

The Court of Session has so far declared in favour of Mr. McMillan, thus usurping to itself authority over the Church in matters purely spiritual. The Church says, Mr. McMillan is no longer a minister: the Court of Session says in effect, You must make him one. Lord Jerviswood has declared that the Church has no jurisdiction except what she has derived from the State; that Churches which are distinct from the Establishment have no jurisdiction at all, and are therefore subject to the Civil Courts in the same manner as are Insurances Companies or Banking Companies or any other association of men. The independent existence of the Church is thus ignored; and it is asserted that it is subordinate to, and derives its existence from, the State. The freedom of all the non-established Churches is threatened. They must stand or fall together; and therefore all or nearly all are now making common cause in their struggle for the "crown rights of the Redeemer." The Free Church leads the van, but she is nobly seconded by the United Presbyterian, the Reformed Presbyterian, the Congregationalist and Baptist Churches. A common danger induces them to stand shoulder to shoulder and enables them to see eye to eye. The Established Church, we regret to say, stands a mute spectator of the conflict, or if any voice is heard from her ranks it is to sneer at her non-established sisters and to encourage the foe. She sacrificed the glorious principle of spiritual freedom and autonomy in 1843; she then consented to place her neck under the yoke of Erastianism and it seems that she would be nowise sorry to see other Churches reduced to the same melancholy position. That there are many good men in her bosom who sympathise in silence with their dissenting brethren we have no doubt; but strangely enough, the very individuals who were the keenest antagonists of the Free Church in 1843 are now the prompters, advocates and judges of Mr. McMillan. Lord Jerviswood is an old enemy to ecclesiastical freedom. He could not understand or bear with it twenty years ago: and we can easily imagine the satisfaction which will be afforded to him now by what he will regard as an opportunity to crush out a principle which he hates.

This contest is of interest to us in the Colonies, so long as the Established Church of Scotland seeks to retain a footing among us; for it is now too plainly to be seen that that Church has lost the magnificent heirloom of spiritual independence bequeathed to Scotland by the Martyrs of the Reformation and of the Covenant—that she does not contend for the "crown rights of the Redeemer"—that she is content to let poorer and weaker churches stand in the gap and bear the brunt of battle. We desire to excite no odium against the Established Church; we only record the fact (and we do so with profound sorrow,) that the hereditary conflict on behalf of the Church's freedom is not shared in by her. It is gratifying that the sympathies of the Presbyterian Churches of Ireland and England—the Old and the New School Presbyterian Churches of America—the United Presbyterian Churches throughout the world—the Reformed Dutch Church and almost every other Evangelical denomination—are with the Free Church in the present struggle. How could it be otherwise? Has not a Church the right to say who shall or shall not be one of her members or office bearers? Is it to be endured for a moment that ecclesiastical culprits are to find shelter from censure under the shield of the civil magistrates? The principle sought to be applied to the Free Church by the Scotch Court of Session would apply in this country just as well. Let a Kirk-Session suspend or expel a member of the Church—let him go to a magistrate and demand that the magistrate reinstate him in his old position in the Church by "reducing" the sentence of the Session—let the magistrate encourage him and threaten the Kirk Session with pains and penalties,—and then we have a complete illustration of the principle sought to be applied to the non-established Churches in Scotland.

The case will probably be taken by appeal to the House of Lords, and if the decision of that august tribunal prove adverse to the Free Church she will be called upon, not to lower her standard, not to hush her testimony, but to hold herself in readiness to "endure hardness" and if need be to "suffer unto blood" for the sake of her glorious King and Head who shed his blood for her. But she will not suffer alone. The United Presbyterian Church and other bodies will gladly share in all the troubles that may come.