

high time to enlighten them,—at least to make the attempt; and instead of its being wrong to introduce the subject, perhaps it was culpable in me to neglect it so long.

With this expression of my views, I proceed, without further preface, to state my question.

What caused the (so-called) Disruption?

This is the question: plainer I could not make it. But before I address myself to the answer, a word or two as to the qualification and meaning of *Disruption*. You will observe I have set it forth as the “so-called Disruption.” Now, like the assumed title of the “Free Church,” I hesitate not to say that the term *Disruption* is not warranted by the fact alleged to be its origin, any more than the Church *par excellence* titled “the Free,” is anything else than a misnomer. You have heard from respectable, and by us a most justly respected authority, the Free Church described “as a splendid off-shoot” from the Church of Scotland. Now, granting the accuracy of this description, you know that an off-shoot, however magnificent, does not destroy the tree. It might be also called a *swarm*; but who ever heard of the bee-hive being injured by the departure of its off-spring? But why call the exodus of 1843 a disruption? Evidently to set forth, not only an injury to the tree, but its being torn asunder; to set forth the hive as not only emptied of its supernumeraries, but as sustaining irreparable damage. Hence our Free brethren never condescended to call themselves a *Secession*, which means a “going away from,” but “a Disruption,” to tell of the fatal damage they think they have done to their old Parent Church of Scotland. The Erskines, the Fishers, the Browns, the Hoggs of the 18th century, contented themselves with the modest designation of *Seceders*; but their brethren of the 19th century must affect a title which seems to glory in the destruction of their deserted Mother: nothing short of tearing her asunder would satisfy their craving. Do you ask, was it not a tearing, an incurable wound? I am not here to deny but the Church has suffered grievously from what I shall endeavour in the sequel to prove, the unnatural conduct of her children. Yet to show that this suffering does not amount to a Disruption, I would point my hearers to the position of the Church as respects her ministers, her members, her activity, and liberality to every Christian Scheme; in all which respects she is known to be far in advance of what she was before the '43, even when all our seceded brethren were with us. If this be so, (and that it is, the proof were easy, had this been the place for it,) where is the propriety of saying that the Church was *disrupted* by the Secession of '43, i.e. “torn asunder,” and crippled irredeemably? The wish was father to the thought, the thought that the Secession had rendered the Church *effete*:

and, alas! how often was the awful exaggeration ventilated by highly gifted and distinguished Christian ministers! Who does not remember the Church of Scotland decried by the very highest of her own outed sons as a “Vicious Institute?” by others as a “God-dishonouring, Christ-denying, soul-destroying Church?” But, while we cannot forget these effusions of party violence, and sad proofs of human frailty, as tares topping it high among the finest of the wheat, we have reason to be truly thankful that nothing save the faintest echo, if even such, is now to be heard of these asperities, and that, if it does exist, exists only in mouths whose censure is praise; exists only with those to whom the courtesies of life are unknown, and with whom vulgarity predominates; who are alike strangers to the honour of the gentleman, and the charity of the Christian.

As respects the epithet “Free,” that it is a misnomer, and that the Church which the Seceders left is the free church, in fact the freest church in Christendom, can, I flatter myself, be made clear by the answer to my first question; as also, that the Free Church has lost her freedom by her secession from the Parent Church.

Now, then, what caused the Disruption?

Hitherto, the impression generally prevailing was, that it resulted from the undue exercise of Patronage, i.e. forced settlements of ministers upon reclaiming congregations. Dr Guthrie, in his sermon on the occasion of a collection on behalf of the Ante-disruption Ministers, sets down this as the first cause of the Disruption. Were this so, none would be more ready to acknowledge the grievance than myself, I having been since my college-days an Anti-Patronage man; and hence my sympathies would go far indeed with the Seceders of '43. I do hope also that never was Patronage nearer its last than this very year; and that soon this real and only barrier to the full developement of the Church's energies, will be taken out of the way. Even as it is, the Act commonly called the Earl of Aberdeen's gives an almost unlimited scope for objection to the people, rendering an unacceptable settlement now very difficult; but soon it is expected that the direct call or choice of the people will be given effect to; and then, as far as human foresight can go, and human imperfection admit, the Church of Scotland, it may be hoped, will become, in the fullest sense, the Church of the people of Scotland.

But is it the fact that Patronage was one of the causes of the Disruption? So says Dr. Guthrie. Yet, strange, in the very same Church, viz. —Free St. John's in Edinburgh, and on the very same day (November 13th) and occasion, Dr. Hanna, his colleague, the son-in-law and biographer of Dr. Chalmers, states positively in his celebrated sermon, that “the very men who accomplished the Disruption, had consented in tolerating Pat-