RELIGION AND DEMOCRACY IN SCOTTISH HISTORY

I

LIBERTY was one of the prominent aims of that many-sided movement which we call the Reformation. The advance of Education, the widening of human experience, the relative independence of the Scottish nobles, the rise of the burgher and merchant class, made possible a new individualism and nationalism, and undermined the old Authority. The sharpness faded from the distinction between clergy and laity. Before God all were alike human beings with rights, the right to approach God, the right to have justice; and all were alike sinners and in that sense also equals, as at the same time equal in connection with the hope of the life to come. All classes were involved. Although the Reformation in Scotland was due in part to the jealousy of the nobles on account of the wealth and influence of churchmen and in part to an intellectual renaissance, it would have been impossible but for general popular support. Some one put forward in the name of the poor a document called the *Beggars' Summons*. The *Guid and Godlie Ballats*, and the *Satire of the Three Estates* show the discontent among the commons under clerical oppression and spiritual neglect. The people were in it. Perhaps it was with a view to encouraging their co-operation that John Knox was brought back from Geneva.

Knox's eloquence had tremendous power over the multitude. He had not himself much respect for mobs, and was no democrat in any modern sense of that word; but both in his writings and in his speeches to Mary Queen of Scots he made clear his conviction that a monarch who proves unworthy may be deposed, and that rulers should be open to censure for their sins like anyone else. To the Queen he said: " Ye crave of them service; they crave of you protection and defence against evil-doers. Now, madam, if ye shall deny your duty unto them, think ye to receive full obedience of them? I fear, madam, ye shall

not." And John Craig, the colleague of Knox at St. Giles's, gave his opinion " that princes are not only bound to keep laws and promises to their subjects, but also that in case they fail they justly may be deposed, for the band betwix the prince and the people is reciprocal ". This was a very different view from that which had been expounded by Mary of Guise and other representatives of royal France.

Doctrine similar to that of Knox was developed in George Buchanan's *De Jure Regni* (1579). Thus he declares: " Kings were not made for themselves but for the people." " The people from whom he derived his power should have the liberty of prescribing its bounds." " When a king is called before the tribunal of the people, an inferior is summoned to appear before a superior." " A mutual compact subsists between a king and his subjects."

Andrew Melville followed with his theory of the Two Kingdoms, and his plucking of King James's sleeve and his terming him " God's sillie vassal ", treatment which the king never forgave and which ultimately meant exile for the outspoken minister.

Knox, Buchanan and Melville all assumed that the normal system of government as ordained and blessed by God was by King and Three Estates, (nobles and gentry, clergy and burghers). This remained the characteristic Scottish attitude, even in Samuel Rutherfurd's *Lex Rex*, which Charles II ordered to be burnt. The Presbyterian revolution of 1638 was guided by an executive of four Tables representing nobles, gentry, clergy and burghers.

Lex Rex gives us the political theory of the early Covenanting party, and it teaches constitutional monarchy. Man is depicted as naturally belonging to a society whose members are born equally free but which for convenience delegates its powers, power of government being from God, but mediated by the consent of the community. God by the people's free suffrage appoints someone to be king, and a king may be a great mercy to church and people. Popular government is stated to be, not that wherein all the people are rulers " for this is confusion and not government ", but government by chosen instruments. Rutherfurd accepts the hereditary principle as expedient; election would be better " in respect of liberty ", but " in respect of safety and peace birth is safer and the nearest way to the

well ". Rutherfurd approves of a constitution that combines monarchy, aristocracy and democracy, using the word democracy to imply representative rulers under the rank of noble and laird. Absolute monarchy he says is tyranny; unmixed democracy is confusion; untempered aristocracy is factious dominion. " I utterly deny God ever ordained such an irrational creature as an absolute monarch." " Every government hath something wherein it is best; monarchy is honourable and gloriouslike before men: aristocracy for counsel is surest: democracy for liberty and possibly for riches and gain is best. A limited mixed monarchy such as is in Scotland and England seems to me the best government." Absolute rule or tyranny he considers utterly unjustifiable from scripture or reason, and sufficient warrant for deposition or even death.

