LECTURE VI

INFLUENCE OF THE SCOTTISH CHURCH IN THE PROMOTION OF POLITICAL LIBERTY AND SPIRITUAL INDEPENDENCE.

St. Columba, the founder of the Scottish Church, was also one of the earliest champions of Scottish independence. Prior to his settlement in Iona, the ruler of the Scoto-Irish colony (in Argyll), which afterwards expanded into the kingdom of Scotland, was a tributary of the King of Dalriada in the North of Ireland, from which the colonists in preceding generations had gone forth. On the death of King Conall in 573, St. Columba, in accordance—so his early biographer declares—with a thrice-repeated divine intimation, selected Aidan, the cousin of Conall, as successor; and, without waiting for Irish sanction, solemnly installed the new king at

Iona.[1] To this bold proceeding, and to the saint's influential support of Aidan's claim to independent sovereignty in the great Irish Convention of 575 at Drumceatt. in Derry, was mainly due the recognition thenceforth of the Scottish colony in North Britain as an independent realm.[2] The circumstance is memorable not only on its own account, but for its emblematic significance. Throughout the history of Scotland the Scottish Church has been generally on the side of national independence as well as constitutional liberty, and has borne against despotism, both external and internal, a notable testimony which has potently influenced the history of Britain, and, more or less directly, that of other lands.

I. At two critical epochs, the Scottish Church intervened with signal effect and far-reaching influence in the cause of freedom: first, in the era of struggle with England for national independence, under Wallace and Bruce; afterwards, in the age of conflict with the Stewart kings for civil and religious liberty.

The Scottish Wars with the English people and their kings, in the thirteenth and four-

teenth centuries, were preceded by an ecclesiastical conflict, in the twelfth century, with the English Church and her prelates. During this early period of the Roman Church of Scotland, free admission of Anglican influence was remarkably united with resolute resistance to Anglican aggression. The Scottish Church welcomed English clergy to its benefices, English monks to its abbeys, English forms into its worship, English architecture into its church-building enterprise; but of Anglican domination it would have none. English ecclesiastical aggression manifested itself in a claim by the Archbishops of York and of Canterbury to jurisdiction over the Scottish Church, corresponding with the later claim by Edward I. to suzerainty over the Scottish kingdom;[3] and the patriotic Scottish churchmanship which withstood the English primates was a moral preparation for the patriotic Scottish nationalism which, more than a century afterwards, resisted the English King. The Council of Northampton in 1176, at which, under the presidency of a papal legate, the Church question was fully discussed, and the ecclesiastical independence of

Scotland virtually secured,[4] not only foreshadowed, but helped indirectly to bring about, the Treaty of Northampton in 1328, when, in the reigns of Robert Bruce and Edward III., Scotland's political autonomy, after thirty years of struggle, was reluctantly but distinctly recognised. Scottish ecclesiastical independence was formally ratified, in 1188, by a Papal Bull which declares that the "Church of Scotland is a daughter of Rome by special grace, and subject to Rome without any intermediary."[5]

II. The influence of the Church of Scotland, however, on the side of national independence was more direct and conspicuous when the conflict with England actually began. Blind Harry, indeed, in his *Wallace*, composed nearly two centuries after the events described, represents that

> The byschoprykis inclynyt till his (Edward's) croune,
> Bathe temporalite and all the religioune (B. x. 1001-2)

—both the clergy who belonged and those who did not belong to the religious orders. But the poet chronicler, writing amid a popular environment which ecclesiastical abuses had

by that time rendered hostile to the Scottish hierarchy, is no more to be trusted here than where he declares, against clear historical evidence, that Edward I. forced on the Scottish Church the Anglican "use of Sarum."[6] No doubt the oath of allegiance to Edward was frequently taken by Scottish bishops; but in every instance, so far as appears, this was done under constraint or menace. It meant no more than that the Scottish prelates had not the devotion of martyrs as well as the zeal of patriots.[7] Nevertheless, the sympathies, influence, and, on many occasions, active efforts of the leading clergy throughout the period of conflict were on the patriotic side; and amid the frequent vacillation and occasional treachery of Scottish nobles, not a few of whom, in virtue of estates south of the Tweed, were also English subjects, the uniform support given by the Scottish prelates to the patriotic cause contributed largely to its ultimate success.[8]

