

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

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AN English visitor is likely to be puzzled by the churches in a Highland village; he will probably find one or two labelled "Church of Scotland," a "Free Church" and a "Free Presbyterian Church," possibly also an Episcopalian Church and a Roman Catholic Church. Of these bodies the Church of Scotland is far the largest, but its position cannot be understood without some knowledge of Scottish ecclesiastical history which can be summarized as follows.

I.

The evangelization of what is now called Scotland began in the 5th and 6th centuries. The Christianity of Ninian Kentigern and Columba was of the "Celtic" type, with little organization; its unit was the monastery where the bishop seems to have lived in subordination to the presbyter abbot. Diocesan episcopacy was introduced in the 11th century and the mediæval church in Scotland, in order to protect itself from the claims of York, was in close dependence on Rome. By the beginning of the 16th century it possessed some cathedrals, abbeys, and collegiate churches comparable with at least some of the greater churches in England, but it never had the rich heritage of beautiful parish churches such as abound on the south of the Tweed. In the later Middle Ages the Scottish Church shared in the general corruption of the national life and reform was long overdue when at length it came, under the leadership of John Knox in 1560.

The Reformation period lasted from 1560 to 1690. Knox gave to the Church of Scotland a Confession of faith and a liturgy modelled on Calvin's Church at Geneva; he also procured the abolition of episcopacy, though the setting up of the Presbyterian system of church courts was the work of Andrew Melville in 1581 rather than of Knox. Those who refused to be reformed continued as the Scottish Roman Catholic Church, mainly in the north-west Highlands and islands.

In 1610 Episcopacy was grafted on to this Presbyterian system not without some success; but in 1638, owing to the attempt of Charles I to impose an unpopular prayer-book on the Church of Scotland, the bishops were abolished. In 1661 episcopacy was again restored, but the second episcopal period was far from happy and in 1690 the Scottish Parliament again abolished the bishops and re-established Presbyterianism. Those who still wanted bishops now dissented from the Church of Scotland and formed the Scottish Episcopalian Church.

From 1690 to 1843 the Church of Scotland was weakened by many schisms. In 1690 the Reformed Presbyterian Church broke away. Then, as a result of the restoration of lay patronage in 1712, there were the schisms known as the Associate Presbytery (1733) and the Relief Church (1761). Meanwhile within the Church of Scotland were two

parties, the Evangelicals who adhered strictly to the doctrines of Calvin and the Moderates who sat more lightly to those dogmas.

In 1843, again as the result of "patronage," many of the Evangelicals seceded and formed the Free Church, which was opposed not to Establishment in principle but to the conditions of Establishment then prevailing.

Since this disruption there have been movements towards reunion.

In 1847 most of the schisms of the 18th century amalgamated as the United Presbyterian Church, opposed on principle to any state connection.

In 1876 the Free Church was strengthened by the addition of most of the Reformed Presbyterian Church (of 1690) and in 1892 weakened by the secession of the Free Presbyterian Church.

In 1900 the majority of the Free Church joined with the United Presbyterians with the title of the United Free Church ; but a minority, strong in the Highlands, held aloof and are known as the Free Church (locally as "Wee Frees").

After a while negotiations began between the United Free Church and the Church of Scotland. In the Church of Scotland patronage had been abolished in 1874, and in 1921 a Declaratory Act was obtained by which the State acknowledged that the Church of Scotland was free to manage its own affairs so long as it holds the Trinitarian theology and adheres to the Scottish Reformation. The majority of the United Free Church then agreed that the grievances that had justified the disruption of 1843 had been removed and in 1929 united with the Church of Scotland. A minority, however, were not satisfied and they still continue as the United Free Church.

If the Church in Scotland means the whole congregation of Christian people, it can be analysed thus :—

1. The Church of Scotland with a communicant membership of a million and a quarter.
2. The Roman Catholic Church which dissented in 1560 ; owing to Irish and other foreign immigration its adult members are said to have increased to 600,000.
3. The Scottish Episcopalian Church which dissented in 1690. It insists on episcopacy with a rigidity far greater than that required by the more comprehensive Established Church of England. Its communicants number about 60,000.
4. The Dissenting Presbyterian churches representing the remnants which have held aloof from the various reunions :

(a) The remnants of the Reformed Presbyterians	-	1690
(b) The remnants of the Associate Church	-	1733
(c) The Free Presbyterian Church	-	1892
(d) The Free Church	-	1900
(e) The United Free Church	-	1929
5. English dissenting churches (Baptist, Congregational, Methodist) which have a small following.
6. A number of smaller religious bodies with perhaps about 70,000 adherents.