In one passage Rutherfurd declares that " the ministers of Christ in Scotland had never a contest with King James but for his sins and his conniving with papists and his introducing bishops, etc. ", " the ushers of the pope ". James, however, had formed a different impression. He protested in the *Basilicon Doron* (1599) that he was calumniated in sermons " because I was a king, which they thought the highest evil ". The ministers, he believed, informed the people that all kings and princes were " naturally enemies to the liberty of the church". He explains that " some fierce-spirited men in the ministry got such a guiding of the people at that time of confusion as finding the gust of government sweet they began to fantasy themselves a democratic form of government ", and " settled themselves so fast upon the imagined democracy as they fed themselves with the hope to become tribuni plebis and so in a popular government by leading the people by the nose to bear the sway of all the rule ". James indicates that such extremists could only be allowed to exist to exercise his patience " as Socrates kept an evil wife ". James was satisfied that " no bishop " would mean " no king ".

A similar conception of the ideas of the Presbyterians a century later is afforded by the clever skit, *Scottish Presbyterian Eloquence Displayed* (1692), which tells us that to these persons " kings and tyrants for the most part are reciprocal terms ". Sir George Mackenzie in his *Vindication* (1683) attributes to the Presbyterians " principles opposite to monarchical government ".

George Gillespie (1649) insists, however, that the Scots " utterly abhor " the tenets of Brownists and Anabaptists concerning popular government; and Robert Baillie (1647) expressly disclaimed the views of English sectaries who disapproved of monarchy and of the peerage and who insisted that " the common people, every individual of the whole multitude must be set on the throne of sovereignty ", that the kinghood belonged to " every individual of the people, as well beggars, fools and rogues, as the most vertuous, wise, noble and wealthy persons ". This " ochlocratoric republic ", as Baillie calls it, he distinguishes from what he would describe as democracy, where he says " the better sort only of the people have voice in government ".

The Scots proclaimed Charles II whenever the execution of Charles I was reported, and thus displayed their antipathy to the political philosophy of the English Independents. Gilbert Burnet in his *Vindication* (1673) makes the representative of the Presbyterians express the opinion that the people first chose princes in the interest of justice and peace and might resume their own " conditional surrender ", the king of Scotland being traditionally " a limited king ", accountable to the people.

The strongest expressions are those of the later Covenanters who were bitterly hostile to their persecutors, including the reigning House of Stuart. Shields, in *A Hind Let Loose* (1687), teaches that " every man created according to God's image is a sacred thing ". He recognises that Magistracy or the State is ordained of God, but points out that this " does not make James Stuart a king no more than John Chamberlain ". Corresponding ideas appear in *Naphtali* (1667) where the National Covenant of 1638, a covenant with God, is regarded as a new beginning of government in Scotland, being itself " the very fundamental law of the kingdom, whereon all the rights and privileges either of king or people are principally bottomed and secured ".

The Episcopalians in Scotland preferred the views favoured by their Stuart rulers. Thus the *True Narrative of the Perth Assembly*, published by Bishop Lindsay in 1621, adopts the attitude that " where a man hath not a law his judgment is the rule of his conscience, but where there is a law, the law must be the rule ". The Aberdeen Doctors expressed their belief that they must accept the king's authority. God, they declared, has given

the sword directly to the magistrate. A full discussion of the whole issue regarding the divine right and absolute authority of the monarch appears in Bishop Honeyman's *Survey of Naphtali* (1668). Democracy he pronounces the "worst of governments", speaking of "the rabble of the multitude". The theory of compact or covenant he entirely rejects.

II

We turn from political theory to ecclesiastical polity, and to the question as to how far the system of church government set up at the Reformation upon what was understood to be a biblical basis under the *First* and *Second Books of Discipline*, and re-established at the Revolution Settlement of 1690, was democratic in tendency. The Presbyterians demanded parity of clergy and this became the subject matter of many books of controversy. David Calderwood, George Gillespie, Jameson, Forrester, Rule and Anderson were among the champions of parity, while the opposition was led with like fluency and scholasticism by George Garden, Sage, Rhind and others. The emphasis upon equality was never such that one minister could not be placed over others, but any distinction which the Presbyterians were prepared to recognise rested upon merit or convenience, and did not contemplate any difference in rank. A minister might act as moderator, primus inter pares. He might even be a Superintendent, but that would not in the least affect the doctrine. Amongst the Episcopalians this attitude would have satisfied Bishop Patrick Forbes, but most adhered rather to the principles of Laud.

