

**An assessment of the contribution of the Church of Scotland
to school education 1774-1872 focusing in particular on the
work of the General Assembly Education Committee 1824-72.**

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**Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
The University of Edinburgh
2005**



I declare that this thesis is entirely my own work and that all quotations and sources have been acknowledged.

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Acknowledgements

A number of people have encouraged and advised me during the preparation of this thesis. In particular I am indebted to my supervisors, Stewart J. Brown, Professor of Ecclesiastical History, University of Edinburgh and Dr. Ewen A. Cameron, Scottish History Department, (School of History and Classics), for their meticulous scrutiny of my work and for their helpful guidance and wise counsel. I would wish also to record my gratitude to one of my early mentors, the late Rev. Dr. J. I. H. McDonald, a noted New Testament scholar and educationist and a former convener of the Church of Scotland Education Committee. Dr. Andrew Bain willingly shared with me his experience and expertise as a researcher in the field of school education. My thanks are due also to Maurice Berrill, a fellow-member of Greenbank Church, Edinburgh, who proof-read the draft, and to the administrative and computer staff at New College for their support. The New College Library Staff were as always friendly and patient with a rather time-consuming research student. Lastly whatever I have achieved has only been possible thanks to the loving support and understanding of Mairi, my wife.

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Abbreviations Used

<i>ACR</i>	<i>Argyll Commission Report</i>
<i>AGA</i>	<i>Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland</i>
<i>AAGA</i>	<i>Abridgment of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly</i>
<i>ACGA</i>	<i>Abridgment of the Commission of the General Assembly</i>
CC	Privy Council Committee on Education
<i>ECR</i>	<i>Report of Church of Scotland Education Committee to the General Assembly</i>
EUL	Edinburgh University Library
EUNCL	Edinburgh University New College Library
<i>GAP</i>	<i>Church of Scotland General Assembly Papers</i>
NAS	National Archives of Scotland, General Register House, Edinburgh
NLS	National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh
<i>NSA</i>	<i>New Statistical Account (1845)</i>
<i>OSA</i>	<i>Old Statistical Account of Scotland</i>
PP	Parliamentary Papers
<i>RSCHS</i>	<i>Records of the Scottish Church History Society</i>
SSPCK	Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge

Unless otherwise stated "Church of Scotland" is taken to refer to the Established Church of Scotland.

Abstract

In 1824 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland agreed to set up a committee to bring forward a plan for increasing the means of school education in Scotland. The following year the Assembly formally re-appointed this committee as an Education Committee whose remit was to plant schools to supplement parochial schools in areas where additional provision was most needed, particularly in the Highlands and Islands. This thesis describes the work of this committee over almost fifty years (1824-1872) during which time it established over 280 elementary schools throughout the country and two colleges for training teachers ("normal schools").

The Education Committee was also answerable to the General Assembly for the oversight of the Church's statutory management of parochial schools through the supervision of local presbyteries and kirk sessions. This control of schools by the Church involved these church courts in visiting parish schools and in examining schoolmasters and ensuring that they were members of the Church.

The Education Committee's endeavours were soon hampered by the lack of voluntary funding and it had to rely on government aid, particularly for its teacher training scheme. To make matters more difficult by the mid 1850s denominational and private enterprise had created a manifold pattern of education consisting of nine or ten different types of school, with the Free Church, the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Roman Catholic Church all engaged in setting up their own schools and all looking to the government for financial assistance. In this situation the Established Church's control of parish schools was challenged and in political and ecclesiastical circles a number of questions were raised, principally, should the management of all Scottish schools (including parochial schools and Church schools) be transferred to local boards under the supervision of some centralised body and if so who should be responsible for the delivery of religious instruction presently under the jurisdiction of the various denominations?

This thesis recounts how the Education Committee responded to these questions by defending its status with regard to parochial schools and by opposing moves to abolish the traditional parish school system and replace it with a new national system of school education in Scotland. Up until 1872 the Church continued to add to the number of its Assembly schools and to promote the professionalism of teachers by raising teaching qualifications and standards. I will contend that by pursuing this strategy, which included a measure of co-operation with the government, the Church of Scotland made a significant and historically important contribution to Scottish school education in the nineteenth century.

