

Scotland and the Great Disruption

I. Nineteenth Century

A. Evangelical Renewal

1. Fresh surge of evangelical theology/piety after 1800 revived in response to rationalistic excesses of French Revolution
2. Example of concern: British and Foreign Bible Society battle over including the Apocrypha in Bibles
3. Extreme: Edward Irving, a “proto-Charismatic”

B. The Great Disruption (1843)

1. Major Leader: Thomas Chalmers
 - a. Well-read and talented—actually converted *after* he became a minister in the Church of Scotland
 - b. In Glasgow, he sought to use the parish system in place of state welfare, using funds from the Church of Scotland for church-directed, church-administered relief
 - c. Remained interested in science and mathematics
 - d. Eventually became a professor in the University of Edinburgh
2. Issues in the Disruption
 - a. Theological liberalism, but only secondarily
 - b. Government interference in the Church
 - 1) Lay patronage: Landlords selecting ministers
 - 2) 1842: a majority called for no govt. interference in affairs of church
 - 3) Parliament rejected this claim
 3. Formation of the Free Church of Scotland
 - a. About 1/3 of ministers and members of the Church of Scotland withdrew
 - b. Chalmers moderator and principal of its new college

C. “Flowering” of Scottish Presbyterianism w/ Free Church

1. Robert Murray McCheyne
 - a. Famous minister of Dundee
 - b. *Memoirs of McCheyne* ed. by Andrew Bonar; devotional classic
2. Alexander Duff
 - a. First Scottish overseas missionary to India
 - b. Represented the majority of Church of Scotland missionaries who joined the Free Church
3. Horatius and Andrew Bonar
 - a. Hymns (Horatius)
 - b. Covenantal premillennialists [in contrast to traditional Reformed amillennialism]
4. Professors
 - a. William Cunningham: historical theology
 - b. James Buchanan: apologetics & systematic theology
 - c. James Bannerman: ecclesiology

II. Twentieth Century

A. Splits and Reunions

1. 1892—Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland formed
 - a. Left Free Church over relaxed subscription

- b. Split in 1989 over controversy when one of leading members & elder, a member of the House of Lords, attended the funeral Mass of a Catholic colleague
- 2. 1900—United Free Church of Scotland formed (Free Church and United Presbyterian Church)
- 3. Minority Free Church continued separate—“Wee Free” Church
 - a. Believed in establishment
 - b. Won recognition in House of Lords as continuing Free Church
 - c. Stresses Sabbath-keeping (“blue laws”) and exclusive psalmody
 - d. In 2000 Free Church split over doctrinal/moral questions about Free Church theologian Donald Macleod → Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) represents about a fifth of church (led by Maurice Roberts)
- 4. 1921—Parliament guaranteed freedom from state control
- 5. Reunion of 1929
 - a. United Free Church reunited with Church of Scotland
 - b. Small United Free Church branch resisted and left
- B. Church of Scotland Today
 - 1. Predominantly liberal with Puritan groups among its ranks (e.g., Forward Movement)
 - 2. Dropping in numbers—from 1.3 million members in 1956 to 660,000 in 2001; one leader called for closing of 500 of the Church’s 1,700 churches