There has never been complete agreement among Presbyterians as to the relation between clerical and lay. Some in seventeenth century Scotland were inclined to put almost as much stress as English non-conformists upon the democratic Reformation doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, and so to make the distinction merely one of function. But this was not the general view, and in Scotland ministers were actually marked off very decidedly from the laity by public opinion, partly, no doubt, on account of the high educational standard set for the minister and his good social position, facts which established an undeniable separation. There was no democratic familiarity with ministers in those days. What one might call

the non-conformist view was fairly characteristic of the United Presbyterian Church in nineteenth-century Scotland.

The Presbyterian system was definitely democratic in tendency in giving the laity a say in the government of the Church. The precise position of the elder has never been clear. Thus Rutherfurd scorns the phrase "lay-elder"; and it has to be remembered that the elder is "ordained" though without the laying on of hands, and that the Biblical warrant produced by Calvin for the office makes the elder differ merely in function and not in order from other Presbyters, so that theoretically the elder might be classed as clergy. In practice this has never carried weight. Scottish elders seem consistently to have regarded themselves as in a different position from ministers. The fact that a minister's task is a full-time and paid employment may have helped to create this feeling. There has, it is true, been some difference of opinion as to the extent to which an elder may undertake ministerial duties in emergency, and practical considerations have influenced doctrine. In spite of Rutherfurd and others the elder must be held to be a layman. This more democratic view was taken even by Robert Wodrow, notwithstanding that he was quite as much opposed to "popular supremacy and anarchy" as he was to prelacy.

In practice the Presbyterian system did bring the laity into the sphere of Church government. Elders did "represent the people" to a degree that had no parallel in the Pre-reformation Church in Scotland. The discipline of the people was in the hands, not of the clergy, but of a Kirk-session consisting of minister and elders, the latter being of the people and knowing them personally and understanding their point of view and the circumstances of their life. Elders always outnumber ministers on the sessions, and the vote of an elder counts as much as that of any minister. Session discipline is a democratic institution.

In a sense, of course, it might rather be described as rule by moral aristocracy. After the first days of the Reformation in Scotland, elders were not even selected by the people: they were co-opted by the existing session just as new town councillors were appointed in the Scottish burghs. Perhaps further the experience of those who supervised parish discipline tended to encourage in them a belief in the fewness of the elect, and to strengthen the sense of belonging to an aristocratic group.

In the Presbytery the arrangement was not quite so democratic even in theory as we find it in the Kirk-session. All the ministers of the area were members, but not all the elders, since only one elder was normally appointed from each congregation. In practice the position was even worse, since for business and other reasons elders never attended Presbytery at all well and those who were able to be present were not always truly representative. One may speak somewhat similarly of the other Presbyterian Church courts, Synod and General Assembly.

The eldership was democratic in the best sense in that it seems generally to have included to a remarkable degree representatives of different classes of society, nobles, lairds, magistrates, farmers, tradespeople. There were parishes where the laird or his factor tyrannised, and until the second half of the eighteenth century resistance to the attitude of the laird would not be common; but the lists of elders which appear in session records are conclusive of the care with which in most periods men were selected from all the respectable classes. Rhind rather scoffs at the godly webster and sanctified cobbler who had even the right to frame libels against their pastor. It is plain that he thought the system democratic.

In the First Episcopate of the seventeenth century we hear comparatively little of elders. Under the Second Episcopate sessions remained much the same in composition and function as under Presbyterianism; but the laity were given no say in the higher courts and the General Assembly was abolished —a definitely undemocratic step. Modern Scottish Episcopacy has been distinctly more democratic than has English Episcopacy, and the layman has a real share in ecclesiastical matters.

III

Church interest in Scotland in the eighteenth century centred round the problem of the method of electing ministers. Interesting and important principles were here involved, and there was in particular evidence of strengthening democratic feeling as over against two parties, the patrons and the Church courts.