Introduction

Religious Education (or more accurately Religious Instruction) is the only subject whose place in the curriculum of Scottish schools is protected by statute. To explain this unique status we must go back to the nineteenth century and to a time when the Church of Scotland fought to retain government support for the provision of what was then confessional religious instruction both in its own schools and in the parish schools. The Church's efforts ultimately found political recognition in the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act. This was later strengthened by the Local Government (Scotland) Act, 1929, and the 1980 Education (Scotland) Act – both of which made it compulsory for an education authority to provide religious instruction unless and until a poll of the local electorate decided otherwise. Today the status of religious education (now, of course, non-confessional in non-denominational schools), is enhanced by the fact that as "Religious Studies", it is a subject examinable at "Higher" level. Moreover, in 2004 the Scottish Executive set up a committee to look into the format of Religious Observance with the intention of reinforcing its place in both the Primary and Secondary sectors.

The Church of Scotland's involvement with state education, however, is not confined to its interest in religious education. In the early 1990's the Church, through its Education Committee, was still appointing representatives to sit on the governing bodies of the Teacher Training Colleges which existed at that time. Today it appoints representatives to deal with educational matters on each of Scotland's thirty-two Local Authorities, it appoints a member of the education committee to represent it on the General Teaching Council and the committee is consulted by the Scottish Executive on a variety of educational matters, especially where these involve issues of morality such as sex education.

This respect for the Church's views on school education by the secular world has a long history and is a recognition of the contribution made by the Church for over three hundred years. The active involvement of the Church with schools goes back to the Reformation but it became particularly important in the nineteenth century when the General Assembly set up a committee to establish Church schools. The Education Committee, formed in 1824, remains the Church's oldest continuing standing committee and it is the work of this committee from its inception to the passing of the 1872 Act that this thesis will examine. The present relationship of church and state in the sphere of non-denominational school education and the continuing place

of Religious and Moral Education on the school curriculum are, I believe, significant enough to warrant such an investigation. Further, quite apart from its importance for later educational developments, the Church's contribution to nineteenth-century school education was in itself substantial. Between 1824 and 1872 through its Education Committee, the Church of Scotland played an influential role by its provision of schools, its support and training of teachers, and by its protection of the distinctive traditions of Scottish education.

Although the reformed Church of Scotland had had a major involvement in parish education since the days of John Knox, it was not until 1824 that the General Assembly considered setting up its own schools. The committee which embarked upon this task the following year was appointed in the first instance out of a concern for the educational needs of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. By 1872, however, it had successfully planted 286 schools in different areas of the country, with teachers supported from a central fund gathered largely from congregational givings. The committee, moreover, had endeavoured to improve professional teaching standards by insisting that teachers should be trained and by co-operating with the government's scheme of school inspection. Just as important, its work had inspired kirk sessions and local industrialists to establish schools in some of the most deprived areas of Scotland's cities.

In the nineteenth century the Church of Scotland drew its inspiration for school education from the ideals of the Reformers and the First Book of Discipline. It believed that its responsibility for schooling was enshrined in legislation going back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and ratified in the Act of Union which had confirmed the Church of Scotland as the "established" Church and laid down that all schoolmasters had to be members of it.¹ On the basis of this legislation the Church claimed a statutory right to examine and superintend all Scottish schools and to ensure that young people were given a "godly upbringing". This conviction, however, ultimately brought the Church into headlong conflict with politicians who sought to change the system and with successive governments on which the Church

¹ *Act for Securing the Protestant Religion and Presbyterian Church Government*, 1707. I am aware that there is currently a debate about the status of the Church of Scotland as an "established church", but it is not relevant here to enter into this discussion. In the 19th century the Kirk acted in the belief that it was the Church Established by statute and the government of the day so dealt with it even although after the Disruption it may not have been the Church of the nation. [See Callum G. Brown, "The myth of the Established Church of Scotland" in James Kirk, ed., *The Scottish Churches and the Union Parliament 1707-1999* (Edinburgh: Scottish Church History Society, 2001) and David Fergusson, *Church, State and Civil Society* (Cambridge: The University of Cambridge Press, 2004.)].

became increasingly dependent for financial aid. This conflict between Church and state in the sphere of school education will be considered here in some detail in relation to the aims and educational achievements of the Church.

