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The Attitude of James Begg and *The Watchword* Magazine to the 1872 Education Act

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Since the Reformation there has always been a link between church and school, typified in the frontispiece of David Calhoun's history of Princeton Theological Seminary, "an Old University town . . . Kirk and College keeping time, Faith and Learning, chime for chime".[1] The Reformation itself profited from the great cultural movement called the Renaissance; as Sidney Houghton remarks, "one of the most important external causes of the Reformation was the movement known as the Renaissance, or the rebirth of learning".[2]

The scope of this article is not to chart the relationship between schools and the reformed churches, but rather to explore what the response of the conservative grouping within the Disruption Free Church of Scotland was towards the 1872 Education Act. This Act was seminal in the creation of the modern Scottish school system and has fashioned the situation that we still see at the present time. Today the influence of Presbyterian ministers on schools is exercised through a system of boards where other groupings such as the Roman Catholics, who have retained their own schools, still enjoy a degree of protection within legislation. It is understandable for Presbyterian parents, looking at the present state of Scottish schools, to ask "How did we get here?".

[1] D. B. Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary, Faith and Learning 1812-1868* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), p. vii.

[2] S. M. Houghton, *Sketches in Church History* (Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1980), p. 76.

Further, when it is realised that prior to 1872 there were, throughout Scotland, both parochial schools and over seven hundred schools built by the Free Church of Scotland Educational Scheme, it is natural to ask, "Why were these schools merged into the National Education system brought about by the 1872 Act?". It is the purpose of this article to seek to answer these questions.

1. *The First Book of Discipline*

The Reformation in England took place with the broad support of the monarchy. In Scotland, the Reformation was led by the people (and a select group of nobles) in the face of royal opposition, and this gave the Reformation in Scotland a very distinctive structure and character. John Parkhurst, the Bishop of Norwich, writing to Heinrich Bullinger in 1560 could say, "The Scots have made greater progress in true religion in a few months than we have done in many years".[3] This progress required the leaders of the Reformation to think carefully about the implications of their views on wider society. In England the King was enriched by the dissolution of the monasteries. In Scotland, though the nobles aggrandised themselves, at least some of the monasteries' wealth was put to the common good. It forced the leaders within the Church to place a special emphasis on maintaining order and they sought to achieve this through the mechanism of the *First Book of Discipline.* The *Scots Confession of Faith* of 1560 was accompanied by the *First Book of Discipline,* and while the Confession was ratified by Parliament, the *First Book of Discipline* was not, due to disagreements with the nobles about its practical effects. Amongst the changes envisaged in the *First Book of Discipline* was the establishment of a National Education Scheme. Chapter seven requires the education of the youth of the realm. It says, "Seeing that God hath determined that his kirk here in earth shall be taught not by angels but by men and seeing that men are borne ignorant of God and of all godlinesse . . . of necessity it is that your honours be most careful for the vertuous education and godly up-bringing of the youth of this realm".[4] The vision of the authors was to place a school in every parish with its own schoolmaster and that each significant town in the country should

[3] D. Hay Fleming, *The Scottish Reformation* (Reformation Press, 2011), p. 118.

[4] *First Book of Discipline,* Chapter 7, Section 1. Taken from, W. Steuart, *Collections and Observations concerning the Worship, Discipline and Government of the Church of Scotland* (5th Edition, Edinburgh Printing Company, Edinburgh, 1837), p. 66.

have its own college. In Chapter eight the authors, the six Johns (John Knox, John Spottiswoode, John Willock, John Row, John Douglas and John Winram), placed the responsibility for financing this vision for Scottish schools on the endowments of the Church. Hay Fleming comments about this vision, "This was a mighty advance on the Act of 1496, and it would have been an incalculable blessing to the country had the selfish greed of the nobles not prevented its being put into operation".[5] The scheme was not really put into any effect until 1696 and even then its intentions were muted due to the size of some of the Highland parishes (which could span many miles) and to continued political opposition. Despite its problems, the education system of Knox and his colleagues gave Scotland the foundations of an educational meritocracy. James Scotland who has written a two volume history of Scottish Education comments, "from these parish schools and this daily routine came a number of gifted men, the 'lad o'pairts' of whom Scotland has always been sentimentally proud".[6]

Donald C. Smith has observed, "in the 18th century, in spite of the fact that educational facilities in the Highlands were grossly inadequate, the majority of Scots peasants, unlike the English, could read and write".[7] Readers of the life of John Cairns cannot help but be struck by the academic progress of the youngest of the ten children born to a Scottish peasant shepherd. His biographer recounts how Sir John Hall was surprised to find the shepherd boy of Cockburnspath to be well acquainted with his Euclid and various books, after finding him deep in concentration reading Greek amongst the ruins of an old church. In 1850, John Cairns stood with his head uncovered beside the cross where he played as a child and paid tribute to John M'Gregor the schoolmaster

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[5] Hay Fleming, op. cit., p. 128. The 1496 Act was the product of the Renaissance monarch James IV, who required all barons and freeholders to put their eldest sons and heirs into grammar school until they were at least competent in Latin. After grammar school they had to spend a further three years in schools of arts and law and failure to comply was to lead to a financial penalty. In reality this act had little effect and in 1521 John Major (the Principal of Glasgow University) would write of the Scottish nobles that "the gentry educate their children in neither letters nor morals"; at the same time there is no record of a single fine being issued under the Act. Yet, it remains one of the earliest education acts passed by a government in the history of Europe. See J. Scotland, *The History of Scottish Education* (2 vols., University of London Press, Edinburgh [1970]), Vol. 1, pp. 38-39.

[6] J. Scotland, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 68.

[7] D. C. Smith, *Passive Obedience and Prophetic Protest – Social Criticism in the Scottish Church 1830-1945* (American University Studies, Series IX History, Volume 15, Peter Lang Publishing, New York, 1987), p. 120, n. 66.

in that sleepy hamlet. Cairns spoke of "the impartial and even handed justice which he dealt out to each and all of us; the children of the rich and the children of the poor were on a footing of equality, and the only rank was that of merit".[8]

2. Evangelical witness in the cities

A significant challenge to the vision of Knox was found in the rise of industrialisation and the population movement from the countryside to the cities and larger towns from the end of the eighteenth century. The evangelicals in the Church of Scotland could see that the parish system was breaking down within the larger towns and cities. To meet the spiritual needs of the growing population they set up "Chapels of Ease" in the poorer districts. The House of Lords decision in the Stewarton Case that Chapel of Ease ministers were not entitled to a seat in the Courts of the Church of Scotland was one of the factors leading to the Disruption of 1843.[9] By the early nineteenth century, the educational system in the cities had collapsed as the parishes could no longer cope with the population growth.

In 1817, Dr. Andrew Thomson could write: "In Ireland, as well as in England, there is a growing concern for the establishment of schools and the diffusion of knowledge . . . there seems to be a strong disposition to do everything that is practicable for communicating to the poorer classes of the community a blessing which, though in every respect invaluable, they do not in many cases enjoy at all, and in most cases in a very imperfect form." He then proposed a statistical survey of Scottish National Education with any profits from the resulting publication going to the Widows' Fund belonging to the Parochial Schoolmasters of Scotland.[10]

The most famous of the attempts made by evangelicals inside the Established Church to cope with the difficulties faced by the parish system, was the "St John's experiment" conducted by Thomas

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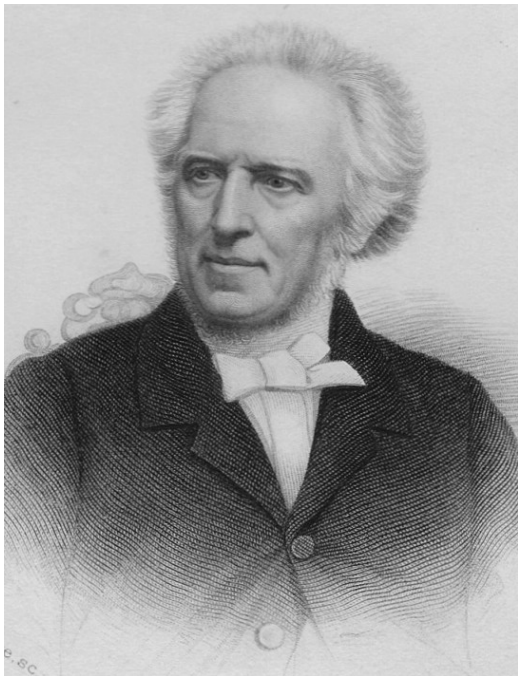
[8] A. R. MacEwen, *Life and Letters of John Cairns DD* (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1895), p. 14. In the chapter on Cairns' upbringing, it describes how the schoolmaster did not raise the school fee, as was the usual practice once Latin was taken, so that with a degree of domestic carefulness his parents could continue his education.

[9] For details of the Stewarton Case see, Francis Lyall, *Of Presbyters and Kings* (Aberdeen University Press, 1980), pp. 43-46; Nigel M. de S. Cameron (ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 796-7.

[10] "The late Dr. Andrew Thomson on Education", *The Watchword,* Vol. 1, 1st January 1867, p. 300.



David Stow.

Chalmers.[11] An elder on the Kirk Session of Thomas Chalmers was David Stow. The son of a wealthy Paisley merchant, Stow was stirred by the poverty he saw as he travelled through Glasgow on his way to work. There he saw children who never went to school, and he found that one in six of those questioned had never heard of the name of Jesus except from the mouths of profane swearers. Stow would spend his family fortune on building urban model schools and then later a "Normal" college.[12] Stow believed that schools should not be in the private control of an individual or a charity, and therefore entrusted his life's work to the Church. He had, however, failed to foresee the forthcoming events of 1843 and when the Disruption occurred he went with Chalmers into the Free Church. Stow had clearly hoped that he would be allowed to continue his work in the Normal Colleges and model schools, but the Church of Scotland Education Committee decreed that all staff would have to sign their allegiance to the General Assembly.

In 1845, in a dramatic gesture of repudiation, Stow, his teachers, students and pupils, left the building and walked through the crowded Glasgow streets in a procession joined by the old janitor and his wife who locked the door behind them. They then carried on their classes as usual, but in tents until new buildings could be erected.[13]

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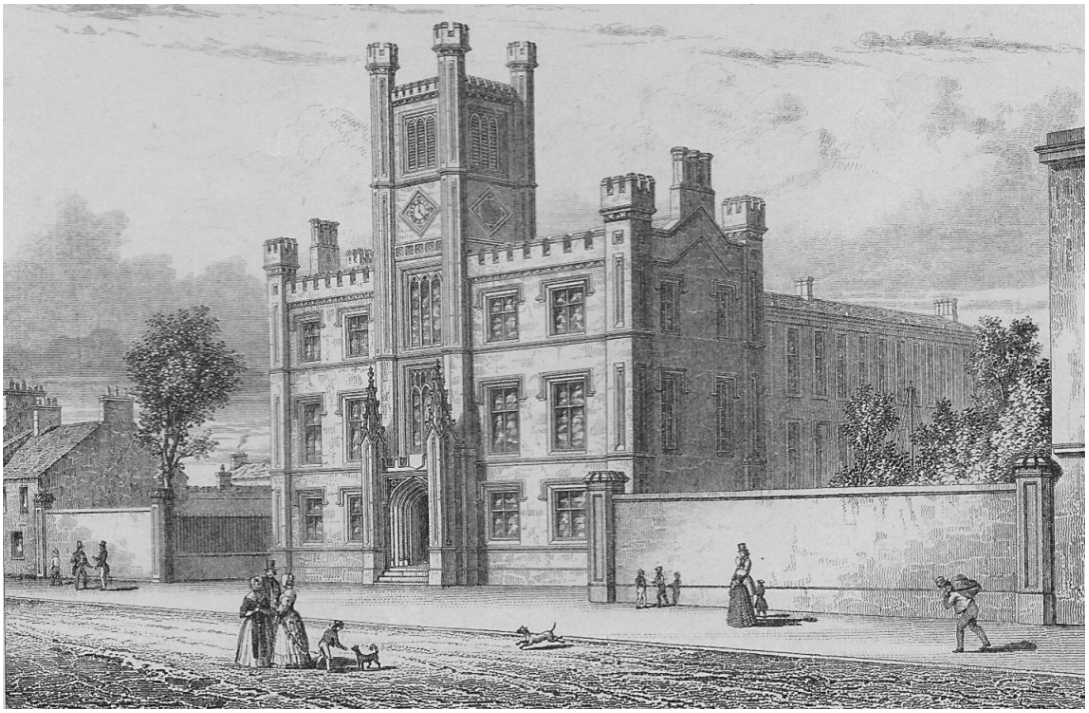
[11] For details of the St John's Experiment see, Stewart J. Brown, *Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth* (Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 122-163.

[12] A "Normal College" was an institution for the professional training of teachers.

[13] For more on the life and witness of David Stow, see W. Fraser, *Memoir of the Life of David Stow* (London, 1868) and also the present author's article in *Banner of Truth Magazine*, No. 537, June 2008, entitled, "David Stow – Faith and Learning: Train up a child in the way he should go". This was followed by a second article in No. 538, July 2008, which sought to apply the lessons from Stow's life to the present situation. These articles elicited numerous responses, some of which were published in the October 2008 *Banner of Truth Magazine,* No. 541. The editor, Walter Chantry, stated: "Never in my experience have we received so many written responses to magazine material." p. 28.



Glasgow Normal Seminary. Frontispiece illustration to David Stow's
The Training System, Moral Training School, and Normal Training School for Preparing School-Trainers and Governesses.

3. The start of the Free Church Education Scheme

In the treatment of David Stow by the Established Church, it is possible to discern some of the methods employed to discourage school teachers from joining the Free Church. At the Disruption, around 450 ministers left the Church of Scotland to form the Free Church of Scotland. At the same time, 400 teachers were ejected from their employment because they had connected themselves with the Free Church. Stewart Mechie says that the Free Church felt itself "morally responsible" for these people and it was this that led to the Free Church Education scheme.[14] Donald Withrington, who was an authority on the Scottish Church and education, has suggested that Robert Candlish supported the concept of a Free Church Education Scheme as a means of protecting the children of the Free Church from the ecclesiastical influence of the body that they had just left.[15]

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[14] S. Mechie, *The Church and Scottish Social Development 1780-1870* (Oxford University Press, London, 1960), p. 147.

[15] D. J. Withrington, "The Free Church Educational Scheme 1843-50", *Records of the Scottish Church History Society,* Vol. 15, 1963, pp. 103-115 (the citation is on p. 105).

There were many difficulties to dampen the enthusiasm for building schools. The Free Church supporters were already financially stretched to provide the funds to build large numbers of new churches and manses without the additional costs of a school infrastructure. The support for the education scheme was, however, drawn from across the spectrum of the Free Church. In May 1843 at the Disruption General Assembly, the retiring moderator Dr. Welsh had spoken in support of schools being opened. By October 1843, Robert MacDonald, the minister of Blairgowrie, offered to raise £50,000 to build 500 schools.[16] The *Assembly Proceedings* for 1843 give the following details:

Scheme for raising £50,000 for the erection of 500 schools for the Free Church of Scotland. Each school to be aided to the extent of £100.