At the Reformation Knox was in his theories ahead of what was practicable in more than one department. For example, he was strongly democratic in his education policy; but little

came of that till the eighteenth century. The *First Book of Discipline* was never the law of the land. Similarly in the *First Book of Discipline* it was stated categorically that " it appertaineth to the people and to every several congregation to elect their minister ". Much later persons with a case to prove looked back to this as a charter of liberty, but it has to be recollected that the declaration was aimed against the methods of the old Church and not against the landowners. It has also to be noticed that actually the statement had no influence on practice. The *Second Book of Discipline* (1581) makes no such claim, though it follows the First in demanding that no one be intruded into the ministry contrary to the will of the congregation or without the voice of the eldership (which in this context means the Presbytery). Ministers continued to be selected by the patrons, normally the landowners who paid the stipend. This was the only practicable way. The people were not capable of judging or of expressing a judgment in the matter and they had no money with which to pay a minister. Lairds provided ministers as they provided churches and mills and as they were supposed to provide schools.

Samuel Rutherfurd in the early covenant period advocated election directly by the people. George Gillespie agrees but points out that this need not imply that the people must all vote, for, he says, " all may consent when none vote in election but the representative body of the church ", by which he means elders; and he explicitly distinguishes the Church of Scotland custom from that of the English Independents who, he says, " give to the collective body of the church (women and children under age only excepted) the power of decisive vote and suffrage in elections ". Patronage was actually abolished in 1649 by the Cromwellian government on the ground that it was " prejudicial to the liberty of the people ", but the matter was not at that date a live issue in Scotland. Patronage was restored without serious opposition when Episcopacy was re-introduced by Charles II; but it was abolished once more at the Revolution Settlement of 1690, partly because of the number of patrons who were expected to be unfriendly to Presbyterianism. *Scottish Presbyterian Eloquence Displayed* declares that " the calling and constituting of ministers is in the power of the mob ", though in fact it was entirely in the hands of a few heritors and elders. The British Parliament restored patronage in 1712, thus giving

control to many non-Presbyterian and absentee landlords, and creating a real grievance. It was still, however, some time before the issue became serious. The Tract entitled *Presbyterial government as now established and practised in the Church of Scotland*, of which the third edition appeared in 1717, does not so much as mention patronage, but assumes that in practice the choice is generally left to the elders, though it adds that the people tacitly consent and may submit reasons of dissent.

As the century advanced a considerable change of attitude manifested itself. Amongst the causes of this development must be included the extension of educational facilities after the 1696 Act, producing a new capacity to form and to express opinions; the emergence of the party system in British politics with a new growth of class feeling and the introduction of politics in a new way into ecclesiastical affairs; and, after the middle of the century, the marked improvement in conditions of living which made it possible for a group of persons who were discontented to pay for a minister of their own choice.

By 1732 there was a growing section in the Church to whom "the rights of the people" had become a matter of principle. In that year the Assembly (with a democratising purpose) enacted that "until it shall please God in His providence to relieve the church from the grievances arising from the Act restoring patronages" in cases where elections had not been made by patrons who for some reason (as frequently happened) let their privilege lapse, appointment should be made by the heritors and elders in presence of the congregation, the person so elected to be "proposed to the congregation to be either approven or disapproven by them". But this, Ebenezer Erskine and his friends would not accept. They regarded it as entirely insufficient and indeed as a retrograde step from the point of view of democracy. The *Publick Testimony and Grievances* (1732) speaks of "the people's spiritual rights", and says: "It is the divine right of all Christian people to chuse and call their own pastors and other church officers." Many Scripture proofs were given; but all parties could produce that kind of evidence with equal ingenuity. Nor can Erskine's historical appeal be allowed, for, while the principle of popular consent goes back to early Christian times, the interpretation of this expression has varied. What was democracy in 1560 was not democratic in 1732. The same words were used at different

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periods of history but their content differed with the changes in experience. Gillespie had been satisfied that the people were choosing a minister when the heritors and elders did it for them in a sort of parental capacity. The Independents thought that the people were electing when the male members of a congregation did so. Even Erskine did not dream of women having any say. It did not occur to him that his democratic logic might so require.

