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SCOTTISH CALVINISM RESURGENT ESPECIALLY IN THE NORTH

I

THE Revolution of 1688 affected State and Church polity profoundly. The resurgence of Calvinism after the Revolution, in a country that was to be governed constitutionally, is clearly seen on both its doctrinal and governmental side. It is not enough to emphasize, as is often done, that the Presbyterian form of government, and no other, must be the government of the Church established in Scotland by the Revolution Settlement. More important than that was the incorporation of the Confession of Faith in a civil statute, which carried with it the obligation on the part of the Church to have settled convictions on questions of faith and doctrine as well as of polity. Enthroned with not less unanimity than when it first became Scotland's creed, Scottish Calvinism had then to direct the spiritual destinies of the people under a compulsive existing need.

The Scottish world that faced Calvinism in the early years of its second triumph was different from that which confronted it after the Reformation. In the Revolution period, strong cosmopolitan sympathies prevailed among educated classes in all Western Europe,¹ and from them percolated to all ranks of the community. The foreign rationalism of philosophers, scientists and theologians, in the jovial times after the Restoration, when in kings' courts and polite society moral obliquity was esteemed an honour, had a fertile soil everywhere for the culture of infidelity. Infidelity was rife among all classes, and low morals oozed from the books of clever writers and pungent pamphleteers. The general community was an inert mass, which was lulled into incapacity to wonder by the prevailing torpor. The most extravagant speculations of unbelief and the coarsest moral disorders were equally ineffective in causing even a temporary surprise. This is shown by Hume's disappointment that his *Treatise on Human Nature* "fell dead-born from the press", simply because it was a reiteration scientifically of the common-places of the life of the times. Even the fortifications of Rome

¹ Cf. Churchill's *Marlborough* (1933), p. 39.

were not proof against the new enemy—unbelief. For Scottish aspirants to the priesthood cheerfully discarded their studies in Paris for the looser but more attractive life of the military camp.

This wave of moral lawlessness, which surged from the Restoration, lapped the most distant shores of Scotland, and left wrack behind it everywhere. And as the sea-wrack on the shores, scorched by the noonday sun, emits odours that are acrid and unpleasant to the fastidious, so, too, the light and heat of a revived faith, beating on this wrack, produce to the present day irritants that painfully affect the olfactory organs of not otherwise too sensitive novelists, and the cultured conscience of superior critics. It is at least stupid on their part to denounce the sun and wholly exonerate the wrack for the hurt done to their refinement. But let us face the facts and judge justly. Did restored Calvinism in the splendour of its freedom act in a manner unworthy of its greatness ?

II

The Church, which was established in Scotland in 1660 and which was disestablished in 1688, may at times have been an unwilling tool of an oppressive and tyrannical Lauderdale and his like, but it was at all times unquestionably unsympathetic with the religious and civil aspirations of the unhappy victims of the sycophants who mis-ruled Scotland during the period of its ascendancy. It might, indeed, have saved itself from the ill-repute in which it was generally held, if it had Christian regard for justice, righteousness and the parity of all men before God, which were cardinal features of its Calvinistic creed, to which it paid lip-homage, and the polity of that creed to which it gave a shadowy recognition.

Scottish Episcopacy was theoretically Calvinistic, but in practice it tended towards Arminianism and, indeed, Universalism.¹ Baptismal regeneration was a widely accepted belief, although the administration of the rite was in either Presbyterian or Episcopalian form as the candidate desired, for such was the adaptability of the incumbents. Laud disliked Calvinism, and in both theory and practice he sided with its opponents. There

¹ This is clearly indicated by the "commonheads" discussed at Presbyteries, e.g. *De lumine interno* ; *De anima* ; *De infallibilitate Ecclesiae* ; *De Universalis redemptione* ; *De Dei Scientia*.—*Presbytery Records*.

was a phase of Arminianism which emphasized the supremacy of the State in ecclesiastical as well as civil affairs, as against the Calvinistic view of the sovereignty of Christ over both, which admirably suited Laud's theory of Church polity. This Arminianism, which differed from Socinianism in little else but the Trinitarian doctrine, soon permeated Scottish Episcopacy and became the parent of two diverging schools of thought. Leighton, although a Calvinist in doctrine, was not unaffected by the new Arminian tolerance of what was termed "indifferencies", which resulted in his gradual shrinking from controversies about forms of government and his fast development as a mystical Quietist. He had his numerous disciples who believed with him in the error that creed and polity were so unrelated that piety could flourish with equal vigour under any polity. This school exercised the widest personal freedom in the acceptance of doctrine as regulative of life and manners, along with a rigid intolerance of liberty of conscience in both government and doctrine when they conflicted with their own views. The spaciousness of their theology can be understood from this pronouncement by one of the best of the school: "Sin has lost us His (God's) favour yet nature (as a candle not quite out and dead) has the stock of God's image whereon grace is grafted, and the spirit blows it in again."¹