By the early 1840s an incredible variety of persons and agencies had become involved in setting up schools in an attempt to meet the needs of Scotland's youth – for example, in addition to Assembly schools set up by the Church of Scotland, there were parish and burgh schools, privately endowed schools, schools run by the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, an increasing number of schools run by the Glasgow Catholic Society, and over 2,000 adventure schools which, in general, provided the poorest instruction by the least able teachers in the land. To this state of things must be added the explosion of Free Church schools following the Disruption in 1843. There was no central body to manage or co-ordinate this multiplicity of educational establishments and no way of planning to meet the needs of the new industrial towns where the old parish school system could not function. The growth of new schools meant an increased demand for government grants and with this demand came the argument that all denominations should be treated equally in the distribution of state funds. It was these factors, aggravated no doubt by the Free Church's envy of the Established Church's privileged position with regard to the parish schools, which convinced many that there was a need to establish a national non-denominational school educational system in Scotland. A succession of government bills attempting to devise such a scheme were vigorously opposed by the Established Church which refused to relinquish its control of parish schools and which argued that with its parish schools and with its Assembly schools to supplement these, Scotland already had a manageable national system. It is in the context of this controversy that the work of the Education Committee will be examined.

While most historians writing about nineteenth century Scotland do mention the Church of Scotland's involvement with school education, few deal with the subject in any detail and fewer still show an awareness of the activity of the Education Committee. Even James Scotland in his comprehensive two-volume *The History of Scottish Education*, allocated only a few pages to Assembly schools and to the Sessional schools which were set up and managed by local Church of Scotland congregations.² John Strong in *A History of Secondary Education in Scotland*

² James Scotland, *The History of Scottish Education*, 2 vols. (London: University of London Press, 1969).

covered the contribution of the Church of Scotland Education Committee in two or three sentences.³ Better, though still limited, was Alexander Morgan's chapter on "The Church and Education" in his *Rise and Progress of Scottish Education*. Morgan briefly charted the history of the Church's involvement with school education from 1565 to 1872 looking at the superintendence of parochial schools and the church's dispute with the town councils regarding jurisdiction over burgh schools. He described the setting up of the Education Committee and the Church's attempt to meet the needs of the remote parishes in the Highlands and Islands. His conclusion was that "the Church did a most valuable work in itself establishing schools or causing schools to be established" and that "a magnificent service rendered by the Church to Scottish education was in connection with the training of teachers".⁴ Writing twenty-five years after Morgan, H. M. Knox (*Two Hundred and Fifty Years of Scottish Education: 1696-1946*) could only find space for a paragraph on the setting up of the Education Committee and a passing reference to the effect of the 1861 Parochial and Burgh Schoolmasters (Scotland) Act on the control of the Church over the appointment of schoolmasters.⁵ In 1982 A. M. Douglas delivered the Chalmers Lectures and chose as his subject *Church and School in Scotland*.⁶ Published in 1985, these lectures provided a summary of Scottish education from Reformation times to the 1970s. Douglas did look at the role of the Church and its Education Committee but as a scholarly contribution the book lacked originality and was limited in its usefulness by the lack of references for quotations and sources cited.

Recent surveys of Scottish history have mentioned the Church's involvement with schools in the nineteenth century, but limitations of space meant they could devote little attention to the details of the Education Committee's work. T. C. Smout's reflection on "The Aims and Failures of Education" offered a short account of the condition of schooling in the nineteenth century. Assessing the provision needed to meet the needs of the country he concluded that while the Scottish system was superior to that in England it was still "extremely inegalitarian" and that "neither parochial schools nor a century and a half of charitable effort by religious bodies ... could overcome the problems posed by geographical remoteness, very large parishes

³ John Strong, *A History of Secondary Education in Scotland* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1909).

⁴ Alexander Morgan, *Rise and Progress of Scottish Education* (Edinburgh & London: Oliver and Boyd, 1927), 62-67.

⁵ H. M. Knox, *Two Hundred and Fifty Years of Scottish Education* (Edinburgh & London: Oliver and Boyd, 1953), 25 and 32.