Obviously a new social opinion was revealing itself. Patrons were for political reasons more inclined to exercise their rights of appointment and to select a type that could not be called popular; and a new feeling of opposition to the lairds as such was showing itself. John Bisset in his *Modern Erastianism Unveiled* (1732) says: " The right of patronage keeps the church in such a sneaking and slavish dependence on great men as is most unworthy of the dignity and character of ministers of the gospel." A few years later in a sermon he declared: " Any rights people have in electing ministers are founded on their Christian profession, and if men's better circumstances in the world doth make them better Christians I shall allow them distinguishing rights in the choice of a minister." This was one of the fundamentals of the Secession of 1733. We see the class attitude very plainly in *Paul's Ghost to the Ministers of the Church of Scotland* (1740) where we read: " It was for that poor mob that counsel of peace was held betwixt the Father and the Son from all eternity; it was for the sake of that poor mob our glorious Emmanuel took that long journey from heaven to earth . . . it was for that mob that He prayed, Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me . . . It was for that poor despised mob that He suffered in the garden." In this same tract objection is taken to admitting lords and lairds as elders in Kirk-sessions. Elsewhere we find noted the tendency of congregations to choose a yeoman's son for minister in preference to a gentleman.

IV

What has come to be called the proletariat was in no degree considered by eighteenth century democracy. Thoughtful and pious folk, nourished on the Bible and on the logical and argumentative sermons which had long been fashionable,

might be expected to develop independence. Weavers and shoemakers had time and opportunity for discussion. The skilled and devout shepherd class in the south of Scotland had abundant encouragement in meditation. The growth of the towns through a set of self-made well-to-do merchants and industrial leaders produced quite a new type, perhaps inclined to domineer but both able and willing to pay for the privilege. Strong dissenting bodies were active in Scotland before the close of the century; but though we would call them democratic in tendency for their day, no one amongst them faced the possibility of extending rights to others than thrifty, intelligent, respectable heads of families, and these socially neither unhappy nor uncomfortable.

Before the French Revolution, however, it was only a very small minority of Scots who showed the type of consciousness of which [we have been speaking and which revealed itself in a demand for a new measure of spiritual freedom. The Moderate party had the negative support of that great majority of the population that had no ambitions or ideas or special grievances and no itch for change. The unroused proletariat has thus never been in the democratic religious group. But while the Moderates had this indifferent and slack and undisciplined mass of the people with it, the party did not consist of these. Its leaders were of the type whose characteristic is balance. They were broadminded, humanistic, tolerant people of the Erasmus rather than of the Luther style; and in the eighteenth century were under the influence of that Reason which had been exalted by the various developments of the Cartesian philosophy. The Moderates of the later eighteenth century were in many respects the successors of the Episcopalians of the Restoration period and of the early seventeenth century, and were similarly opposed to democratic ideas. They wanted people to do what their betters told them. This we can exemplify from their policy as defined by their leader, Principal Robertson, who placed the authority of the organised Church above the conscience of the individual. This order and discipline, involving obedience to the graded courts of the Church which every ordained promised, was the test which they applied to depose Thomas Gillespie, and it was opposition to this that caused the Second Secession and the formation of the Relief Church in 1761. Even in the *Testimony of the Seceders* in 1733 we read: "The power and

authority that the Lord Jesus has given unto the officebearers of his house in their judicative capacity is not an absolute and illimited authority; that it is not a lordly and magisterial power, but it is a ministerial and stewardly power and authority." That is the same attitude as the Covenanters held towards Episcopacy and towards monarchy. The *Testimony* declared that " prelatic dominion and tyranny has crept in ", and they accused Assemblies and Synods of ruling " arbitrarily ". The Moderate party had great contempt for anything democratic, and its supporters had a scarcely concealed conviction that in a parish a candidate for the ministry who was desired by the people was ipso facto dangerous. But it was the demand for independence by the evangelical minority that they chiefly abhorred as subversive of all discipline, while their opponents regarded the moderate policy as no better than popish and subversive of the liberty of the gospel.

The War of American Independence and the French Revolution were symptomatic of a general shifting of opinion throughout the world; and this slowly led in Britain to the Reform Act of 1832. The lairds had been obliged to get over their antipathy to erecting " palaces for dominies ", and the boroughs to revise their protest: " What business has the vulgar rabble, To ken what's done on council table ".

