

PREFACE

THE purpose for which this Lectureship was instituted by the thoughtful munificence of the late Robert Macfie, Esq., of Airds and Oban, was to explain and defend the distinctive principles of the Free Church of Scotland. That was done so ably and so fully by the first two lecturers, Sir H. W. Moncreiff, Bart., D.D., and Dr. W. Wilson, that it seemed as if nothing further of any great importance could be said upon the subject. A happy thought, however, occurred to the third lecturer, Dr Thomas Brown. With Mr Macfie's concurrence, he prepared a course of Lectures designed to show that the principle of spiritual independence for which the Free Church testified and suffered had been maintained by the faithful portion of the Church of Scotland from the Reformation downwards. By taking this line he was enabled to embody in his Lectures some of the most interesting passages of Scottish Church History, and, by accompanying them with a graceful and judicious commentary, to make the position of our Church intelligible to those who might have been repelled by mere abstract reasoning. The last holder of this Lectureship, Dr Norman Walker, having to deliver them soon after the celebration of our Church's Jubilee, conceived the idea of carrying out Dr Brown's historical mode of treatment by telling the story of the Free Church during the first fifty years of its exis-