It will therefore be seen that the Church of Scotland is far the largest of the churches in Scotland. To it belong all the parish churches, including the mediæval cathedrals still in use (St. Giles, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dunblane, Dunkeld, Brechin, Aberdeen, Dornoch, Kirkwall, and Iona). It is the national church, Established, though free from state control; the Sovereign attends its worship and is represented by the High Commissioner at the General Assembly. More important than these external advantages is the influence that it evidently exercises over a large proportion of a religiously-minded nation.

II.

The position of the Church of Scotland may be examined under the headings of Doctrine; Discipline; Ministry; Sacraments; Worship; Relation to the State.

(1) *Doctrine.*

The Declaratory Act of 1921 states that the Church of Scotland holds the fundamental doctrines of the Catholic faith (God, the Incarnation, the Holy Spirit) as contained in the Scriptures; that it adheres to the Scottish Reformation; that its principal subordinate standard is the Westminster Confession of 1647 (a Calvinistic document which superseded the earlier Confession of 1560). The Westminster Confession, besides expressing the fundamental doctrines on which the Church of Scotland is at one with the Church of England, also includes the Calvinistic doctrine of Predestination; but as the formula of subscription only binds the signatory to "the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith contained in the Confession of faith of this church" a minister is not committed to Calvinistic or Augustinian doctrines which at most are only inferences from Scripture.

(2) *Discipline.*

This is maintained by the Presbyterian system of Church Courts. Each parish has its Kirk Session consisting of the minister and a number of elders. Each parish belongs to a group known as the Presbytery, and to this court (meeting as a rule once a month) it sends the minister and one elder. Above the Presbytery is the Synod, corresponding in area to a diocese, where the membership of the court is the same as that of the Presbyteries—the minister and an elder from each parish within the bounds of the Synod. The supreme court is the General Assembly meeting every May in Edinburgh under the presidency of an annually appointed minister known as the Moderator. Its decisions are final, subject, in matters affecting the constitution of the Church, to the "Barrier Act" by which a measure passed by one Assembly must be referred to the Presbyteries and come up for final settlement at the next Assembly.

The Moderator during his year of office has the title of "Right Reverend" and takes precedence at Court after the Royal Dukes.

(3) *The Ministry.*

One order, that of the Presbyterate, is regarded as essential, and the utmost care is taken over the training, the appointment, and the commissioning of the presbyter.

A candidate must first obtain a degree in arts or else satisfy the church authorities that his educational attainments have reached that standard. He must then spend three years at a recognized divinity hall and pass the prescribed examinations. Then he may be licensed to conduct worship and preach but not to administer the Sacraments ; in this position, comparable to that of the Deacon in the Anglican church, he becomes in most cases an assistant minister. After a year or so he may receive a call from the communicant members of some church to be their minister ; if the call is accepted and sustained by the Presbytery to which that church belongs, he will be ordained by prayer and by the imposition of the hands of the ordained members of that Presbytery, the service being conducted by a minister specially appointed, generally the Moderator of the Presbytery. After the ordination he will be "inducted" in the "living."

Then and then only will he be allowed to dispense the Sacraments of Baptism and Communion, though occasionally in some large parishes there is an ordained assistant ; in this case when he gets a charge of his own, he will only have to be "inducted."

(4) *The Sacraments.*

Baptism is not given indiscriminately, and some guarantee is required that the child will be Christianly brought up. The law of the Church is that this Sacrament be administered "in the face of the congregation," but private Baptisms are not uncommon : of recent years much success has attended the efforts of ministers to have Baptism administered at public worship. The other Sacrament has always been regarded with the greatest reverence, to be received after careful preparation on occasions which must not be too frequent. The doctrine of the Westminster Confession is Calvinist (i.e. "Receptionist"), not "Zwinglian." In country parishes the Communion is generally dispensed twice a year, in town churches four times ; a roll of communicants is carefully kept, but members of other churches are welcomed at the table. Though there is no fixed liturgy, the service follows a prescribed order in which the elements are set apart and consecrated, the bread broken, and the elements distributed first by the minister to the elders and then by the elders to the communicants seated in their pews. In some churches a liturgy is used, compiled from ancient sources in which the *epiklesis* or invocation of the Holy Spirit is a prominent feature. The service on these great occasions includes the singing of Psalms and Paraphrases and traditionally ends with some verses of the 103rd Psalm in the metrical version, sung to the tune "Coleshill." In some churches there is a more frequent administration ; at St. Giles, Edinburgh and at Glasgow Cathedral there is a Communion once a month after morning service ; at St. Cuthbert's, Edinburgh, there is a monthly Communion at 8.30 a.m. At Govan Parish Church (the centre of the "High-church" movement) there is a choral Communion at the morning service on the

last Sunday in each month and a second administration after the evening service (otherwise Evening Communion is rare, the evening service being regarded as a service of thanksgiving); at one church, Trinity, Coatbridge, there has been for over 20 years a Celebration at 8.30 a.m. every Sunday, in addition to the great quarterly Communion which, here, as at some other churches, coincide with the great festivals of the Christian year.