The American War of Independence itself apparently awoke little sympathy in Scotland. Dr. John Erskine of Greyfriars (praised by Sir Walter Scott in *Guy Mannering*), wrote some tracts on the side of the colonists; and David Hume and Adam Smith, from the extra-ecclesiastical circle, favoured the same party; but even such a Moderate as Alexander Gerard of Aberdeen was carried out of his Moderation into an enthusiastic patriotic sermon against the rebels. He was duly rebuked in the pages of the *Monthly Review ;* but his utterance probably represented Scottish public opinion fairly generally.

The French Revolution caused Somerville of Jedburgh to welcome " the dawn of a glorious day of universal liberty "; but probably Moderate opinion was better represented by James Beattie of Marischal College when he insisted that " no despotism is so dreadful as that of the rabble". The overthrow of the Church in France had the effect of stimulating orthodoxy and discouraging liberalism amongst Moderates; and we may remember how in Galt's *Annals of the Parish* the gentry, to

emphasise their faith in order and conservatism, began to come to church.

There was of course sympathy for the Revolution in some quarters. Robert Burns was enthusiastic. A Revolution Society at Dundee gloried in the fall of the Bastille, and declared for the rights of man and equal representation. The Glasgow Society for Borough Reform proclaimed that men are by nature free and equal in respect of their rights, and that all civil and political distinctions derive from the people and are based on public utility. In 1790 Ramsay of Ochtertyre found that the rules which the miners at Leadhills had made for themselves " breathe somewhat of a republican spirit which wishes to set bounds to the power and encroachments of their superiors". James Mackintosh of Aberdeen published as against Edmund Burke his *Vindiciae Gallicae* in 1791—the same year as saw the publication of the first part of Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*. But this was all rather apart from the Church, and such agencies as the Friends of the People included few religious leaders. Politics and religion were no longer so closely related in men's minds: the secularising of institutions had begun. Henry Dundas considered that the dissenting ministers in Scotland were disloyal to the throne; but the General Associate Synod officially stated its acceptance of " the form of civil government as settled in a king, temporal Lords, and Commons ", and the Rev. John Young of Hawick wrote to defend Seceders against the charge of wishing to overturn government from the foundation. Struthers, the historian of the Relief Church, says that the Revolution was welcomed by that body, and quotes the opinion that " a general amendment was beginning in human affairs; the dominion of kings changed for the dominion of laws, and the dominion of priests giving way to the dominion of reason and conscience". He adds that the Secession Church " did not escape the sifting and liberalising influence of the French Revolution ". One result was the appearance of New Lights, less obscurantist parties amongst the Burghers and Anti-Burghers.

Perhaps the most important influence of the French Revolution in this connection is to be seen in the work of the Haldanes, laymen who were largely responsible for the setting up of the Congregationalist and Baptist denominations in Scotland on lines decidedly more democratic than were to be found

in the Establishment or amongst the Dissenters. Their work roused the opposition of the existing denominations. The Anti-Burghers for instance " unanimously declared lay preaching to be without warrant from the word of God "; but they were stimulated later to more aggressive home missionary and educational enterprise by the challenge provided by the Haldanes. Closely associated with this evangelical revival we must notice the beginning of interest in Foreign Missions. At first Missionary Societies were accused of democratic political propagandism; but emphasis on the idea of the rights of man opened people's minds to the claims of non-Christian races. One gathers from John Galt that sermons showed a new insistence on charity and practical Christianity. Recognition of men's rights to liberty also helped to bring relief to the Scottish Episcopalians from the somewhat savage restrictions to which they had been at least theoretically subject since the 'Forty-Five Rebellion. Democratic tendencies were manifested in the Quoad Sacra evangelical congregations which developed in the growing towns and cities in connection with the Church of Scotland. The inferiority of the ministers of these chapels from lack of territorial rights and of a place in church courts, and the lack of selfgoverning power in the Congregation through want of independent kirk-sessions caused feelings which carried most of these congregations very naturally into the Free Church at the Disruption; while the development of democratic feeling as to the election of ministers was another element in the Disruption struggle; and the problem of Church and State which forms the background of that epoch-making event involved of course the whole vital question of spiritual liberty, a principle which also developed in the Scottish Episcopal Church.