500	persons giving 1s to each of 500 schools yields being £25 individual contributions	£12,500
1,000	persons giving 6d to each of 500 schools yields being £12.10s individual contributions	£12,500
2,000	persons giving 3d to each of 500 schools yields being £6.5s individual contributions	£12,500
6,000	persons giving 1d to each of 500 schools yields being £2.1s 8d individual contributions	£12,500
9,500	persons giving at the above rates	£50,000[17]

With the Assembly's blessing Mr. MacDonald ventured forth. Edinburgh subscribed £7,000, Leith £1,125, Haddington £520, St. Andrews £600, Perth £1,400, Dundee £2,700, Arbroath £1,100, Inverness £1,000, Wick £775, Paisley £1,300, Rothesay £1,000. A

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[16] Robert MacDonald (1813-1893) was a close friend of Robert Murray M'Cheyne, Andrew Bonar, and John Milne. W. Ewing (ed.), *The Annals of the Free Church of Scotland* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1914), Vol. 1, p. 224, speaks of him in these terms: "Robert MacDonald was in the central district of Scotland 'like a torch of fire in a sheaf'. He took his full share in the work and witness of Disruption times. To him the Free Church owed the conception and execution of the scheme for school building, as also a great part of the success of the scheme for the erection of New College, Edinburgh. He was translated to North Leith in 1857 and in 1882 was Moderator of the General Assembly." For a sketch of his career, see, J. A. Wylie (ed.), *Disruption Worthies* (Edinburgh, 1881), pp. 363-370.

[17] *Assembly Proceedings* (Glasgow, 1843), p. 81, cited in Thomas Brown, *Annals of the Disruption* (Edinburgh, 1893), p. 314.

visit to England was not unproductive, with £500 subscribed in Manchester, £1,000 in Liverpool and £1,400 in London.[18]

On receiving this news, the Free Church Assembly of 1844 was encouraged to begin the construction of schools. A year later it was reported that two hundred and eighty schools were already in operation. By 1847 the Free Church was supporting over five hundred schools. In 1851, this number exceeded seven hundred, which should be set against the backdrop that there were only nine hundred and fifty parishes in the whole of Scotland.[19] The editorial of the *Free Church Magazine* for 1846 envisaged a national system of education supported by all non-established Presbyterians. It said there should be "a school wherever there is a congregation, and at least one complete academy in every large town, and one college, in which all branches of a thorough university education shall be taught".[20] The teaching staff for the new schools came from a variety of sources, some were the expelled former staff of the established schools while others were staff from the private and charitable institutions that saw the Free Church scheme as providing a steady means of employment.

4. The problem with the Free Church Scheme

In its eagerness to set up schools the Free Church had overstretched itself. It found that while it was possible to gather money to build schools, it was a different matter to raise the funds year by year that were required to pay the regular teachers' salaries.[21] As Andrew L. Drummond and James Bulloch put it, "Men were so intoxicated with the discovery that money for good causes could be raised simply by appealing for it that they forgot there was a limit. Many of the promises made to the MacDonald's building fund had not been kept, and collections for

[18] The figures are cited by W. M. Mackay, "Church and School and the Care of Youth", an essay on the Free Church Scheme in Clement Graham (ed.), *Crown Him Lord of All – Essays on the Life and Witness of the Free Church of Scotland* (Knox Press, Edinburgh, 1993), p. 123.

[19] The basis for these figures is D. Withrington, "Adrift among the Reefs of Conflicting ideals: Education and the Free Church, 1843-1855", in S. J. Brown, M. Fry (eds.), *Scotland in the Age of the Disruption* (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh), 1993, p. 79; Mackay, op. cit., p. 123.

[20] "Education in Scotland", *The Free Church Magazine,* Vol. 3, April 1846, pp. 97-101.

[21] In May 1844, the Free Church was supporting 600 teachers and was expecting this to rise to over 1000. Figures are taken from Andrew L. Drummond and James Bulloch, *The Church in Victorian Scotland* (Saint Andrew's Press, Edinburgh, 1975), p. 93.

teachers' salaries did not meet existing obligations."[22] In the Assemblies of 1845 and 1846 the tone of the Education Committee's reports and of the speeches in the debates (with the notable exception of those by Robert Candlish) were very much subdued. It was clear that the money raised from the annual collections in the Free Church congregations was insufficient to meet the cost of the commitments already entered into by the Education Committee. The expenditure on the Normal Training Schools in Glasgow and Edinburgh was greater than had been anticipated and was proving a drain on already strained resources. In addition, the salaries offered to the ejected schoolmasters were still, and would have to remain, lower than what they were receiving before the Disruption.[23]

In December 1846, the Government's Privy Council Committee on Education extended the system of grants to all schools with whose efficiency it was satisfied, leaving the active conduct of them in the hands of the parties by whom they had been instituted.[24] After a lengthy discussion the 1847 Assembly, on the recommendation of Candlish, approved the acceptance of grants by the Free Church. So just four years after the Disruption, the Free Church had asked the Government for financial assistance in the running costs of the scheme. Government aid was given, but was accepted with some reservation. Opposition to the acceptance of the grants came from three groups in the Free Church. *Firstly,* there were those who held that in order to maintain its purity the Church should not accept any assistance from a Government that refused to accept Disruption principles. The 1847 Assembly overwhelmingly defeated a motion calling for the rejection of grants on this ground. *Secondly,* a larger group objected to the acceptance of aid if by their action the Free Church were to provide a precedent for the State to make similar grants to Roman Catholic schools, thus permitting public money to be used for the dissemination of false teaching.[25] A *third* group,

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[22] Drummond and Bulloch, op. cit., see the chapter on "Poor Relief and Education", p. 93.

[23] D. J. Withrington, "The Free Church Educational Scheme", op. cit., p. 107.

[24] Norman L. Walker, *Chapters from the History of the Free Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1895), p. 118.

[25] In the debate at the 1847 Assembly William Cunningham stated, "I have no objection that Papists and Socinians should be aided in receiving education out of the resources of the empire. I think they ought to receive that aid. I think it is the duty of the Government of Great Britain to provide, if possible, that the Popish children of the community should be educated. Of course neither I, nor any other member of this House, could ever

comprised of men like James Begg, Thomas Guthrie, and Hugh Miller, and other prominent Free Churchmen, opposed the Privy Council grants because of their doubts about the wisdom of the Free Church Education Scheme. They believed that expanding the Free Church schools would divert interest and effort from the movement to promote a truly national system of education. These men accepted that the Disruption had settled the state of the churches in Scotland but not that it had necessarily settled the state of the national schools.[26]

5. Early clashes over a "national" scheme

In 1847, Robert Candlish succeeded William Cunningham in the chair of the Free Church Educational Scheme. Drummond and Bulloch make the following comment, "He was a hard-headed man who knew that the Free Church schools would succeed best if they reached a high standard and that the key to this was the payment of reasonable salaries to teachers. Thus aided, by 1850 the Free Church had just under 60,000 pupils in subsidised schools and about 14,000 in others, and their scholastic standards came to be recognised as the highest in the country."[27]

The 1850 General Assembly saw Robert Candlish clash with James Begg who was trying to persuade his colleagues to adopt a "national" system of education which linked all denominational schools to the State. Candlish won a resounding victory (254 votes to 16) but the embittered debate marked the beginning of a process that would eventually result in the end of the Free Church scheme.[28] The 1850 *Free Church Magazine* remarked, "it is pretty plain that the general feeling in the Free Church, respecting her duty in the matter of education, has undergone considerable modification within the last two or three years".[29] Candlish continued to advocate that the Free Church should

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become a consenting party to the funds of the nation being employed in teaching Popery or Socinianism." He then went on to say that, he gave a hearty support to the resolution proposed by Dr. Candlish which "suggested that the Government might be able to give secular education without undertaking any responsibility as to religion, and which recommended the managers of Free Church schools to accept grants in aid if they saw their way to apply for them." Walker, op. cit., p. 119.

[26] D. J. Withrington, "The Free Church Educational Scheme", op. cit., pp. 108-112.

[27] Drummond and Bulloch, op. cit., p. 93. The meaning of "others" in the citation reflects the fact that some of the Free Church schools did not receive State support.

[28] For extended discussion of the 1850 debate and its implications see, D. J. Withrington, "The Free Church Educational Scheme", op. cit., pp. 112-5.

[29] "The Education Question", *The Free Church Magazine,* Vol. 7, February 1850, pp. 97-101.

maintain total control over the schools and refuse any form of a national system. Begg on the other hand, motivated by his commitment to the Establishment Principle, wanted to work closely with the State in the provision of a national system of education.

A significant change occurred in 1861 with the passing of the Parochial Burgh and Schoolmasters Act. The purpose of the Act was to address the problems faced by those schoolmasters still within the established schools. It removed the ancient oaths to Government and the monarch that were required of the parochial schoolmaster; and importantly it also removed the religious test for him to be part of the Established Church. While the old test was removed, the new Act gave relief only to Presbyterian schoolmasters as they were still required not teach doctrines that were subversive to the Church of Scotland. In addition, the 1861 Act continued to place the appointment of the school teachers at the discretion of the local parish minister and the heritors.

In 1847, the United Secession Church joined with the Relief Church to form the United Presbyterian Church (UP). The United Secession Church had itself been formed in 1820 from the New Light sections of both Burgher and Antiburgher Churches, all of which traced their origins to Ebenezer Erskine and the Secession from the Church of Scotland in 1733. Twenty years after the Disruption, a large portion of the Free Church agitated in favour of union with the UPs to create a large "rival" establishment to the Church of Scotland. Donald MacLean comments, "Dr. Candlish was to spearhead a movement for unity with the United Presbyterian Church, which involved abandonment of certain Free Church principles. The UPs were Voluntaries, and did not hold to the principle that the civil ruler was to support the Cause of Christ. To them all religions were equal before the law, and Christianity should not be more favoured than other religions. This view is shot through with infidelistic ideas, and is a denial of Christ's Headship over the nations."[30] This movement for unity did not receive unanimous support in the Free Church; the opposition to it was led by James Begg and some close colleagues who in order to oppose the movement for union began the publication of a monthly magazine called *The Watchword.* The front page stated that it was "A Magazine for the defence of Bible truth, and

[30] D. MacLean, "The Declaratory Act Movement", in *One Hundred Years of Witness* (Free Presbyterian Publications, Skipton, 1993), p. 17.

the advocacy of Free Church Principles". The magazine was published in eight volumes from April 1866 to July 1873.

The first issue of *The Watchword* contained a short article, reflecting Begg's position, which was supportive of the involvement of the Church in education. It urged the establishment of endowed grammar schools in important national centres and encouraged wealthier congregations to set up "self-sustaining" schools. It sought to widen the thinking of its readers and to turn their attention to the universities; it envisaged a reliable system of appointing and removing professors and supporting fellowships for students. "There is also a great want of open and adequate fellowships to encourage our higher students, and to prevent them from being seduced to Prelacy by the temptations of Oxford and Cambridge. We should make our arrangements work in precisely the opposite way, and thus to realise the idea of John Knox, who sketched a bold outline of education, three centuries ago, for the entire kingdom, and for all classes, but which has never yet been realised."[31] An article in the July issue of the same year, spoke about the role of Sabbath schools and the importance of these being run by the congregation rather than by voluntary bodies. It is clear in this second article that they saw these types of schools as a means of evangelism, "The children of Sabbath schools should all be trained to attend public worship as one of their most important lessons".[32] The conservative side of the Free Church, led by James Begg, were clearly not uninterested in education, though they wanted to work with the State in its provision.

The Free Church Education Scheme was building its future on strong academic standards. *The Watchword* was encouraging the Education Committee to create a standard set of textbooks that could be used in all its schools, enabling students to move from school to school and give a greater guarantee of consistency.[33] This type of practical attention to detail was clearly bringing rewards, with the October 1866 *Watchword* reporting that Free Church schools were amongst the best in Britain. It also noted with evident satisfaction that the Established Church schools and those of the Papists were at the opposite end of the

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[31] "Intermediate Education and University Reform", *The Watchword,* Vol. 1, 2nd April 1866, p. 13.

[32] "Sabbath Schools and their relation to the Church", *The Watchword,* Vol. 1, 2nd July 1866, p. 123.

[33] "A set of uniform school-books", *The Watchword,* Vol. 1, 2nd July 1866, p. 111.

spectrum. The figures in the tables below are the percentages of students in each grouping who failed a standard examination.

Failures in Standard V

	Reading	Writing	Arithmetic	Average
Free Church	2.5	11.2	16.2	9
Dissenting Schools (England)	4.6	10	15	9
Church of England	5.3	14	20	12
Romanists	3.5	16.7	25.7	15.2
Established Church (Scotland)	6	17.6	23.9	15.8

Failures in Standard VI

	Reading	Writing	Arithmetic	Average
Free Church	1.8	7.3	11.5	6.8
Dissenting Schools (England)	3.3	8.2	15	8.8
Church of England	7	12	14	11
Romanists	4.4	15.2	14.7	11.4
Established Church (Scotland)	2.2	13.1	24.8	13.5[34]

6. The use of the Establishment Principle in relation to the Education Scheme

As we have noted one of the central tenets of the Free Church was the Establishment Principle. In 1843, Chalmers had famously declared of the Free Church that they were not Voluntaries.[35] Throughout the 1860s in the union debates with the UP Church, the issue of the Establishment Principle was thrust to the forefront.

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[34] "The position of the Free Church Schools in Britain", *The Watchword,* Vol. 1, 1st October 1866, p. 211.

[35] In his opening address to the first Free Church Assembly Thomas Chalmers stated: "To be more plain, let me be more particular. The Voluntaries mistake us if they conceive us to be Voluntaries. We hold by the duty of Government to give of their resources and their means for the maintenance of the gospel ministry in the land. . . . We hold that every part and every function of a commonwealth should be leavened with Christianity, and that every functionary, from the highest to the lowest, should in their respective spheres, do all that in them lies to countenance and uphold it. That is to say we quit the Establishment, we go out on the Establishment principle; we quit a vitiated Establishment, but we would rejoice in returning to a pure one. To express it otherwise – we are the advocates for a national recognition and national support of religion – and we are not voluntaries." *Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland,* May 1843, p. 12.

The April 1850 edition of the *United Presbyterian Magazine* contains an attack on the principle of a National Education system in the form of a letter to the editor from a correspondent calling himself "A United Presbyterian". He writes, "Sometime ago dissenters who agitated for National Education demanded secular education only. This view, however, was soon perceived to be untenable, and few in our church hold to it. We have now the same individuals advocating religious instruction in national schools . . . I maintain that such an opinion is entirely subversive of Voluntaryism, and would go to support the propriety of a government endowment of religion . . . no distinction between a government teaching religion to children and to adults, will remove the difficulty."[36] This same line of thinking in relation to schools can be seen in an article on the proposed union with the UPs in the November 1867 issue of *The Watchword*. The article begins with the comment that there would be those in Scotland who refused to part with their birthright of Free Church principles for the UP mess of Voluntary pottage. This is extended directly to schools, with "The Free Church schools are endowed by the State, (is there no religion in them?) and the UP Church will have none of such endowments. Who shall yield? Or are we to witness the anomaly of a church endowed and not endowed?"[37] Clearly, *The Watchword* approved of schools within the Free Church that were being funded by the State and saw this as an application of the Establishment Principle.

In April 1867, *The Watchword* reprinted extracts from a lecture by Robert Buchanan on the Establishment Principle given in 1834 in which he had said, "The one great doctrine, which we as Churchmen maintain, and which Voluntaries deny is shortly this – That whenever the ruling powers among any people have been called to the knowledge and belief of that Word which was given for light and for the life of men, it is incumbent on them publicly to profess their allegiance to the great God and Saviour whom it reveals; and it is their duty officially to use their power and influence to bring their people also to know, and to acknowledge, and to obey the same divine Redeemer."[38] Voluntaryism,

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[36] "The National Education Movement Questioned", *The United Presbyterian Magazine,* Vol. 4, 1850, p. 178.

[37] "The Irish Presbyterians and Union", *The Watchword,* Vol. 2, 1st November 1867, pp. 254-5.

[38] "Dr Buchanan on the Establishment Principle", *The Watchword,* Vol. 2, 1st April 1867, p. 17. Buchanan in later life weakened his commitment to the Establishment Principle in his desire to achieve a union with the United Presbyterian Church. Another article

on the other hand, argued that the State should limit its activities to the protection of life and property.