(5) *Worship.*

The chief service is held on Sundays at 11 or 12. The proclamation of the Word of God is a central feature, though the service includes prayer and praise as well as lessons and sermon. In most churches there is also an evening service at which the attendance is usually smaller than in the morning. The praise consists of metrical Psalms and paraphrases sung to tunes which generally leave pleasing impression on the visitor from other churches. Hymns have also been introduced and in the revised hymnary the Church of Scotland has a book of praise that some other churches may envy. In some town churches the singing of prose Psalms and canticles finds a place, and anthems are perhaps somewhat too frequent. The minister is usually vested in cassock and bands, gown and hood. Weekday services, though not unknown in the Reformation period, are not popular. Some of the churches that formerly belonged to the United Free Church have a mid-week prayer meeting, and in two churches in Edinburgh, three in Glasgow, and one each in Dundee and Aberdeen, there is a daily service. It must, however, be admitted that church-going except on Sundays does not find favour in the Church of Scotland, though Christmas Day and Holy Week are gradually coming to be observed.

(6) *Relation to the State.*

Though the Church of Scotland is "Established" it has complete freedom to manage its own affairs. Patronage has long since been abolished; Parliament has no veto on the legislation of the General Assembly; and there is no final court of appeal corresponding to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. But the situation in Scotland is different from that in England, and the Church of Scotland was acknowledged in its present freedom only on the understanding that it adheres to the Scottish Reformation.

III.

After this description of the Church of Scotland it may be worth while to record the impression made on the present writer, a minister of the Church of England of partly Scottish descent, who since 1922 has officiated each year in various churches now belonging to the Church of Scotland, though some of them were until 1929 connected with the United Free Church.

(a) The strength of a national church which out of a total population of about five million numbers a million and a quarter among its communicant members. No doubt some of these communicants are content with the barest minimum of attendance, and there is in Scotland

a "churchless million," yet even so the Church of Scotland is a "national church" to a degree probably unique among the reformed churches.

(b) The high standard of its ministry. Many of its assistant ministers wear a B.D. hood and the parish minister is frequently a doctor of divinity. The educational standard of the ministry is seen not only in the preaching but in the many books that come from the manses (frequently the country manses), and also in the publications in which the Church of Scotland explains its position in books and pamphlets which are honest, clear, readable and cheap. No doubt there are a number of ministerial misfits, but the general impression is that, unless he is too isolated, the parish minister is happy in his work.

(c) The Eldership, which represents not "the ecclesiastically minded layman" but the average religiously minded churchman of every grade in society. If an Anglican minister should be present at the meeting of the session in an ordinary working class parish he will probably be impressed by the efficiency with which the business is transacted and also by the power of expression shown by many an elder, whatever his social position.

(d) Its energy in tackling the problem of the new housing areas. As far as can be seen, each new area is quickly provided with a minister and a church hall and in due course with a church.

(e) The varieties of churchmanship. Presbyterian discipline does not permit those changes in ritual which so often lead to friction in the Church of England; but in spite of this outward uniformity, there is certainly an Evangelical, a Moderate and a High-church party or group. The last-named lay stress on the "Apostolic Succession" derived through presbyteral ordination and on the value of the Sacraments, but there is very little, if anything, that deserves the reproach of "Sacerdotalism" and nothing that deserves to be called "Romanizing." Further, a dignified service such as that in St. Giles, Edinburgh, is no sign that the minister is a High-churchman, any more than in the Church of England where a choral service is quite compatible with a Protestant theology.

One sometimes hears about the "Modernism" prevalent in Scotland. That term should be used with the greatest caution. It refers only to a movement which seeks to combine the Sacramentalism and devotion of Catholicism with the often negative criticism of modern science; as such the term may be used of a movement in the Roman Catholic church which has been suppressed and of a somewhat similar movement within circles known as Anglo-Catholic. It should not be used of those in the various Reformed churches who hold a critical view of the Bible that a generation ago marked the holder as a "broad-churchman". Probably such views are now common to a large number of all parties within the Churches both of Scotland and of England.

(f) The increasing attention now given to beauty in church architecture and furniture.

