a very different character indeed. It will be found that all the false religions of past or of present times, which have abused the credulity or flattered the judgments of men, may be divided into two grand classes, "the natural and the artificial. The natural religions are wild and extravagant; and the enlightened reason, when unbiased by the influence of early prejudice, rejects them as monstrous and profane. But they have unquestionably a strong hold on human nature, and exert a powerful control over its hopes and its fears. They are, like the oak or the chestnut, the slow growth of centuries; their first beginnings are lost in the uncertainty of the fabulous ages, and every addition they receive is fitted to the credulity of the popular mind ere it can assimilate itself to the mass. The grand cause of their popularity, however, seems to consist in the human character of their gods; for is it not accords' inf to the nature of man as a religious creature that he meet with an answering nature in Deity? The artificial religions, on the other hand, are exclusively the work of the human reason, and the God with which they profess to acquaint us is a mere abstract idea, "an incomprehensible essence of goodness, power, and wisdom. The understanding cannot conceive of him except as a first great cause "as the mysterious source and originator of all things; and

it is surely according to reason that he should be thus removed from that lower sphere of conception which even finite intelligences can occupy to the full. But in thus rendering him intangible to the understanding, he is rendered intangible to the affections also. Who ever loved an abstract idea, or what sympathy can exist between human minds and an intelligent essence infinitely diffused? And hence the cold and barren inefficiency of artificial religions. They want the vitality of life. They want the grand principle of *motive*; for they can lay no hold on those affections to which this prime mover in all human affairs can alone address itself. They may look well in a discourse or an essay; for, like all human inventions, they may be easily understood and plausibly defended; but they are totally unsuited to the nature and the wants of man. Now, is it not according to reason and analogy that the true religion should be formed, if I may so express myself, on a popular principle? Is it not indispensable that the religion which God reveals should be suited to the human nature which God has made? Artificial religions, with all their minute rationalities, are not suited to it at all, and therefore take no hold on the popular mind; natural religions, with all their immense popularity, are not suited to improve it. It is Christianity alone which unites the popularity of the one class with the rationality and more than the purity of the other "that gives to Deity, as the man Christ Jesus, his strong hold on the human affections, and restores to him, in his abstract character as Father of all, the homage of the understanding. Question the principle as you please, but look, I beseech you, to the fact. Who was that most popular of all preachers, whom the immense multitudes of Judea followed into waste and solitary places, and of whom it is so expressly told that the "common people heard him gladly"? And what the religion taught by the twelve unlettered men, whose labors revolutionized the morals of the world? Christianity, in its primitive integrity, is essentially a popular religion; and what we complain of in the Churchmen opposed to the popular voice is, that they have divested it of this vital principle. What God has done in the framing of it they undo in the preaching of it; they impart to it all the cold inefficacy of an artificial religion; they tell us well-nigh as much of the beauty of virtue as Plato could have done; of the incarnation or the atonement they tell us well-nigh as little, or tell as if they told it not; and what wonder if they should be left to exhibit their minute and feeble rationalities to bare walls and empty benches, and to dread in the popular principle the enemy which is eventually to cast them out of the Church? We are acquainted with our New Testaments, and demand that our ministers give that prominence and space to the peculiar doctrines of Christianity which we find assigned to them in the epistles of Paul and of Peter, of James and of John. I have striven, my lord, to acquaint myself with the history of my Church. I have met with a few old books, and have found time to read them; and, as the histories of Knox, Calderwood, and Woodrow have been among the number, I do not find myself much at the mercy of any man on questions connected with our ecclesiastical institutions, or the spirit which animated them. Some of the institutions themselves are marked by the character of the age in which they were produced; for we must not forget that the principles of toleration are as much the discovery of a later time as those principles on which we construct our steam-engines. But the spirit which lived and breathed in them was essentially that "spirit with which Christ market his people free." Nay, the very intolerance of our Church was of a kind which delighted to arm its vassals with a power before which all tyranny, civil or ecclesiastical, must eventually be overthrown. It compelled them to quit the lower levels of our nature for the higher. It demanded of them that they should be no longer immoral or illiterate. It was the Reformed Church of Scotland that gave the first example of providing that the children of the *poor* should be educated at the expense of the state. Not Henry Brougham himself could have been more zealous in sending the schoolmaster abroad. But ignorance, superstition, immorality, above all, an intolerance of an entirely opposite character, jealous of the knowledge and indifferent to the good of its vassals, were by much too strong for it; and there were times when the Church could do little more than testify against the grinding tyranny which oppressed her, and to the truth and justice of her own

principles; and not even this with impunity. I have perused, by the light of the evening fire, whole volumes filled with the death-testimonies of her martyrs. Point me out any one abuse, my lord, against which she has testified oftener or more strongly than that of patronage, or any one privilege for which she has contended with a more enduring zeal than that for which our General Assembly is contending at this day. Moulding her claims according to the form and pressure of the opposition from without, " casting them at one time into a positive, at another into a negative form, " asserting at one time a *free election*, at another a *non-intrusion principle*, " we find her, on this great question, perseveringly firm and invariably consistent; and we regard the abolition of patronage, and the recognition of the popular right, as entirely a consequence of that dominance of just and generous principle which was in part a cause and in part an effect of the Revolution, as we do any of the other great liberties which the Revolution has secured to us; nor does the very opposite opinion expressed by your lordship weigh more with us in this matter than if it had proceeded from the puniest sophist that ever opposed himself to the spread of education or the emancipation of the slave. Twenty-one years passed, during which the Church, in the undisputed possession of her hard-earned privileges, was slowly recovering from the state of weakness and exhaustion induced by her sufferings in the previous period. And well and wisely were these privileges employed. Differences inevitably occur wherever man enjoys the blessings of liberty, civil or ecclesiastical; but during these twenty-one years there were few heats or divisions, and no schisms, in the Scottish Church. Such, at least, is the view of the matter given us in that life of Woodrow affixed to the late edition of his history; and sure I am that it tenders its information in a better spirit than that of any of the acts of Parliament which disgraced the latter years of Queen Anne. But a time had arrived in which no privilege was to be respected for its justice, or spared for its popularity, and in which our governors were to pursue other and far different objects than the good of the people or the peace of the Church. The Union had sunk the Presbyterian representation of Scotland into a feeble and singularly inefficient minority.

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