The Scottish Episcopal Church in the time of its great ascendancy pressed conformity to its system with greater emphasis than the transformation of character, with the result that, while succeeding as an ecclesiastical organization, it failed generally as a spiritual and uplifting force. Its records disclose no account of revivals of religion, nor any earnest and prayerful desire for a great awakening. Clergymen, who held loosely by the supreme notes of a true Evangelism, could not with sincerity or success insist on the great change the Evangel makes imperative. Defective as many of them were in their educational equipment,² they could only point to their own unquestioning acceptance of the exotic system which they imposed, without generating thoughtful respect for that system, or for any higher plane of thought or conduct than that of which they were themselves living examples.³ Lacking in personal piety, they could not

¹ Kirk's MS. *Meditationes*.

² Burnet, I, p. 158.

³ Fraser of Brea's *Corrupt Ministers*, p. 50.

make personal appeals to the beauty of holiness, and therefore they failed with all the rigour of their discipline to effect that at which all discipline should aim. Without precision in doctrinal statement, and void of conviction as to the Scriptural and Reformed system of religious thought, they failed to impress a people who, by reason of inherited reverence and solemn mode of thought, refused to respond to the claims of a God clothed in soft and plastic attributes. These defects were alike the cause of the Church's ineffectiveness and the seed of its decay, which, apart from political upheavals, would have brought on its sure demise.

III

It is a commonplace of histories, even the most recent,¹ to aver and condemn an alleged vindictiveness of spirit and bitter and intolerant action towards Episcopal incumbents on the part of regnant Calvinism. It would not be history, but fiction, because contrary to fact and to human nature, to maintain that there were no sporadic outbursts of human passion, in recoil from twenty years of harrowing persecutions, against those who aided and abetted the persecutors. While not condoning in the least any unnecessary lawlessness, justice demands the clear affirmation that the weapon of retaliation is neither morally nor ethically more offensive when wielded in haste by the "rabblers" of the West Country than when used in leisure by Solemn Convocation in 1689. For the erudite and liberal Dr. Stillingfleet with many more in that Convocation, including Dr. Beveridge, Bishop of St. Asaphs, for these "rabblings" by Presbyterians "were put on *not yielding a jot*"² to the demands of Presbyterians; and so "Comprehension" was defeated partly at least by this unseemly love for reprisal. But these "rabblings", which were deplorable and unavoidable incidents in a peaceful Revolution, had no direct relation to the settled Reformed system. They can be accounted for on other grounds.

Burnet and Fraser of Brea are deemed by many as untrustworthy authorities on the character of the curates of the period.

¹ Anthony Mitchell (Episcopalian), *A Short History*, p. 95; Andrew J. Campbell (Presbyterian), *Church of Scotland*, p. 20.

² Kirk's *MS. Diary*. Prof. MacEwen was clearly unaware of this important fact. See *Christian Unity Association Papers* (1914), p. 125.

But the qualification of the devout Episcopal minister of Aberfoyle to give an unbiassed estimate of his contemporaries cannot be reasonably questioned by the most exacting partisan. Unfortunately for particular historians his appraisal does not enhance the character of his confrères. He pithily expresses his view of them thus: "Rather punish ministers if they misbehave than tempt them to loose themselves from God to bind over to promise (oath of assurance) to which they will never be conscientiously stedfast, if not so first to the King of Kings."¹

The profoundly suggestive and damnatory disclosure of this quotation was the root cause of nearly all the troubles that faced the Presbyterian Church after the Revolution. An irresponsible levity in the Episcopal incumbents' treatment of oaths to God and King meets one in the records of the time with oppressive frequency. With a facility for adaptation, which was clearly remote from conviction, they could and did recognize the sovereignty of King William and Queen Mary *de jure* as well as *de facto*, when the exigencies of the situation made the consideration of temporalities the determining factor. The salient point of their conscience-appeasing argument was that even though they swore allegiance to King James, his tyranny and profligacy made him a subject fit for "Bedlam", and therefore he forfeited the right to loyalty; and having forfeited that right they were no longer bound by the terms of their obligation, and were not accordingly justified in denying to themselves the protection offered to them by the reigning monarch, sovereign of the realm, *de facto* if not *de jure*.

