

1843 Disruption 1 - Why the church divided

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[0 : 00] June of May 18, 1843, an exodus took place on St Andrew's Church in George Street, Edinburgh.

George Street runs parallel to Prince's Street, if you know Edinburgh. St Andrew's Church is still there. In that afternoon, the cry went up from the crowd gathered outside.

They come, they come. And a procession of what were undoubtedly rather portly, middle-aged and elderly-looking clerics, as ministers still are today, emerged from the church and wound on.

The main interest of the crowd was to see how many there were. But so dense was the crowd gathering that it was quite difficult for them to walk out.

And without having intended to, they ended up marching out virtually in column of threes. Because of the shortage of space there. A company of English dragoons, based in Edinburgh Castle, had been called in to try to control the vast crowd that had gathered.

[1 : 06] Somebody asked one of the English dragoons, What's going on? Oh, it's nothing, he said. Just something to do with Scotchman's religion. Others weren't so sure it was nothing.

One leading judge said that he was proud of his countrymen. In no other country could such a great event have taken place. It certainly amazed the government in London, who had confidently predicted that only a handful of men, if any at all, would be found actually walking out of that church on that day.

And it was an event that had profound consequences throughout the 19th century in Scotland and in many other parts of the world. And continues to have its influence on the church life of Scotland today.

But what was going on for a disruption to take place? What was it that caused that number of ministers?

And by the time others who were not there in the building had gathered, well over 400 ministers, something about a third of the ministerial strength of the Church of Scotland, walked out on the denomination that day.

[2 : 21] Was it that the church was in a desperate condition and in panic and in great trouble, had divided over what could be done?

No, indeed. No, indeed. Seldom has a church been in such a flourishing and growing condition as the Church of Scotland was in the years up to 1843.

A little handbook for the year 1843 reveals that the Church was running education throughout the highlands and islands of Scotland, constantly opening new schools and training 180 teachers every year.

In the whole mission, it had, in the last 10 years, opened, built, opened, paid for something like 350 new churches.

In foreign missions, it had 13 missionaries sent out over the previous 10 years to India, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. And something of its boldness and vision can be seen in the notes that is included in that almanac for 1843.

[3 : 36] Committee on the conversion of the Jews. It is understood that Aden in Arabia, a port in the possession of Britain, is to be the scene of the Assembly's first labours for the benefit of the Jews and for the overthrow of Mohammedanism.

An attempt considered both bold and hazardous, as Aden is only 600 miles distant from Mecca. Now, you may know that nothing ever came of that proposal to put a mission in Aden.

In fact, the first missionary went to Budapest. But it says something of the spirit and the vision of the Church of Scotland at that period, that the Committee for the Conversion of the Jews had in mind a mission, not only to convert the Jews, but the Mohammedans while they were at it as well.

There was also a large and growing colonial church scheme to serve the increasing number of Scottish emigrants with tracts, Bibles, libraries, ministers and teachers in New South Wales, Canada, in Demerara, in the West Indies and in the Cape Colony.

Now, the Church of Scotland was not in desperate, miserable condition and therefore falling apart. It was a lively church. It was a growing church.

[4 : 57] And yet, that exodus on May the 18th led to a new church being started, the Free Church of Scotland.

There, those 400 and more ministers met together five days later to sign away their position as parish ministers. Before they'd left the building in St Andrews, St Andrews Church rather, they'd delivered a protest setting out the reasons for their departure, listing their complaints against the state and the courts that they regarded as having intruded into the liberty of the Christian Church.

The protest said, in essence, the General Assembly has been called to meet today in Edinburgh. But it is not possible for there to be a free General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in the present circumstances.

The state has interfered in the Church of Scotland. The state has interfered in the Church. The state has usurped the powers of the Church. And those who want to have a Church that is free of state interference cannot continue here.

That, in a nutshell, was their protest. And it was on that ground that they left. What had brought such a Church into collision with the state?

[6 : 26] Before we look at that in a little more detail, you have to realise that 1843 was a long time ago. We talk about Church and State in conflict. But you must remember that the Church then was not like the Church now.

And the State then was not like the States now. The world then, the country, was extremely, was very, very different. The population of Scotland in 1843 was between two and three million, barely a half of what it is today.

Universities in England, Oxford and Cambridge, were still closed to anybody who was not the Church of England. There were still window tax. If you had eight windows in your house, you paid fifteen shillings and sixpence a year window tax.

The Church had a very different place in society. In the Scottish parish, the Church, with its elders, a group of elders called the Kirk Session, was not only the place where some people might go to worship, not everybody went to church, not everybody went to the Church of Scotland, but the parish church was not only a place of worship, it was also responsible for the education of the parish.

The school was run by the Kirk Session. It was the welfare agency for the parish. It was the Kirk Session that met the needs of the poor.

[7 : 58] Ministers were paid by the rents from lands that were set apart for that work. The collections in church went to meet the needs of the poor and the unemployed.

The Kirk Session were the police force. If there was crime, if there was immorality, it was the Session that were expected to find it out. The Kirk Session was also served in some ways as the sort of bank to the community.

The money that was used for the relief of the poor was in the Session box. And loans could be made from the Session box to businessmen or traders who were in difficulties.

The church was also in those days, you may find this hard to believe, but it was one of the main sources of entertainment in the parish and in the land. To go and hear the minister preach was exactly the equivalent of watching Terry Wogan, but it was one of the few things other than sitting looking at a fire that you could do.

And in a day when there was a mass media, the church was very influential as an opinion performer. The state too was exceedingly different in those days.

[9 : 19] I came across some of the figures for those eligible to vote. The state in, yes, constituencies were small. Kirk Cuddy with a population of 5,261 had 490 voters.

Inverness that had a population of 15,000 had 765 voters. And listen to this one, those of you who know the Highlands. The county of Sutherland, the county of Sutherland in 1843 had a population of 24,666.