The use of the Establishment Principle in relation to education occurred again in a long report on "The Union Question and Dr. Rainy's reply" in March 1868. The issue with the UPs was that whilst they clearly understood the conservative Free Church position of the duty of the civil magistrate, they did not accept it. "They studiously kept in sight the twofold view of the duty of the magistrate which Free Churchmen hold, viz., that of recognising and owning the creed of the Church, ratifying its spiritual jurisdiction, securing its freedom from civil interference and control, and aiding the Church out of the national resources to maintain and extend the truth of the living God, granting aid also for the religious upbringing of the young. The United Presbyterian Committee have not admitted either the one or the other of these State duties, but denied both."[39]

The same issue of *The Watchword* disapproved of Robert Buchanan and other Free Churchmen supporting an education amendment that provided religious teaching at a given hour and allowed parents who objected to this teaching to withdraw their children. They felt that the schools should be allowed to open in prayer and that religious instruction should form a natural part of ordinary school business. They characterised the amendment as thrusting Jesus Christ into a corner.[40]

Six months later, the October 1868 edition continued to attack the effect of Voluntary principles on education by citing the authority of Thomas M'Crie. M'Crie saw Voluntaryism as attacking the Protestant nature of the country and undermining the liberties and privileges of the Church of Scotland which must be given up for a visionary and

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reprinted in *The Watchword* was from the April 1870 *Princeton Review* entitled "The Education Question in America", defending the use of the Bible in schools. At the start, Begg comments that it "demonstrates the vast importance of what we call the Establishment Principle. . . . The Americans themselves begin clearly to see that in this respect they must either rise higher or sink lower." *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 1st September 1871, p. 255. Begg was surprised to find himself looking to America, the supposed land of Voluntaryism. The following month's edition reprinted Judge Storer's Cincinnati ruling on the "Bible in Public Schools" in which he gave judgement to the effect that it was not in the power of an American School Board to interdict the teaching of the Word of God in the public schools of America. "The Bible in American Schools", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 2nd October 1871, p. 285.

[39] "The Union Question – Dr Rainy's reply", *The Watchword*, Vol. 2, 2nd March 1868, p. 376.

[40] "The Education Question", *The Watchword,* Vol. 2, 2nd March 1868, p. 397.

undescribed liberty of all religious professions. M'Crie then details the harmful effect of Voluntaryism on a whole range of institutions. With respect to education he observes, "Public institutions for education, as far as they have religion for their object, and as securities respecting the religious principles of teachers are appointed by government, would also be abolished".[41] The problem for the Candlish pro-union wing of the Church was that there was, quite correctly, a perceived link in the minds of Free Churchmen between State support of the Free Church Education scheme and the practical application of the Establishment Principle. "A consistent Voluntary must be a secularist, in so far as any Government support of education is concerned, and as such must occupy a position wide as the poles asunder from that which the Free Church has hitherto professed to stand on this question."[42]

There is a carefully-worded article in the December 1868 issue of *The Watchword* entitled "The Godly upbringing of the Young: How is it to be secured for the future?". The article focuses on the question, "Who is responsible for the education of a child?". The answer provided is that there is a three-fold responsibility involving the Parent, the State and the Church. Each of the three parties has full responsibility for the whole process of education. The role of the State in the education of the young is both the religious and secular. The article uses the Establishment Principle to argue that unless this is the case then the only other alternative is secularism.[43]

Towards the end of 1870 *The Watchword* reprinted excerpts from Charles J. Brown's book published in 1833, *Church Establishments Defended.* Brown writes, "It will not be denied that it is the duty of our rulers to maintain National Schools throughout the country. If anyone, granting this, shall deny that religion ought to form part of the instruction there communicated, I will enter into no argument with that person. But supposing this is also granted, then let it be observed, that the duty of rulers to provide the means of religious instruction is conceded. . . . There are two principles on which the provision of religion in schools can

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[41] "Current difficulties solved", *The Watchword,* Vol. 3, 1st October 1868, p. 239.

[42] "The education question in Scotland – its present aspect", *The Watchword,* Vol. 3, 2nd November 1868, p. 277.

[43] "The godly upbringing of the young: How it is to be secured in our schools for the future?", *The Watchword,* Vol. 3, 1st December 1868, pp. 325-330. This article is a classic statement of the Scottish Presbyterian view on Education and on where the responsibility for educating children lies. It forms the Appendix to this paper as being potentially helpful in the ongoing education debates at the present time.

be constituted; either first, that of leaving the patrons or chief supporters of each school to teach in them whatever religion they please, or secondly, that of appointing, that the religious instruction be communicated according to some fixed standard of doctrine, which has been previously recognised by the State, as both scriptural and calculated most effectively to accomplish the ends contemplated. The latter method, I need scarcely say, is that which has for centuries been pursued in the parish schools and universities of Scotland."[44] The corollary of the Establishment Principle for the Church was that it was obliged to support the State and defer to it in matters which were in its own proper sphere.

There was clearly a fear in the minds of Free Church conservatives that in the union negotiations with the UP Voluntaries, too many concessions were being made by some Free Churchmen with regard to education. Begg was unhappy at the changing stance of Candlish towards the place of religion in the school. Begg wanted the Free Church to be united on the importance of religiously educating the young, and felt that the duty of the State towards all its citizens was being downplayed. He asserted that the strength of the argument for the State's training of the young was in the Biblical teaching regarding the Establishment Principle. "There can be no security except in the citadel of the State's obligations to all persons, and at all times."[45]

7. The Argyll Commission

During the 1860s successive Governments appointed four Royal Commissions to investigate the state of education in the country. The last of the four was the Argyll Commission; it was appointed in August 1864 to investigate the schools of Scotland. With respect to its scope it was the most comprehensive of all the four Royal Commissions since its terms of reference extended to all types of public and private foundations as well as to teacher-training institutions. Like the other great Royal Commissions of the period, the Argyll Commission was concerned with getting value for money for the State. The annual subsidy to Scottish education in 1863 was running at £100,000 and the Commission was

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[44] "Dr C. J. Brown on National Scriptural Education", *The Watchword,* Vol. 5, 1st October 1870, p. 324.

[45] "The godly upbringing of the young: How it is to be secured in our schools for the future?", *The Watchword,* Vol. 3, 1st December 1868, p. 329.

instructed to report whether the funds voted by Parliament were being applied, "in the way most beneficial for the interests of the people".[46]

The Commission was headed by the Liberal statesman, the eighth Duke of Argyll – George John Douglas Campbell.[47] Other members of the Commission were James Moncreiff, a Free Churchman and Lord Advocate in successive Liberal Administrations;[48] Lord Belhaven, for many years Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland; Adam Black the publisher and twice provost of Edinburgh; and John Brown, the physician and author.[49]

The Commission produced three reports, published in four volumes, together with three special reports between 1865 and 1868, looking at both elementary schools and burgh schools. The revelations

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[46] Of this amount 52.5% went to schools connected to the Church of Scotland and 40% to schools connected with the Free Church of Scotland; the remainder went to schools connected with the Episcopal and Roman Catholic Churches. *Second Report of the Argyll Commission Elementary Schools 1867,* cited in Marjorie Cruickshank, "The Argyll Commission Report 1865-8: A Landmark in Scottish Education", *British Journal of Educational Studies,* Vol. 15, No. 2, June 1967, p. 133.

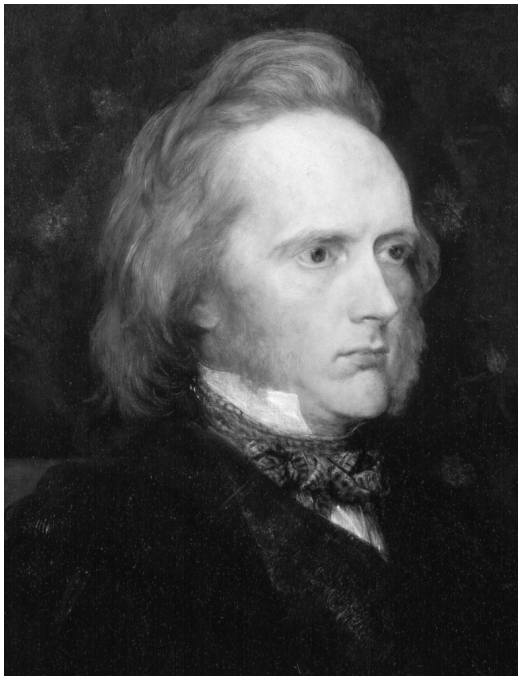
[47] George John Douglas Campbell, the eighth Duke of Argyll (1823-1900) besides being a Liberal politician was a writer on science, religion and politics. He was a close associate of Prince Albert and served as Lord Privy Seal on three occasions in the Governments of the Earl of Aberdeen, Viscount Palmerston, and William Gladstone. He was Secretary of State for India in Gladstone's first administration.

His first written contribution to public questions was a *Letter to the Peers from a Peer's Son,* a work which, though published in 1842 anonymously, was soon known to be by him. The subject was the struggle in the Church of Scotland, which resulted in the Disruption of 1843 and the formation of the Free Church (see Thomas Chalmers letters to him, when he was Lord Lorne, in William Hanna (ed.), *Letters of Thomas Chalmers* (Banner of Truth Trust, 2007), pp. 382-397). In 1848 he followed this work by another entitled *Presbytery Examined: an Essay on the Ecclesiastical History of Scotland since the Reformation.* His view was to some extent favourable to that which had been held by Chalmers, but not to the point of secession; his ultimate conclusion being that the claim of the Free Church to exclusive jurisdiction in matters spiritual was a dogma not authorised by scripture. As a scientist, or publicist on scientific matters, he was a leader in the scholarly opposition to Charles Darwin's theories. See *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* online edition.

In May 1841 his father, the seventh Duke, who sympathised with the claims of the Evangelicals in the Church of Scotland, introduced a Bill (which his son helped him draft) into the House of Lords with the purpose of legalising the Veto Act of 1834. The object was to avoid a breach in the Church of Scotland. Though the Bill was opposed by the Moderates it was introduced into the House of Commons, but was eventually withdrawn due to procedural difficulties. See Drummond and Bulloch, op. cit., pp. 240-1, and Robert Buchanan, *The Ten Years' Conflict* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1852), Vol. 2, pp. 218-244.

[48] James Moncreiff was the younger brother of Sir Henry Wellwood Moncreiff, the Free Church of Scotland minister.

[49] John Brown (1810-1882) was the son of John Brown of Edinburgh, the Secession minister and the author of many Biblical commentaries, and the great grandson of John Brown of Haddington.



George John Douglas Campbell.

regarding Scottish Education that the Commission uncovered were to have a major role in the thinking that would produce the Education Act of 1872.[50]

Whilst the union discussions between the Free Church and the UPs were taking place in the 1860s, the Argyll Commission was sitting to examine the structure of schools in Scotland. The first meeting of the Commission was on 4th November 1864 and it went on to make a series of recommendations, amongst which were the following: that a Board of Education should be created with fourteen members paid for by the Crown; that public schools should be established, supported by an education tax, but should not supplant existing provision; that there should be an annual inspection regime; that there should be building grants to repair schools; that teachers should be given pensions for their old age; and that there should be a structure of elementary, intermediate, and higher schools that would prepare students for university. The recommendations of the Argyll Commission led to the 1869 Parochial Schools Bill which was a precursor of the 1872 Act.

In late 1867, one of the news articles in *The Watchword* mentions a Reform Bill being proposed by Benjamin Disraeli. This Bill would have the effect of preserving the existing structure of the parish schools. It drew the comment, "We have no objection, but the reverse, to the proposal of an immediate settlement of the question of National Education in Scotland, provided two objects are effectually secured:

> 1st – that the scheme shall provide an education commensurate with the wants of the entire people; and
>
> 2nd – that the education shall be high-toned, pervaded by moral and religious principle, and fairly conducted."[51]

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[50] For a recent paper on the Commission's achievements, see Cruickshank, op. cit., pp. 133-147.

[51] "National Education", *The Watchword,* Vol. 2, 2nd December 1867, pp. 293-4.

The same article goes on to reflect that "it is only a pity that our Church had not devoted its strength twenty years ago to the solution of the problem". Begg and *The Watchword* clearly felt that the Church ought to be supporting the endeavours of the State to educate the young and that if it had worked with the State from the outset it might have been able to set the educational agenda for the rest of the United Kingdom. They saw in the idea of National Education the practical outworking of the Establishment Principle, and wanted to ensure that the religious duties of the State were clear in the legislation. The April 1868 edition of *The Watchword* outlines the argument for National Education and for opposition to Voluntaryism in the form of a dialogue between two Free Churchmen – John and Andrew. The author of the piece is stated to be "A distinguished Disruption Elder":

> *John:* Now that I see what Voluntaryism is, I think it must be one of the Anti-Christs to come after the many that were already in the time of the apostle. Tell me what you think about this National Education question?
>
> *Andrew:* I think it will prevent any Free Church people from becoming UPs and that it should convince Voluntary ministers that Voluntaryism is not a Christian doctrine.
>
> *John:* How so?
>
> *Andrew:* Well, I am sure there is nothing more to be desired by a Christian nation, than that the children should know the Scriptures from their childhood, and I am sure that neither by the letter or spirit of the Bible, is there a word from Genesis to Revelation forbidding nations or dominions to provide means for this blessed purpose. According to Voluntaryism, it is right to teach the English Grammar at the expense of the nation, but to teach the Shorter Catechism is sinful or unjust. And the young scholars may read all about the filthy loves of heathen gods and goddesses in the Latin language; but they must not read about the love of Christ in their mother tongue. The Bible in the school hours of National Education becomes, according to Voluntaryism, the banished book.
>
> *John:* I heard the other day that some of the Voluntaries were going to accept Government money for Bible schools.

> *Andrew:* If that be true, their practice will stultify and destroy their doctrine; they will be receiving that which, according to their doctrine, it is sinful or unjust to bestow, and Voluntaryism will, by and by, have become a thing of the past, which had its little day and vanished.[52]

At the conclusion of the article in *The Watchword* detailing the statistics on the performance of Free Church schools, it was noted that "this ought to be a great encouragement, to all interested in our schools, to exercise renewed energy in their behalf; and it will be alike the duty and interest of the Church to see that the influence which such a position will assuredly give her, shall be exercised to the full when the question of National Education comes up again for consideration".[53] This worry about being able to exercise proper influence on the National Education Bill re-appears in December of 1867. The conservatives saw they could "lose the advantage of our past efforts" by failing to devote sufficient energy to working with the State to produce a national system with the proper religious safeguards. In consequence of the recommendations of the Argyll Commission they now faced a proposal for the whole system to be managed by a single secular board sitting in Edinburgh. *The Watchword* news article observed, "This proposal we regard with just jealousy. The churches of the country, on the other hand, whilst encouraging to the uttermost a right national system of education, must take care that neither the responsibilities of parents, the proper status of teachers, nor the due influence of the Church, are forgotten in any plans that may be adopted. This subject is of great importance, and we shall probably return to it in our next number."[54] Though Begg and the conservatives opposed a single secular board, they still maintained their support for a national system of education run by the State. However, they disagreed with a proposal where "the Churches and clergy of Scotland, who have done more for education than all other classes put together, are to be wholly unrepresented, whilst the whole school-houses of the kingdom are to be vested in this same board! We hope the people of Scotland will never dream of submitting to this, but they will require to keep their eyes open."[55]

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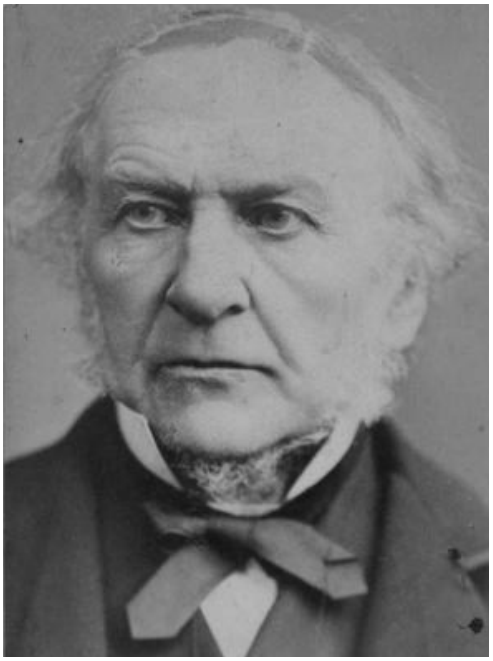
[52] "What does the debate mean?", *The Watchword,* Vol. 3, 1st April 1868, pp. 11-12.