Episcopacy bequeathed to its successors a heavy legacy of ruinous church fabrics, a public tone of low esteem for the clergy, and a class of incumbents clinging tenaciously to temporalities, and spiritually and morally bankrupt. While this is particularly true of that part of Scotland north of the Tay, in the rest conditions were not widely different, except, perhaps, in some areas where the fast-diminishing influence of Leighton, Forbes and suchlike was still casting a flickering ray across a moral morass through which serious-minded people were anxiously treading their way. As this is solely a survey of the bequests of Episcopacy, there is no particular call to emphasize the noble spiritual heritage that was bequeathed by that other part of

¹ Kirk's MS. *Diary*.

the Church in Scotland which was under the teeth of the harrow.

Doubtless the fruit of a long period of severe suffering among a class, and from a class of churchmen, and the dread of fellowship with them in the new judicatories were a contributory cause of the policy of exclusion formulated by established Presbyterianism.¹

But the Church's policy and conduct moved on a much higher plane, and under the influence of a nobler principle. The Church of Scotland restarted its eventful course after the Revolution with a Confession of Faith which it received and owned "as containing the pure and uncorrupted Doctrine of Christianity". It used this Confession as a means of preserving the purity of Christian doctrine, of preventing the spread of heresy and of establishing a unity in belief. It claimed that this Confession was agreeable to human freedom and to the dignity and perfections of the Word of God. It protested against and abhorred all pretended liberty which could not subsist without the ruins of the noblest part of true liberty—a fervent love to God. Accordingly it followed that, as emoluments and salaries dedicated to the interests of pure religion and not attached to persons but offices, the occupants of these should conform to the conditions of office.²

The whole striving was in the interest of a European Œcumenical movement which aimed at a confederation of Churches having a common basis of unity in the faith. It was thus sharply distinguished from some current Œcumenical tendencies which are without any definite common denominator of normal Reformed doctrine. Moreover, these tendencies are towards union of organizations which, for geographical reasons, must inevitably remain local and ineffective in a sustained corporate effort for universal Reformed interests.

The plane of movement of the post-Revolution Church of Scotland was accordingly spiritual, where spiritual ends were conceived as directly related to secular life. The body of doctrine, which it professed, was the expression of its soul to be guarded jealously because, in its genesis and manifestation, it was aristocratic. The body through which it operated worthily and

¹ Grub's *History*, III, p. 319.

² For the classic vindication of the need and use of the Reformed Confessions, see Dunlop's *Creeks* (1719), *Preface*.

truly must act with a democratic freedom that never forgets the authority and dignity of its aristocratic soul. So it is true that the whole of the imposing enterprises, achievements, sacrifices and structures of the Church of Scotland, and all Reformed Churches throughout the world, had this basis of unity in the faith as the source and motive power of all spiritual impulses that lay behind them. The Secessions of the eighteenth century and the Disruption of 1843 are suffering from a lack of true appreciation of their significance by the unjustifiable emphasis laid on these as magnificent displays of effort for experiments in freedom. Rather are they more profoundly worthy of honour as noble protests against the Church's own neglect of its real freedom as a witness and bond-slave of Christ, and against a disfigurement of its soul, and witness in doctrine or conduct, by the exercise of a freedom or private judgment that inevitably became tyrannical, when it ceased to act within the limits imposed by loyalty to the Church's own solemnly accepted doctrines.

No Secession worth noticing occurred anywhere in the Reformed Church, which made emancipation from the bondage of its definite Reformed system of doctrine its battlecry. That cry has only been heard in comparatively recent times in Churches which are living precariously on the great achievements of definite beliefs, and which imagine, without any encouragement from Scripture or history, that great spiritual structures can be reared on indefinable foundations.

IV

The Reformed pastor, according to historical Calvinism, should bear the hall mark of piety and learning. To have all pulpits occupied by such men was the ideal of re-established Presbyterianism. Provided a minister had these qualifications, neither his former adherence to a different polity nor his implication in the persecutions of the past was to stand as a barrier to his admission into the Church. Indeed, the remit¹ of Assembly

¹ The Assembly's remit ran : " That they be very cautious of receiving information against the late conformists, and that they proceed in the matter of censure very deliberately, so as none may have just cause to complain of their rigidity ; yet so as to omit no means of information. And that they shall not proceed to censure but upon relevant libels and sufficient probation." *Acts of Assembly*, 1690.

