

they had received from Christ, and for the right exercise of which they were responsible to Him alone,—or to interdict, suspend, or reduce what was done by them in the name of Christ, and within the province which Christ had committed to their care. And had the civil courts kept within their own province, and dealt merely with the temporalities, affected by the procedure of the Church, the struggle, which issued in the disruption, would never have occurred. But the civil courts would not thus restrict themselves; wherever, as we have explained, a civil interest was affected by the action of the Church, in any case, no matter how purely spiritual that action, they asserted the right on this ground, of dealing, not merely with the civil interest so affected, but with *the spiritual action of the Church itself*. Here, you will observe, lies the Erastianism of the claims to supremacy over the Church, advanced by these courts, which no formal admissions of the Church's exclusive jurisdiction in matters purely spiritual, and no mere assertions that the civil courts have only dealt with civil interests can explain away. On the plea of their supremacy *in things civil*, these courts have asserted a right of intermeddling with *things spiritual*, and thus have thrust in a wedge by which they have broken up the scriptural constitution of the Church of Scotland, set aside the solemn sanctions by which her spiritual independence was guaranteed by the State, and reduced her from the glorious position which she once occupied, to a condition of helpless dependence on the good pleasure of the civil power.

But let us now proceed to show the *extent* to which, on the principle we have explained, the civil courts have actually advanced claims subversive of the spiritual independence of the Church. We cannot undertake, within the limits we have assigned to this address, to record all that has been done in this way; but we shall point out enough to prove that there is scarcely a spiritual function,—if, indeed, there be so much as one,—with respect to which the civil courts do not claim the right of controlling or setting aside the action of the Church.

The civil courts, then, have claimed the right of controlling or setting aside the action of the Church in the following, among other purely spiritual or ecclesiastical matters:—*First*—The ordination and settlement of ministers. *Second*—The suspension and deposition of ministers. *Third*—The conferring of power to perform spiritual functions. *Fourth*—The composition of Church Courts. *Fifth*—The extension of parochial superintendence over the members of the Church. And, *Sixth*—The preaching of the Gospel. A simple statement of facts will make this plain.