[53] "The position of the Free Church Schools in Britain", *The Watchword,* Vol. 1, 1st October 1866, p.211.

[54] "National Education", *The Watchword,* Vol. 2, 2nd December 1867, p. 294.

[55] "The Education Question", *The Watchword,* Vol. 2, 2nd March 1868, p. 397.



William Edwart Gladstone – Prime Minister when the 1872 Education Act was passed.

The Watchword reported the recommendations of the Argyll Commission and the draft Bill of 1868 that flowed from it in negative terms. "The Bill was a long one, but its essence may be expressed in a few words, – Scotland was to be put under the domination of the Committee of Council and a Scotch Board of the closest and worst kind, and with powers more despotic than, we believe, it was ever proposed to give to any such tribunal in a free country."[56] They were very clear on instructing their readers to press members of parliament on the importance of religious instruction in schools.

8. The clash with the Voluntaries over the Duke of Argyll's 1869 Parochial Schools Bill

Parliament was dissolved in July 1868 and a furious period of electioneering took place which resulted in Benjamin Disraeli's Conservative Party losing office and the Liberal Party being elected. William Ewart Gladstone became Prime Minister for the first time. It was not long before action was taken over the Scottish Education question: the Queen's Speech announced that the Government would bring forward a Bill for Scottish education and the Parochial Schools (Scotland) Bill was introduced into the House of Lords by the Duke of Argyll on 25th February 1869.[57]

In November 1868, in the middle of the election campaign, a long article in *The Watchword* voiced support for National Education as opposed to State Education. It defined a State-controlled system as one

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[56] "The Education Question in Scotland – Its present aspect", *The Watchword,* Vol. 3, 2nd November 1868, p. 275.

[57] See D. J. Withrington, "Towards a National System, 1867-72: The last years of the struggle for a Scottish Education Act", *Scottish Educational Studies,* Vol. 4, No. 2, November 1972, p. 115.

where the textbooks, curriculum and inspection regime all belonged to the State and where the only input of the people was to pay their taxes. It preferred a national system where, "the State has its part to play, and its share to pay".[58] It opposed a State system that would banish the Bible to the sidelines of the curriculum and focus on arithmetic, writing, and reading. Historically both Free Church and Church of Scotland teachers had both placed the Bible and the Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism at the heart of their curriculum and they saw this as an important part of the State's role in applying the Establishment Principle.

As we have noted the Free Church conservative position regarding the education of the young was that there were three parties with an interest: the parents, the Church and the State. It saw each of these having a divinely-appointed role which they could not avoid or waive. After the Reformation, there was a necessary, but not an ideal phase, in the development of this system. The parents and the Parish Church were taking the major role and the State took a very hands-off approach by simply setting the processes in motion. Begg and the conservatives believed that each of the three parties had responsibility for the whole work and no part was exclusively limited to any of the three parties. They accepted that the State would show a greater interest in the secular side of schooling and the Church would be more active in the religious side, but none of the parties could ignore their responsibilities for the whole. It also enjoined on the Church a further duty, namely, that of ensuring the other two parties were aware of their duties and – when necessary – to be the means of calling the State to account, and thereby avoid a move into secularism.[59] *The Watchword* noted, "One of our few demands [of Parliament] is a good system of public education. We have been looking and longing in vain for a satisfactory Bill on National Education for five and twenty years, and it is only now that we seem to be getting within sight of the solution of the problem and that chiefly from mere stress of circumstances".[60]

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[58] "The Education Question in Scotland – Its present aspect", *The Watchword,* Vol. 3, 2nd November 1868, p. 274.

[59] "The godly upbringing of the young: How it is to be secured in our schools for the future?", *The Watchword,* Vol. 3, 1st December 1868, p. 325.

[60] "National Education and the United Presbyterians", *The Watchword,* Vol. 4, 1st May 1869, p. 50.

There remained a real concern for Begg and his colleagues about the nature of the Bill being presented in 1869. They worried that if the existing management of schools was maintained in the short-term, it would quickly become inequitable as the Roman Catholics could remain outside the system and still gain grants from the Government – under the provisions of the existing system. They did not want a situation developing where the Parish schools and Free Church schools would be covered by the Act while both Episcopalians and Romanists would remain outside the Act. This would result in an intolerable situation: "Unless great care is taken in securing amendments, [the Act] may degenerate very much into one for breaking up and appropriating, without compensation, the educational machinery of the Free Church of Scotland."[61]

Despite the fear of having the Free Church schools appropriated, *The Watchword* continues in the same article to argue for a uniform system of scriptural public schools. It argues for unity amongst Free Church and Church of Scotland ministers in pushing for this type of education. It also drew attention to the fact that the Duke of Argyll speaking in the House of Lords had referred to a powerful "secular" party, to whom it was supposed to be necessary to defer.

The Watchword queried whether the UP Synod was not this powerful secular party. It was encouraged to think on these lines because of the statement of the UP Synod about the Bill: "there does not appear to be anything in the provisions of the Bill at variance with the principles of this Church, 'that religious instruction, which is of primary moment in the education of the young, is a department which belongs exclusively to the parent and the Church, and which is not within the province of the State to provide'."[62] *The Watchword* maintained that the position of the Reformers was to favour the establishment of schools by the civil magistrate as part of his duty towards religion. The absence of specific reference to religious content in the Bill was a matter of concern and they noted with 'melancholy' that the religious tone of the proposals was not improving. The attitude of the UPs was in marked contrast to that of *The Watchword;* they expressed "satisfaction . . . that the religious

[61] op. cit., p. 52.

[62] op. cit., p. 53, citing the Statement of the UP Synod as reported in the *Daily Review* on 27th March 1869. It later became clear that it was the UP Synod to which the Duke had been referring to as the "powerful secular party". *The Watchword,* Vol. 4, 1st October 1869, p. 297.

peculiarity of former Bills has been so comparatively excluded from the present measure".[63]

The Free Church conservatives opposed the teaching of religion only at "stated hours", thinking that it ought to pervade the whole course of instruction, and they wanted to protect by law the liberty of the teacher to include the teaching of scripture at any point during the school day. There was annoyance at the way in which the UP Voluntaries continued to maintain that the State should not provide religious instruction. *The Watchword* commented: "Nor can we imagine why the United Presbyterian Church, holding such views, should have done little or nothing themselves in education, and have been able to take advantage of parish schools and Free Church schools, founded on theories diametrically opposed to those which they advocate as vital."[64] It was argued that "every patriotic Scotsman" ought to do his utmost to "remove every blemish" in the 1869 Bill.[65]

The leading article of *The Watchword* for September 1869 was devoted to the education question. Throughout the article there is an unmistakeable note of dissatisfaction in the union with England, mixed with mild anti-Irish sentiments, and the perception that Parliament in London had failed to act fairly towards Scotland. It argued that the Scots had been trying for twenty years to extend the scriptural Scottish parochial system of education throughout the country, and now they had the Argyll Commission's failure to extend these blessings over the entire kingdom. Instead, they had a Bill that tried to please everyone and ended up pleasing no-one and one which the Free Church had spent considerable sums of money trying to improve.[66]

The Free Church sent a delegation to Parliament to lobby about the Argyll Bill. There were, however, other lobby groups in London besides the Free Church when the Bill was debated in Parliament. These groups ranged from the Established Church, the UPs, the Roman Catholics and the schoolmasters.[67] The final Bill did not include the entire UP clause which would have restrained teachers from making any

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[63] op. cit., p. 55.
[64] op. cit., p. 57.
[65] op. cit., p. 60.
[66] "Scotch legislation – The Education Bill", *The Watchword,* Vol. 4, 1st September 1869, p. 241.
[67] "National Education – Report of the deputation to the commission", *The Watchword,* Vol. 4, 1st September 1869, p. 272.

moral or religious observations but it did contain a limited version that gave a separate hour for teaching religion.

9. The alignment of the parties in the Free Church on the failure of the 1869 Bill

The Duke of Argyll's Parochial Schools Bill failed after it had bounced backwards and forwards from the House of Commons to the Lords, with various amendments, and then ran out of Parliamentary time. In October 1869, after the failure of the Argyll Bill, *The Watchword* charted the different interest groups within the Free Church. These were as follows:

(i) One group that wanted denominational schools.

(ii) Another group that wanted denominational schools in order to address the destitution in the country and to force the creation of a national system.

(iii) A further group that thought that a national system should be the aim, and that the religious element needed to be protected, but felt that this was not achievable in the short term.

(iv) Finally, one that thought that a national system was essential and who maintained the importance and necessity of religious instruction.

It could be argued that the majority of the conservatives always belonged to the last category, while the pro-unionist Candlish wing had moved from the first group to either the second or third. *The Watchword* claimed that there had been a convergence of opinions over the last few years and now the majority of ministers and people in the Free Church favoured a national system provided that the right safeguards were in place. The main defects in the 1869 Bill were, in its opinion: the central board in Edinburgh which had the powers to control the schools, including the power of excluding religion; the failure to compensate the Free Church for transferring its schools into the control of the State; the lack of provisions for teachers and the failure to support normal schools.[68]

The Free Church group that lobbied Parliament had argued that the meetings of the central board should be in public and regarded it as

[68] "The late education Bill", *The Watchword,* Vol. 4, 1st October 1869, pp. 289-291.

quite unacceptable to have a board, nominated by the Government, who may have no sympathy whatever with the feelings and wishes of the people of Scotland and who may in fact be infidels, Tractarians, or Romanists.[69] This had caused the Government to relent and consent that a small number of the board meetings would be held in public. The Lord Advocate went further and argued in the House of Commons that the demand for public meetings was not unreasonable. James Begg moved an amendment in the deputation that the government concession was not satisfactory and that all meetings should be held in public. The original motion was carried and Begg's amendment lost. Sir Henry Wellwood Moncreiff voted against Begg in support of the motion that only some of the meetings should be held in public.

The Watchword opposed the leaders in the Free Church who in its view compromised in the negotiations in order to keep the UPs and the Gladstone Government content. The conservative side disagreed with the secular approach of the UPs, which was "in the teeth of the public profession of the Free Church and of the Church of Scotland since the Reformation".[70] The Government, eager to see the Bill passed, had conciliated the Romanists with the promise that the board might give their schools financial grants in the future even if they remained outside the provisions of the Act.[71]

"We regret to say," *The Watchword* noted, "that the Free Church committees[72] voted in favour of the motion by Robert Candlish that supported the Bill being passed into law rather than being abandoned." This motion was opposed by James Begg, who moved that the committees continue to press for amendments and defer giving any other expression of opinion.[73] The Begg group remained unhappy at the way the Free Church deputation had bowed to pressure and failed to gain the safeguards they saw as necessary. They felt that the Candlish motion in

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[69] op. cit., pp. 292-293.

[70] op. cit., p. 292.

[71] "The United Presbyterians and the Parochial Schools Bill", *The Watchword,* Vol. 4, 1st January 1870, p. 461. The article laments the fact that the Free Church delegates did not oppose the Episcopalians and Roman Catholics achieving all that they wanted. The Episcopalians were supported by the Prime Minister (W. E. Gladstone) and the Romanists had the support of the "Irish popish" MPs.

[72] The Free Church General Assembly had appointed several committees to deal with both the proposed union with the UPs and the education question. In addition, the Assembly had appointed a delegation to go to London to lobby Parliament on the Argyll Bill. James Begg was a member of the two committees and of the London delegation.

[73] "The Late Education Bill", *The Watchword,* Vol. 4, 1st October 1869, p. 294.

the Edinburgh committee was influenced solely by a desire to conciliate the opinions of the UPs and was done in the interests of church union with them rather than securing the best result for Scottish education.

The strength of UP opinion against the Establishment Principle is evident in their answer to the following question, "What will the United Presbyterians allow the government to do in the matter of scriptural education? The answer is, Absolutely Nothing. Mr Renton,[74] the convenor of their committee, has candidly told us that in this respect they differ from the Reformers and other Presbyterian Churches. They will not even allow the State to mention in their preamble to their Bill, that the object of the measure is to promote scriptural education, and their deputation suggested that the teacher should be even interdicted for introducing any religious remarks except at separate hours."[75]

A month later in December 1869, *The Watchword's* leading article reported that they were mystified at the report of the Union Committee. The negotiations with the UPs had yielded a set of resolutions that stated: the UPs accepted the advantage of having pious men in schools who taught religion; the right way of having religion taught was to have it in the hands of parents or ratepayers and the Church; the clause that the UPs introduced in the late Bill was simply to secure that parents who withdrew their children from religious instruction classes would still be able to have the full benefits of the other classes.[76] The editorial urged caution that the first element of the statement should be checked to ensure that the resolutions referred to schools that were provided by the nation for the nation, and that the statement should be affirmed by the UP Synod. The second part of the statement about parents, ratepayers or the Church educating children was quite simply a way of excluding religion from the school-house and confining it to the home and the Church. *The Watchword's* assessment was that the UPs were using a set of words designed to conceal their true principles.

The January 1870 *Watchword* opens with the words, "No attempt has been made to answer our exposure of the sophistry by which the

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[74] Henry Renton was the United Presbyterian minister in Kelso; see Robert Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church from 1733 to 1900* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1904), Vol. 2, pp. 264-5.

[75] "The Education Question", *The Watchword,* Vol. 4, 1st November 1869, pp. 371-372.

[76] "Mystification by the Union Committee – the Voluntary difficulty in National Education", *The Watchword,* Vol. 4, 1st December 1869, p. 387, where the three-point statement agreed by the UP delegation is printed in full.

Union Committee attempted, in their recent resolutions to cover up the hollow and unsound principles of the United Presbyterians on the subject of National Education".[77] The same issue gives a further overview of the background to the 1869 Bill paying particular attention to the views of the UPs on religious education.[78] It then prints a trenchant speech delivered at a meeting of the Commission of the Free Church General Assembly by William Kidston of Ferniegair, a member of the Union Committee who took a conservative line.[79] Kidston first complained that significant parts of his report to the Commission, of the proceedings of the delegation to Parliament regarding the Argyll Bill, had been omitted for consideration by the Union Committee. A Committee, he adds, in which many of us have no confidence and whose fidelity in maintaining Free Church principles or exposing the real views of the UPs could not be relied upon. Kidston asked whether the omission was from ignorance or inadvertence or was it done designedly. If the latter, then he humbly submitted that the Union Committee be immediately dissolved and its convener (Robert Buchanan) reprimanded.[80] He then added, that an absence of reference to the Establishment Principle in the Statement was telling and that "it is the duty of the civil government of the country to see that the Christian religion is taught to children in the national schools, and that the United Presbyterian Church holds that it is contrary to the Scriptures for the civil power to interfere, so as to cause children to be taught religion in national schools". Kidston argued that the effect of UP thinking would be to cause religion to be driven out of their schools, and that reference in the three resolutions contained in the minutes of the Union Committee to the involvement of ratepayers was wrong. Ratepayers were not specifically parents, or the Church, and only those parties had an interest in education besides the State.[81]

James Begg and those who were in agreement with him had always supported a national system of education based on the

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[77] "The Education Question", *The Watchword,* Vol. 4, 1st January 1870, p. 433.