At the Norham Convention in 1291, with which English aggression began, when Edward I. advanced his claim to lordship

over Scotland, and when the Scottish nobility were subserviently silent, a Scottish bishop, Wishart of Glasgow, boldly declared in the aggressor's presence, that "the kingdom of Scotland had from the first always been free, and owed homage to none but God and his vicegerent on earth."[9] Five years later, in 1296, when the servile King Baliol was driven at length, by Edward's overbearing attitude and intolerable demands, to renounce his allegiance, a leading ecclesiastic, Henry, Abbot of Arbroath—"a bold-spirited man," as Bower the annalist calls him—dared the lion in his den, and at the risk of his life delivered to Edward at Berwick the instrument of renunciation.[10] In the following year, when William Wallace inaugurated his patriotic enterprise, one of his leading supporters was the Bishop of Glasgow already mentioned, who, regardless of the charge of sacrilege, devoted the oak-wood which he had obtained for the spire of his cathedral to what he considered the more urgent purpose of constructing military battering-rams.[11] Lamberton, Bishop of St. Andrews, the head of the hierarchy, although under constraint he repeatedly swore

fealty to Edward, zealously supported the national movement under both Wallace and Bruce. He was ambassador of the former at the French Court, and was the very first man of high position who encouraged Bruce in his patriotic aspirations.[12] It was through the influence of the Scottish clergy that Pope Boniface VIII. was induced in 1300 to intervene on the side of Scotland, and to enjoin upon Edward the cessation of hostilities; although two years later—through English bribes, it was maintained—the same Pope, with discreditable tergiversation, denounced the patriotic bishops as "abettors of disturbance and discord detrimental to their country and displeasing to God."[13] In 1309, five years before the battle of Bannockburn, when Robert Bruce was still simultaneously struggling against English domination and hampered by the jealousy of Scottish nobles, a General Council of the Scottish Church met at Dundee and issued "to all the faithful in Christ" a bold and timely manifesto, in which they render "due fealty" to Bruce as "King of Scotland"; and declare that "with him the faithful of the kingdom will live and die."[14]

The dignitaries of the Scottish Church shared fully—over fully, it must be admitted—in the martial spirit which characterised the patriotism of the time. Wishart of Glasgow held Cupar-Fife against English besiegers, who captured him there in 1306, along with Lamberton of St. Andrews, and the Abbot of Scone, all three being in full armour.[15] David, Bishop of Moray, who afterwards founded the Scots College at Paris, preached publicly that it was no less meritorious to rise in arms against the English for the freedom of Scotland, than to engage in a crusade against the Saracens for the recovery of Palestine.[16] Of another prelate—St. Clair of Dunkeld—it is related that in 1317, when an English force had landed at Inverkeithing, and had driven a band of Scots in full flight before them, St. Clair came to the rescue on horseback, exclaimed to the fugitive leaders, "Our Lord the King would do well to hack your gilt spurs from off your heels," rallied the Scots with the cry "All who love King and country, follow me," and drove back the English invaders to their ships with the loss of 500 men.[17] Every Scottish

schoolboy is familiar with the description of the patriotic Abbot of Inchaffray, on the morning of the battle of Bannockburn, passing from rank to rank of the Scottish host, with crucifix in his hands, exhorting the kneeling soldiers to fight bravely for freedom and fatherland;[18] and it is not without significance that the Scottish poet who, in the fourteenth century, chiefly expressed and conspicuously stimulated the patriotic sentiment of the people, was no secular minstrel, but John Barbour, Archdeacon of Aberdeen.