⁶ Andrew M. Douglas, *Church and School in Scotland* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1985).

and a non-English speaking population".⁷ T. M. Devine discussed the Scottish attitude to education and the myth of a democratic tradition but his treatment of the Church's contribution to schooling was fairly superficial.⁸

In the hands of historians writing from a Church of Scotland perspective the subject does not fare much better. Although the General Assembly saw school education as important enough to merit being one of the four Schemes of the Church deserving congregational funding, J. H. S. Burleigh (*A Church History of Scotland*) restricted himself to describing the Church's interest in schools to a few lines in connection with the success of Free Church schools and a comment on the Act of 1872.⁹ In Stewart Mechie's *The Church and Scottish Social Development 1780-1870*, there is a chapter on "The Scottish Church and Education" but as Mechie's primary interest was in social issues, it suited him to limit his discussion of the subject mainly to a consideration of the achievements of individuals such as David Stow, George Lewis and Thomas Chalmers. Drummond and Bulloch, on the other hand, provided a summary of the situation with regard to schooling in Scotland from 1803 to 1872. (*The Church in Victorian Scotland 1843-1874*).¹⁰ Here the formation and work of the Education Committee was comprehensively covered and some perceptive conclusions reached with regard to what the authors saw as the diminishing powers of the Church. It was their verdict that the Education Committee failed to fulfil George Lewis's 1834 vision that parochial churches and parochial schools working together would strengthen Scotland as a nation, because "the age was looking to centralised government rather than local" and teachers "increasingly resented control by ministers who might be less well educated than themselves and who understood little of the problems of teaching".¹¹

In his survey of school inspection in Scotland, T. R. Bone mentioned those areas of the Education Committee's work concerned with the training and qualifications of teachers. It was Bone's view that the Church had first inaugurated school inspection through its system of presbyterial superintendence and then had promoted it nationally through its co-operation with the Privy Council and that this, together with

⁷ T. C. Smout, *A Century of the Scottish People: 1830-1950* (London: Fontana Press, 1997), 216.

⁸ T. M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation 1700-2000* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2000), 389-397.

⁹ J. H. S. Burleigh, *A Church History of Scotland* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960).

¹⁰ Andrew L. Drummond, & James Bulloch, *The Church in Victorian Scotland 1843-1874* (Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1975).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 88-9.

the setting up of normal schools by the Church, had led to considerable improvement and progress in Scottish school education.¹²

The Scottish Council for Research in Education has been responsible for the publication of a number of County histories of education which have included accounts of the involvement of presbyteries and kirk sessions with school education.¹³ In some cases these made brief references to Assembly schools and the work of the Education Committee. For example, J. C. Jessop's account of the working of one Presbytery (the Presbytery of Brechin) in applying parliamentary and ecclesiastical legislation to schooling from pre-reformation times to the nineteenth century has provided an illustration of how presbyteries would have conducted the business of school supervision throughout the land. Making use of presbytery minutes and church records, Jessop described presbytery inspections, the disciplining and examination of schoolmasters and noted those instances where the presbytery's powers were questioned. Noting the effects of the Disruption, Jessop expressed the view that "it heralded and hastened the question of national education by shedding a fierce light on the throne of Presbyterian tyranny".¹⁴ For him there was no doubt that the parochial system was essentially defective and that for all the Church's efforts Scotland remained "A Half-Educated Nation".¹⁵ While local histories such as Jessop's concentrated on particular geographical areas, they offered valuable insights into the working of the Church in schooling nationally.

Prior to the 1970s only two writers with an interest in Scottish education dealt with the involvement of the Church and the work of the Education Committee at any length. One early work deserving of mention is James Kay-Shuttleworth's *Public Education as affected by The Minutes of the Committee of Privy Council from 1846 to 1852*, which was published in 1853.¹⁶ Kay-Shuttleworth, by that time secretary to the Privy Council's Education Committee, was mainly concerned with the English

¹² T. R. Bone, *School Inspection in Scotland 1840-1966* (London: University of London Press, 1968).