[78] "The United Presbyterians and the Parochial Schools Bill", *The Watchword,* Vol. 4, 1st January 1870, pp. 460-7.

[79] William Kidston of Ferniegair was a Free Church elder and a staunch defender of the views of the constitutional party in the Free Church. The Kidston family were merchant bankers. The mother of the British Prime Minister Andrew Bonar Law was Elizabeth Kidston who was a cousin of the Ferniegair Kidstons.

[80] "Mr. Kidston's Explanation", *The Watchword,* Vol. 4, 1st January 1870, p. 468.

[81] op. cit., p. 469.

Establishment Principle. They were now facing a different conflict to the one in 1850. The Candlish wing of the Church, in 1850, wanted to preserve the independence of the Free Church schools while the Begg and the conservatives wanted to work with the State to produce a system of education for the nation with the Bible at the centre. In 1870, the Candlish wing of the Church wanted to give away the Free Church schools while Begg and the conservatives wanted sufficient safeguards in place to protect the proper biblical application of the Establishment Principle by the State. The pro-union Candlish wing was prepared to subscribe to the model being proposed by the Government which did not have sufficient safeguards to protect the religious content of the instruction. The internal conflict between the conservatives on the educational committee of the Free Church and the Candlish liberals continued into 1870.[82] The Candlish majority also disregarded a memorial of 401 Free Church teachers in favour of more effectual security for religious instruction.[83] The conservatives commented despairingly, "Of late, the Free Church has manifestly yielded to the unsound opinion of the UPs on this subject. It is hard to see what claim men who have never done anything for education except to obstruct the progress of others have to be consulted in such a matter."[84]

10. The English Education Act 1870

Following the failure of the Duke of Argyll's Bill it was realised by politicians that there was little likelihood of the Bill being revived and finding a place in the Government's programme for the next session of Parliament. That place had been reserved for a promised Bill on English elementary education. It was also clear that many English MPs would oppose a new Scottish Bill which, if passed, they feared would be used to force undesirable innovations on the proposed English Bill. This enforced delay before another Scottish Bill could be introduced in 1871

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[82] "The Late Meeting of the Commission", *The Watchword,* Vol. 4, 1st March 1870, p. 553. There is a letter in the same issue lamenting the failure of the Free Church delegation to question how the Gaelic schools would be treated under the new Act. The Gaelic schools had used the Bible, Boston, Doddridge, and Bunyan for teaching children to read and it was felt that in the new system these religious books would be avoided or replaced by secular writings. See "The Gaelic Schools in the Highlands and the Proposed New Scheme of Education", *The Watchword,* Vol. 4, 1st March 1870, pp. 567-8.

[83] "The Late Meeting of the Commission", *The Watchword,* Vol. 4, 1st March 1870, p. 553.

[84] "Noticeable Points in the Late Assembly Proceedings", *The Watchword,* Vol. 5, 1st July 1870, p. 148.

allowed Gladstone's Liberal Government time to give careful review to the mistakes of the 1869 Bill.[85]

In the meantime Parliament turned its attention to the equally problematic situation of a National Education system for England and Wales. The 1860s had witnessed growing calls for improved primary education for the masses. A Royal Commission in 1861 had revealed that in England and Wales only 60% of the school-age population were receiving any form of education. In 1869, a group of Nonconformists founded what became the National Education League. The guiding principle of the League was stated by one of its leading lights, the Congregational minister, R. W. Dale, in the following terms: "that every child has a right to be educated as well as to be fed, and that it is the duty of the State to protect this right."[86] To achieve this objective the League called for the creation of a national system of education, to be supported by local rates on property. The system, they argued, should be unsectarian and compulsory for all school-age children. There were differences, however, among League members as to what was meant by unsectarian. For most it meant a non-denominational form of Christian teaching – that is, Bible instruction and the moral teaching of Christianity, but free from any creeds and catechisms. Some radicals, however, went further and called for a completely secular education, arguing that any religious instruction should be provided by families and churches outside of school hours.

Another group of educational reformers began agitating for a national system of education that would be based on denominational Christian teaching and would include instruction in the creeds and catechisms. In the autumn of 1869 they formed, in Manchester, the National Education Union. This grouping was made up largely of members of the Church of England as well as some Roman Catholics and Methodists. Their position was that the nation's educational needs would best be met by additional State grants to the churches, to enable them to build more schools where they were needed. For members of the Union, education must have a Christian content and this could best be

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[85] See D. J. Withrington, "Towards a National System, 1867-72", op. cit., pp. 117-8.

[86] R. W. Dale, "The Nonconformists and the Education Policy of the Government", *Contemporary Review,* 22nd September 1873, p. 646, cited in Stewart J. Brown, *Providence and Empire 1815-1914* (Harlow, 2008), p. 259. Dale was the successor to John Angell James as the minister of the famous Carr's Lane Congregational Church in central Birmingham.

provided by distinct doctrinal instruction based on the ancient creeds and catechisms. With the two organisations differing so substantially on the way forward, vigorous public debates took place over the respective benefits of non-denominational and denominational education.

Amidst growing public pressure for educational reform, Gladstone's Government prepared an educational Bill for England and Wales in late 1869. The Bill was largely drafted by William Edward Foster. Born into a Quaker family, Foster had joined the Church of England when he married the daughter of the liberal Anglican Thomas Arnold. Foster introduced his Bill in the Commons on 17th February 1870. It was designed to be a compromise between the denominational and non-denominational positions. The Bill provided that the churches and denominational societies would be given a year to meet the nation's urgent educational needs by erecting new schools or enlarging existing ones. If after a year there was still need for more schools a school board would be appointed with considerable powers to levy rates on property holders in order to build additional schools. The State, meanwhile, would continue its policy of making grants to the schools provided by the denominational societies. Despite its moderate nature, the Bill encountered intense opposition. Advocates of the non-denominational system strongly opposed the continued payment of State grants to the denominational schools. Under pressure from its critics the Government agreed to a number of amendments. The period which churches and denominational societies were given to extend the current system was reduced from a year to six months. It was also agreed that the new school-boards, which were originally to be appointed by town councils and the churches, would now be elected by ratepayers. Finally the Government agreed to an amendment by the MP for South Hampshire, William Cowper-Temple,[87] which prohibited the use of "catechisms or religious formularies distinctive of any particular denomination"[88] in rate-supported schools.

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[87] William Cowper-Temple, 1st Baron Mount-Temple, had impeccable connections. He was a nephew of the Prime Minister Lord Melbourne. His father died in 1837 and two years later his mother remarried another Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston. Educated at Eton he held office in several administrations. His home was Broadlands in Hampshire (later the home of Lord Mountbatten of Burma). It was in the grounds of his estate that meetings were held in 1874 that resulted in the commencement of the Keswick Convention. Lord Mount-Temple was one of the upper class evangelicals influenced by the holiness teacher Robert Pearsall Smith.

[88] Stewart J. Brown, op. cit., p. 260.

Whilst the English Act was going through its various parliamentary stages William Kidston of Ferniegair was carefully watching over the interests of the conservatives in the Free Church and reporting his observation to the Free Church Education Committee. He was most concerned that the Bill had been seriously damaged by the insertion of a number of objectionable clauses prior to its leaving the House of Commons. These concerned an attempt to legislate that all religious instruction should be given outside of school hours, that no catechisms should be taught and that no Government money should be used to provide religious instruction. In response to the information provided by Kidston, though the Act did not directly apply to Scotland, the Free Church Education Committee appointed a sub-committee to respond to these issues. Their concern was that if these matters were embodied in the final version of the English Act it would most probably result in similar clauses being embodied in a future Bill for Scotland.[89] With the amendments outlined above, and a considerable amount of infighting and debate, the English Bill was passed through both houses in August 1870 and became the epochal Education Act of 1870 that applied to both England and Wales.[90]

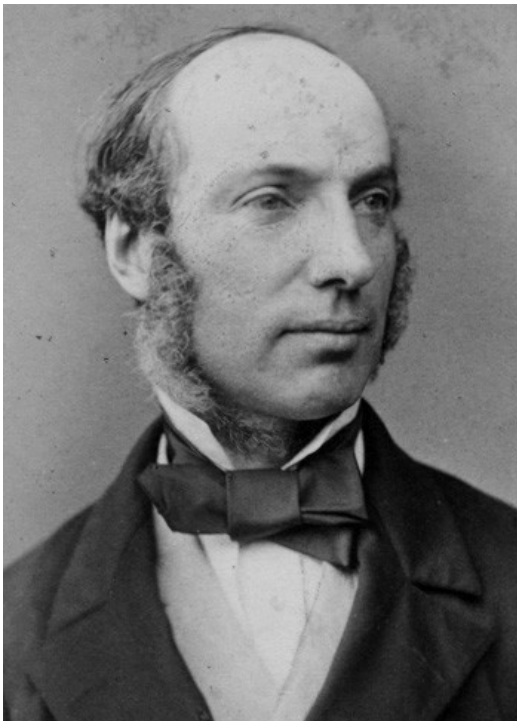
11. A second attempt to legislate on Scottish education: the Lord Advocate's Bill 1871

Now that the education question had been settled south of the border, the way was clear for another attempt at a solution for Scotland. When Gladstone became Prime Minister for the first time in December 1868 he appointed as the Lord Advocate, James Moncreiff.[91] Moncreiff resigned

[89] "The Education Committee", *The Watchword,* Vol. 5, 1st April 1871, pp. 212-3.

[90] For the passing of the English Act and its subsequent application see, Marjorie Cruickshank, *Church and State in English Education: 1870 to the present day* (London, 1963), pp. 14-68; Stewart J. Brown, op. cit., pp. 258-262. For a description of the infighting see Jonathan P. Parry, *Democracy and Religion: Gladstone and the Liberal Party 1867-1875* (Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 295-306.

[91] James Wellwood Moncreiff (1811-1895), first Baron Moncreiff of Tulliebole, had previously been Lord Advocate in the Liberal administrations of Viscount Palmerston and Earl Russell from 1859-1866. He was the son of the Scottish Judge and Free Churchman, Sir James Wellwood Moncreiff (1776-1851), and the younger brother of Sir Henry Wellwood Moncreiff (1809-1883), the Principal Clerk of the Free Church of Scotland, and a leading advocate of union with the UPs. His father had drafted the famous Veto Act and was involved in the cases that led to the Disruption both in the Church Courts and the Court of Session. For biographical details of James Wellwood Moncreiff see, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* online edition, and G. W. T. Omond, *The Lord Advocates of Scotland, 1834-1880* (London, 1914), pp. 147-202, 226-259.



George Young.

after being in office for less than a year and was replaced by the brisker and more self-assured George Young.[92] It was said of Young that in 1868 he was waiting impatiently for Moncreiff to retire and to exchange his post of Solicitor-General for that of the Lord Advocate.[93] He took up the task of drafting a further Scottish Education Bill which he introduced in February 1871.

The April 1871 *Watchword* commented regarding George Young's Bill: "Reasonable men will not wonder at the strong and widespread excitement which has been created in Scotland by the Bill of the Lord Advocate in regard to National Education. The measure, whilst valuable in some respects, is a bold and even revolutionary one. It aims to overturn all the existing arrangements in regard to schools, and framing one uniform system, nominally managed by Local Boards and elected by the ratepayers of every district, but really presided over and absolutely controlled by the Privy-Council in London."[94] The Government preferred imperial money to be spent by themselves, not by a statutory board, and did not want a large-spending department to be based outside the capital.

The men producing *The Watchword* saw in the Bill a measure that would gain widespread support for the wrong reasons: the landowners

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[92] George Young (1819-1907) was born in Dumfries and educated at Edinburgh University. He became a member of the Faculty of Advocates in 1840 and was also called to the English bar. He was appointed Solicitor General for Scotland between 1862-1866, and 1868-1869. He then became Lord Advocate. As an advocate Young was one of the most brilliant and successful court pleaders of his day. He earned the reputation as a merciless cross-examiner, who excelled in difficult and desperate cases. He inspired the conviction that he was born to lead and not to follow. In 1874 he was appointed a Judge of the Court of Session and left Parliament. See *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* online edition, and Omond, op. cit., pp. 260-288.

[93] See D. J. Withrington, "Towards a National System, 1867-72", op. cit., p. 118.

[94] "The Education Bill", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 1st April 1871, p. 1.

would be happy as it transferred the burden for parish schools to the taxpayer; the Voluntaries would be pleased as they would garner some control of schools they had not built; the Romanists would see an increase in their endowments; and the general populace would just see an increase in public education. The Bill, however, gave no protection to religion, other than whatever might be made by local boards. The leading article in the April 1871 issue, doubtless written by James Begg, asked the question, "Why has not the Free Church as a body, and in all her congregations, manifested a resolute determination to get those glaring defects in the Bill removed, which she, at the same time, professes clearly to see? Why, on the contrary, do the leading Unionists of all classes urge and press the people to take the Bill even as it is?" Begg himself provided the answer, "The whole future of Scotland should be sacrificed, and her noblest birthright thus sold, by her own unworthy and ungrateful sons, for this odious mess of Union pottage".[95]

The next month, *The Watchword* reprinted an article from *Blackwood's Magazine* titled, "Religion essential to education". The article which supported National Education observed, "unless religion is made the groundwork of education – unless it is interwoven with all its stages from first to last – unless public instruction forms a part of the religious establishment, and the schoolmaster is made the outwork of the Church, all that is done for the extension of knowledge will be worse than useless".[96]

12. The majority Free Church response to the Lord Advocate's Bill

The May 1871 Free Church General Assembly discussed again the education question and in particular the place of religious instruction in any national system of education. The conservatives were insisting on maintaining the principle of "use and wont". This was the term applied to mean retaining in any national system the established provisions with respect to religious instruction, which in the Scottish context meant the use of the Bible and the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly in the classroom. A motion not to insist on "use and wont", moved by the ardent pro-unionist Sir Henry Moncreiff, was carried by a majority of

[95] op. cit., p. 4.

[96] "Religion essential in Education", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 1st May 1871, pp. 83-84 (the citation is on p. 84).

316 to 136.[97] In addition the Assembly appointed a delegation to wait on the Lord Advocate, with Sir Henry Moncreiff as the convener, and deliberately excluded James Begg's supporters from the deputation. Sir Henry's deputation was charged by the Assembly vote to inform the Government that they were generally supportive of the Bill.

In response, the friends of "the Bible in the school" held large public meetings shortly after the General Assembly, in both Edinburgh and Glasgow and appointed a further delegation, privately funded, to wait on the Lord Advocate and other members of the Government to press their views. They opposed the absence of any reference to religious instruction in the Bill and were insistent on maintaining the place of the Bible and the Shorter Catechism. They also wanted to ensure that teachers were fairly paid and that the management of the schools was located in Scotland rather than the London-based Privy Council.

Sir Henry Moncreiff was indignant that a second delegation was going to London from Scotland and wrote to the "Members of the House of Commons" in a letter dated 14th June 1871. After an introductory section explaining his role, he writes, "I am desired as convener of the deputation to request your most earnest attention to the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly in terms of which the deputation was instructed to act. These resolutions are embodied in the petition already presented to the House of Commons, a copy of which is enclosed with this letter. I am further directed to state that the deputation of which I am the convener is the only body authorised by the General Assembly to express the mind of the Free Church of Scotland with reference to the Bill in question. The deputation feel it necessary to advert emphatically to this fact, because they have reason to believe that some respected brethren who voted in the minority of 136 to 316 in the Assembly, are or have been, in London for the purpose of urging their own opinions on the Legislature."[98]

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[97] At the heart of the problem for Begg and the conservatives, was that they did not have a majority in the Free Church General Assembly. If they could not insist on a National Education scheme that adequately protected the application of religion in accord with the Establishment Principle before a union with the UPs, they certainly would not be able to do so afterwards. They lamented the double standards in the Free Church on the education question resulting from the overwhelming desire to please the UPs, in order to achieve a union of the two churches. "We cry aloud that we would welcome religious instruction, but we whisper in an undertone that we care little about it. We wish religious instruction, but will make no definite stand to secure it." "Noticeable points in the late Assembly proceedings", *The Watchword,* Vol. 5, 1st July 1870, p. 150.