And in the whole of Sutherland, the total number of those eligible to vote was 153. Nowadays there's more like 153 people and 24,000 midges in Sutherland.

It was very different. So when we talk about church and state coming into conflict, we do have to realise that it's not, you know, we have our own sort of mental picture of what a church is and what sort of things the state do.

The state had nothing to do with education in 1843. Nothing to do with the provision of healthcare. Nothing to do in large parts of Scotland with welfare.

[10 : 37] The state oversaw the law courts, dealt with foreign affairs, the basis of taxation. And that was about in time.

Okay, what had caused the state and the Church of Scotland to come into conflict? There's three reasons or three factors that we need to look at to understand that.

The first one has to be said, put it like this. What brought them into conflict was the corrupting of Reformation liberty. Now, without giving you a lecture on the whole history of the Reformed Church of Scotland, from 1560 to 1690, the Protestant Church of Scotland had a series of struggles and conflicts with the kings of the day, which eventually issued with the Church more or less victorious, and more or less setting the standard for democracy.

Not just in the Church, but in the state as well. The Church, as reformed under the ministry of men like John Knox, had had basically a democratic government.

The people chose their own ministers. The Church was governed by the ministers and elders of the Church meeting together in the Presbyterianism, and the Presbyterianism meeting together in General Assembly.

[12 : 12] You may recall that James VI of Scotland and I of England did not like Presbyterianism, and he said, no bishop, no king.

The Church had to fight long and hard to get rid of bishops. You may recall the story of Jenny Geddes, how in the days of Charles I, the attempt was made to force a prayer book in the style of the Church of England prayer book on the unwilling ears of the Scottish congregations.

And that's how Jenny Geddes in St. Giles' Church in Edinburgh picked up her stool and threw it at the minister's head and said, will you say the mass in my lug?

And that's why Scottish ministers had pews put in their churches from that day to this. Then, of course, there was the great struggle under Charles II, where once again the Church of Scotland was rigorously controlled by the saint.

Those that stood for a pure Presbyterianism were driven out of the Church, carried, hassled and martyred, many of them, in those terrible years. But in 1690, in the Glorious Revolution, which William Orange came over with Mary, and our democracy in Britain as a whole, our parliamentary democracy was established.

[13 : 36] So in that year, the liberty of the Church of Scotland was established and recognised. And in some very important acts of Parliament, the Scottish Parliament in 1690, it was implicitly and explicitly acknowledged that the Church had the right to rule itself and to be what its own confession and its own biblical standards laid down.

A few years later, there was the union between Scotland and England. And it's very interesting, and of some political topicality today as well, when Scottish independence and Scottish nationalism is very much under debate.

But what happened when it was agreed reluctantly on the Scots' path that they must consider a union with England? They appointed commissioners. The Scottish Parliament appointed commissioners to treat with commissioners from the Parliament of England as to a union of the kingdoms.

But in the act appointing those commissioners to deal with the English Parliament, the Scottish Parliament added this statement, provided that the said commissioners shall not treat of or concerning any alteration of the worship, discipline and government of the Church of this Kingdom, as now by law established.

They said you can negotiate terms and, you know, have reached an agreement with the English Parliament, but you are not to negotiate anything that touches the worship, government and discipline of the Church.

[15 : 29] And indeed, the Scottish Parliament passed an act called the Act of Security, an act for securing the Protestant religion and Presbyterian Church government.

They established and confirmed the said religion, the said religion, the worship, discipline and government of this Church, to continue without any alteration to the people of this land in all succeeding generations.

And did forever confirm the act of the Church of the Church, and did forever confirm the act of William and Mary's Parliament, ratifying the confession of faith and the settling of the Presbyterian Church government.

In other words, the Scottish Parliament insisted, and this was embodied in the Act of Union of 1707, which is the fundamental act of the British Parliament, that the Church of Scotland must not be interfered with by Parliament.

And it had exactly the status that it was given in 1690, when it was recognised to be not under the control of the King or Parliament.

[16 : 32] Well, like all perpetual guarantees, that one lasted about five years. And in 1712, a Tory government, a Tory-dominated Parliament of Queen Anne, passed a patronage act, which forced upon the Scottish Church the system of appointed ministers that was the practice in England.

That is, that the local landowner, the local big noise, had the right to present a person to be the minister of the local church.

Now, in theory, the patronage act looked rather innocent. And, to put it in a diagrammatic form, the theory was like this.

It's rather topical. When there was no minister in the church, the patron, whoever it was who owned the patronage of that church, he would say, Here is man, I present him to be the minister of this church.

Then the congregation was invited to call this man. And the presbytery had to examine him and to see if they thought that he was suitable. And then he was ordained.

[17 : 59] That was the theory. But as somebody has said, it's rather like, or it soon became very much like the theory of the appointment of bishops in the Church of England today.

You know that a name is mentioned on Downing Street. And then the cathedral chapter meets to elect a bishop. And lo and behold, they elect the man whose name has been put to them on Downing Street.

In other words, these steps, the congregation's call and the presbytery's examination quickly became a meaningless ritual, a sort of nod in their direction.

And what actually happened was that the patron presented a person and he was ordained. The Church of Scotland protested bitterly against this intrusion on their liberties.

For a hundred years, the Assembly at various times petitioned Parliament to change the act and protested against it. But the heart went out of the struggle and that became very much the pattern in Scotland.

[19 : 18] Evangelical people, keen Christians, were never happy with it. And indeed, there were several breakaways from the Church of Scotland which were largely caused by the evils of patronage.

But it did suit those who became the predominant party in the Church of Scotland in the 18th century. They were known as moderates. Moderates were people who, well, they were moderate in what they believed.