to the visiting Commissions, if justly implemented, precluded any vindictiveness on the ground of personal resentment or prejudice on the part of the Commissioners. Further, the Commissions were appointed by an Assembly whose policy was dictated by Carstares, a man of acknowledged prudence and fairness. It seems, therefore, to be nothing short of arrogant assumption to suggest that men would be appointed to discharge such a difficult and delicate task as was theirs, who would not reflect in their decisions a similar fairness. This matter of persistent controversy should surely be settled for all time by a letter from the Earl of Sutherland, whose motives and sincerity cannot be questioned on any ground in reason or in fact. Writing from "Canongate [Edinburgh] Sep. 4, 1701" to the Moderator of Commission of Assembly, the noble Earl regrets his inability to attend the Commission owing to "the foul day", pleads earnestly the needs of his wide domains, and then proceeds to urge the Commission "to take some effectual course for planting the churches in Sutherland with holy and knowing ministers of the Gospel, that so the kingdom of Christ may be advanced in that place, which will tend much to the honour of God and comfort and gratification of Reverend Sir, Your much obliged friend and servant—Southerland."¹

They acted in strict loyalty to the aim set before them by the standards of the Church, to fill the numerous vacancies throughout the country with "holy and knowing ministers of the Gospel". It was a comparatively easy matter, in the general confusion, for the corrupt life of the times to infuse its method and spirit into this work of the Church. But nowhere in the records of the time is there any evidence that they yielded to the vindictive spirit or ways of truculent victors. These Commissioners and local Presbyters were men with sensitive consciences and normal Christian feelings, who could not have had any pleasure in probing the wrack. Typical cases, with some of the grim tale of stifling facts which the records disclose, should satisfy all unprejudiced judges that the decisions of these courts of enquiry could not be otherwise if piety and knowledge were to continue the distinguishing feature of our Scottish Presbyterianism.

At Dornoch, September 16th, 1695, complaint was made of Hugh Ross, late incumbent at Creich, who was deposed by the

¹ MS. *Assembly Papers*.

Commission of Assembly for "gross scandals", that he "intrudes on the Kirk of Creich and exercises other ministerial acts in a mercenary way to the scandal of religion."¹ In 1693 the Presbytery received the Commission of Assembly to enquire into the character and conduct of Walter Ross of Kincardine. Ross compeared and declared himself "separated by not taking the oath, nor recognizing the Acts of Parliament". This was not an unusual way out of the difficulty of facing up to their moral lapses and guilt. Yet this same person afterwards boldly asked the Presbytery for a certificate of character, which the Court, reasonably enough, "think strange, considering the charge against him", and refuse to oblige him.²

Kenneth Mackenzie, incumbent at Fearn, was "under no good report among friends or foes". He was charged with assaulting one of his parishioners, and with being guilty of the shedding of "innocent blood". With a tongue as uncontrollable as his fist, he publicly declared that another of his parishioners "lied like a devil".³

Donald Forbes, incumbent at Kilmuir Easter, was charged with "gross scandals and Arminian error". The libel against him stated that the "said Donald Forbes is charged with Arminian error, with antenuptial fornication, co-habiting with a woman as his married wife and yet can give no account that he is legally married, covetousness, breach of Sabbath to a most scandalous degree, neglect of discipline particularly against such as are guilty of the sin of uncleanness, as having been confounded by one charged with that sin before the Session. He is deposed, *nemine contradicente*."¹

Around the person of Robert Ross, incumbent at Tain, has waged a controversy.² The late Venerable Archdeacon Craven, who wrote scholarly and interesting monographs on northern Dioceses, fastens on this case as illustrative of the alleged Presbyterian vindictiveness. In the interests of historical truth it is therefore necessary to bring this shady character into clear light. Dr. Hew Scott³ avers that the Presbytery deposed him "for refusing to acknowledge their authority". It is on this statement that Craven and other apologists base their defence of Ross.

¹ MS. *Records of the Presbytery of Ross and Sutherland*.

² Craven, *Church in Ross*, p. 69.

³ *Fasti*, V, p. 309.