[98] "Documents in regard to education", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 1st September 1871, p. 243.

As might be expected, *The Watchword* was highly critical of Sir Henry Moncreiff and the majority in the Free Church General Assembly. Their main objections were as follows:

(i) It was high-handed tyranny, which it was necessary to expose and resist. "It was perfectly plain from the petitions sent from Scotland to Parliament that the majority in the Assembly do not represent the general mind of the Church. The very reverse."[99]

(ii) They considered the Assembly's action in removing all dissident voices from the delegation to Parliament as intolerant and grossly unfair. It was in their view a one-sided delegation whose expenses were to be met by the Church.[100] The action was also in marked contrast to the delegation that the Assembly's Commission had appointed to lobby Parliament in reference to the Duke of Argyll's Bill. On that occasion it was a "tolerably fair delegation" as an "important minority" in the Church was represented and had unanimously opposed any time-table clause. The force of such a clause was that the teaching of religion would be outside school hours, either in the hour before or the hour after the school day.[101]

(iii) The additional delegation to London *The Watchword* viewed as representing the true voice of Scotland and the general mind of the Church: "never was a measure more generally condemned in Scotland than the Bill in its present form." It went on to describe the delegation criticised by Moncreiff in these terms: "The gentlemen to whom Sir Henry refers went to London neither to express their own individual opinions, which are well known, nor the opinions of any section of the Church, but the opinions of two large and influential public meetings held in Edinburgh and Glasgow respectively, and composed of all classes of Scotchmen anxious to secure the continuance of Bible instruction in our Schools. They represented, therefore, the true mind of Scotland much better than Sir Henry and his one-sided deputation."[102]

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[99] "The Education Question", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 1st July 1871, p. 177.

[100] ibid.

[101] "The Education Question and Present Duty", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 1st August 1871, p. 190.

[102] "The Education Question", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 1st July 1871, p. 177.

(iv) Begg and *The Watchword* anti-unionists knew that the majority Free Church Assembly position on education was being driven on by its consuming desire for an organic union with the UPs. They commented, "At the late Assembly, the Unionists, probably in part under the influence of their new allies, determined to press forward at all hazards the Education Bill, which stood much in the way of unsound Union, and accordingly their next deputation to London was of a purely partisan kind, and worked with the United Presbyterians".[103]

(v) The July 1871 issue of *The Watchword* reprinted an article from the newspaper, the *Western Standard,* that contained these telling remarks: "The UP Synod and the Free Church Assembly unite, they tell us, in maintaining that 'Nations and their rulers are bound collectively and officially, as well as personally and individually, to own and honour Christ's authority, to further the interests of his holy religion and to accept the guidance of His Word as making known His mind and will'. And, yet, in the very first instance in which that principle can be tested, the one insists the people shall not be allowed to use their own rates for the teaching of that Book whose guidance they professedly acknowledge, and the other will not trouble the Government about the matter."[104]

(vi) *The Watchword* recorded with satisfaction that the General Association of Free Church Teachers, at a meeting held just prior to the Free Church Assembly had unanimously resolved, "That in common with nearly all the public bodies in Scotland, this committee are of the opinion that this Bill, in several important respects, and especially in its proposed treatment of teachers, is unworthy of support, and therefore they would regret very much to see it become law in its present form".[105]

When Sir Henry Moncreiff's delegation met George Young on behalf of the Gladstone Government he reported in reference to the Lord Advocate's Bill that it was the view of the Free Church that "with some

[103] "Documents in regard to education", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 1st September 1871, p. 241.
[104] "The Union and Education Debates", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 1st July 1871, pp. 175-6.
[105] "The Education Bill and Free Church Teachers", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 1st July 1871, p. 178.

quite congenial modifications the proposed measure commands a very large and hitherto unprecedented amount of approval on the part of the general community".[106]

In August 1871, *The Watchword* reported that Robert Rainy had made a public appeal to John Cairns to solve a painful mystery and state whether "in consistency with their Voluntary principles" the UPs would allow the Bible to be taught by Government in public schools. Cairns – usually so free in written and spoken communications of all kinds – maintained a prudent silence. The UPs "emboldened by Free Church backsliding" had declared that they would only support the Bill on the clear understanding that local or government taxes would not be used to support the teaching of religion.[107] The same issue reprinted an article from the *Perthshire Courier* that described John Cairns as quitting the field on James Begg with his breastplate down and his visor up. Cairns had altered his statement that "the UPs differ from us concerning Free Church principles, only in respect of Endowment and Establishment", by changing the word "only" for the word "chiefly". Cairns had added, "that in using that expression, he had in his eye the complexity of the Establishment Principle, so that Education and any other matter not technically covered by Establishment, but akin to it, might be embraced". The *Perthshire Courier,* commenting on Cairns silence to Rainy's appeal, now saw him responding to Begg in a way that showed him to be "an unmitigated secularist".[108] Another article remarks how surprising it was that the proposal to withdraw the Bible from Scottish classrooms comes not from the Romanists but from Protestants and that the papists allow their children to be taught Bible along with the rest of the class.[109]

In the event, the Lord Advocate's Bill never went into Parliamentary Committee so the various amendments were not discussed in the House of Commons. The Lord Advocate put the Bill into "Committee pro forma" which meant that he reproduced the Bill without showing what had been added or taken out from it. This new Bill

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106 "The Education Question", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 1st July 1871, p. 177.

107 "The Education Question and Present Duty", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 1st August 1871, p. 190.

108 "National Education and Dr. Cairns", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 1st August 1871, pp. 220-1.

109 "Some thoughts on the Scotch Education Bill", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 1st September 1871, p. 263.

Hugh Martin.

included the time-table clause, so that if any of the children were to be taught religion they would need to come to school an hour earlier or leave an hour later.[110]

13. Hugh Martin on National Education

To this debate Hugh Martin responded with a pamphlet on *National Education* subtitled *The Lord Advocate's Bill.*[111] In the pamphlet, Martin disapproved of the attempt to limit religious education to a set hour of the day. He thought the time-table clause in the Bill was designed to distance the nation from its faith in God as "it relieves the nation from all religious responsibility in its national and authorised education of its own youth". He was concerned that the Bill did not bring the nation to acknowledge God and Jesus Christ, or "to declare whether Christ or Anti-Christ, God or Mahomet reigns over us".[112] Martin was opposed to a Bill containing a time-table clause as "it is not possible to imagine a more complete practical denial of the Headship of Christ over the Nation, or of the claims of National Christianity".[113] The reality was that many Christian teachers, in both Free Church and Parochial Schools, introduced the Bible and Shorter Catechism as their discretion dictated. The time-table clause in the Bill was designed to change these blessings to one where Christians felt compelled to hold their counsel on these matters. Martin questioned whether Christian teachers could tackle Darwinism if they remained silent on the Biblical teaching with respect

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[110] "The Education Question and Present Duty", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 1st August 1871, p. 190.

[111] Hugh Martin, *National Education – The Lord Advocate's Bill* (Scottish Educational Association, Ballantyne and Co., 1872).

[112] op. cit., p. 1.

[113] op. cit., p. 2.

to the real origin of man.[114] He saw in the Lord Advocate's Bill, Voluntaryism gone mad, as it required secular instruction and forbad religious instruction.[115]

Martin's pamphlet has a most valuable section showing the difference between the old conscience-clause that allowed the withdrawal of children from religious instruction and the new time-table clause that restricted the actions of the teacher. He saw in the time-table a far worse system that was built on extreme Voluntary views. Martin brilliantly contrasted the conscience clause with the time-table clause in this way: "By the Conscience-Clause, the individual parent takes the responsibility for his own child's non-religious education. By the Time-table the nation takes responsibility for the non-religious education of the whole population. In the former case, the Nation washes its hands of all responsibility, and leaves it on the individual on whom it must really and ultimately rest. In the latter, the Nation becomes guilty of refusing to train up the Nation's children in the way they should go."[116] He then added: "It is a most extraordinary object of contemplation, the concurrence of Sir Henry Moncreiff and Dr. Cairns to obtain this godless Bill, the former by representing his Church as having come down from a Free Churchism from which the vast majority of her elders and people never have come down, and never will come down; and the other by representing his Church as having sunk to a depth of Voluntaryism to which the vast majority of her godly elders and people have never descended, and we trust never will descend!"[117]

Martin then added, in complete harmony with the Free Church conservatives from the start of the Educational Scheme in 1844, that "The Free Church people never abandoned the conviction, that if the State educate its children, it ought to educate them religiously".[118] The same feelings were voiced in *The Watchword,* where they feared that the Scottish Voluntaries would get themselves onto local boards and attack

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[114] op. cit., p. 4. *The Watchword* reprints a lecture by Hugh Martin at the opening of Lasswade and District Science School on 19th October 1871 that deals with the relationship between teaching Science and the Bible. Sadly it is a little weak on Darwin's theories. See the articles "Village Lecture on Scientific Education", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 1st November 1871, pp. 340-347, and continued, in op. cit., pp. 389-396.

[115] Hugh Martin, op. cit., p. 5.

[116] op. cit., p. 7.

[117] op. cit., p. 8.

[118] ibid.

the use of the Bible in the schools, as they had opposed all reference to religion in the Bill.[119] The magazine, like Martin, was vehemently opposed to the time-table clause and used similar arguments to those he had used.[120] The editorial in the previous month's issue of *The Watchword* commented that some thought Scotland should allow a time-table clause because in Ireland the Romanists might demand a Roman Catholic system of National Education.[121]

14. A National Education Union

In an article stressing "present duty" in response to the education question, *The Watchword* called for the formation of a distinct organisation to oppose the Bill. "We do not see why, in addition to the strenuous efforts of the Free Church Defence Association, a great educational league might not be formed, consisting of all men in Scotland – and we believe that many can be got amongst all classes – who are determined, by the blessing of God, to defeat this most unscriptural and revolutionary scheme."[122] They believed that such an organisation would both counteract the political influence of Voluntaryism on education and put a check on the organisation and funds of the Free Church being most unfairly employed in opposition to her previous profession regarding education. The article concludes by citing a paragraph from the *Glasgow Herald* that details six of the amendments proposed to the Lord Advocate's Bill by the deputation to London representative of the public meetings held in Edinburgh and Glasgow. The deputation included Lord Polwarth, William Kidston and the Rev. William Fraser of Paisley.[123] The amendments included the maintaining of "use and wont" with respect to the Bible and the Shorter Catechism in schools and the removal of the time-table clause.

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[119] "The Education Question", *The Watchword,* Vol. 5, 1st April 1870, p. 41.

[120] "Why we object to a time-table conscience clause", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 2nd October 1871, pp. 319-320.

[121] "The Commission – The Education Question", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 1st September 1871, p. 239.

[122] "The Education Question and Present Duty", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 1st August 1871, pp. 193-194.

[123] Fraser was the biographer of David Stow, who was one of Thomas Chalmers' elders and a pioneer in the professional training of teachers. Prior to training for the Free Church ministry, Fraser was the headmaster of the Free Church Seminary in Glasgow for training teachers. See W. Ewing, *Annals of the Free Church of Scotland 1843-1900,* Vol. 1, p. 162.

Three months later in October 1871, *The Watchword* noted with the "greatest satisfaction" the formation of the "National Education Union" to defeat the strange and anti-national attempts of the "backsliding Free Churchmen", UPs, infidels, and Romanists. It argued that the educational system had become inadequate in the large cities and manufacturing districts despite the efforts of the Churches supported by Parliamentary grants that had done "incalculable good". It wanted the introduction of a national system by the State that retained the religious character which had hitherto been distinctive of the Scottish system.[124] The following month, Captain Webster of Stirling, who is described as one of the most intellectual and zealous elders of the Free Church, argued that for generations the Scottish system had been based on the Word of God and that "the children of Presbyterians, Papists, Secularists, and Voluntaries" had all enjoyed its benefits. Webster opposed the change to a "secular" National Education system and went on to quote the Bible as being the source of our national prosperity, adding that, "we are told, the ministers, the Sabbath Schools and the parents, are to attend to the religious instruction of the children". His comment was that "ministers have too much to do already without the additional onerous duty of a schoolmaster", that Sabbath Schools met for only about an hour once a week which would provide a thin thread, and that "if parents are to be relied upon for inculcating religion on the minds of their children, I fear much we will be leaning on broken reeds".[125]

Captain Webster's next article spoke of the "constitutional party" in the Free Church that were standing against a "majority" who have "little in common with the Free Church". He noted that at the November 1871 Free Church Commission the voting of 105 votes for Robert Rainy's motion and 92 votes against, which was a large narrowing of the gap from the May 1871 General Assembly when 316 votes were cast for Sir Henry Moncreiff's motion and 136 against.[126] The November 1871

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[124] "The National Education Question", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 2nd October 1871, pp. 314-6.

[125] "The Education Question", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 1st November 1871, pp. 367-70 (citations on pp. 368-9).

[126] Captain Webster, Stirling, "True Union and Scriptural Education", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 1st January 1872, p. 460. Webster disapproved of the order of debate at the May 1871 General Assembly where the education question was designedly brought up after the debate on union to avoid weakening support for union – which it most certainly would have done. Webster was of the view that the rash union proposals fade into insignificance beside the education question. op. cit., p. 461.

Commission heard opposing speeches from Sir Henry Moncreiff and William Nixon.[127] This resulted in Moncreiff demanding to know if the conservatives approved of the separation between secular and religious education in Scotland. The conservatives replied by pointing out that the effect of the time-table clause, if it remained in the Lord Advocate's Bill, would not merely separate secular and religious education, but would exclude religion entirely from the normal school day. It is also evident in the report that Moncreiff had "keen feelings" in this debate and made vague threats when Nixon had imputed political motives to his desire to see the Lord Advocate's Bill passed – it was well known that Sir Henry and his family were supporters of the Whig Government from which, *The Watchword* asserted, he enjoyed a "lucrative situation".[128]

15. The withdrawal of the Lord Advocate's Bill

In February 1871 the leading article in *The Watchword* reported, with a measure of sadness, the growth of secularism in Free Church circles: "It is painful to observe, that this theory of undisguised secularism, in so far as the State is concerned, so repugnant to Free Church principles, is gradually being avowed in some quarters of the Free Church."[129] The article then refers to David Brown, the Professor of New Testament Exegesis at the Free Church College in Aberdeen, who had moved a motion in the Aberdeen Presbytery that it petition both Houses of Parliament for a complete secular system of education at the public expense, with an hour each day set apart for religious instruction, for those who wish to provide for it at their own expense.[130] The same issue carried the second part of an extended book review of J. L. Porter's *Life and Times of Henry Cooke.* This records Cooke's opposition in Ireland to the 1831 National Education Act which excluded the Bible from

[127] William Nixon was the Free Church minister of Montrose and an ardent supporter of James Begg in opposing the union of the Free Church with the United Presbyterians. He was a Disruption minister and Moderator of the General Assembly in 1868 and was nicknamed "the lion of Montrose". Nixon was a keen debater; an example of him in controversy with Robert Rainy in the 1872 General Assembly can be found in, "Assembly Debate on Union", *The Watchword,* Vol. 7, 1st November 1872, p. 357.

[128] "The Education Question – Mr Nixon and Sir Henry Moncrieff", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 1st January 1872, pp. 465-7. The altercation between Moncreiff and Nixon is reported on pp. 466-7 along with a detailed explanation from Nixon.

[129] "Progress of the Education Struggle", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 1st February 1872, p. 478.