They were reasonable. They were not very enthusiastic about anything. Thomas Chalmers said a bit later that a moderate sermon was like a winter's day.

It was clear. It was short. It was cold. The clarity was good, he said. The brevity was even better. The coldness was fatal.

And the formal style was of despair. The moralistic discourses that you hear all too often on Thought of a Day. And religion became something respectable, but something that didn't get to grips with life.

[20 : 29] It was said of the moderates that they preached morality and led others to practice it. They certainly were not the sort of men who were going to shake the order of things.

In a society dominated by big landowners, it suited the landowners to have ministers who were at their beck and call.

In the days when the minister's word was both law and gospel, the legal right to appoint that minister was a powerful instrument of social and political control.

The landowners, the big noises of the day, felt that it helped them to keep society stable if the minister was someone who was dependent upon their largesse and their appointment.

Nowhere did this have such tragic and such obvious results as in the Highlands, when in the dreadful days of the Highland clearances, when people were being driven off their land and their roofs burnt over their heads.

[21 : 39] All too many of the ministers simply preached to them that it was their duty to submit and threatened them with hellfire if they dared to resist the clearances.

Men like David McKenzie, who was the minister in Stratenever, were notorious for this, but he owed his appointment to the Duke of Southerland, the local landlord. And it was entirely in his interests to keep the people passive.

Henry Dundas, who was the Secretary of State for Scotland, said in 1793, nothing is more important for Scotland's stability than the influence of the clergy.

So the government and the ruling class, and it was a very small ruling class, were very concerned to keep that pillar of the established social order under their control.

And it was that denial, that abandonment of the reformed position of the Church of Scotland, which lay behind the disruption.

[22 : 43] But when we move on to 1843, there's another factor we had to consider that brought things to a head, and that was the revolutionary social scene.

It's so long ago now, and we've all done it in school history, but we forget how enormous was the impact of the French Revolution upon the whole of European society in the early years of the 19th century.

The French Revolution was a cataclysmic upheaval, an overthrowing of all accepted values. And there was a horror, especially in the ruling classes, the upper classes in Britain, of the possible spread of the French Revolution to this country.

The years after 1815, at the Battle of Waterloo, the end of the Napoleonic Wars, were years of great economic recession for Britain.

There was great unrest, the Pentaloo massacre in Manchester, the Luddites smashing the new machinery, old classes of people like weavers who'd been fairly prosperous in their cottage industry, finding themselves totally impoverished by the new factories.

[23 : 56] Into this maelstrom of social change, there came political change with great reluctance. The great reform bill of 1832, that we would say did so little to enlarge the electorate, but yet was looked upon by some as not just the thin end of the wedge, but the prelude to total disaster and anarchy in the country.

In the 1830s and 40s, the years of the churches struggling Scotland, the whole country was seething politically. People were afraid that the terror that had been seen in the French Revolution might come to Britain.

There were small rebellions in Wales and Ireland. The Chartist movement was gaining strength to culminate in 1848 in the enormous demonstrations down in Kennington Common.

And Europe had seen revolution in France in 1830, and was brewing up towards that very year of revolutions in 1848. And so it was a time of revolutionary change in the political scene.

And, of course, as I've already mentioned, it was a time of enormous social change that was especially strong in Scotland. Up until the mid-18th century, Glasgow had been a small little country town, more like St Andrews than anywhere else in Scotland today.

[25 : 28] And somebody who visited Glasgow said it was the most charming and beautiful, picturesque little town in the country. It was Glasgow actually, but it was a little town.

But by the early years of the 19th century, things had changed. A Glasgow doctor told how in 1818 he visited a narrow close, that's a little alley, with, from four to five feet wide, flanked by houses five stories high.

The collected filth lay in a pool from which there was no drain, and animals were housed among the human beings. I saw one closet measuring twelve feet by less than five feet, on the floor of which, I was told six people had lain affected with the fever, within these two days.

And now a seventh person was combined with the fever as well. The streets, or rather the lanes in which the poor lived, said another observer, are filthy beyond measure.

There was no sanitation, no toilets of any description. Everything just lay in the lanes. The houses are ruinous, ill-constructed, and to an incredible degree, destitute of furniture.

[26 : 42] In many there is not an article of bedding, and the body clothes of the inmates, are of the most revolting description. There was an enormous mass, of totally poor people, living in conditions that, well, we couldn't imagine if it weren't for some of the horror pictures, we see on the television, of some conditions elsewhere.

There was this enormous growth, of the urban poor. At the same time, there was a growing middle class in Scotland.

Edinburgh's new town, had been built in the 18th century. And the end of the 18th, the beginning of the 19th century, was a very prosperous time in Scotland. There was a growing, and a wealthy, middle class, well-educated, and increasingly assertive.

It's very interesting, that while the nobility, the old upper ruling class, were right through, hostile to the church, and to the free church, the free church had its greatest strength, among this new middle class.

The head of the commercial bank, a judge, and head of Edinburgh Council, the principal of St Andrew's University, were three men, who were as elders, involved in the disruption, and the starting of the free church.

[28 : 07] So, you've got the situation, where Scotland, after years of poverty, is a massive, seething change.

And the third factor, in the midst of all that, was an amazing resurgence, of evangelical Christianity. The moderates, had been the predominant party, in the Church of Scotland, for the best part, of 50 or 60 years.

When in the early years, of the 19th century, evangelicalism, once again, became a force, in the land. It had never totally vanished.

George Whitfield, had ministered in Scotland, and there had been faithful, evangelical ministers, within the Church of Scotland, on one occasion. A man called John Erskine, was at the General Assembly, in the 1790s, when the assembly, dominated by moderates, voted against, the idea of missions, to the foreigners.

The missions to Africa, missionary work, was against, the order of nature, they said. John Erskine, stood up, and in a famous incident, in the assembly, he said, write me that Bible, reach me that Bible.

