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## The St Mary's Heritage Project

The Position of the Episcopal Church in Scotland since the Revolution in  
1688.

A sermon preached in S. Mary's Church, Glasgow,  
on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March, 1880,  
by Robert Eden, D.D.,  
Bishop of Moray, Ross and Caithness,  
Primus of the Episcopal Church in Scotland.

SOURCE:

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## The Position of the Episcopal Church in Scotland since the Revolution in 1688.

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PSALM cxxvi. 3.—“The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.”

One generation has passed away, and another has grown up, since I preached my first Sermon in Scotland - and that sermon was preached in S. Mary's, Glasgow; not of course in the beautiful S. Mary's in which you are now worshipping. To me it was a very memorable occasion - one which the older members of your congregation will remember - the Consecration of my old and dearest friend, the late Bishop Trower. But not only on that account was the occasion a very memorable one for me. In the dispensations of Divine Providence, it was made the instrument of settling the whole future of my life. Not the Sermon, for it was very ordinary one; not the sermon, but the fact of my having preached on that occasion led to my being chosen about two years after to be a Bishop in the Church of Scotland. Thus has S. Mary's, Glasgow, been woven, as it were, into the web of my short life here on earth. And now, within two days of my entering on the thirtieth year of my Episcopate, am I again invited to preach in the church of S. Mary's, Glasgow. While you can well believe, my brethren, to what searchings of heart a bishop must be led, as each anniversary of his Consecration comes round, with the crushing consciousness of many shortcomings, you may perhaps understand how, not unnaturally, my thoughts should have turned at this time to a retrospect of the fortunes of our Church during this interval of thirty years, in which it has been my lot to take a part; and to look still farther back, with a thankful heart, upon its altered position, since it pleased God of His infinite mercy to remove His heavy hand from us, at the close of the last century. When then I was considering on what subject I should again address this Congregation, I thought it might not be inappropriate or uninteresting were I to point to some of those evidences of God's gracious dealings towards us, which have marked the more recent history of our Church; of those “things which the Lord hath done for us, whereof we are glad;” that you may be encouraged, my dear brethren, (in the assured hope that God is with us of a truth) to go forward with increasing zeal and energy in endeavouring to “lengthen the cords, and to strengthen the stakes” of our beloved Church, when you find that hitherto the labours of those who have gone before you, and who bore the heat and burden of its most scorching day, “have not been in vain, in the Lord.”

But if a man is to devote himself, heart and soul, to promoting the welfare and prosperity of the Church to which he belongs, *he must have faith in his Church*; he must have no doubts or misgivings as to whether his Church be indeed a true branch of the Catholic Church of Christ in this country; and which it must therefore be not only his duty, but his privilege to aid, and, if need be, to defend and contend for. He should therefore be able and willing “to give an answer to every man that asketh him a reason of the hope that is in him.” And, circumstanced as our Church is in Scotland, not free

from misconstruction, not always free from misrepresentation, which has its effect, almost unconsciously, upon some of its less-informed members, tending to check their zeal in its service, or cause them to give it but a lukewarm and half-hearted support, it becomes a duty on our part, from time to time, to remind our people of so much of the history of their Church as may enable them to refute such misrepresentations, to rectify misconstruction, and by leading them to see that we have not taken up any antagonistic position, as some suppose, towards the Established Church of Scotland, but have, at least, as legitimate a *status* in Scotland as any of the many religious bodies which exist in this country, they may have the courage of their convictions, and, without for a moment condemning others, resolve to maintain with firmness, zeal, and confidence, not a *Sect* in Scotland, but the old Church of Scotland of which they are members; and though now small in numbers, not an isolated Church, but a living recognised member of the great Anglican Communion, which is spread over the face of the whole world.

With the view, then, of endeavouring to remove some misrepresentations of our position in this country, and some misconstructions which have raised prejudices against us, I will place before you the true position in which the Episcopal Church in Scotland was left after the Revolution of 1688, which, as you know, led to our disestablishment and to the establishment of the present Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

The Episcopal Church was twice Established, and twice Disestablished, in the seventeenth century. It was *Established* in 1610, and again in 1661. On both occasions the *mode* of its establishment was the same. The Church of England consecrated its Bishops, and so gave them that Spiritual Authority, Order, and Mission, which the Church only can give, and which they have possessed and exercised ever since. The Sovereign and Parliament of Scotland made It the Established Church of Scotland, and so gave it Temporal endowments, and that Civil sanction and support which the State only can give to the Church.