But what the long-lost Record, which neither Scott nor Craven saw, actually states is: "Tain, June 26, 1699, Master Robert Ross, incumbent at Tain, charged with errors, gross scandals, and supine negligence, is deposed".¹ This is a totally different ground of action, and in view of that fact, and the other new facts that follow, the Court could not have judicially decided otherwise in this case. For in an action for damages raised in 1690 by Christin Ross, she avers²: "The suppliant never gave any disturbance to the Government being always for a monarchical Government . . . but endeavouring to behave herself peaceably and to educate her twelve fatherless children in the true reformed protestant religion at Schools, Colleges and other virtuous things, yet the pretended minister [Robert Ross] of the place where she lives from the hour that her husband departed this life, having no respect to the Law of Nature, her sex, nor her great charge of a numerous family, six of them not being able then to put on their own clothes, most inhumanly and barbarously threatened and harassed the petitioner by complaints to the Privy Councillors and Prelates upon no other pretext, but that her husband in his lifetime helped to entertain Mr. Thomas Ross, a Godly minister [Covenanter], and that she entertained him and others of that degree. . . ." Although Seaforth and the then Prelate reproved "the said pretended minister for his cruel unnatural usage of her and her family", in 1684 at his instigation and the advice of Council Captain Kenneth Mackenzie of Suddie was "sent with a severe commission to commit all violence to and persecute a handful of Godly people". Captain Mackenzie was disposed to do her no harm, but the "said pretended minister did instigate the said Capt. Mackenzie to put his commission into force". She was obliged "to flee in the night time . . . running at her foot in the winter time to Strathnaver hills". After "three months" spent there in hiding she "was sent for privately by the most worthy deceased Lady Strathnaver", who kept herself and some of her children in comfort. The rest had to forage for themselves. In addition to this, Ross was frequently at law with his neighbours.³

¹ MS. Records.

² Thomson's *Acts Scot. Parl.*, IX, pp. 233-4.

³ MacGill, *Old Ross-shire*, I, p. 39; II, p. 80.

V

Having set before them the ideal of a truly Reformed Church, they pursued their policy of exclusion as well as excision entirely out of regard to that ideal. So, to prevent the Church from being inoculated with any elements foreign to their high standard, they examined every applicant for admission with searching and meticulous care. But they endeavoured to hold the balance of justice evenly, and a man's antecedents were not examined more minutely than his present faith and character. At a time when Presbyteries stood in dire need of ministerial help, they still, wisely, practiced the injunction not to lay hands suddenly on any man. The following extract illustrates this truth :

“Tain, Sep. 26, 1695. Mr. John Gibson,¹ Mr. John McPherson,² and Mr. George Oswald³ from the County of Caithness giving each several petitions in writing, which were all read . . . acknowledging the evil of Prelacy and the divine right of Presbytery . . . desiring therefore to be received into our communion . . .” and liberty to exercise their license which they had received under Prelacy some time before. “Being wholly unacquainted with them”, the brethren of the Presbytery were asked to converse with them, “and withal that they report testimonies of their lives and conversation”.⁴ In their extreme caution they referred the applications to the Assembly, and all three were declared qualified by the Assembly of 1697.

Before Patronage had cast its dark shadow across the path of Christian freedom in the Church, not even the pleadings of County Superiors would induce these Reformed Presbyters to deflect from their course of spiritual independence. For example, Lord Macleod complained to the Sheriff-Depute of Ross in 1705 that “Mr. Daniel Mackenzie, residing in Moray, came and presented himself to the Presbytery of Ross, who upon frivolous pretences did obstruct his settlement . . . pretended that no probationer without the appointment of the General Assembly, or Commission, can have a call. It's true I have a

¹ One of a well-known family of substance in Caithness.

² Clerk to the Episcopal Synod of Caithness, 1687.

³ One of another well-known family in Caithness. Craven, *Cb. in Caithness, passim*.

⁴ MS. Records.

particular interest in Mr. Mackenzie, but the sense I have of the desolate condition of this parish [Tarbat] makes me more concerned".¹ Even probationers recommended by other Presbyteries and all divinity students had to face the ordeal of a searching but interesting examination in scholarship of a wide range.

With a similar spirit of firm resolution these Presbyters faced the colossal task of rendering Church fabrics habitable and suitable for the ordinances of religion. From all parts of the country came the same tale of neglect and ruin. There "has been no manse at Cromarty since the Reformation". The Presbytery visiting Rosemarkie (July 5th, 1700) "find after viewing the place that the very ruins or relicts of a manse could not be remarked there, far less any conveniency for habitation". "Visited the kirk of Nigg and found much of the mason work and windows ruinous, some of the roof and couples fallen and that part of the roof and couples which stand rotten and insufficient." "Nonnekill is entirely ruinous." The Presbytery visited the "kirk of Dornoch", "one of the most considerable Cathedrals in the north". With a greater concern for Cathedrals than "Puritan" Presbyters are generally credited, "they viewed and considered the fabric and circumstances of the said Kirk; do find that it is a great loss that it should be fallen into ruin". "The preacher was often unable to open the Bible for lecture or text, from wind and rain, and the minister was many a time wet from top to toe."²

The Presbytery, in a thoroughly businesslike manner, proceeded to repair the existing fabrics and to build new ones where none existed. Where money was scarce, and heritors not always ready to enter enthusiastically on great schemes of reconstruction, the success that crowned the labours of the ministers is indicative at once of their influence and power. It is, therefore, not only fair to their memory, but necessary for true history that popularized prejudices should be corrected by facts.