[29 : 25] And made the moderator, hand over to him the Bible. He opened up the Bible, he read to them, some of the verses, in which the Church is commanded, to preach the gospel. But those days, where the assembly, was dominated, by the moderates, were changing.

The first great leader, of evangelicals, was a man called, Andrew Thompson, who was the minister, of St George's Church, on Charlotte Square, in Edinburgh.

He for the first time, showed that, somebody could be, a respectable city minister, ministering, in a way, that was intellectually satisfying, to the new middle class, and yet be a thoroughgoing, evangelical.

Andrew Thompson, died suddenly, in 1831, and 10,000 people, followed his coffin, to the graveyard. By 1833, the party, one writer has said, the party, of orthodoxy, action, and reform, had secured a majority, in the general assembly.

Fascinatingly, a lot of the men, who were ministers, after the free church, after disruption, and all those ministers, who left, St Andrew's Church, had been, converted, after they became ministers.

[30 : 46] There was an evangelical, resurgence, in the church of Scotland, not just by, evangelical men, becoming ministers, but by ministers, becoming evangelicals. The most famous, of those, was of course, Thomas Chalmers, himself.

Chalmers, was minister, of a little village, in Fife, and, on the side, he lectured, in mathematics, at St Andrew's University. On one occasion, he said, in the general assembly, in those days, that, he considered, that two days a week, were more than, adequate, for any minister, to fulfil, to fulfil all, the duties, study, and work, that was necessary, as a minister, of the gospel, leaving him, five clear days, for other pursuits.

Years later, when Chalmers, was a leading evangelical, those remarks, were thrown in his face, and he gave, a great rejoinder.

He said, on the floor, of the assembly, ah yes moderator, I did say those things, about time, days, and these things, are measurements, and magnitudes, but then I had forgotten, two magnitudes, two measurements, I had forgotten, the shortness of time, and the greatness, of eternity.

Thomas Boston, Thomas Chalmers, became, an evangelical Christian, in that little parish, and almost literally, exploded from there, onto the Scottish scene, moving to Glasgow, and becoming, an influential preacher, in the Tron church, the silhouette, of him preaching, perhaps gives, some little clue, to the urgency, the directness, and the power, of preaching, I love these, silhouettes, of Chalmers preaching, he's not, he's not standing there, coldly, lecturing, he's, he's leaning over, he's pointing, he's explaining, preaching, that grips people, so popular, was Chalmers preaching, that he had to resort, to, ah, means of, disparaging people, from coming, to his church, he used to announce, on a Sunday morning, that there would be, a service this evening, but he would be, preaching exactly, the same sermon, that he preached, this morning, and he once, with lovely meekness, asked another minister, what do you do, to keep the crowds, down at your church, and this minister, just shook his head, most of us, don't have to worry, about that, but, uh, such as Chalmers, his power,

[33 : 19] Chalmers, and, uh, men like him, in that first generation, then, produced, a new generation, a whole generation, of missionaries, and ministers, were converted, under Chalmers ministry, in Glasgow, later in St Andrews, where he lectured, and then, studied under him, in Edinburgh, one of those, most famously, was Robert Murray McShane, who, uh, is still a byword, for his evangelical, fervor, and the depth, of his piety, in McShane's church, in Dundee, in the late 1830s, there was, a revival, there was, uh, a great movement, where, uh, people, in their hundreds, began, attending, churches, in an old book, about the disruption, one of the first chapters, is, has the heading, religious revival, a preparation, and it lists, uh, a whole series, of places, throughout Scotland, where, people suddenly, became, deeply concerned, about religion, in the autumn, of 1839, says McShane, uh, while, the reverend, uh,

William Burns, was, uh, filling the pulpit, in Dundee, because McShane, was off in Israel, uh, the word of God, came with such power, to the hearts, and consciences, of the people here, and their thirst, for hearing it, became so intense, that the evening classes, in the schoolroom, were changed, into densely, crowded congregations, in the church, for nearly four months, it was found desirable, to have public worship, almost every night, at this time, also many prayer meetings, were formed, some of which, were strictly private, or fellowship meetings, others, were open, to people, under concern, about their souls, many hundreds, under deep concern, for their souls, have come, from first to last, to converse, with the ministers, and that happened, not just there, but at one lockhead, among the miners, Buchan, in Aberdeenshire, Ellen, in Tain, in Roskeen, Kilsith, Collis, near Perth, uh, there were, movements, there were, uh, great outbreaks, of religious, concern, and zeal, and enthusiasm, the church of Scotland, now led, by Thomas Chalmers, he was the most, influential minister, in it, set about, doing something, about those, great masses, in the city, who were there, in such poverty,

Chalmers, great concern, was, to, well, listen to this, never was piety, more intensely, practical, than in Chalmers, to reform society, was the object, of his life, the gospel, could do this, and nothing else, could do it, and how, to bring, to bring, to the homes, and the hearts, of the neglected masses, that were multiplying, with such fearful rapidity, on the ground floor, of the social edifice, this was his grand problem, which he spent his days, in working out, with incredible energy, and in laboring, with matchless eloquence, and power, to get other men, to learn, he wasn't interested, in ecclesiastical policy, except insofar, as it bore, upon what to him, was the all important object, of making the church, more efficient, as an instrument, for promoting, the moral, and spiritual, well being, of the people, Chalmers said, what we need, is more churches, and more ministers, perhaps a, a graph, can make the point here, better than anything, in 1560, the reformation, the population, of Scotland, was 800,000 people, and there were, about 930 parishes, in Scotland, by 1820, the population, had grown, to over 2 million, and there were still, 930 parishes, and ministers, in Scotland,