It was *Disestablished* in 1638, and again in 1689-90. But there was an essential difference in the manner of its disestablishment on these two occasions. On the first occasion - in 1638 - the General Assembly of the Church, which met in Glasgow that year, declared Episcopacy to be unlawful, deposed the bishops from all spiritual order or office, and passed against them a sentence of ex-communication, which at that time carried formidable civil consequences. And all these measures were ratified and confirmed by the Sovereign and Parliament of Scotland.

But in 1689, when the Episcopal Church was for the second time disestablished, nothing of this sort was attempted. All that was then done was, to withdraw from it the Temporal endowments and other Civil advantages which it had received from the State in 1661. The Parliament of Scotland simply "abolished Prelacy and all superiority of any office in the Church above Presbyters;" and in place of the Episcopal Church which was thus disestablished, it established "the Presbyterian Church Government and Discipline," as "being," not, as we might have expected to find, as being most agreeable to the Will of God, but "as being most agreeable to the inclinations of the people," for so run the words of the Preamble of the Act by which the present Church of Scotland was established by Parliament. As the State had not given the Episcopal Church its

*Spiritual authority* in 1661, so the State did not attempt to take that spiritual authority away in 1689.

Neither did the newly-established Church of Scotland seek to deprive the Episcopal Church and its clergy of their spiritual functions, as had been done in 1638. The Bishops were neither deposed from their offices nor ex-communicated. Nor was the National Covenant, or the Solemn League and Covenant abjuring or condemning Episcopacy as unlawful, resumed as a Standard of the Established Church, much less imposed upon all the people, as in 1638 and 1644.

In a word, the Scottish Bishops, although stripped of all that the Scottish State had given them, were left in possession of all that the Church of England had given them at their Consecration at Westminster in 1661. They ceased to be Bishops of the Scottish Establishment, but continued to be Bishops of the Catholic Church of Christ.

They still continued, therefore, to exercise their spiritual functions as bishops, and the validity of their Ordinations and other Episcopal acts was acknowledged for all spiritual purposes. The Scottish prelates, although no longer established, were recognised by the State, and are still recognised by the State, as possessed of all the Spiritual powers of bishops. Thus, three years after the disestablishment of the Episcopal Church, Dr. Cairncross, who had been Archbishop of Glasgow, was appointed, by King William the Third, Bishop of Raphoe, in Ireland; and the latest evidence of the State still recognising the spiritual powers of the *present* bishops of the Episcopal Church is afforded by the case of your own late Bishop Trower, who, on leaving Scotland, was appointed by the Crown to the Bishopric of Gibraltar.

Not only, however, did the State recognise the validity of the spiritual powers of the disestablished bishops, but they continued to be addressed by the Sovereign by the Territorial titles which they enjoyed before their disestablishment. Thus, Her Majesty Queen Anne, by a royal warrant under the sign Manual, dated at S. James's on the 17th of April, 1704, and again by a similar warrant, dated at Newmarket on the 4th of October, 1706, ordered the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury in Scotland to "order payment to be made," thus run the words of the warrant, to "order payment to be made out of the first and readiest of the Bishops' rents in Scotland, of one hundred pounds sterling to each of the four bishops undermentioned, viz., to the Bishop of *Edinburgh*, to the Bishop of *Aberdeen*, to the Bishop of *Moray*, and Bishop of *Dunblane*." Both these warrants under the sign Manual, with the counter-signatures of the Secretary of State for Scotland, are preserved among the Records of the Exchequer at Edinburgh (*Memorandum of the late Mr. Joseph Robertson*).

From this brief historical summary you may clearly see the position in which our Church was left after its disestablishment in 1689. The Act of Parliament which disestablished it did not, as you see, attempt to deprive its bishops of that Spiritual Authority, Order, and Mission which the Church only can give; nor, as is shewn by the testimony of the Sovereign, did it forbid the use of the Territorial titles which the bishops enjoyed before they were disestablished. What it did do was simply to deprive the Church of all its Temporal endowments, and of that Civil sanction and support which the State can confer upon the Church. The position, therefore, in which we stand towards the Established Church of Scotland is not like that in which the Free Church, for instance, stands towards it. The members of that Church are Presbyterians, and were once members of the Established Church. From that Church they voluntarily

seceded, and then constituted themselves into an independent Church. We were never members of the present Established Church, and therefore could not have seceded from it. Nor have we constituted ourselves into an independent Church *since* or *in consequence* of our Disestablishment. What our Church was when it was the Established Church of Scotland, in everything which is of the essence of the Church, that we possess now. I say in every thing which is of the essence of the Church. But that which is *not* of the essence of the Church, viz., temporal endowments and civil sanction and support, that we possess no longer. But the man who is violently deprived of all his worldly possessions is the same man still. His misfortunes do not destroy his identity. So our Church, despite its misfortunes, is the identical Church which, before its disestablishment, was recognised by the State as the *true Church of Christ* in this country. The State, as I have before said, had not given that Church its spiritual authority when it established it, and could not take it away when it saw fit to disestablish it. It had for a time clothed it with the earthly garments of temporal endowments, and with civil advantages. It stripped it of these, which it was in its power to do, and then, leaving its spiritual powers untouched and unimpaired, it left it - open to its enemies.

