

## Free Church Jubilee.

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## II.

The Moderates were the successors of those worldly-minded ministers who, in the changes and changes of Church affairs in the seventeenth century, were ready to accept Prolacy or Presbytery, as the tide turned, careless of the vital principles of the Gospel, indifferent to the interests of their people, neither radical nor conservative in thought, neither hot nor cold in their religion. Throughout the eighteenth century this party gradually rose to ascendancy in the Church of Scotland, as did a similar school in the Church of England.

Under this tendency the Erastian view of the relation of Church and State prevailed. The State was practically regarded as supreme in every sphere. The spiritual independence of the Church was no longer a principle to stir men's blood. A deadly chill fell upon all religious interests. The end of vital religion seemed at hand. But, in the good providence of God, there came a change—life from the dead!

What the conversion of John Wesley meant for the religious life of England, that the conversion of Thomas Chalmers meant for Scotland. With him laboured a band of able, pious energetic men whose influence was felt throughout the parishes of Scotland in gracious

In 1838 Chalmers thus eloquently proclaimed these principles to a brilliant audience in London:

"It should never be forgotten, that in things ecclesiastical, the highest power of our Church is amenable to no higher power on earth for its decisions. It can exclude, it can deprive, it can depose at pleasure. External force might make an obnoxious individual the holder of a benefice, but there is no external force in these realms that could make him a minister of the Church of Scotland. There is nothing which the State can do to our independent and indestructible Church but strip her of her temporalities, *nee tamen consumebatur*. She would remain a Church notwithstanding, as strong as ever in the props of her own moral and inherent greatness. . . . What Lord Chatham said of the poor man's house is true in all its parts of the Church to which I have the honour to belong. 'In England every man's house is his castle. Not that it is surrounded with walls and battlements; it may be a straw-built shed. Every wind of heaven may whistle round it, every element of heaven may enter it, but the king cannot—the king dare not.'"

The Evangelicals were now in the majority in the Church and prepared to give effect to these views. They were not prepared to abolish patronage altogether, even if they had had the power. But they sought to bring it into harmony with the spiritual independence of the Church. By the Veto Act of the General Assembly of 1834, it was provided that a Presbytery should not ordain any man presented by the patron to a living, if a majority of the male heads of families, communicants in the parish concerned, disapproved of the nomination. This act worked well, produced little friction, resulted in a great decrease in the number of unconverted candidates for the ministry,



THE DISRUPTION FATHERS SIGNING THE DEED OF DEMISSION.

revivals, and in the Church courts in a developing sensitiveness touching the relations of Church and State. Not that this Evangelical party desired to sever Church and State, or dreamed of following the Erastians and other courageous men who had abandoned the emoluments of a spiritually dead establishment, choosing the obscurity and poverty of dissent. No, Thomas Chalmers was not only a loyal but an enthusiastic upholder of the Establishment, valuing it as affording at once the centre for the unifying of the whole life of Scotland and the basis for united and successful effort to teach and evangelize the lapsed masses of the community. But Chalmers and the Evangelicals in general cherished this fascinating ideal of a State Church, in strict subordination to the fundamental ecclesiastical principle of the spiritual independence of the Church. This was no afterthought of controversy, but a principle fully stated long before the conflict came.

More and more, however, a breach between the Moderates and Evangelicals became inevitable, between those who were willing that the Church should be the creation and instrument of the State, and those who deprecated the use of the Church for political purposes, denouncing the bestowal of its livings for the reward of unconverted sycophants of the aristocracy, and sought to fill the pulpits of the land with men whom they had called to that holy office and ministry. These Evangelicals claimed that the compact between Church and State in Scotland, from the Reformation down, had left the Church autonomous in her spiritual affairs, supported indeed by the State but neither created nor controlled by it, and especially that the intrusion of unsuitable ministers upon unwilling congregations by force of patronage was a gross breach of this compact.

who relied upon the favour of landed families for positions in the Church, and in a great increase in the settlement of devoted evangelical pastors.

But such Evangelical success naturally intensified the hostility of the opposing Moderate party. Such assertion of ecclesiastical independence was obnoxious to the Scotch landed aristocracy, and also to the English politicians, whose conception of the true relation of Church and State was that of the complete dependence of the former upon the latter, as in England. From this point on we may date the so-called Ten Years' Conflict between the sturdy, godly, Evangelical majority of the Church of Scotland on the one side, fired with the hereditary sentiments and principles of long heroic centuries, and on the other side the formidable and determined forces of the Moderates, the landed proprietors and the politicians. All came to a crisis in the cases of the parish of Auchterarder and the Presbytery of Strathgogie.

In the fall of 1834 Lord Kinnoul presented a Mr. Robert Young to the living of Auchterarder. The congregation almost unanimously disapproved. Out of a parish population of 3,000 only two men signed the call. The Presbytery accordingly declined to ordain Mr. Young pastor over a reluctant people. Lord Kinnoul and Mr. Young applied to the civil courts. After the usual delays of the law, the decision was rendered in March, 1838, that the Church had no right to defer to the wishes of the congregation, and that the presentee must be treated by the Presbytery just as if the people had not expressed their disapproval of him.

(To be continued.)