

There could not, of course, be a more ridiculous nor a grosser misrepresentation. The Civil Courts were appealed to, in the cases supposed, on a point of law, and gave their decision as the law directed, in the same way as the Civil Courts here would decide, that a Municipal Council could not legally impose taxes, if there were men sitting at the Council Board who had not been legally elected to do so. No Corporation, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, can usurp illegal powers. That is so plain that it seems a waste of time to discuss such a question. Yet the position taken up by those who seceded from the Church of Scotland in 1843 was this: They attempted to assume powers contrary to the laws of the land, and then proclaimed themselves martyrs, because the law prevented them from carrying their illegal assumptions into effect, and from trampling on the rights of others who did not think like them.

The bitterness of theologians is proverbial, and the contest in the Church of Scotland at this time might serve as a confirmation of the truth of the prevailing belief on this subject. Two hostile camps were formed: the one active, restless, self-asserting and loud in its pretensions; the noise of its paper artillery resounding through all the parishes of Scotland—rumbling along the mountain sides and penetrating into the low-lying valleys. Tracts, pamphlets, dreams even, were brought into play. Not a vacant parish was left undisturbed for a day. Agitators flocked into it from every quarter, and the wrongs of the parishioners were so eloquently depicted that they themselves were moved to tears at the story of oppressions they had not until then known they had suffered. The other was more calm, and acted chiefly on the defence. To the side of the High Church party was attracted the greater part of the chapel ministers who had been illegally admitted into the Church Courts. It would have been strange had it been otherwise. They owed their official existence in the Church Courts to an illegal Act, passed by the party to which they now adhered, and they therefore, as a body, supported pretensions whose defeat would end their parochial life. It was by the assistance given by the *quoad sacra* ministers in the inferior Church Courts that the dominant party was able to pack