It would be quite beside my purpose to dwell upon what it endured at their hands during the last century. I desire now to speak only of *the results* of the persecutions and penal enactments which were launched against our Church, with the view of contrasting its position when all these ceased, with that which it now holds in the country, that it may appear "what great things the Lord hath done for us; whereof we are glad."

The result, then, of the Penal Statutes which were passed against us in the last century, together with our inability from disendowment to provide for the maintenance of our Clergy was this, that in the interval between our disestablishment and the year 1792, when those Statutes were repealed, our Clergy were reduced in number from 1000 to 42, and our Bishops from 14 to 4. At the end of that period the clergy were ministering, not in Churches - these had been destroyed - but in upper rooms, or in their own houses. Our bishops had no incomes, except from the scanty flocks to which they ministered. We had no Parsonages, and no Schools. Our flocks, few in number, were widely dispersed throughout Scotland. There was no Organisation, and consequently but little unity of action. On looking on this scene of utter desolation of a once flourishing and established Church, the words descriptive of the original Chaos would not seem inappropriate to it. It was "without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep." Could this chaos ever be reduced to order? "Not by might, not by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." That Spirit has moved upon the face of our dark and troubled waters, and has brought light out of darkness, order out of disorder. And we can now look back and see, with unfeigned gratitude, a steady gradual development of a healthy Church progress, accompanied with a growth of earnest, reverent, spiritual life in both Clergy and Laity, such as can spring from no other source than from the Lord and Giver of Life Himself.

As compared, then, with its desolate chaotic condition at that period, what do we see now, in the year 1880? Our Church's ecclesiastical organisation complete, - a Diocesan bishop presiding over each of the ancient dioceses, and our Diocesan and Episcopal Synods meeting annually. More than 200 Churches and missions, with as many officiating Clergy, about 120 Parsonages, and 80 Day and Sunday schools, with

between 8,000 and 10,000 children under Church education. We have undertaken Foreign Mission work in Central India and for South Africa, we have consecrated and sent forth a Bishop, who is labouring with great success in Kaffraria. Within the last fifty years four new Cathedrals have been built and Consecrated; Official Residences have been provided for almost all our bishops, for whom incomes have also been provided varying from £550 to £700 a-year, but which, thirty years ago, averaged only about £150; a Theological College and Public School have been founded at Glenalmond, and another Theological College at Cumbrae, in connection with the Cathedral of the Isles, and a Training Institution for School-mistresses in Edinburgh. Within the last four years, a Church Body has been constituted by Canon, consisting of the Bishops, Presbyters, and Lay representatives from every incumbency of the Church, to be the Organ of the whole Church in all matters of financial administration, and to collect and distribute money for all Church purposes of a general or corporate character. And thus has been brought into activity the *Corporate Life* of the Church, which had been hitherto dwarfed and stifled by a narrow Congregationalism, which, never looking beyond itself, had failed to grasp the idea of the Church as a Corporate Society, with Christ as its One Head, and we all members one of another. And however regarded in this country by friends or foes, though disestablished and disendowed, we have maintained our position here as an independent branch of the Catholic Church of Christ. As such our Bishops were invited by the Archbishops of Canterbury, in the years 1867 and 1878, to take their seats, on an equal footing with the Bishops of the English, Irish, American, and Colonial Churches, in those two famous Lambeth Conferences, in the latter of which one hundred Bishops of the Anglican Communion met together to confer upon matters deeply affecting the interests of that whole Communion. By far the greater number of the hundred Bishops, who met at Lambeth on that memorable occasion were bishops of *unestablished churches*. And amongst those Bishops who then were gathered together, none greeted with more cordiality or with greater respect and affection the Scottish Bishops than did the American Bishops; cherishing with the deepest gratitude the memory of the debt which they owe to the bishops of Scotland, who, in the darkest hour of their persecution, had been privileged to Consecrate the first Bishop of their now glorious and flourishing Church in the United States of America.