Typical manses were immediately proceeded with; and as the official specifications are available, this disputed question of the suitability or sufficiency for healthy living of these manses can be submitted to an impartial judgment. The specifications

¹ MacGill, I, p. 43.

² MS. Records.

for Kincardine Manse were : " The Manse to be forty feet long, within walls, sixteen feet broad, within walls, the side walls ten feet high ; two fire-rooms on each gable, the whole length floored and twice lofted ; three large windows in the first storey, glazed and wired ; four windows in the second, glazed ; three storm windows for the garret, with sufficient joisting roofing and thatching." The Rosemarkie Manse was to have " fourteen hewn windows and four hewn chimneys ", and " four score feet of glass " for its windows.¹ The Manse of Alness had a garden with " sixty fruit trees and sixty other trees ".²

VI

The complete reorganization required for the effective work of the ministry at which the Church aspired involved the erection of competent inferior judicatories. This was a difficult task. The main difficulty in setting up Kirk-Sessions, for example, did not, however, lie in the lack of men ready to assume office, but in the spiritual unfitness of available men. Differing from Prelacy, while not ignoring the social status of men, supreme emphasis was laid not on that, but on Christian character and religious and spiritual attainments. But although the standard was higher than consideration for previous religious training might demand, Sessions were nevertheless set up in many parishes in a comparatively short time after the Revolution.³ The Session took cognizance of all matters that affected the religious and moral well-being of the people, and were of great help to the ministry. In populous parishes⁴ the catechizing of the people, which was regular and systematic, required the assistance of the Session. But in 1699 Andrew Munro, " an honest man ", was definitely appointed Catechist at Kincardine, with

¹ MS. *Records*.

² Dalrymple, *Decrees*. These specifications do not support Graham's (*Social Life*, p. 280) gloomy description of " brew-house, dunghill, meagre light, cramped abode, etc."

³ " It is also a curious fact that though appointed minister of Tain in 1701, Mr. Hugh Munro could only get a Presbyterian eldership constituted there, anno 1708 " (Craven, p. 69). But the real fact is that there was a Presbyterian Session there consisting of five elders before October 2nd, 1700, and that Hugh Munro's Call was signed by " the Provost, Baillies, Councillors and Burgess of the town and some of the heritors of Tain " (MS. *Records*).

⁴ The catechizeable Roll of the eight following typical parishes above nine years of age was in 1716 : Kincardine over 1,200, Edderton 700, Tain 1,800, Tarbat 1,250, Fearn 1,060, Nigg 1,000, Logie 800, Kilmuir Easter 1,000. MS. *Records*.

an annual salary of £40 (Scot.). With him begins the long line of honoured servants of the Church whose labours, during more than a century and a half, contributed much to the acquired religious knowledge of the people, and to the intelligent appreciation of the definite doctrinal instruction that distinguished the Evangelical pulpits of the time. But a ministry seriously anxious about Scripture interpretation denied the untutored Catechist the privilege of exposition, and confined his labours to the circumscribed routine of asking answers to the questions of the catechism. Murdo Michael, Catechist at Tarbat, was indeed reprimanded in 1715 for expounding the questions and Scripture. His humble and reasonable defence was that "if any person enquired the meaning of a question, he told it as best he could". He was further blamed "for singing a tune different from the precentor", which has intriguing implications for students of Presbyterian Church melody.

The Sessions, true to the Reformed tradition of love for learning, interested themselves greatly in educational affairs. Everywhere there was a desire for school facilities. "The people of the populous parish of Gairloch, in 1713, not only encourage the minister", in this respect, "but evidence a great desire to have their children educated."¹

The lack of suitable school books and general literature was felt. But with commendable alacrity the General Assembly in 1703 and 1704 responded to the loud appeal of the Highlands for literature. Libraries were set up throughout areas as far apart as Shetland, Kintyre and Dunkeld. The purely educative and non-sectarian aim of the Assembly is clearly set forth by the injunction "that those who profess the protestant religion shall have access to and the use of the said Libraries, and that no difference of opinion among them shall preclude them from the use of the same".² These Libraries were set up on the lending system—the beginning of lending libraries in Scotland—"for a fortnight or three weeks", with the wise precaution that "no erroneous books be sent to Gentlemen without particular license or commission".³

¹ There were many excellent schools throughout the north as early as this, such as the less known school at Petty and another equally good at Kirkhill—both near Inverness—"where not only Latin and Greek, but Reading, Writing, Church Music, Cyphering and Book-keeping are taught."—*Forfeited Estates' Papers*, MS. *Presbytery Records*.