¹³ For example, Ian James Simpson, *Education in Aberdeenshire before 1872* (London: University of London Press, 1947); William Boyd, *Education in Ayrshire through seven centuries* (London: University of London Press, 1961); James Meldrum Beale, *A History of the Burgh and Parochial Schools of Fife* (Edinburgh: 1983); J. C. Jessop, *Education in Angus: An Historical Survey of Education up to the Act of 1872 from Original and Contemporary Sources* (London: University of London Press, 1931); Andrew Bain, *Education in Stirlingshire from the Reformation to the Act of 1872* (London, 1965); James Anderson Russell, *History of Education in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright from original and contemporary sources* (Newton Stewart, 1951).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁵ Jessop, *Education in Angus*, 161-2.

¹⁶ James Kay-Shuttleworth, *Public Education* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1853).

scene, but his chapter on "The Condition and Prospects of Elementary Education in Scotland" provided a useful synopsis of the history of Scottish education giving descriptions of the management and curriculum of parochial and burgh schools. He covered in some detail a wide range of issues affecting Scottish schools such as the Church's jurisdiction, the appointment and condition of schoolmasters, the establishment of normal schools and the effects of Privy Council legislation. He also included several short but fairly positive references to the educational provision of the Education Committee and Kirk Sessions. By the time he was writing (1852) the first moves had been made by politicians and Free Church activists to deprive the Established Church of its monopoly of the control of parish schools yet, from his own observations, it remained Kay-Shuttleworth's opinion "that Scotland should submit to the imposition of a Secular School, or, which is the equivalent, of a School under purely civil government, is vain imagination".¹⁷

One of the best short summaries of the Church's first endeavours to establish schools is to be found in a little known book, *Broken Links in Scottish Education*, by a Church of Scotland minister, John Smith.¹⁸ His first chapter is aptly entitled "A Forgotten Chapter in Scottish Education". Here, and in a later chapter on "The Training of Teachers", Smith has described the early days of the Education Committee from the time when Assembly schools were established and the first normal schools set up. Smith is one of the few historians to mention the Church's abortive attempt to fund its own schools in 1704. He is also one of the few to give some of the credit to George Baird, who served as Principal of Edinburgh University from 1793 to 1840 and who, in his fifteen years as the first Convener of the Church's Education Committee, devoted the best part of his life to the cause of Scottish education. Smith's account is altogether favourable describing as he does how much the committee's efforts were appreciated by those living in the isolated parishes of the Highlands where "adults from twenty to seventy years of age, crowded everywhere to the newly erected schools".¹⁹ He was anxious to remind his readers that the committee did not stop at providing a basic elementary education but responded to the desire for a more advanced education which included Latin, geography and practical mathematics. He attributed to the committee the view that "the example exhibited by the better sort of the Assembly schools might contribute in

¹⁷ Ibid., 416.

¹⁸ John Smith, *Broken Links in Scottish Education* (London: James Nisbet, 1913).

¹⁹ Ibid., 9.

some way to restore the ancient condition and character of the parochial".²⁰ While Smith extended his account of teacher training up to and beyond the Privy Council's introduction of the pupil-teacher system in 1846, his account of the Assembly's schools only covered the first four years of the Education Committee's existence. He completed his survey at a time when it could still be said that "the magnificent efforts of the Assembly's committee, shows what could be done without any Government Grants, Bursaries, or Maintenance Allowances ... the story redounds to the lasting credit of the Church, but it reflects upon the amazing inactivity of the State".²¹ The limitations of Smith's "Forgotten Chapter" are thus obvious but in a short space he has provided more detail than most other histories of Scottish education.

Since the 1970s there have been signs of a greater interest in the history of Scottish school education in the nineteenth century, and so also in the role of the Church, as illustrated by the writings of D. J. Withrington and R. D. Anderson. Apart from Anderson's two major works, *Education and Opportunity in Victorian Scotland* (published in 1983) and *Education and the Scottish People 1750-1918* (published in 1995), most of the research has been published in educational journals or in chapters contributed to edited collections. Few of these, however, actually deal with the contribution of the Church and its Education Committee in any detail.

For the argument of this thesis it is important to note Withrington's research into the extent and availability of schooling in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One of Withrington's main concerns was to establish as accurately as possible the educational needs of Scotland and to test and contest the conclusions of the various surveys on educational provision undertaken. In his opinion more provision existed than was normally thought to have been the case. It would be Withrington's view that the argument for establishing Church schools made, for example, by George Baird (the convener of the Education Committee) and George Lewis (author of the pamphlet *Scotland a Half-Educated Nation, both in Quantity and Quality of her Educational Institutions*) was not as sound as these men maintained.²²

R. D. Anderson's contribution to our understanding of the Church's role in education has been to describe the Church's scheme for establishing Assembly

²⁰ Ibid., 20.