Such then is the present position of our Church in Scotland - the same, yet not the same - not the same, indeed, in outward circumstances as when proscribed and persecuted, but the same in Faith and Discipline whether proscribed or tolerated. Surely then, my brethren, we may, and ought, humbly and gratefully to acknowledge that "the Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we rejoice," and that "not by might, not by power" - for we were in ourselves powerless - but "by His Spirit." "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name, be ascribed all honour, praise, and power."

And now, my fellow-Churchmen, in this retrospect of the fortunes of our Church there is one fact which presses itself upon me, and to which, in conclusion, I would desire at this time to direct your attention. It is this: the grievous injury which is inflicted upon the great body of the poor and unlearned when the State ceases to provide the ministrations of the Gospel through the instrumentality of an Established Church. It is true that in Scotland one Church was established by the State in the place of another in the year 1689. But at that time there were thousands of poor and

unlearned Episcopalians, who, in consequence of the disendowment of their Church, were altogether deprived of the ministrations of their clergy; and it was many years before things so settled down as to make even the newly-established Church effective for the great purpose of preaching the Gospel to the poor. If we may judge from the signs of the times it would appear that this great question of Disestablishment is once again likely to become a practical one. In this event, what line would the members of our Church be disposed to take? In answering for myself, I can say unhesitatingly that I could not assume the responsibility of assisting in any way towards procuring the disestablishment of the present Established Church of Scotland. It may be a fair question, where no Established Church already exists, to consider whether, in the interests of Church and State, it is desirable to establish any Church at all. But it is another question, and a very different one, looking at all the attendant consequences, and the disruption of all old associations, to *unestablish* one which has been long established. Whatever evils some may consider as incident to an Established Church, whether from its supposed tendency to secularize the minds of the clergy, or to induce indolence and carelessness on their part, which cannot justly be charged against the great body of the present clergy of the Establishment, there are unquestionably great and counter-balancing benefits; and I should therefore shrink from joining in any attempt to root up the tares, lest in so doing the wheat be rooted up also.

Nor, in saying this, am I losing sight of the fact that the Established Church of Scotland repudiates certain great Truths which we, as Episcopalians, hold to be of primary importance. We believe that our Presbyterian brethren are suffering great *spiritual loss* by their rejection of a *Divine Institution*, which, in common with all our Episcopalian brethren throughout Christendom, we believe Episcopacy to be. [Preface to Ordinal in Book of Common Prayer. Canon I. Sect. I., Code of Canons of the Episcopal Church in Scotland.] We should be glad to convince them of this if we might, but we shall not convince them of it by endeavouring to disestablish their Church, nor, by so acting, should we make them the more ready to listen to our arguments in favour of Episcopacy. And we must remember that Parliament, in passing the Act which disestablished us, did not *condemn Episcopacy*. Nor did it profess to establish "the Presbyterian Church Government and Discipline" because it was more agreeable to the Will of God than Episcopacy; but simply, because "the Presbyterian Church Government and Discipline was most agreeable to the inclinations of the people." Seeing then that neither the State when it disestablished the Episcopal Church desired, nor the Presbyterian Church when it was established, was able to deprive the Episcopal Church and its clergy of their *Spiritual functions*, for the exercise of which we have now free scope, I think we should not only not be justified, but that we should be incurring a very grave responsibility indeed which we are not called upon to incur, were we to unite with those who should endeavour to disturb the Revolution Settlement by the disestablishment of the present Established Church of Scotland.

In the midst then of the inevitable distractions and heart-burnings, which cannot fail to come upon our country by the agitation of such a question as this, let it be our resolve, my brethren, to pursue a calm, uncontroversial, patient course; upholding in quietness and confidence, but without compromise, those great principles of Doctrine and Discipline to which our Church has been called to bear witness in Scotland. But let us at the same time remember, that we are living in the midst of those

who from their childhood have been trained to look at religious Truth in other lights and colours than those which have always rested upon our paths. Let us therefore be slow to “judge” “that we be not judged.” Rather let our aim be, that the light of our views of Truth shall so shine before our brethren as to win them, if it so please God, by its purity and brilliancy. And though, unhappily, we cannot worship together in the same House of Prayer, may we ever be found ready to co-operate with them as fellow-Christians and fellow-citizens, in forwarding all such good works of usefulness, love, and charity, as may glorify our common Father in Heaven, and such as may serve to promote happiness, peace, and good-will, in our respective neighbourhoods. Then I believe “the Lord will do yet greater things for us, whereof” our children and our children’s children “will be glad.”