The patriotic spirit and influence of the Scottish Church, at this critical epoch of national history, is strikingly illustrated by the refusal of the clergy to endorse the repeated papal ban against Bruce, first in 1306, after his slaughter of Comyn in the Greyfriars' Church at Dumfries, and later, in 1320, when Bruce refused to open sealed letters from the Pope which were not addressed to him as King of Scotland. That the papal excommunication, even after the double crime of murder and sacrilege, remained innocuous, and that the simultaneous papal interdict, debarring Scotland from priestly ministra-

tions, proved futile, was due to the recognition, notwithstanding all, of Robert Bruce by the Scottish clergy, as a divinely-raised-up champion of national independence, to whom they were ready loyally to adhere not only against the carnal power of England, but against the spiritual fulminations of Rome.[19] This patriotic attitude is finely depicted by Sir Walter Scott in his memorable description of the interview between Bruce and the Abbot of Iona, when the "sainted man from sainted isle" is represented as purposing at first to curse, but constrained, like Balaam, by an inward impulse to "turn the curse into a blessing"—

> "De Bruce! I rose with purpose dread
> To speak my curse upon thy head; . . .
> But, like the Midianite of old,
> Who stood on Zophim, heaven-controlled,
> I feel within my aged breast
> A power that will not be repressed.
> It prompts my voice, it swells my veins,
> It burns, it maddens, it constrains!—
> De Bruce, thy sacrilegious blow
> Hath at God's altar slain thy foe:
> O'ermastered yet by high behest,
> I bless thee, and thou shalt be blest."
>
> *Lord of the Isles*, ii. 31.

There can be no doubt that in that age of conflict, when the secular leaders of the Scottish people were often politically double-minded and suicidally jealous of each other, the uniform support of the national cause by the Church's official representatives had no small share in the deliverance of Scotland from the demoralising humiliation of foreign conquest.

III. The beneficent issues, notwithstanding temporary hardships, of the Scottish Wars of Independence were not confined to Seotland. The long conflict promoted indirectly the cause of constitutional government, and even of national independence, in England. Contemporaneous with the external struggle of Scots against English, was an internal contest of the people of England with their own sovereign for political rights and liberties. In proportion as the Scottish War demanded fresh supplies of men and money, the tenacity of the English King, in regard to what he regarded as royal prerogative, relaxed. The victory of Wallace at Stirling Bridge in 1297 was followed immediately in England by important royal concessions as to taxation; and the prolonged resistance of Scotland to English

aggression forced Edward I. to complete the programme of the Magna Charta. In order to obtain fresh equipments, he consented to invest the Commons with that parliamentary privilege of granting or withholding supplies which became a vital part of the British constitution, and a main safeguard at once against useless wars and against baneful despotism.[20]

IV. Not only the constitutional government, but even the continued national independence, of England was intimately connected with that Scottish resistance which the leading Churchmen of Scotland largely helped to render ultimately successful. Had the influence of the Scottish clergy been thrown into the scale of submission to England, and had Edward I. been thereby enabled to reduce Scotland to permanent subserviency, one can scarcely doubt that the subsequent warfare between England and France would have had a very different issue. As it was, France narrowly escaped complete subjugation by the English Kings Edward III. and Henry V., in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. But for the Franco-Scottish alliance, the constant danger to England on the Scottish frontier,

and the frequent need of part of her strength being occupied in warfare with Scotland, it is highly probable that the Norman-English kings would have become permanently, what they were temporarily, the rulers of France.[21] Are we then to ascribe French national independence partly to the patriotic conflict in Scotland? Primarily, yes; but English independence might eventually have been imperilled, and was, in reality, at this epoch secured. For, what would have been the ultimate issue of England and France becoming permanently under one king and one administration? It is not difficult to discern. Not insular and (as it then was) remote London, but continental and central Paris would have become the seat of government, the habitation of the Court, the fountain of honour, the reservoir of wealth, the focus of influence. Not English, as yet only a half-formed tongue, but French, which was still the language of the English Court, would have been the dominant speech of the united kingdoms; and the writings of Shakespeare and Addison would have been composed in a mere provincial dialect. The wholesome fusion of Saxon and Norman, then

being gradually effected, would have been detrimentally interrupted, and would have been replaced by the amalgamation—fatal for England—of Norman with French. The new empire thus created would have been Franco-Norman in name, policy, and spirit; and England would ere long have subsided into the chief appanage of a magnified France.[22] No weightier words were ever uttered by the late Dr. Arnold of Rugby than those in which he declared that "two of the greatest defeats we (English) ever suffered have been two of our greatest blessings—Orleans and Bannockburn;"[23] and to the issue at Bannockburn, of which the series of salutary reverses, inaugurated at Orleans in 1429, were in part the indirect result, the patriotism of Scottish Churchmen influentially contributed.