²¹ Ibid., 27-28.

²² See for example Withrington's chapter on "Schooling, Literacy and Society" in *People and Society in Scotland*, T M Devine and Rosalind Mitchison (eds.) Vol. I 1760 -1830 (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1988) and his chapter "'Scotland a Half-Educated Nation' in 1834? Reliable Critique or Persuasive Polemic?" in W. M. Humes and H. M. Paterson (eds.), *Scottish Culture and Scottish Education 1800-1980* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd.,1983).

schools and its desire to hold on to its control of parish schools in the broad context of those traditions and developments in school education in which he is most interested – literacy and attendance, the supply of schools, the effects of government legislation and the part played by the various denominations.

Many writers who have contributed to the discussion have been more interested in the debate over the introduction of a national system of education in Scotland. Instances of this would be Wilson H. Bain's "'Attacking the Citadel': James Moncreiff's Proposals to Reform Scottish Education, 1851-69"; J. D. Myers' "Scottish Nationalism and the Antecedents of the 1872 Education Act"; D. J. Withrington's "Towards a National System, 1867-72: The Last Years in the Struggle for a Scottish Education Act";²³ and Thomas Wilson's "A Reinterpretation of 'Payment by Results' in Scotland, 1861-1872".²⁴ While these articles have dealt with some of the important issues which will be raised in this thesis – the pressure on the Church from politicians and the other Presbyterian denominations (the Free Church and the United Presbyterian Church) to relinquish its control of parish schools; the threat to the delivery of religious instruction in parish schools posed by proposed legislation; the problem of dealing with a Privy Council or Board of Education sitting in Westminster and the dangers to the Scottish tradition posed by government legislation; and the Church's struggle to maintain a scheme of teacher training appropriate for Scottish schooling – there has been no real attempt to consider these issues from the Church's point of view. There is, indeed, an emphasis on the Church as playing an obstructive role in the development of school education and little acknowledgement of what it accomplished.

It is evident that what is missing is a fuller explanation of the Church's stance, one which might present the Church's actions in a more positive light. What is needed is a more detailed account of the aims and the policy adopted by the Church. This thesis will respond to this need by conducting an investigation of relevant Church records and other contemporary writings and by undertaking a full elucidation and evaluation of the work of the Church in the sphere of school education up until the

²³ Wilson H. Bain, "'Attacking the Citadel': James Moncreiff's Proposals to Reform Scottish Education, 1851-69", *Scottish Educational Review*, 10 (1978).

J. D. Myers, "Scottish Nationalism and the Antecedents of the 1872 Education Act", *Scottish Educational Studies*, 4 (1972).

D. J. Withrington, "Towards a National System, 1867-72: The Last Years in the Struggle for a Scottish Education Act", *Scottish Educational Studies*, 4 (1972).

²⁴ Thomas Wilson, "A Reinterpretation of 'Payment by Results' in Scotland, 1861-1872" in W. M. Humes and H. M. Paterson (eds.), *Scottish Culture and Scottish Education 1800-1980* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1983).

passing of the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act. For the purposes of this thesis, therefore, a detailed study of the Reports of the Education Committee, the relevant Acts of Assembly and the General Assembly Papers has been undertaken. These Assembly Papers were printed separately and contain details of overtures sent up to the Assembly by presbyteries and the reports on the examination of schools carried out by presbyteries. A cross-section of synod, presbytery and kirk session minutes representing towns and parishes of various sizes in widely different geographic locations has been examined. These provided accounts of decisions made by the courts of the church in the day-to-day management of parochial schools and in the appointment and supervision of teachers. These Church records were valuable not only as sources of information but as a means of gaining insight into the thinking and motivation of those involved in the decision-making process.