V

Politically Scotland had been definitely more democratic than England before the Reform Act of 1832, perhaps not least because conditions as to municipal and political representation had been worse in Scotland; but there is also something in what Hugh Miller hints in a letter to Lord Brougham: " Our popular struggles have been struggles for the right of worshipping God according to the dictates of our conscience and under the guidance of ministers of our own choice, and . . . when

anxiously employed in finding arguments by which rights so dear to us might be rationally defended, our discovery of the principles of civil liberty was merely a sort of chance-consequence of the search." The Secession churches had early introduced democratic ideas, democratic church government, democratic prayer-meetings; though it was well into the nineteenth century before the vast mass of the people entered men's thoughts seriously in connection with the word Democracy, unless indeed where Democracy was being condemned as equivalent to rabble-government. In the other churches there remained a strong Conservative element which was drawn along very slowly by public opinion.

The nineteenth century showed a gradual but steady increase of democratic tendency. One cannot say that it was either led or opposed by the Churches; but on the whole the Churches seem to have lagged behind common opinion. They could not, of course, ignore such facts as the hostility of Robert Owen to religion and the Church. The extension of the franchise under successive Acts up to 1928; Bentham and John Stuart Mill; the development of the Trade Union; the emergence of the Labour Party; the introduction of universal education and then of free secondary education; an awakening to social problems that had intensified owing to the growth of towns and cities; a slower awakening to rural problems; improvements in factory life, prisons, poor-houses; the municipalisation and nationalisation of so many of the aids to living—these were not religious movements and perhaps the Church had very little to do with most of them. We may, however, note that in this country as contrasted with others, the democratic tendency retained to a remarkable extent the sympathy of the Church and vice versa. The Church trained a very great number of those who were responsible for these movements. I am not thinking so much of Shaftesbury and F. D. Maurice and Charles Kingsley who influenced Scotland as well as England; or Thomas Carlyle with his Secessionist background, but of Y.M.C.A. meetings and other religious gatherings where working men learned to think and to express themselves and were inspired with Christian principles which they sought to apply to politics and economics even after they had possibly abandoned the Church.

The nineteenth century Church made more effort to touch the masses than the conditions of earlier days had demanded

of them. Dr. Thomas Chalmers, and much later, Dr. Norman Macleod of the Barony, took the Church to the people with whom the Industrial Revolution had overpopulated the towns. The growth of democratic feeling in the Church was nowhere symbolically plainer than in the abandonment of Patronage in 1874 by the Church of Scotland in response to the accepted public opinion of the day.

There was slow progress in the matter of true social liberty. We do not look back to the Victorian Age as an age of liberty. Socially it was a period of restrictions and worshipped respectability. And when we go farther back in Scottish history liberty in the social sphere is not very evident. Life was strictly disciplined by the Church after the most approved Geneva fashion, and people were taught that no one might live just as pleased himself in Scotland. This all looks like an aristocratic system of rule, and I have already said that there was something aristocratic about the kirk-session. It must, however, be noted that while Democracy is all for liberty, the freedom of the individual and release from oppression, this liberty which it fosters is not the same thing as lawlessness. Thus a Trade Union may be called an agent of democratic liberty, but it is obviously restrictive and aristocratic and may be oppressive. It is really the principle of representation which is in evidence here. Similarly with kirk-session discipline. It is the community that speaks through that, and the highest liberty for individuals is recognised as only possible under law. This may be overdone but liberty is best attained by way of law, law being in essence a means to liberty, though it often forgets this. We are always having to balance carefully the claims of law and of liberty; and true democracy is not compatible with lawlessness. We might illustrate by two very small points in modern Scottish Church life. The Congregational and Baptist denominations have begun to submit to organisation as corporate bodies to an extent not originally contemplated; but in this they are not becoming undemocratic, but are coming to a fuller realisation of the technique of liberty. The hankering after Superintendents which we find in the Church of Scotland is a similar move. It looks undemocratic, but is not necessarily so; it is simply a proposal for fuller use of the representative principle of democracy, which encourages difference of function, while rejecting hierarchy and continuing to emphasise the ultimate equality

of all. Democracy is anti-authoritarian, but not hostile to system and organisation. One of the weaknesses of Democracy has been its occasional failure to recognise this, and to remember that the quality as well as the extent of liberty has to be considered.