Chalmers said, we need new parishes, we need new churches, we need to extend, the church, so that there are, enough seats, in our churches, for everybody, in Glasgow, to come to church, if they want to, and there are enough, ministers, to get, a manageable area, so that they can, reach the people, with the gospel, by 1843, there have been, another 400, almost 400, new churches, built, paid for, founding, and given, ministers, under, Chalmers, most of them, were in the cities, but some weren't, one of the parishes, in Sutherland, the Farnels, which is an enormous, parish, with 300 miles, of coastline, in it, had no less, than five, new parishes, carved out of it, during that period, but mostly, these new churches, were in the cities, on this, diagram, give you some idea, of the scope, the change, the red churches, the red blocks, there, are the number, of parishes, that were there, you know, up to 1820, 1830, and the green ones, were the new parishes, or the new churches, rather, that were created, in those 10, or 15 years, up to 1843, you see,

Glasgow, for instance, there were 22 parishes, there, in about 1830, and, yet, no less than, 37, new churches, were built, and paid for, in Glasgow, in that short period, and in other parts too, so it was an enormous change, an enormous outburst, of evangelistic zeal, but, it, in its way, aroused, great resentment, it set the moderates, on the alert, and, it, was objected, and feared, objected to, and feared, by the powers that be, because, almost by definition, the men, who went to be ministers, in these new churches, were evangelicals, and they were reaching, the poor, the lowest levels, of society, the very people, that the government, feared most, chalmers, would have said to the government, you've no reason, to be afraid of us, if you're frightened, of what these poor, impoverished people, may do, the best way, to make them moral, useful, dependable citizens, is to have the gospel, enter their lives, and the government, ought to be paying, for these churches, itself, as the best way, of caring for, the whole well-being, of the population, religion, but the government, didn't see it, that way, and, these new churches, were resented, by the old parish churches, not long before, 1843, in an outrageous, decision, of the church courts, it was ruled, that every penny, taken in collection, in these new churches, belonged, to the Kirk session, of the old parish church, in which they were, set up, and, the ministers, of these new churches, were banned, from taking their seats, in presbyteries, and assemblies, in 1843, the civil courts, ruled, at the request, of some of the moderates, that these were, not proper ministers, and that the church, had no business, setting up, these new churches, well,

[41 : 02] Chalmers, led the church, I forgot to show you, a picture of Chalmers, a lovely looking man, but there he is, he's a good man as well, with the church, alive, and, going out aggressively, to reach the population, the battle over patronage, flared up again, with, a much larger, and more, theologically alert, population, of evangelical Christians, people were just, not prepared, to put up, with a moderate minister, imposed, on their church, by the local landowner, there was renewed, discontent, over the 1812 act, and in 1834, the general assembly, passed the thing, called the veto act, what it said, was, that the congregation, had the right, to veto, anyone who was, presented to them, by a patron, to our eyes, it was a very, it was a very, minimal measure, they didn't say, let's get rid of patrons, they said, no, the patron can present, if he wants to, but, those old procedures, of the congregation, calling, and so on, let's, put some teeth, back into them, and the patron, could suggest, a man, but if the congregation, decided, that they didn't want him, to be their minister, they could veto him, didn't have to give reasons, they just, had the right, to say, a majority, of the heads of families, could say, we don't want this man, and the church said, if the congregation, veto him, the presbytery, is not, to appoint him, as minister, at the time, the veto act, was welcomed, and judges, and experts, said it was, a very good measure, it would deal, with the discontent, that was in the church, but within a very few years, it blew up, in everybody's face, the first explosion, was in a place, called,

Octorada, and the second, great one, was in a place, called, Marnock, just in case, you're ignorant, of Scottish geography, Octorada, is a town, just off the A9, between Stirling, and Perth, Marnock, is in the area, of Strathobogie, Bamshire, way up near Keith, and Dufftown, way there, but in Octorada, in 1834, there was a vacancy, the congregation, had a minister, that they very much, or knew of a minister, that they very much wanted, and they wrote, to the patron, the Earl of Kino, and said, please, could you give us this man, to be our minister, and they received, the following letter, from the Earl of Kino, Ramsgate, Kent, I have to acknowledge, I have to acknowledge, the petition, requesting me, as patron of the parish, to appoint, Reverend James Aitken, to be minister, I have to inform you, that feeling, a deep concern, for the welfare, both spiritual, and temporal, of the parish, of Octorada,

I have appointed, after due consideration, Mr Young, to be minister thereof, and this Mr Young, duly appeared, and the congregation, was asked to support him, and there, in one of the great scenes, a thousand members, of the congregation, packed the church, and voted overwhelmingly, that they did not want, Mr Young, to be their minister, the presbytery refused, therefore, to appoint Mr Young, even though the Earl of Kino, had presented him, and in the instigation, of one of the leading moderates, in Edinburgh, instead of appealing, to the General Assembly, Mr Young, and the Earl of Kino, took the case, to the civil courts, and eventually, the court of session, the highest court in Scotland, ruled, that the church, had no right, to refuse, a patron's presentee, that the right, of the patron, was absolute, and that it was, a serious offence, for the church, to refuse, to appoint the man, the patron presented, the case was appealed, by the church, up to the House of Lords, and eventually, in, 1839, the House of Lords, made its ruling, and its ruling, was, that, democracy, was an obsolete, right, in the church,

Lord Broome said, and there was, no right, of the congregation, and it was, incompetent, it was improper, for the church, to pass laws, changing things, the people, had no rights, the church, had no right, to present someone, the other famous, case, was in Strathbogie, in Marnock, up in the north, there, a man was, nominated, by the patron, the congregation, voted against him, the only man, who voted for him, was the local, local innkeeper, otherwise, the congregation, unanimously, voted against him, in this case, the patron, said okay, who do you want, and they suggested, someone else, and the patron, nominated him, before we, broke into our series, for the summer holiday, we were, going through,