V. Three centuries have passed since the Wars of Independence. Both in Scotland and in England the Church of Rome has given place to the Church Reformed. The union of the two crowns, which Edward I. and Henry VIII. had vainly attempted to achieve, the former by force, the latter by craft, has been

peacefully and honourably consummated under a Scottish king with English ancestry. Once more, in the foreground of the political, as well as the ecclesiastical arena, stands the Scottish Church, as the determined and eventually successful antagonist of royal despotism.

For this later conflict in the cause of liberty two notable Scottish Churchmen, already referred to in another connection, had effectively paved the way, although both were dead before the struggle began. They were both pupils of the illustrious John Major. Major was not merely a Churchman but a politician; and his political views were more advanced than his ecclesiastical. In his *History of Greater Britain* he declares that "from the people kings have their institution," and "on them royal power depends." "The nation as a whole," he writes elsewhere, "is above the king, who exists for the people's good, not they for his."[24] One of the two eminent pupils of Major, who developed and popularised his political creed in Scotland, was John Knox. In the audience of his sovereign, Knox boldly maintained the lawfulness of resisting, deposing, and punishing

rulers who transgressed the laws or oppressed the people.[25] These principles received practical application during his life in the deposition and imprisonment of Mary Stewart; and eighty years after his death, John Milton appealed to his writings when vindicating the execution of Charles I.[26] The other of the two pupils was George Buchanan, whose reputation as a humanist and as a historian is not more memorable than his influence as a political economist. In his work *De jure regni apud Scotos* (published in 1579) the principles of constitutional, as distinguished from absolute monarchy, are expounded and defended with a freedom which caused the Scottish Parliament in 1584 to declare the possession of the volume penal, and moved the University of Oxford, a century later, to commit the treatise publicly to the flames.[27] The large circulation which the publication received, and the numerous answers which it drew forth in Scotland and England, and even on the Continent, attest its importance as an epoch-making work, which helped to mould the political opinions of influential thinkers both at home and abroad.[28]

VI. The struggle of the Scottish Church against the despotism of the Stewarts extended over four reigns and lasted for nearly a century, terminating with the Revolution of 1688. To the more distinctively ecclesiastical phase of the conflict reference will afterwards be made. Equally important, and farther-reaching, probably, in its influence, was the political issue of the contest, as a struggle, not less real because at the time not fully realised, for constitutional liberty. Beneath the resistance of the Scottish people in the seventeenth century to "black" prelacy and Laud's Liturgy, to kneeling at Communion and the observance of Christmas, there lay the national determination not to let either religious usage or anything else be forced upon Scotland by arbitrary power, especially when imposed in English form. The struggle was a renewal of the conflict for Scottish Independence, and along therewith a contest for constitutional government. The objection of the Scots to the ecclesiastical policy of the Stewarts, in the earlier stages, at least, of the conflict, was sharpened by the consideration that the government and worship of the Scottish Church were being Anglicised,

in order to secure religious conformity in the two kingdoms, as a means towards political consolidation. To a patriotic people, among whom the memories of former wars with England survived, such an Anglicising policy was in itself offensive. It had too much the appearance of a token of Scottish vassalage, such as the proud patriotism of men descended from the victors of Bannockburn and the heroes of Flodden could ill endure.[29]

Deeper, however, than any antipathy to particular forms of worship or modes of Church government—deeper, also, than any resentment against Anglican intrusions, was the spirit of resistance to despotism. When Andrew Melville and other ecclesiastical leaders, in the end of the sixteenth and in the beginning of the seventeenth century, opposed the insidious policy through which James VI. eventually established prelacy; when Calderwood and other churchmen, in 1617, protested against the same King's attempt to abolish the legislative functions of the General Assembly; when, a little later, one-half of the clergy and the majority of the people, led by Scot of Cupar and Dickson of Edinburgh, resisted the