VI

In the nineteenth century an important modification had been introduced by the rise of economics to a place alongside politics in connection with the word democracy. Progress towards economic liberty was slow compared with the advance to political liberty. People only slowly become conscious of occasions for applying even accepted principles. Progress has no doubt been retarded by a tendency to restrict the word democracy to what we call the working classes, and not, as the derivation of the word would suggest, to the entire community. This is nothing new, but it is unfortunate. The class war is not democratic; it is anti-democratic. On the other hand, it is not fair to tie up Scottish religion to Capitalism by declaring, as has been done by Archdeacon Cunningham and those influenced by Max Weber, that Calvinism and Capitalism are vitally related. It is true that Scotland was very Old Testamentish. It is true also that Calvinists have often attained commercial prosperity, some of them with little credit to themselves or the Church. But the attitude of the Scottish Church to the poor throughout its history must be remembered, and also its stout fight for the careful observance of the Lord's Day. Scotland, however, was a very poor country for long enough after it accepted Calvinism, and though usury was approved to an extent unknown before, the association of Calvinism and Capitalism seems accidental, and reduces itself to the fact that Calvinism tends to encourage and to produce certain qualities, provides backbone, discipline, a sense of vocation, a spirit of confidence, and in other ways develops a type of character likely to succeed in life.

In so far as there has been a widening of the gulf between classes through economic development, true democracy has suffered. There is difference of opinion as to the proper balance and distribution and some will think our present society scarcely deserving of the name of democracy at all. They are not satisfied with the degree of equality it makes practicable.

Certainly our democracy has many defects, especially on the side of efficiency. We have to assure ourselves that these are not too serious relatively to the advantages of the system, or not inherent in it. In the political world the extension of the franchise has not had the anticipated results. Not all vote, and few take a real interest in public affairs where they are not immediately concerned. What is everybody's business is nobody's business. Public affairs in town and nation have fallen into the hands of second-rate people who hide behind well-paid and so correspondingly unprogressive permanent officials. The course of action pursued in a democratic institution is apt to be one to which public opinion will have no particular objection, rather than a programme characterised by positive decision and enterprise and faith. Presbyterians in the Church are worried by the ineffectiveness of their discipline; by the development of a set of permanent officials in the Church who know everything and listen to nothing; and by changes in the method of electing ministers which would have made Ebenezer Erskine's hair stand on end.

But, reviewing the centuries, one may say that the Reformation in Scotland introduced a decided democratic tendency, and that gradually this has strengthened, and a much wider part of the community both in Church and State has a share of control and of responsibility, of service and of benefit, while fewer and fewer remain in positions of mere privilege, or on the other hand are left altogether out of account. The word democracy properly used has a richer content than it had. Perhaps we would be entitled to say that just as Christianity has never been Christian, so Democracy has never been democratic. It is a direction rather than a system. But we can see some progress in the Church. We have liberty of conscience. Our church members have vastly increased opportunities of Christian service offered to them in all kinds of church work and organisations and active charities. And we can say that the more democracy is democracy, the more it is Christian. It is plainly compatible with Christianity, embodying the principle of the priesthood of all believers, a gospel view of the individual, and ideals such as charity, brotherhood, stewardship, vocation, justice, liberty. Scottish history would therefore declare that there was something right about the democratic ideology. In addition to being progressively effective as a method, capable

of inner development and expansion and improvement, it can be true to its early religious basis in Reformation teaching. From the world point of view its ideals seem compatible with general peace and happiness and the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Dr. Adolf Keller has written: " There used to be a widespread belief that a special affinity existed between a true democracy, assuring full liberty and equality of rights to its members, and the true Christian society, composed of brethren and aiming at the welfare of all. . . . The secular development of democracy, its degeneration and infirmity, no longer allow of such a comparison." So says Keller. Perhaps we need not be so pessimistic. Perhaps Democracy will justify itself after all and give us a Christian world.

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