[130] ibid.

ordinary school hours; Cooke, too, had used the Establishment Principle as the basis of his argument.[131]

At the subsequent meeting of the Free Church Commission in March 1872 the voting gap between supporters and opponents of the Bill had once again widened. Sir Henry moved "that the Commission should resolve to petition in favour of the Lord Advocate's Bill, as containing the essential elements of a good educational measure, and as providing due security for religious instruction", whilst William Nixon's counter-motion stated that, "Provision must be made for the continuance of the free and unfettered use of the Word of God and that there must be no obstacle placed in the way of communicating religious instruction as heretofore in National Schools". Sir Henry Moncreiff's motion received 149 votes whilst that of William Nixon received 85 votes.[132] In reference to the debate in the Commission *The Watchword* lamented the habit of the pro-union party in the Free Church of saying that they desired amendments to the National Secular Education Bill and then failing to demand them.[133]

Sir Henry Moncreiff met with George Young, the Lord Advocate, to discuss the time-table clause and agreed that for political reasons it was necessary to include it within the Bill. The Lord Advocate asked if he was to understand that the Free Church would not object to a time-table, and Moncreiff did not contradict him. *The Watchword* spoke of this action as "toadying" to either Mr. Young or the Voluntaries,[134] and it continued to oppose the time-table clause as allowing the State to deny its Christian obligations in the training of the youth of the nation.[135]

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131 "Dr Porter's *Life and Times of Henry Cooke D.D.*", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 1st February 1872, pp. 480-491. The sections of the review dealing with National Education and the Establishment Principle are on pp. 484-491.

132 See, "Education deliverance and debate in the late commission", *The Watchword,* Vol. 7, 1st April 1872, p. 8 and "The Education Question – Abuse of Language", *The Watchword,* Vol. 7, 1st April 1872, p. 29. The latter article gives the names of the ministers and elders who voted each way in the debate. Among those opposing Sir Henry were James Begg, William Nixon, Gustavus Aird, Patrick Borrowman, William Fraser, Hugh Martin, Thomas Smith, and William Kidston.

133 "Education deliverance and debate in the late commission", *The Watchword,* Vol. 7, 1st April 1872, pp. 7-8. The article makes an interesting observation concerning Robert Rainy. It noted that at the Commission he had quoted scripture – "The only instance of him doing so in Church Courts for many years". op. cit., p. 8.

134 "The Education Bill – Free Church deputations", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 1st February 1872, p. 511.

135 "The time-table clause", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 1st February 1872, pp. 513-4.

There were five major amendments that James Begg and his colleagues along with the Scottish Education Association sought to make in the Bill. They were:

(i) A positive enactment for the reading and teaching of Holy Scripture.

(ii) An enactment that the branches of education, including religious education according to "use and wont", should be left to the determination of a local board.

(iii) That no time-table clause should be in the Bill.

(iv) That there should be a central representative board, open to the press with the power to prepare the code for Scotland.

(v) That there should be clauses in the Bill to secure the training, status, and remuneration of teachers.[136]

On 13th June 1871 the Lord Advocate found that notice had been given of two hundred amendments to the Bill. When this became known Duncan McLaren, a Liberal Member of Parliament for Edinburgh and former Lord Provost, asked Gladstone to send the measure to a Select Committee representing Scottish opinion. Gladstone responded by telling him that George Young had made up his mind that the Bill must be discussed by a Committee of the whole House. This proved to be a fatal decision as two other Scottish Bills had already been rejected. A Ballot Bill had been lost and an important Bill regarding the Army was in troubled waters. On 20th July 1871, Gladstone told the Commons that the Scottish Education Bill was to be withdrawn. There was great disappointment in Parliament and George Anderson, one of the Members for Glasgow, asked the Prime Minister if he could not give a definite assurance that it would be a leading measure in the next session. Gladstone responded by saying that it could hardly be expected that the Ballot question and Army Reform were to be put aside for an Education Bill.[137]

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[136] "Notes on the Education Question", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, March 1 1872, p. 552.

[137] Omond, op. cit., pp. 276-278 and D. J. Withrington, "Towards a National System, 1867-72", op. cit., p. 119.

16. The 1872 Act

In November 1871, referring to the education question, Gladstone complained that the "extreme jealousy, susceptibility and irritation" of the contending parties in Scotland was making it more difficult than ever to find a solution.[138] Six months after the withdrawal of the Lord Advocate's Bill a third attempt was made to get a Scottish Education Bill through Parliament. In order to prompt the Government to return to the principles on which Lord Argyll's Bill had been based, Lord Kinnaird introduced a Parochial Schools (Scotland) Bill in the House of Lords.[139] The Bill was substantially the Duke of Argyll's Bill of 1869 as it had passed the House of Commons in August that year. The Commons amendments were not considered by the Lords for want of time.[140] This proposal was, however, overtaken when four days later the Lord Advocate introduced the Government's new Bill in the Commons at a time when Gladstone's cabinet and the Liberal administration were losing their grip on the Commons and probably the country. The all-important question was, what changes had George Young and the cabinet agreed since the previous legislation was withdrawn in mid-1871, in this new hope of, at long last, pushing through a Scottish Education Bill? As Donald Withrington observes, the answer was, almost none.[141]

The clauses that elicited the most antagonistic comment in 1871 were still there. The system would be run by a Privy Council sub-committee based in London without the interposition of a central board in Edinburgh between it and the schools. There was no formal security

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[138] Gladstone to Ardmillan, 29th November 1871, *Gladstone papers,* 44540, fo. 183; to Argyll, 22nd November 1871, H. C. G. Matthew (ed.), *Gladstone Diaries, Vol. 8, July 1871-December 1874* (Oxford, 1982) p. 66, cited in Jonathan P. Parry, op. cit., pp. 339-340.

[139] George William Fox Kinnaird, the ninth Lord Kinnaird (1807-1878), was a lifelong adherent to the Liberal or Whig cause. He played a prominent part in the promotion of legislation for the protection of workers in industry and the furtherance of education. He drafted the legislation for the closing of public houses on the Sabbath (Sunday); see his entry in *Dictionary of National Biography (DNB).*

[140] The observations of *The Watchword* on Kinnaird's Bill were that "this Bill is substantially the Duke of Argyll's Bill of 1869" and not a revolutionary measure like the Lord Advocate's Bill. Kinnaird's Bill enlarged the management of parochial schools but preserved their distinctive features. It appointed a Scotch board or commission to erect schools and assist in the preparation of a code. It provided for the training of teachers with a minimum salary and a fair tenure of office. It contained a conscience clause but no time-table clause. There was special provision for poor areas, such as the Highlands and it allowed for school-boards to purchase or lease existing schools. "Parochial School (Scotland) Bill", *The Watchword,* 1st March 1871, p. 558.

[141] See D. J. Withrington, "Towards a National System, 1867-72", op. cit., p. 119.

for religious instruction in the curriculum although the conscience clause and compulsory school attendance were there. All parochial schools were to be transferred at once to the national system under an obligatory organisation of local school-boards which had the power to raise school rates through local taxation and to engage, dismiss, and determine the pay of schoolmasters. Non-parochial schools of all kinds, denominational or not, were to be given a restricted period in which to decide whether to apply to join the national system. There was the greatest pressure on them to do so since otherwise they would get no public support.

Edward Strathearn Gordon,[142] the leading opposition spokesman in Parliament, said, very disgruntled, at the first reading of the new Bill that it was "was little better than a repetition of the Bill of 1871".[143] The Gladstone Government had surprisingly maintained its position despite the widespread criticisms it had received in the intervening months. It is equally surprising that that there were few amendments to the Bill before it was passed in August 1872. However, the few changes made were very important. The first was the introduction of a Scottish Board (a temporary one) in Edinburgh, but more importantly a resolution was carried against the Government that met a major complaint of both Established and Free Churches. The resolution gave national schools the right to continue religious instruction according to "use and wont" and the insertion of a time-table clause similar to that introduced into the English 1870 Act, which was to ensure the holding of formal religious teaching at the beginning and/or the end of the school day – but not outside normal school hours.[144] Against the Government whips the amendment on "use and wont" was carried by seven votes (216 to 209).

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[142] Edward Strathearn Gordon (1814-1879) was the Conservative Party's spokesman on Scottish Education. Born in Inverness, he was called to the bar of Scotland in 1835 and became a QC in 1868. He was Lord Advocate in the Conservative Government that preceded Gladstone's first administration and filled the office again when Disraeli was returned to power in February 1874. See his entry in *DNB* and Omond, op. cit., pp. 289-308.

[143] *Hansard,* Vol. 209, p. 268, Cited in D. J. Withrington, "Towards a National System, 1867-72", op. cit., p. 120.

[144] The famous "use and wont" resolution was drawn up and moved by Edward Gordon. It read, "That having regard to the principles and history of the past educational legislation and practice of Scotland, which provides for instruction in the Holy Scriptures as an essential part of education, this House, while desirous of passing a measure during the present session for improvement of education in Scotland, is of opinion that the law and practice of Scotland in this respect should be continued in the provisions of the Bill now before the House".

The most violent onslaught against the Bill came from the English Nonconformists. They proposed that R. W. Dale of Birmingham be sent to Scotland to deliver a series of attacks on the Government for acquiescing to the amendments. He was, however, advised to stay at home, and leave the people of Scotland to manage their own affairs. "I think it better," wrote leading Voluntary John Cairns in a letter to Dale, "that we should fight the battle amongst ourselves, rather than be agitated by a new party, however much we sympathise with your grievances, and respect your motives in wishing to help us."[145] Contrary to this advice Dale came to Scotland and held meetings in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Aberdeen. Predictably his tour had only a very limited success; the largest meeting was in Aberdeen where he taunted the Voluntaries for supporting such a Bill and told his audience that the ratepayers of Aberdeen might have to pay fees which would be spent on buying crucifixes and pictures of the Virgin Mary and the saints.[146]

17. Why the Churches supported the Act

It may be asked, "Why did the three large Scottish Presbyterian Churches support the Act?". The main reasons appear to be as follows:[147]

(i) There was a greater readiness in 1872 than in 1869 to accept what the Government offered. The Voluntaries knew that Gladstone's Government was in a weak position and if Disraeli and the Conservatives were re-elected there would be little enthusiasm for a rate-supported system of National Education.

(ii) The three main Presbyterian Churches (Established, Free and UP) were all aware of their growing weakness. Church attendances were poor and were falling off, and the missions to the industrial centres seemed to be having little success. In addition, organised religion was coming more and more under attack from the secularists, to which was added the even greater threat of religious indifference. The publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859 had revitalised the secularists and increased the number of doubters. In that book and in *The Descent of Man* published in 1871,

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[145] Omond, op. cit., p. 282, n. 1.

[146] A. R. MacEwen, *Life and Letters of John Cairns* (London, 1898), p. 546. Robert Rainy had also written to Dale urging him not to come to Scotland.

[147] Omond, op. cit., p. 281 and Parry, op. cit., p. 341.

Darwin denied the biblical story of the creation and, therefore, a literal interpretation of the fall of man. In late Victorian Scotland the churches were loosening their grip on Westminster orthodoxy; accordingly they faced very great problems in resolving the theological consequences of Darwin's work.

(iii) The effect of all this on attitudes to the place of religion in schools was remarkable. By early 1872 the Duke of Argyll went out of his way to warn those who were prepared to fight on against the Scottish Bill rather than agree to a compromise solution on religious education. He did so in these words, "I should regard further delay in the settlement of this question with considerable fear, lest it should result in the adoption of a purely secular system of education".[148] The message to the Churches, established and non-established, was clear.

(iv) Of crucial significance for the Free Church was the awareness that the Free Church Educational Scheme was in very considerable financial difficulties. This made them ever more ready to cooperate with the Government-sponsored system of National Education proposed by George Young.

On the second reading of the Bill, it was an English academic liberal MP, Auberon Herbert,[149] who moved a resolution condemning it for employing the school rate to give religious teaching; he argued that it would furnish a precedent for Irish legislation, that it would divide localities and poison school-board elections, and would impose contestable religious viewpoints on children.[150] Support for him was minimal; there was much more Liberal Party interest in limiting religious teaching in board schools to Bible reading and teaching. At the committee stage of the Bill, 127 Liberals voted for an amendment to exclude catechisms and formularies from teaching in publicly

[148] For valuable comment on why the Churches reluctantly supported the Act, see D. J. Withrington, "Towards a National System, 1867-72", op. cit., pp. 120-2, and D. J. Withrington, "How the Churches defended religion in the Education Act of 1872", *The Times Educational Supplement,* 7th January 1972, p. 4.

[149] D. J. Withrington, *Times Educational Supplement,* op. cit., p. 4.

[150] Auberon Herbert (1838-1906) was a writer, theorist, and philosopher and one of the MPs for Nottingham. He was the son of the 3rd Earl of Carnarvon and promoted a libertarian philosophy that was closely related to anarchy. A collection of his work, *The Right and Wrong of Compulsion by the State and Other Essays* was re-issued as recently as 1978.

[150] *Hansard,* Vol. 209, p. 1531, 7th March 1872, cited in Parry op. cit., p. 341.

managed schools. The amendment was based on the Cowper-Temple proposal for the 1870 *English Education Bill*. The amendment failed as non-official British Liberals and a number of Irishmen joined the Conservatives to defeat it. Eventually the Bill was quietly passed on 2nd August 1872.[151]

18. How did James Begg and the supporters of *The Watchword* react to the 1872 Act?

Hugh Martin in his speech at the May 1872 Free Church General Assembly on the topic of National Education rejoiced at the recent resolution of the House of Commons. He welcomed the change while reaffirming that the Free Church could never abandon or compromise that great principle, that "Nations and their rulers are bound, collectively and officially, to own and honour Christ's authority, to further the interests of His holy religion, and to accept the guidance of His Word as making known His mind and will".[152]

Articles in *The Watchword* continued the plea for religious education. A long article by John Robinson, a Lanark schoolmaster, argued that secular education only showed the properties of things around us, but not our relation to these things or to the Author of them. He added that education is a pyramid which needs a base, and this base is the "knowledge of God". The same article attacked a godless education as one that robbed a young man of his modesty, and contrasted it with a godly one which taught him his relation to God and his own imperfections.[153]

At one level Begg and his colleagues were relieved that the Education Act of 1872 was better than Lord Advocate Young's Bill, with its purely secular system of State education. On another level they saw the new Act as "better than we once anticipated, yet it is very imperfect", and they thought it a very unnecessary sacrifice to part with such Free Church schools, as may be incorporated within the new scheme, for nothing! They saw this loss as the fault of the unionist party within the

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[151] The Duke of Richmond, who was in a hurry to leave London for the Goodwood races, had arranged with Lord Colonsay and the Duke of Argyll that the Bill would go smoothly through the House of Lords at one short sitting. Omond, op. cit., p. 28, n. 1.

[152] "Dr Martin on National Education", *The Watchword,* Vol. 7, 1st August 1872, pp. 224-6 (citation on p. 225).

[153] "A plea for religious education", *The Watchword,* Vol. 7, 1st June 1872, pp. 115-122 (citations on pp. 116-7, 119-120).

Free Church and "their break-neck haste to get a scheme of education at any price, and thus to remove one obstacle out of the way of the Union project".[154] They lamented that the Act would compensate the private schools' owners and the heritors of Scotland with "about a million sterling" whilst the Free Church received no compensation. *The Watchword* asserted in response, "It is an act of legalised robbery", and they considered that the liberal wing of the Church had consented to an act of spoliation, stating "A more unjust and unsatisfactory collapse of our educational efforts, our MacDonald fund, and high pretensions, it is impossible to imagine".[155]

The October 1872 issue of the magazine said, "This question is far from being ended. It is only begun. The whole country will immediately be involved in the important work of electing the new School-boards, and it is of the last importance that this should be done well." It encouraged the enlargement of the Scottish Educational Association[156] to guide supporters and for "preventing mischief".[157] The worry was that the Voluntary party within Scotland that had sought to prohibit religion in schools would seek to obtain the same end by getting elected on to the local school-boards that controlled whether the Bible and Shorter Catechism would be taught during the school day.[158]

19. Conclusion

James Begg's views did not change with respect to his support for the involvement of the State, Church and parents in a national system of education based on the Establishment Principle. What changed within the Free Church was the movement of opinion away from the old position held by Begg to the new position adopted by Candlish and Sir Henry Moncreiff. The liberal wing of the Free Church began by supporting the Free Church Educational Scheme and ended by giving the schools away to the State without any necessary guarantees; and they did this to assist bringing about the union with the UPs.