Since the war Kirkwall Cathedral, Paisley Abbey and St. John's, Perth, have been examples of large churches completely restored; similar

work is now being done at the Holy Rood, Stirling, and at the Greyfriars Church, Edinburgh (both of them hitherto divided between two congregations) and the "friends of Glasgow Cathedral" are hoping to make the furniture more worthy of that splendid building. Among small churches restored to perhaps more than their former beauty may be mentioned those at Dalmeny and Aberdour (both near Edinburgh). Among the beautiful modern churches built during the last 50 years the large church at Govan, the little church at Connel Ferry, and the somewhat freakish church at Loch Awe come to one's mind; while among the successful attempts to beautify the interior of a commonplace building the church at Kippen is the outstanding example. Many of these churches are left open on weekdays, another pleasing feature. But though much has been done, much still remains to be done. There are still some churches of interest that are roofless and unused; and many of those who visit the island of Iona wish that more use could be made of its rich heritage of sacred buildings.

(g) Though the greater part of the United Free Church joined with the Church of Scotland, that union is not without its difficulties. In particular there are still in many places two churches where one would be sufficient. But the completion of that union must take time and until it has settled all these difficulties within its own borders the Church of Scotland can scarcely be expected to launch out into schemes of union with other churches.

IV.

The last of these impressions leads to the question with which this article will conclude, namely, the relation between the Church of Scotland and the Church of England.

Those members of the Church of England who rejoice in the title of "Protestant" (whether they be low-church, broad-church, or Evangelical) will probably wish for complete inter-communion with the Reformed and Presbyterian Church representing in Scotland what the Reformed and Episcopalian Church represents in England. But such inter-communion would be so distasteful to High-churchmen and Anglo-Catholics (who also have a place within the comprehensive Church of England) that if it were now formally allowed, there would be a disruption not only of the Established Church of England but of the Anglican Communion; and, much though we may desire a closer relationship with other Reformed churches, we do not wish for it at the price of the break-up of the Church of England. Further, an attempt to reach a better understanding with the Church of Scotland has recently been frustrated.

But, though the Church of England as a body is apparently unable to approach the Church of Scotland, individual members of the Church of England are free, if they so wish, to associate themselves with the Church of Scotland as soon as they cross the border.

The Established Church of England does not exist in Scotland, though St. Thomas', Edinburgh and St. Silas', Glasgow, claim to be "Church of England"; and the rules of our church say nothing about what we are to do when outside England. Those Anglicans who regard Episcopacy as necessary will of course associate

themselves with the Scottish Episcopalian Church which corresponds to the High-church section of the Church of England. Those who do not set so high a value on forms of church government and regard the Church of England as the national expression of the Protestant religion are not likely to feel at home in the Scottish Episcopalian Church and will therefore turn to the Church of Scotland where they may be sure of a welcome. If the legality of such a course is questioned, we reply that the rules of the Church of England do not forbid its members to worship, communicate, or (if ministers) preach in the Church of Scotland, and that until such action has been declared illegal by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council we have a right to exercise that freedom; if precedent is sought, Charles Simeon, at the end of the 18th century, used to officiate in the Church of Scotland on the ground that where the King and his court must attend an English clergyman may preach; and in 1872 Dean Stanley set an example at the Greyfriars Church, Edinburgh, which has been followed by not a few English clergymen, not all of them so "Broad-church" as the Dean. The fact that the Scottish Episcopalian Church forbids any such inter-communion is irrelevant to those who have never subjected ourselves to the discipline of that church. On the other hand, an English clergyman exercising what is undoubtedly his right incurs the wrath of the Scottish Episcopalian Church and of High churchmen within his own communion, and for the sake of peace he may hold that in his case that which is lawful is not expedient.

In the Bidding Prayer of 1604 we are bidden to pray for "Christ's Holy Catholic Church which is the whole congregation of Christian people dispersed throughout the world, especially for the Churches of England and Scotland" and the Church of Scotland at that date was, as now, Presbyterian. Those who regard both churches as expressing for their respective nations the reformed or Protestant religion will wish for a closer union between them, and will regret that the liberal attitude of the Church of England to the other reformed churches which characterized the Reformation period was not continued during the period which followed the settlement of 1662.

This paper is concerned only with the Church of Scotland. Lack of space prevents any further account of the dissenting Presbyterian churches, from one of which, the United Free Church (continuing) the writer has received much kindness. Nor has it been possible to describe the history of the Scottish Episcopalian Church, a history which goes far to explain its exclusive attitude to-day. But while these and other small churches play a part in the religious life of Scotland, readers of *THE CHURCHMAN* will probably feel more interested in the great communion which so well deserves the title of "The Church of Scotland."

NOTE.—The Rev. J. Hutchison Cockburn D.D., Minister of Dunblane Cathedral, kindly read through this article in typescript; the writer is indebted to Dr. Cockburn for a number of explanations and for some corrections, mainly on matters concerned with the internal administration of the Church of Scotland.