Five Articles of Perth, whose civil and ecclesiastical enactment was obtained by royal intimidation; when, finally, under Charles I., the ministers under the leadership of Henderson, the influential laity guided by Lord Rothes, and the populace stirred by the riot of 1637 in St. Giles's, withstood the imposition of Laud's Service-Book, and organised the movement which culminated in the Covenant — there underlay all objections to those innovations in themselves an equal or graver objection to their despotic introduction by the will of the monarch, and to their high-handed enforcement by the odious High Commission.[30]

VII. In this political bearing of the long ecclesiastical conflict in the seventeenth century, the Scottish Church exerted an influence in England, as well as in Scotland, and, indirectly, in other lands. To the example and influence of the Church of Scotland were largely due the inauguration, prosecution, and successful conclusion of the long political struggle between the English people and the Stewart dynasty —the struggle whose early outcome, when national sympathies were divided, was the Great Rebellion, and whose eventual issue,

when the nation had become virtually unanimous, was the British Revolution. When the Scottish Covenanters continued to sit in the Glasgow Assembly of 1638, after the Royal Commissioner had dissolved it in the King's name; when they proceeded, with reforming zeal, to demolish those ecclesiastical innovations and (as they believed) deformations, which the despotism of thirty years had introduced into the Church's edifice; when they took forcible possession of Edinburgh and Dumbarton Castles, and raised a large army to vindicate the Church's testimony; an example of resistance to tyranny was set which fanned the flame of English opposition to unconstitutional taxes, and of indignation against the abuse of royal prerogative, until rescntment and remonstrance developed into revolt. Thirty thousand armed Covenanters sitting down on Duns Hill, became, as Carlyle epigrammatically expresses it, "the signal for all England rising up."[81] Within two years of the Duns demonstration, Charles had been constrained to send Strafford to the scaffold; one year later the Civil War began.

As the conflict in England was partly in-

augurated, so it was largely sustained through Scottish influence. On the struggle against royal despotism, the Church of Scotland bestowed an ecclesiastical benediction, instead of pronouncing, like the Church of England, through leading representatives, a spiritual ban. The clergy of the former Church, unlike those of the latter, distinguished clearly, in their policy, between conservative resistance to royal tyranny and that radical antagonism to monarchical government whose earlier outcome was a short-lived Republic, and whose later issue was a reactionary Restoration. The Scottish Church helped thus to forward what her English sister for two generations hindered, the growth of constitutional monarchy.[32] Amid prevalent English subservience during the reign of Charles II., Scotland, under cruel persecution, held aloft the banner of the Covenant; and that banner notwithstanding the intolerance of Covenanters, led to liberty, and, amid regrettable extravagances, enlisted in the cause a line of devoted martyrs like Renwick, and a group of patriotic politicians like Carstares. During the struggles, moreover, which attended and, at more than one juncture,

endangered the Revolution settlement, the Scottish Church contributed potently to the success of the enterprise by keeping Scotland, as a whole, on the side of William of Orange and National Liberty; while in Ireland, but for the courageous support of the Revolution by Scoto-Irish Presbyterians, in contrast with the widespread vacillation (at first) of Anglo-Irish Episcopalians, James would have retained his Irish, and might have eventually regained his English and Scottish kingdoms.[83] Throughout the half-century which elapsed between the signing of the Covenant and the Revolution, while dignitaries of the Church of England sided with despotism, persistently upholding the divine right of kings and the duty of submission even to a Nero, the Scottish Church, in spite of its intolerance and occasional fanaticism, united loyalty to the monarch's person with resistance to monarchical oppression, testified against both republicanism and absolutism, and promoted, if not always intentionally, on the whole effectually, the cause of civil and religious liberty. If it be too much to assert that, but for the Scottish Church, there would have been no British Revolution, it is safe to

affirm that to the persistent struggle of the earlier Covenanters and the faithful martyrdom of the later, the growth of the spirit which led to that great crisis was largely due.