² MS. *Assembly Papers*, 1703.

³ MS. *Assembly Papers*, 1704.

Nor did the immediate and pressing needs of their own localities wholly occupy the attention of the Sessions, but wider appeals to them for such objects as the Protestant Church in Prussia, dependents of captive Scottish prisoners in Algiers, families of deposed incumbents and sufferers from a fire in the Canongate, Edinburgh, received a comparatively liberal response.¹ The spirit of brotherhood and federal responsibility underlying the Reformed system of doctrine are clearly manifested here. Here also we have the beginning of the magnificent Home and Foreign Mission enterprises of the Reformed Church in Scotland to-day.

VII

The Revolution and the re-establishing of Presbytery were essentially popular movements. So much was this the case that opponents of the Establishment twitted its protagonists as upholders of a system reared on the inclinations of the people, and as not possessing divine right. To allay the irritated feelings of their own people, the Commission of Assembly, in 1689, had to publish "Seasonable Admonitions" in which they claimed a better foundation for their Church government than the "inclinations of the people or the laws of men". The earliest northern Records amply prove the firm hold Presbyterianism took of the common people. From nearly every district between Inverness and Thurso urgent requests for "ordinances" came constantly before the one Presbytery then erected.²

This onward flow of the Presbyterian movement was rapidly corroding the buttresses of chieftain rule. Exasperated by the filching of their power by the commoners, then realizing the real value and independence of their lives under the potent influence of a liberating Gospel, Seaforth and his offshoots offered stern opposition. Confronted by the new politics that curtailed the

¹ In 1697 the following collections were made for the Church in Prussia: Golspie £32 15s.; Alness £16 16s. 04d.; Kiltarn £22 18s. 00d.; Cromarty and Rosemarkie £13 14s. 8d.—*Scots money*.—MS. *Records*.

² MS. *Records*. "The only two parishes where any number appear to have held Presbyterian opinions were Alness . . . and Kiltarn" (Craven, *Cb. in Ross*, p. 66). "They [i.e. Presbyteries] were all who wished the settlements" (p. 75). "Notwithstanding all that . . . congregations would do Presbyterian ministers were forced on the parishes" (Craven, *Cb. in Moray*, p. 92). Each and all of these statements are contrary to the facts disclosed in the *Presbytery Records*. In 1693 not only were there "Presbyterian opinions" at Alness and Kiltarn, but equally strong at Tain, Tarbat, Rosemarkie, Cromarty, Fearn, Contin, Ardersier, Resolis, Dornoch, Lairg, Golspie, Rogart, Creich and many other districts (MS. *Records*).

power and sway of their rule, and the religious movement that diverted the loyalty of their vassals to a Higher Ruler, the chagrined MacKenzies and MacRaes identified themselves with refractory Episcopacy, and both, hoping to regain power by such confederacy, cordially espoused the Jacobite cause. But, like every politico-ecclesiastical confederacy, which is impelled by political rather than religious motives, the crash of its defeat fell more heavily on the Episcopate than on the Chief. In this, its last strong hold in the Highlands, Episcopacy collapsed completely in 1715. With its collapse there disappeared the most pious and literary elements in northern Episcopacy. There were sporadic efforts before then to thwart the will of the people for a Gospel ministry at Dingwall, Killearnan, Avoch and Gairloch.

It was only befitting that in the region where still hovered the sinister shade of Sir George MacKenzie of Rosehaugh of "dark and torturous paths", Presbyterianism should meet with violent treatment. On the Sabbath after his settlement in 1711 Mr. John Grant of Knockbain was surrounded by a mob of armed men and women with blackened faces, who tore his clothes, cut his head, smote him "to a terrible effusion of blood, and were bent on having him killed had not some among them more tender-hearted rescued him from the frenzied mob", while the incumbent stood by unconcernedly.¹ Happily such an outburst of violence was confined to the territory over which the notorious Advocate once held sway.

Presbyterianism was meantime advancing with rapid strides. The Presbytery of Ross and Sutherland, whose bounds were conterminous with the northern Highlands and Caithness, was broken up into the various Presbyteries that now extend over the same area. In 1700 the Commission of Assembly set up a distinct Presbytery in Sutherland. In 1707 the Presbytery of Dornoch was erected, Caithness in 1709, Chanonry in 1707. Dingwall was disjoined from the latter in 1716. On December 31st, 1706, Tain was erected with its eight parishes. The Records of the Presbytery of Inverness begin under the new order in 1702. In Argyleshire Presbyterianism flourished without obstruction. Lorn, which was annexed to Inverary, was disjoined by the Synod of Moray in 1704. Mull was detached from it in 1729 and Abertarff in 1724. Skye, separated from the Synod of

¹ *Presbytery Records ; Acts of Assembly, 1712, Wodrow's Analecta.*

Argyle, was erected in 1712, and Uist in 1724. The Presbytery of Gairloch (afterward named Lochcarron) came into existence in 1724. Tongue had its independent existence in 1727; and, last of all, the Presbytery of the Lewis was erected in 1742.