The Victorian age has left us a rich legacy of pamphlets and the library at New College, University of Edinburgh, is fortunate in possessing a unique selection of these. Many dealt with the debate which was current in the 1850s and 1860s on the possible introduction of a national non-denominational system of school education into Scotland. The two main matters of contention were how school education should be managed and the importance of safeguarding religious instruction. There were also records of public political meetings held in support of a national system and of special meetings of Church of Scotland elders held in Glasgow and Edinburgh to publicise their opposition to the various political proposals to change the educational system which were around at the time. In the thesis reference has been made to the large collection of letters written in the 1850s to the Lord Advocate, James Moncreiff, from a wide variety of individuals and organisations – schoolmasters, town councils, universities and groups such as the Coal and Iron Masters in the West of Scotland – few of which have been used by historians.²⁵

Since it is the purpose of this thesis to demonstrate how the Church of Scotland enhanced school education over the years 1824 to 1872 while defending its statutory position vis à vis parochial schools, a chronological approach has been adopted. This makes it possible to chart the progress of the Education Committee's work as well as describe how the Church coped with new legislation and new proposals as these emanated from Westminster over almost fifty years.

²⁵ These are held in the National Archives of Scotland, Register House, Edinburgh – Lord Advocate's Papers, AD56, 47.

While the thesis is mainly concerned with the period 1824-1872, in order to appreciate the reasons for the Church's decision to set up an Education Committee and to fund its own schools, it has been necessary to look at the Church's role in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and at its efforts to consolidate its supervision of schools in the early nineteenth century. In the first chapter, therefore, it will be argued that while presbyteries were diligent in the examination and disciplining of schoolmasters, they failed to maintain any regular visitation of parochial schools. There is reason to believe that the explanation for this may have been that parish ministers, influenced by the culture and manners of the Enlightenment, had grown apart from their people. Fear of the doctrines of the French Revolution, however, awakened the Church from its complacency and from the beginning of the nineteenth century attempts were made at enforcing a more regular visitation of schools. This in turn created a greater interest in the provision of schooling and led to the decision that the Church should attempt to meet some of the deficiency by establishing its own schools.

The second chapter takes up the account of the Education Committee's work from 1825 until 1834. With the identification of the Highlands and Islands as having the greatest educational need, this period saw the setting up of the first Assembly schools in that region. Although it was agreed that schoolmasters could charge fees where people could afford to pay, during this time the committee relied mainly on congregational support and the generosity of individuals to pay for salaries and equipment. (The provision of a schoolhouse and school continued to be the responsibility of the heritors.) Further pressure was put on presbyteries to visit schools and to report on their findings to the committee by means of standardised schedules. In this connection the value placed by the Church on religious instruction as against secular subjects in the curriculum, is an important issue which the thesis will have to consider. The first programme for training teachers was developed at this time but this and the planting of schools was costly and by 1834 it had become clear that the Education Committee could not expand its work without the help of government grants.

The third chapter will cover the years 1835 to 1849. This was a make-or-break time for the Church's educational programme. The continuation of its work in schooling was threatened by a lack of funds, by the Disruption, and finally by political moves to strip it of its privileged position with regard to the supervision of parish schools and the examination of parish schoolmasters. By 1849 the Established

Church was probably at its weakest and most vulnerable. Nevertheless, more new schools were opened and the Church proved strong enough to negotiate with the Privy Council over the question of school inspectors and in the matter of funding for its normal schools. The high point was the opening of the first purpose-built school for teacher training in Edinburgh in May 1845.

The years 1850 to 1863 are sometimes described as the years of recovery of the Established Church, mainly denoting its recovery from the blow to its membership and its authority as a result of the Disruption. In chapter four the significance of this new found strength and confidence for the Church's work with schools will be examined. There will be a description of how successive bills attempted to introduce a national system of education by sweeping away the existing system of parish schools and denominational schools and of how these proposals were strongly opposed by the Church. From its point of view these moves put at risk the very *raison d'être* of Scottish education which was to secure the godly upbringing of the nation's youth. An Act passed in 1861 did deprive the Church of its right to insist that schoolmasters must be members and curtailed its powers of school superintendence, but denominational schools continued as before.

The last chapter covers events leading to the passing of the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act. Its main concern, however, is with a commission set up in 1864 to advise the government as to the state of school education throughout Scotland. This was the Argyll Commission. The findings and recommendations of the Argyll Commission and the Church's response will be examined in some detail. Finally there will be a description of those bills which followed from the commission's report and which paved the way for the 1872 Act and the introduction of a national secular system of education in Scotland.