Paul's letter, to the Corinthians, the first letter, and studying there, its relevance, and its challenges, to us, I want this evening, to resume, that series, here, in the first part, of chapter 11, case, was in Strathbogie, in Marnock, up in the north, there, a man was, nominated, by the patron, the congregation, voted, against him, the only man, who voted for him, was the local, local innkeeper, otherwise, the congregation, unanimously, voted against him, in this case, the patron, said okay, who do you want, and they suggested, someone else, and the patron, nominated him, the first man, and the first man, went to law, and got the courts, to rule, that as he had been, presented, he must be made, minister, and on a bleak,

[47 : 44] January day, in 1841, in deep snow, in deep snow, this man, was ordained, and inducted, as the minister, of Marnock, nobody, would shake his hand, after the service, the congregation, walked out, in the midst, of the service, having made, a protest, and the local, reporter said, old men, with hair, as white, as the snow, that lay deep, on their native hills, middle aged, and young people, left the church, once free to them, but now, given up, to the spoiler, the new man, called Edward, new minister, had to be escorted, by the captain, of police, and three policemen, he was hissed, by the congregation, as he walked down, through the church, the Marnock case, went, from bad, to worse, because, the man had been, this man Edwards, had been ordained, by the presbytery, the majority of whom, were moderates, who said, we must do, what the law courts say, the general assembly, had forbidden them, to ordain this man, and told them, that they should ordain, the other man, when the presbytery, went ahead, and ordained, this poor man Edwards, the general assembly, removed, the ministers, of the presbytery, from their chargers, and sent, other ministers, to preach, the first ministers, then went to the law court, and got injunctions, forbidding, any other ministers, to preach, in their churches, the general assembly, said, right, well, you know, their buildings, their places, and they sent men, then to preach, in the open air, the moderate ministers, then went to the law courts, and in an amazing instance, the law courts, the courts, the sheriff courts, backed up by the court, of session in Scotland, issued an injunction, forbidding, any minister, other, than those moderate men, preaching anywhere, in those parishes, and that, the general assembly, saw red, with a vengeance, and said, what have things come to, that the courts, of the land, are forbidding us, to preach, the gospel, anywhere, in a whole area, of Scotland, have things, really, come to this, the place, of monarch, that went to, that extreme, really, brought things, to a stark clarity, the newspapers, of course, make the most of it, this was a cartoon, of Thomas Chalmers, and his, fellows, and onlookers, here's the court of session, hitting him on the head, he's saying, a feat for the court of session, and this one says, that's right, hit him hard, my lord, he has no friends, and so on, the goings on, were made a mockery, by many, but it was, an extremely, serious, situation, it got to the point, where the church, just couldn't do anything, a man, was deposed, from the ministry, by his presbytery, for drunkenness, swearing, and cursing, and he went, to the local court, and the court, issued an injunction, saying that the presbytery, should not dismiss it, from the ministry, had no right, to dismiss it, from the ministry, it got to the point, where, the church courts, really, were left, able to do nothing, the two positions, you see, were, totally, far apart, the position of the, the law courts, which was really, the position, of, the English establishment, was, the queen, is head of state, and head of the church, through parliament,

she rules the country, and she rules the church, and the church, must do, whatever the queen, and parliament, let it do, the church, has been given, certain powers, and can get on, with its business, within those, it can't change them, it can't decide, how far, those powers, can go, it's totally, under parliament, just as the, department, for the environment, is ruled, by parliament, so the church, is a branch, of the civil service, that bluntly, and perhaps, rather crudely, is the position, in England, the church of England, passes a rule, allowing women ministers, but it has to go, to parliament, to be, become law, but the church of Scotland, position, was totally different, the church of Scotland, position, was that there is the church, and there is the state, and these two, are two kingdoms, there is the spiritual kingdom, of Jesus Christ, which Christ, is the kingdom, and which he rules, by the bible, and the form of government, laid down in the bible, and that church, is answerable, only to Jesus, in spiritual things, for what it preaches, for the spiritual discipline, and administration, that it gives, and there is the state, of which the king, or the queen, is the head, and which is ruled, by parliament, now there is interaction, here, because the church, exists in the state, and the church, has money, and buildings, and temporal things, and the church, readily said, look all of these things, our buildings, our money, our possessions, of course, they come under the rules, we must pay tax on them, we must do with them, what parliament says, if parliament says, you can't preach, in that building, or that building, must be given up, then we say, well parliament, is the supreme governor, of all the material things, in this realm, but, the church, of Jesus Christ, is not, under parliament, when it comes to, the gospel, that we preach, or the need, and duties, to preach the gospel, or, how the church, governs, and appoints, its ministers, they said, there are two spheres, here, there is the spiritual sphere, and there is the temporal sphere, the two, should, recognize each other, and appropriately, support one another, church, preaches people, to be subject, to the powers that live, and to respect, those that rule over them, the state, should recognize, that true religion, is a great blessing, in the land, but each is independent, within its own sphere, that was the principle, that the church, was working on, as far as the church, was concerned, the state, and the law courts, had trampled, upon the position, of the liberties, of the church, as far as the state, was concerned, they saw this, as dangerous, revolution, why whatever next, if people have a right, to choose their ministers, the people, will be wanting, to choose their MPs next, people will be wanting, democracy in the state, as well, the Presbyterian religion, said one of the judges, and the Presbyterian form, of government, are in this country, the creatures of statute, both derive, their existence, and their doctrines, as well as their powers, from parliament, and it is impossible, that they could derive them, from any other source, that's where the church's, doctrine comes from, that's where the church's, power comes from, only has that doctrine, because that's what, parliament says it can have, and the church said, in effect, no way, well, these battles, and struggles, have gone on, various attempts, were made, to find, a resolution, the church, kept sending committees, to London, they met with, the Duke of Wellington, and,

in 1842, the General Assembly, sent a final, plain declaration, and protest, to parliament, setting out, all the acts, the past, right back to 1690, the reformation, explaining, why they felt, these acts, had been trampled on, pleading with parliament, to give them justice, when parliament, rejected that, the evangelicals, called a convocation, they had a week, of conference, together, in a small church, in Edinburgh, Roxburgh Church, to discuss, what they should do, what could they do, and they came to the conclusion, that if parliament, would not budge, if they insisted, on interfering, in the church's life, and discipline, then there was nothing, for it, but the church, would have to break, its links, with the state, it couldn't continue, in its relationship, with the state, any longer, that was the policy, that they agreed on, and it was that policy, that they put into practice, on the 18th of May, 1843, when, no,