It is surely a fact that needs no proof that a Presbytery consists of ministers and elders, that ministers and elders represent congregations, and that congregations consist of people. To urge, therefore, as many writers do, that before the Forty-five the Highlanders were "not Presbyterian at all" is to go against the impressive fact that all the Highland Presbyteries were erected well before that eventful year. In face of that fact, and the mass of corroborative evidence in contemporary sources, it seems nothing short of a crime against ecclesiastical history, and a devout people, who, in the midst of many difficulties, joyfully elected their own path of doctrine and polity, for a competent writer, who should know the meaning of "Presbytery" and "congregation", to perpetuate this untenable assertion in the extravagant and obviously absurd statement that "the Highlands adhered to the Episcopal rather than to the Presbyterian system" till the débâcle at Culloden. Not only was the Presbyterian system firmly established long before then through Presbyteries, but these Courts took an intelligent and active interest in every important matter that engaged the attention of the General Assembly from 1690 onwards, as their numerous overtures and petitions to the Assemblies clearly show.²

Furthermore, it was during this period, when Presbyterianism is alleged to have been non-existent, that flourished some of the most profound and searching theologians and preachers that ever stood in the Presbyterian pulpits of the north. Among these were Balfour, Beaton, Calder, Denoune, Duff, Fraser, Porteous and Sutherland.

Finally, as early as 1724, or eighteen years before the great religious awakening at Cambuslang burst into intensity, a revival with a deep and abiding influence began to spread over the whole of the eastern Highlands. In its religious, social and educational effect, there has been nothing comparable to this spiritual rebirth in the history of northern revivals.

One accordingly turns to the cultured Anglican Rector, of Highland birth and upbringing, with a feeling of respect and

¹ Rev. Andrew J. Campbell, *Church of Scotland* (1930), p. 73.

² MS. *Assembly Papers*.

admiration for him both as a historian and ecclesiastic, when he ruefully writes that Episcopacy was "all but totally renounced and rejected by the people of the Highlands".¹

VIII

The change-over of the northern community to Presbyterianism did not entail as much religious difficulty as is sometimes supposed. For one thing, the difference in form of service was almost invisible.² In the matter preached, however, the difference was frequently as wide as the poles. While there was, thus, nothing in the form to repel the people, there was much in the substance to attract the devouter elements in old Episcopacy. There was no straitening of conscience in listening to the Good News from men whose life and conduct proved the sincerity of their profession. Thus, there was no intolerant forcing of the people into a new fold. Indeed, a striking feature of the times was the constant cry of the people for the Gospel.³ It was in response to these appeals that ministers toiled incessantly and laboriously. The seed which they thus sowed was shooting forth, here and there, in promising quantity and quality, and with soothing beauty. But, as true Calvinists, they were burning with zeal for the glory of God.

They were, perhaps, too sanguine, hence it came to pass that their eyes were not unacquainted with the waters of grief, and their breasts with the upheavings of sorrow. The sins formerly connived at, and the coarse and subfusc appurtenances of a past social order could not be eradicated in a day. A religious movement in the current of life forced ugly elements to the surface, and a quickened conscience and deepened sense of sin did not minimize their enormity. Hence the Records bewail "open profanity", "swearing", "drunkenness", "superstition" and "Sabbath breaking". In this, and in all their actions, intolerance of sin was a ruling principle. It was because of it they disapproved of King William's lenient policy, and of the Toleration Act of 1712. The former they regarded as perpetuating the scandal of unholy living among incumbents,

¹ *Clan MacRae History*, p. 65.

² *Kirk's Diary*; *Morer's Short Account* (1714), p. 47; *Hay Fleming's Critical Reviews*, p. 451.

³ *Presbytery Records*.

and the latter as encouraging the same among the people, by creating safe retreats for fugitives from discipline. Amidst the alluring temptations of a formative period, the ministry, on the whole, was saved from wild excess by sanity of judgment and impressive discrimination. Their newly acquired power they exercised with a noble restraint in which charity is more evident than intolerance. Above all, they believed the Gospel which they preached, and they endeavoured to practice its precepts.

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