VIII. The Revolution of 1688 is the acknowledged turning-point of modern political history. It was the signal repudiation by the British nation, before the world, of the "divine right of kings to rule wrong." It was the first stage in the realisation of George Buchanan's maxim that the fountain of political authority is the popular will, and that the end of political government is the popular welfare. In contributing to the success of the Revolution, accordingly, the Scottish Church promoted indirectly the downfall of despotism and the growth of virtual democracy throughout the civilised world. When Great Britain herself, against the counsel of her wisest statesmen, attempted, in the eighteenth century, to impose oppressive laws on her American colonies, the event of 1688, and the education of the preceding half-century, made submission impossible for descendants and kinsfolk of men who had struggled successfully against tyranny at home. The American Revolution was the natural

and uecessary outcome of the British. Scottish exiles and immigrants, in particular, had carried with them across the Atlantic those instincts of liberty and (in the broad sense) liberalism which the suffering Church of Scotland had fostered. It is amply attested by contemporary royalists, as well as by republicans, in the American conflict, that the earliest and most strenuous opponents of British despotism and promoters of colonial freedom were the descendants of the Scottish or Scoto-Irish Presbyterians.[34] The bronze statue of Dr. Witherspoon, erected at the centennial celebration of American Independence, commemorates the significant fact that the minister of religion who took the foremost part in the struggle was a Scottish Presbyterian divine.

The connection of the British with the French Revolution was less direct and less vital, but can be distinctly traced. In so far as that terrible event was the outcome, not of the lawless passion of the hour, but of a prolonged grievance and struggle against despotism, the chief external impulse was communicated by the signal achievements and testimony of 1688. When the national splendour, which

veiled the oppressive absolutism of the French monarchy and the luxurious selfishness of the French aristocracy, passed away, like a transient vision, with Louis XIV., in 1715, and when France awoke from her dreams of glory to find herself a veritable land of bondage, it was to the British Revolution and Constitution that leading Frenchmen turned their gaze at once for an example and for inspiration. British political ideas permeated France through translations of English writings; leaders of French thought and society acquired, through travel and social intercourse in England and Scotland, a taste for political liberty; and when a sufficient inflammatory mass had been accumulated, the conflagration was hastened by the successful American Revolt, to which men of Scottish descent had powerfully contributed.[85] If the Revolution of 1789, like a destructive hurricane, made shipwreck of much that was precious, both socially and religiously, it none the less cleared the political atmosphere of a great deal that was noxious and noisome. It paved the way, throughout Europe as a whole, for a new and better political dispensation, in which the responsibilities of the ruler,

for the ruled and to the ruled, are more clearly realised, and a beginning has been made with the fulfilment of our Lord's pregnant words: "He that will be great among you, let him be your servant."

IX. Hardly less notable than the influence of the Scottish Church in the promotion of political liberty has been its sustained testimony regarding spiritual independence; *i.e.*, the freedom of the Church, through her courts and councils, from external control within the spiritual sphere.

The witness of the Scottish Church to this principle dates from the earliest period of her organised existence, relates to her attitude towards papacy as well as magistracy, and has been maintained—with virtual unanimity down to the early part of the present century—along with adherence to the principle of Church Establishment. The Church of St. Columba, in the sixth century, was altogether independent of Rome. In the seventh century, that Church, rather than appear to recognise Roman authority and jurisdiction respecting the date of Easter, withdrew from her Anglo-Saxon mission field.[36] This spiritual inde-

pendence, as regarded the Roman See, continued down to the time of Queen Margaret, when Anglican influences led to the Church's submission to Roman supremacy. Even after the Church of Scotland became Romanised, it was for long conspicuous for its resistance to papal encroachment and uninvited intervention. In the thirteenth century papal legates were excluded from Scotland, and the Pope's demand for crusading tithes was refused.[37] In the fourteenth century, as we have already seen, the Church and her clergy ignored repeatedly the pontifical ban, when Rome interfered with the Scottish national cause.