David Welsh, the moderator, read out, the protest, objecting, to all these intrusions, in the state, in the church's life, insisting, on spiritual independence, the headship, of Christ, in his church, and the principle, of non-intrusion, that there was, it was totally wrong, biblically, as well as against, all the laws, and liberties, granted to the church, of Scotland, in the past, for a minister, to be intruded, on a congregation, against their will, and so it was, that day, that so many, ministers, and elders, got up and left, had, remember I mentioned, that the ministers, of the new churches, had been barred, from presbyteries, and assemblies, by a decision, of the civil courts, had those ministers, been present, it might well have been, that there was a majority, in the general assembly, that day, but because they were barred, it was a minority, of the assembly, about a third, of the assembly, that got up, and left, the church, of St Andrews, they were, rather savagely, ridiculed again, in the newspapers, you see, they've got this, banner here, and the free, ass,

Emily, with a hyphen, going off, down the road, retract, no, not a hearing, breath, they were portrayed, as unreasonable, pig-headed, people, and Scotland, or many people, sat back, and waited, for the whole thing, to peter out, but, it didn't, why it didn't, and how it didn't, we'll see another week, can I quickly, wrap up, in more than 45 minutes, don't I, must be the battery, in the watch, it's going too fast, three quick comments, one, churches, can make a stand, on matters, of principle, and order, and, take their people, with them, you may, have your head, spinning, at all this talk, of, you know, church, and faith, and spiritual independence, and the rights, of congregation, seems a long way, from the simplicity, of telling people, that Jesus Christ, died for sinners, surely, if you get involved, in a row like that, it's only going to be, a few ministers, and a few, sort of, intellectuals, who are going to get, worried about it, but when it happened, right across,

[59 : 18] Scotland, a large proportion, of the membership, of the church, in some areas, virtually the entire, membership of the church, got up, and left the church, with their ministers, or without, their ministers, it was an enormous, popular movement, how come?

Well, I think partly, because the, the laity, if we can use that, that unsound word, but the ordinary church members, in Scotland, were religiously, intelligent, they'd been well taught, the catechism, the presbyterianism, teaches its people, the great doctrines, of the faith, they were a well taught, people, and the controversy, had been sharply, fought out, over ten years, there have been, public meetings, there have been speeches, a man called, Hugh Miller, came from Cromartie, was made the editor, of a new newspaper, called the witness, which published, verbatim records, of speeches, by charmers, that lasted three hours, in the assembly, and, we shouldn't despair, of educating, the Christian population, it's interesting, that they did, take great care, they didn't say, look, this is a dispute, about the nature, of the establishment principle, it was that, and they said that, but they said, we are fighting, for the crown rights, of the redeemer, is Jesus Christ, the king, of his church, does Jesus Christ, rule the church, or does parliament, rule the church, and they, took the time, and the effort, and the energy, to make the church, stand together, on a matter of principle, that I think, is a, a relevant principle, second thing to say, we'll look at this more, another week perhaps, there's no easy answer, to this church, state problem, somebody might say, well of course, if you have an established church, even if it's not like, the church of England, once you get, messing around with the state, you're going to be in problems, but not so, in America recently, where there's no such thing, as an established church, churches were taken, to court, by people, who wanted to sue them, because of the counselling, that their ministers, have given, in a case where somebody,

I think committed, some resign, and their family, wanted to sue the church, because this gospel, that they had preached, had upset this person, now where does the church, stand there, if the state, starts interfering, in our own church, a few years ago, there was a dispute, in one of our congregations, and the presbytery, and the assembly, were planning, to take certain action, and there were rumours, I don't know, if they were true, I hope they weren't, but it was rumoured, that some of those, concerned, were thinking, of going to the courts, for an injunction, to stop the presbytery, and the assembly, for acting, because they felt, the assembly was in danger, of acting, against the rules, of the church, as the state, the courts, and the right, to be a court of appeal, for the church, of Jesus Christ, the free church, says no, even if the church, fails to live, by its own rules, the only appeal, beyond the church, is to Christ, himself, that's high ground, and it's controversial, ground, but it's a problem, that won't go away, and I suspect, what we're seeing, in England, at the moment, only underlines, how relevant it is, and the last thing,

I want to say, is that, it is possible, to be spiritually alive, and to be, concerned in detail, over the reform, and the ordering, of the church, the disruption, was a time, of great debate, about ecclesiology, it was also a time, of great spiritual blessing, the two, do not necessarily, cancel each other out, the two are not necessarily, hostile to one another, sadly, because of the way, we conduct our theological disputes, and our ecclesiastical debates, they often are, but, in those days, they were men, who were zealous, for the right ordering, of the church, and zealous, for the gospel, of the Lord Jesus Christ, and within a couple of years, of the disruption, Thomas Chalmers, had resigned, from all the committees, he was on, in order to go evangelizing, in some of the worst slums, of Edinburgh, that was the sort of men, who led, this movement, but that's going on, beyond the disruption, next week, we must look and see, whether this strange, and remarkable event, was going to survive, or not, right, that's stopped, there, do you have any questions, if you can catch your breath, after all that, it's an enormous,