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[154] "Unionism and Education in Scotland", *The Watchword,* Vol. 7, 2nd December 1872, p. 381.

[155] op. cit., p. 382.

[156] This was the group that had been formed at the encouragement of Begg and *The Watchword* to campaign on the education question.

[157] "The Education Question", *The Watchword,* Vol. 7, 1st October 1872, p. 327.

[158] "Unionism and Education in Scotland", *The Watchword,* Vol. 7, 2nd December 1872, p. 382.

A Victorian Classroom.

In December 1871, *The Watchword* cited *Lowe's Magazine* of December 1846 for the report by Candlish on "The constitution of the Schools in connection with the Educational Scheme of the Free Church". *The Watchword* reflected on the change that had taken place over the last thirty years: "At that time Dr Candlish, the author of the scheme in question, was apparently more zealous for scriptural education than John Knox himself, and seemed to be making, in regard to teachers, higher demands than even the great Reformer. He in truth would have made them a kind of ministers." It then noted how these "leaders" had abruptly changed their position so that they were in favour of pure secularism. "Starting from such a high platform, it is truly deplorable to mark the rapidity with which some leaders in our Church, like Reuben of old who was 'unstable as water', have recently been sinking."[159]

In the last year of the magazine, *The Watchword* spoke of office-bearers in the Free Church who had subscribed to the "whole doctrine of the Westminster Confession" and who were no longer prepared to implement their ordination engagements. It encouraged these office-bearers to leave and no longer be part of the Free Church. In the opinion of *The Watchword,* the point at issue was fundamental:

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[159] "The Education Question", *The Watchword,* Vol. 6, 1st December 1871, pp. 381-389 (citations on pp. 381, 384).

> The duty of nations to honour and serve Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, is one of paramount importance. To disown it or deny it, even by implication, is the most flagrant dishonour to our Lord and Master. It involves in it, moreover, the question of Scriptural education by the State, the protection of the Sabbath, the vindication of the purity of married life, the Protestantism of the Throne, and generally everything connected with that national religion by which we have hitherto been distinguished as a people and which has been the source of so many blessings.[160]

[160] "The approaching crisis", *The Watchword,* Vol. 8, 1st April 1873, pp. 6-7.

Appendix
THE GODLY UPBRINGING OF THE YOUNG – HOW IS IT TO BE SECURED IN OUR SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE? [1]

In the great work of educating the young, three parties, and only *three*, are entitled to participate – the Parent, the Church, and the State. Their warrant to do so proceeds from the fact that they are all divinely appointed for the discharge of certain functions, of which the godly upbringing of the young is one. Their share in the work is not a privilege which they, or any of them, may waive at pleasure, or a right which they may claim or not as they choose. It is a duty which, at their peril, they are each and all bound to fulfil. While Scripture has, we believe, thus distinctly pointed out the parties responsible for the work, it has laid down no precise rules for the exact position of each in all circumstances. These are left to be adjusted according to the varying phases of human society; although, of course, that adjustment will be all the easier the more nearly a community approaches to Christian perfection.

It is not necessary to the due performance of the work that all the three should be formally engaged in it; but all the three are bound and entitled to see that it is done. In the parish school system of Scotland, the State had formally no share in the work beyond setting the machinery in motion, and leaving the management of it very largely in the hands of the Church and the parents. This was done as the best method of then settling the question. Had the State taken up the position, which it certainly did not, of asserting that it had nothing to do with the religious upbringing of the young, or had the Church accepted the superintendence of the schools on that footing, both would have been guilty of a serious dereliction of duty. This proposition we regard as indisputable.

And there is another about which we think there can be as little dispute. It is this – that they are all charged with the responsibility of the *whole work*. By this we mean that there is no part of the work of education *exclusively* the province of any one of the three. We have no objection to grant that, from its nature, the Church ought primarily to concern itself with *religious*, and the State with *secular*, instruction. Rightly understood, we are prepared to concede this; but we regard it as utterly fallacious to

[1] *The Watchword,* Vol. 3, 1st December 1868, pp. 325-330 (see footnote 43).

assert that the State has exhausted its duty when it has provided the means of instruction in secular knowledge. It has no warrant for saying, "I instruct in secular learning. I have nothing to do with religion; you, the Church and the parents, can attend to that." Attention to the *entire* education of the young is alike incumbent upon it, and on both of its co-partners. If the other parties concerned neglect their duty, it is within its competency to urge it upon their attention, but we can find no authority in Scripture for limiting the sphere of its duty to mere worldly learning. Similarly, the Church would certainly be within her legitimate province, when, finding those committed to her care sunk in ignorance and social degradation, she did all within her power to civilise as well as Christianise them – to educate secularly as well as religiously. This view of the province of both Church and State is denied by many at the present time; still we believe it to be the scriptural one, and to be therefore the safe one for both, while the opposite is fraught with consequences most disastrous.

These two propositions, then, lie at the foundation of all sound views on national education: (1) That there are three parties empowered by God himself, to see that the work is done; and, (2) That no particular part of the work is the exclusive province of any one of them, but each has had laid on it the obligation to see to the discharge of the whole. Grant these two propositions, and the Christian education of such a community as ours need not be a difficult problem. Deny them, and it is scarcely possible to see how it can be solved.

But there is one additional duty peculiarly incumbent on the Church. Enjoined as she is by the most solemn sanctions to declare the whole counsel of God, it is specially her province, while zealously discharging her own duty, to tell the nation and the parents what are theirs. Whether it will hear, or whether it will forbear, it is hers to tell the State that its obligation is not fulfilled, when it has provided, however abundantly, the means of secular instruction, – that if, along with the others, it secures that the young be brought up in the principles of divine truth, to it will be the share of the glory and the reward; but if, from indifference or mistaken notions of duty, it fails in this respect, then is it failing to fulfil one of the prime functions of its existence. No change in the circumstances of society, or in the relation of Church and State, can liberate the Church from this obligation. This is a phase of duty of nations to Christ, or, if you please to call it, the Establishment principle, which will last to the end of time. Whenever the Church abandons it, she

surrenders the best ground on which she can insist on the State educating the people at all.

Scriptural views on such a subject are always of moment. At the present time their value is inestimable. There are pretty clear indications that another attempt will soon be made to settle the Scottish Education Question. In a few months the condition of elementary education may to a large extent be settled for generations to come. Surely if this be so, all Christian men and Christian Churches have an obvious duty to perform. It will be as it ought to be, that the Free Church should express her opinion on the subject of the local and general management of an education scheme, and should see that her teachers are equitably dealt with if her schools are to be absorbed in the national system. But if she interferes solely, or even chiefly, for such purposes, would it not be better that she kept aloof altogether? It may be that the guarantees proposed for religious instruction will be such as ought to satisfy her. It is hoped so; but if not, she, more than any other church, will have the power of determining that they shall be satisfactory.

And if there is one consideration more than another that should influence her, it is this, that if *religious instruction is not to be imparted in the common schools, no adequate substitute can be found.* It cannot be imparted by the parents. Are our ministers prepared to accept the responsibility? Many have formed a very low estimate of the religious value of the teaching in our day-schools. It is sometimes objected to, that where the master is indifferent, or worse, religious truth be a hindrance to the child's best interests rather than an advancement. That this does sometimes occur cannot be denied. It is a deplorable fact; but it suggests the pregnant question, Is such an evil likely to increase or diminish under the school committees that are proposed for the local management?

It is sometimes also urged, that even where the master is under the influence of divine truth, the religious teaching is often more of the head than of the heart – nothing more, in fact, than instruction in the mere facts of Scripture history, and the words of Scripture doctrine. Even if this be so, such instruction is not to be despised. By it the child is better fitted to profit from the Sabbath ministrations of his minister. Even before the blessed hour of conversion, is it not something that his mind should be stored with the sacred precepts and the matchless histories of the Divine Word? Does not such knowledge more eminently qualify him for coming under the sanctifying influence of that Spirit who worketh by means?

All the three agencies are required. The parent and the Church never can adequately supply the place of the school. For, think of the every-day life of a child of one of the labouring population, when all religious instruction has been banished from our schools. Before he is awake, his father has gone to the field or the workshop. For six or seven hours in the day, the child is under the influence of a teacher thoroughly equipped to teach him all the rudiments of secular knowledge. But he hears of Christianity as he hears of Mohammedanism or Mormonism. He hears not a word as to the merits of the one or the demerits of the rest. They are all treated, with impartial unconcern, as subjects which he has to know about, but which have otherwise no personal interest to him. He goes home and has an hour or two's tasks of the same nature as his studies at school. When his father returns, is either of them fitted for the work of religious instruction? Grant that the parent is both willing and competent to impart it, how much is to be expected of him, jaded and exhausted as he is, in the way of systematic religious teaching? The picture is not overcharged. It is that of the great body of the population of this country. The parents cannot be expected to supply this deficiency. Will Sabbath schools, or Bible classes, or the ordinary sanctuary services of the Sabbath, be able to do it? Oh, but, say some – and particularly some of the ultra-Secularists – the ministers of the religious denominations ought to teach the children of his own religious communion! Without stopping to remark that these parties will not in the least regret it if the ministers decline to do so, we ask, "Is such a thing possible? Does time hang so heavy on the hands of our ministers, that they are prepared to accept this addition to their labours?". Even if they were, there are several practical difficulties which must suggest themselves to everyone who reflects on the subject.

If the Free Church desires a satisfactory settlement of the question, there are certain theories more or less antagonistic to the positions we have laid down, to which it will be well that she should not listen. One of these is, we need scarcely say, the fallacy that the nation as such has nothing to do with religion. This theory prevails among us in two forms, in some respects different, but both leading in education to the same fatal termination. One of these, held by many politicians, and expounded by Lord Macaulay in his famous criticism of Mr. Gladstone's work on Church and State, is to this effect: Government is a mere contrivance for mutual protection, and nothing more, and

it is as absurd that it should embrace a creed, and support religion, as it would be to expect a co-operative association or a railway company to do so.

The other is more plausible, but on that account all the more dangerous. It grants that the State may be of divine origin, but it is only for purely secular purposes. In a vague, general sort of way, it allows that the civil magistrate ought to regulate his conduct by the precepts of Christianity, and so forth. But whenever it is brought to the test of an individual point, such as the acknowledgment of a creed, the protection of the Sabbath, or the religious upbringing of the young, then does its hollowness become woefully apparent. If the magistrate cannot competently educate the young religiously, it may be fairly asked, What is it he can do with religion at all?

Both phases of the theory lend inevitably to secular education, pure and simple. A good many of the holders of the latter aspect of the theory were wont to assert, that if only nothing were said in an Act of Parliament about religion, they would have no objection to the ratepayers in each locality deciding whether religion should be taught or not, and if they answered in the affirmative, they, the advocates of the theory, were ready to acquiesce. Many of them have now abandoned this position, and, as was shown in our last number, it is not logically tenable. At all events, it would not be safe to peril the question on such a solution now. It would necessitate a struggle, to be ever and anon renewed, in one-half of the parishes in the land. Our ministers would be assailed by the whole force of the secularists, and would in too many instances soon abandon the contest. Depend upon it, there is more than meets the eye under the present unanimity about *unsectarian education*. Will anyone guarantee that it may not be soon noisily argued that the Bible and the Shorter Catechism are sectarian books, and that those who urge their admission into the schools are sectaries?

Then another ingenious expedient has been proposed to get over the difficulty, and reconcile Voluntaries and those in favour of the Establishment principle. The amount given by the State, it is said, may be regarded as for secular learning, and for that only, while the fees paid by the parents will cover all the religious, and a part of the secular instruction. This might do if the fees were mere voluntary contributions on the part of the parents, and not fixed and exacted by the school-committees, – that is, by the State. Or is it actually intended that there should be a separate fee for religious instruction, not to be paid by

those who desire their children to be absent from the school when it is communicated?

Even allowing that this could be done, what of the building where the religious instruction is given? For the theory is so persistent that it follows us even there. Who is to provide the school-building? We have never heard of any other proposal than that it should be erected by the State funds – that is, by so much granted by the State from the general exchequer, and so much collected by the State's authority in the shape of local taxation. The fees have nothing to do with it; the building will be raised by the money, and will remain for all time to come the State's property! We are sure to be told, and the argument would be unanswerable, that if it is wrong for the State to pay for the teaching of religion, it cannot be right for it to pay for the building where it is taught. Look at the matter in any shape we choose, to this complexion must it come at last: If we once abandon the State's right and duty to educate religiously, we can find no rest for the sole of the foot save in secularism pure and simple.

Still another expedient, very plausible too, has been suggested and urged upon our acceptance by high authority. Leave us, it is said, leave to the churches the training of the teachers. Leave us to secure the right sort of men, and give them the right sort of training, and we have no fear of the education then. Of course this is very good so far as it goes, but will it gain the end in view if even the right sort of men are to be muzzled, are to be prohibited from teaching religion? Besides, it is extremely doubtful whether the State would consent to such an arrangement. Even if it did, it could only be regarded as an additional guarantee provided the conditions otherwise are satisfactory. It would be perilous to accept it as a sufficient counterpoise, if the whole religious upbringing of the young is to be made an open question, and if facilities are given for the exclusion of religion altogether. As an equivalent, it is, on the face of it, all but worthless.

Alarmed by the force of such considerations as these, and at the looseness of views prevailing on the subject, while hampered at the same time by their concessions on Union, some Free Churchmen have been forced to take up a new position. They propose to say nothing as to the general question of the State's duty to religious truth, but declare they will strenuously maintain its obligation and duty to religiously educate the young. Such a position seems clearly untenable. Why the young more than the old? At what age of the child does the obligation cease? What

single scriptural argument is there for the distinction? This is an outwork exposed to attack on both sides. There can be no security except in the citadel of the State's obligation to all persons, and at all times.

But it is well to keep in mind that the right of the parent, as well as the State, to educate religiously, is assailed in our own time. We find that one class of so-called philosophical Secularists protests against children having any religious instruction, on the ground that even the parent has no right to force his religious views on his children – that all he has to do is to teach them to read, write, and cipher, to know about the structure of the human body, and the laws of nature, and to leave them to be of any religion or no religion when they come to judge for themselves. This idea is so antagonistic to human nature, that it would not deserve serious attention were it not that the propagators of it are sure to be zealous allies of those who see difficulties in the way of securing religious instruction in the schools.

Such are some of the prevalent fallacies on this great question. What, then, is the clear line of duty to all right-minded men in the present juncture? It is surely to insist that the guarantees for religious instruction ought to be as good for the future as they have been for the past. This will be obviously best done, by the State's saying that there shall be religious instruction in the new schools, just as there has been in the old, along with what nobody ever objected to, and very few have availed themselves of, – viz., a conscience clause to protect those parents who may not desire Bible teaching for their children. We do not say that even more than these may be required, nor are we prepared to assert that the end could not be secured by any other plan, than a direct enactment in the statute. On this, however, we cannot enter at present.

But surely the subject is one of surpassing importance to all Christian and patriotic Scotchmen. For what would we have been without our Bible training? We were once about the poorest, the most ignorant, and the most superstitious among the nations. That we are so different now is largely due to the fact that religious teaching has been inseparably interwoven into our system of education. What we are we owe to the godly upbringing of the young among us.