In post-Reformation times, the Scottish Church, emancipated from papal jurisdiction, maintained, amid recurrent conflict, its spiritual independence against royal encroachment. Under the leadership of Andrew Melville it resisted, with eventual success, the attempts of Morton and of Lennox to reimpose a hierarchy upon Scotland without the authority of the General Assembly. James VI. succeeded in restoring Episcopacy and introducing certain Anglican usages, only through the employment of "kingcraft" to obtain the semblance of the

Church's sanction; while Charles I., by endeavouring to impose ecclesiastical innovations without ecclesiastical ratification, provoked a conflict out of which the Church emerged triumphant. "There are two Kings," were Andrew Melville's oft-quoted words to James VI., "and two kingdoms in Scotland. There is King James, the head of this commonwealth, and there is Christ Jesus, the King of the Church, whose subject James VI. is, and of whose kingdom he is not a king, nor a lord, nor a head, but a member."[38] Throughout the prolonged struggle of the Church with the Stewart dynasty, her fundamental protest, amid varying details, was ever this, that the spiritual jurisdiction of the Church, through her General Assembly, was being unconstitutionally interfered with by the civil power; and the Assemblies of 1638 and 1690, apart from their particular enactments, derive their main importance as landmarks of Scottish Church History from this, that they signalise the recovery of her lost spiritual independence.[39]

During the eighteenth century, while in the re-established Presbyterian Church the question of spiritual independence retreated for a

time into the background, the nonconforming episcopal remnant, partly through its severance from the State, partly through the non-juring attitude of its clergy, threw off the Erastianism by which Scottish Episcopacy had formerly been characterised, and adopted ideas of spiritual independence which survived its Jacobite proclivities.[40] In the case of the Presbyterian Seceders, the principle of ecclesiastical autonomy, which they carried with them out of the Church, was increasingly emphasised amid continued disconnection from the State, until, almost within living memory, it developed into Voluntaryism.

In subsequent times, when those internal conflicts began which issued in the lamentable Secession of 1843, the cause of contention, it must be remembered, was not whether the Church possessed spiritual independence and a free ecclesiastical jurisdiction, but whether, in particular instances, she had, or had not, stepped out of her spiritual province, and arrogated to herself civil powers. While the Free Church, accordingly, by making spiritual independence her watchword, bore specially prominent testimony against erastian inter-

ference with the Church in her spiritual province, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, on the other hand, in a pastoral address to the Scottish people, immediately after the close of the conflict, distinctly declared:—"It is our firm determination ever to maintain that in all questions purely spiritual the judicatures of the Church have the sole right of judging. By these principles we are determined to abide."[41] In more than one notable instance subsequent to 1843, this supremacy of the Church within its own ecclesiastical sphere has been signally recognised by the Civil Courts;[42] and the most illustrious living statesman of Great Britain testified by anticipation that the Church of Scotland was invested, in 1874, through the Act which abolished patronage, with powers not possessed by any other Church in Christendom.[43]

X. The witness of the Scottish Church—of both established and non-established communions—to the principle of spiritual independence, has helped to supply a conspicuous want in Reformed Christendom, and has exerted, doubtless, an appreciable influence beyond

Scotland. Whereas in England, France, Scandinavia, Holland, and Switzerland, the National Reformed Churches have either been from the first, or eventually become, more or less erastian in government and discipline, the Scottish Church has set before Christendom a substantial realisation of Calvin's ideal of a Church at once national and free.

On the one hand, in the Old as well as in the New World, this example of Scotland has, presumably, stimulated the formation and growth of Churches which possess spiritual independence and are without State connection. Both in Great Britain and on the Continent of Europe—notably in Switzerland, Holland, and France—State support has been renounced by a considerable portion of the Protestant populations. This renunciation is due to the conviction that the civil power, in their case, not only encroached upon ecclesiastical jurisdiction, but hindered the conservation or revival of evangelical doctrine, and the diffusion of an earnestly evangelical spirit.[44] In America and in Australia, through combined colonial and religious enterprise, numerous Churches have come into existence which either

from the first have been unconnected with the State, or have received from it moderate support without sacrifice of ecclesiastical independence.