I mean really, you have to start the year, dot, and work the way through, it'll be easier next week, when we, we can understand, we can take it for granted, that you're experts, in all the causes, of the disruption, and we can come, and look in a little more detail, at some of the, incidents, that happened afterwards, but do you have any questions, on what I've spoken of, or any, questions you'd like to raise, on what I haven't spoken of, all the time, there it is, yes, were there some ministers, who were evangelicals, who didn't come out, I think the answer is yes, there were some, interesting, I think I would like to add, that there were probably, some who came out, who weren't evangelicals, because the issue, between church and state, was so blatant, and in the controversy, it got so extreme, and that parliament, and those who took their side, were saying such extreme things, about the church's, lack of power to do anything, that even some, who were not really, that known as evangelicals, said, you know, we stand on this issue, but there were some, they were known, as the 40 thieves, in some circles, because there was a group of 40, at one of the meetings, of synod, who said, look, can't we find, some other one, they were rather ridiculed, as people, who were frightened, of losing, their wealthy parishes, and their incomes, and their homes, who were compromising, we look in another week, and say, well, could the disruption, have been avoided, but once, my own view on that, is that once, it got to that level, of conflict, there was no way, out for the church, without compromise, apart from Israel, but there were some, but amazingly few, considering, the cost, that these men, were giving up, their homes, their incomes, their social position, and they were going out, on a venture, the general consensus, was, it's hopeless, you know, it's a fool's errand, the whole thing would collapse, and, in a day, when there was no unemployment, you know, they risked everything, so the amazing thing, is that there weren't more, and, over the night, do you mean on the day, yeah, well, those who were, actually members, of the assembly, there were about, 200 and something ministers, you know, the assembly is a representative body, not every minister, of a Scottish church, is actually, a member of assembly, presbytery's elect, representatives, so, you know, there were a lot of ministers, who wanted to join the speech, actually, who weren't actually members, of the assembly, so they couldn't, they weren't in there, to walk out, through the door, when, when they left, when they left, when they left, in Andrews, you know, this was the, these were the men leaving, who were, commissioners to the assembly, so probably, only just about, a hundred or so, of the ministers, who were in the assembly, left that day, but they were joined, by others, who'd come to Edinburgh, and when they had, that big gathering, down at,

[67 : 50] Canfield Hall, there were, four hundred and seventy-five, ministers, who, signed, the deed of demission, that was just a few days later, so, it really happened, fairly quickly, there were one or two, who wobbled, and went back, one or two, who came, a bit belatedly, but really, within, within the few days, of the disruption, it was clear, and, I don't know, who preached, in the parishes, of Scotland, on the Sunday, in between, because as far as, I read the history, all the ministers, in Scotland, for Edinburgh, so, it must have had, a day off, servants, I swear, but it, it was fairly quick, does that answer your question?

Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, it's, it's, it's very interesting, I, I, you know, that, it's a fascinating point, I didn't bring it in tonight's lecture, because there was more than enough factors anyway, but it's fascinating that in Holland in 1830, there was a split in the state church, wasn't there, Jacqueline, 1830 something, Angus, Angus, Angus is married to a Dutch church, but there was the first of the big splits in the Dutch church took place, there was a split in the reformed church in Switzerland around the 11th at that time, and in England, and in England, at that time, there was the great upheaval of the Oxford movement, the Anglo-Catholic movement, and funny enough, there was a breakaway of evangelicals in England, that formed the free church of England, but that happened more influenced by the disruption than the other way around, but I think that's what I said about it being a time of revolutionary social change, a time when the sort of prevailing philosophy of the 18th century was being replaced by a new philosophy, and evangelical Christianity was resurgent around Europe, and I think that's why there was a rash of church disputes there, so I think that, yes, it's a fascinating question, the interrelation there, but it was peculiarly Scottish in the sense that it can be traced very clearly, you know, right back through the disputes of Scotland.

In the free church college in Edinburgh, the room where we have our presbytery meetings, there's a stained glass window with the sort of presbyterian succession of men, you know, Sir Melville, James Mellon, Andrew Meldall, who had constant disputes with King James, and then Rutherford and so on, who were the covenanters, and those, and right on through to charmers, that it was very much the latest chapter in the struggle of the Scottish church to break free of the sort of state control of the church that the English church had had from the beginning.

So, maybe we'll look at that a little more at a time. Does that do it? Thanks very much. Okay, the last question, yes, yeah, that's, that's sort of the, the, what happened next thing.

The simple answer to your question is that the church of Scotland, and, after that sort of body blow of losing all its active peoples, strangely and fascinatingly, had something of a resurgence, didn't vanish away.

[71 : 35] You know, when the free church didn't vanish away, there were people saying, oh, look, the church of Scotland will, but it didn't. And in 1870, patronage was abolished by parliament, thereby sort of implicitly admitting that, you know, the church's claim in 1840, by 1870, of course, it was a very different political and social scene.

The church of Scotland today, in some important respect, is as much the heir of the disruption, free church, as it is of the, the non-disruption church of Scotland.

But that's going into the, just to say that the majority of the free church, that started in 1843, is now back in the church of Scotland.

The church that we're part of today, the minority, because it was split in 1900. You will have to wait till the year 2050, or so, that's just a minute. Okay.

Right, well, I think we must stop there. If you've got any other questions, do come up and ask me, but for the sake of those who've endured, and looking at their watches, we'll finish there. How's it?

[72 : 46] It's almost as if you ever do things, but when you do, you know, a series of tours, you always tend to have too much, in the tour. But, I suppose the beauty of this is, that hopefully, you know, we can sort of ease back, and say, well look, now we don't have to sort of plough.

Alright. Bye. Bye.

Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye.

Bye. Bye. I'll see you next time.

So So So

[75 : 45] So So So
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