On the other hand, there have been notable movements recently in National Churches towards greater freedom of ecclesiastical development and government. In England, the Anglo-Catholic revival, however much to be regretted some of its issues may be, has had, among other commendable results, the restoration of Synodical activity and influence, as well as the deliverance of Church and clergy from phlegmatic acquiescence in an erastian polity. In the National Reformed Church of France, a crave for spiritual freedom and self-government was met by the revival, in 1872, under M. Thiers's Presidency, of the National Synod, through which the voice of the Church, apart from the State, was once more heard. Internal divisions alone appear to have prevented the investment of this Synod with full and supreme legislative authority in the spiritual sphere.[45] In the Evangelical Church of Prussia, and in other German National Churches, the erastian form of ecclesiastical government by royally-appointed Consistories has been, in

recent times, so far superseded by a more genuinely Presbyterian constitution, according to which ecclesiastical supervision and discipline are entrusted to congregational Sessions and district Synods, while General Synods are invested with a share of legislative power.[46] It is impossible to doubt that, in some degree, these varied strivings after ecclesiastical autonomy have been encouraged by the example and testimony of a Church whose history, in post-Reformation times, has been characterised by frequent resistance to civil encroachment, and by almost unanimous assertion, amid very varied application, of the principle of spiritual independence.

The testimony of the Scottish Church to the doctrine of spiritual autonomy is still associated, by the majority of the Scottish people, with the maintenance of the principle of Church establishment, and of national responsibility for the provision of religious ordinances throughout the land. The continuance of this twofold testimony is signally important not only for Scotland but for other countries which have national Churches. It means that emphatic witness is borne before Christendom against

the practical secularism which would either exclude religion from the sphere of national responsibility, or degrade the Christian Church from a divine institution into a department of State-administration.

To mutilate this combined testimony, through the disestablishment of the existing Church of Scotland, without provision for the establishment in its place of a more comprehensive and therefore more fully national Church, would mean a conspicuous concession to the secular spirit of the time. For it cannot be pleaded that there is, at the present day, any general tendency, of which Church disestablishment might constitute only one among other illustrations, to diminish the area of national responsibility for the welfare of the individual citizen. On the contrary, national accountability has, in recent times, been magnified, instead of being minimised. In our own country, we have illustrations of this direction of public sentiment in the modern Poor Laws, through which the nation, to an extent previously unrealised, has made itself responsible for the decent maintenance of the pauper; and also, more recently, in the Education Acts,

through which the State, with an efficiency previously unknown in our country, undertakes to secure the education of every child in the kingdom. We have further illustrations of the same tendency in the growing demand being made, under influential auspices, for national old-age pensions, for public employment of the otherwise unemployed, and for a more complete municipal control, or even actual management, of the traffic on whose careful regulation the repression of intemperance considerably depends. It is impossible, moreover, to ignore the recent growth and diffusion of socialistic opinions which go far beyond such moderate demands in claiming for the individual a public provision. While the duty of the State to promote the material and intellectual well-being of each individual is thus, in various spheres, emphasised and extended, it would be a momentous concession to secularism, if national responsibility for the individual's religious welfare were simultaneously curtailed or practically disowned.

It is possible that in Scotland, at the present time, there is sufficient religious earnestness to undertake the voluntary supply

of all the spiritual provision which the population requires, if the national religious endowments were withdrawn from ecclesiastical use. But the removal of buttresses, apparently superfluous, from a building often issues, eventually, in the ruin of the structure. The disavowal, moreover, of national responsibility in one country encourages similar renunciation in others, where less result can be expected from private Christian enterprise; and no voluntary provision of religious ordinances could compensate for the discreditable testimony—pernicious directly to Scotland, and indirectly to Christendom at large—that while the nation, as a nation, provided against any one being starved literally, for lack of food, or intellectually for want of education, men and women were to be allowed, so far as the State was concerned, to starve spiritually for lack of the knowledge which "maketh wise unto salvation."