There are a number of contiguous issues in the field of Scottish education which do not fall within the scope of this research. For example, while it was no doubt the aim of the Education Committee to increase literacy and school attendance through setting up its schools and through the superintendence of presbyteries, a full analysis of these topics in a national setting would take this thesis well beyond an account of the work of the committee. Similarly no attempt has been made to describe the curriculum over the whole spectrum of Scottish schooling. The curriculum is referred to only in the context of presbytery reports or when it was appropriate to describe what was provided in Assembly schools. In the same way there is no doubt that the Church with its educational roots in the First Book of Discipline believed that its

schools should be open to everyone whatever their background and that students should have the opportunity of improving their education. However, any systematic research into the Scottish democratic tradition (the myth of the "lad o' pairts") would have meant covering the development of Scottish education from earliest times and in examining the university entrance age and qualifications. This thesis will concentrate on the nineteenth century and on assessing the aims and achievements of the Church in its superintendence of schools and in its desire to increase the availability of schooling.

Chapter One 1774 – 1824

A Duty Neglected

Introduction

In 1825 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland agreed to appoint an Education Committee (The Committee on increasing the means of Education and Religious Instruction in Scotland and in particular in the Highlands and Islands), with the aim of extending and improving school education in Scotland.¹ In the fulfilment of this aim the committee set itself to address four issues: the need for more schools; the need to train schoolmasters and improve their conditions of service; the need to promote and develop the regular examination of schools by presbyteries and parish ministers; and the need to safeguard the place of religious instruction, or perhaps more accurately, instruction in Protestant doctrine, in the school curriculum. These issues were not new, but they had become more pressing for the Kirk partly because of the economic and social changes which were taking place in nineteenth century Scotland, but also because in the latter part of the eighteenth century a number of factors had combined to weaken its authority and influence with regard to school education.

Since the Reformation the Church of Scotland through its ministers and courts had been actively involved in Scottish education. The First Book of Discipline had laid down that "discreet, grave and learned men be appointed to visit Schooles for the tryall of their exercise, profite and continuance: To wit, the Minister and Elders and the rest of learned men in every town shall in every quarter make examination how the youth have profited".² From that time various Parliamentary and General Assembly Acts had established a statutory right of presbyterial examination of schools and the scrutiny of schoolmasters on their appointment.³ Apart from the

¹ At the previous General Assembly in May 1824, a committee had been set up to look into the case for establishing an Education Committee. This may be taken as the start of the new committee.

² *The First Book of Discipline*, ed. James K. Cameron (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1972), 132-3.

³ An Act of 1567 decreed that "The thre Estatis of this present Parliament hes statute and ordainit, That all Scules to Burgh and land, and all universiteis and Collegis be reformat; and That nane be permittit nor admittit to have charge and cure thair of in time cuming, nor to instruct the youth privatlie or oppinlie, but sic as salbe tryit be the Superintendentis or visitouris of the Kirk." Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland, vol. iii, 24 (20 December, c 11) *Anent thame that salbe teicheris of the youth in Sculis*, and also Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland, vol. iii, 38 *Articlis concerning the Kirk*. This Act was ratified in 1582 and 1592. In 1645 the General Assembly passed an Act stating, "That every grammar school be visited twice in the year by visitors, to be appointed by the Presbyterie and Kirk-session in landward parishes, and by the town-councill in burghs, with their ministers."

distribution of the Royal Bounty,⁴ however, the General Assembly had never actually provided funding for setting up schools and paying teachers and the formation of a committee for these very purposes marked a new and important departure.⁵ To appreciate the situation which led to the Assembly agreeing to adopt this approach and to understand the policy of the new committee, it will help if we consider in this chapter some of the problems which had arisen over the previous fifty years.

In May 1794 the General Assembly passed an *Act and Resolution respecting the Religious Education of Youth* and five years later adopted a *Report Concerning Vagrant Teachers and Sunday Schools*. Both the Act and the Report reaffirmed the legal right of the Church of Scotland, represented by its ministers and presbyteries, to visit and examine schools. The 1799 report recapitulated those Parliamentary and General Assembly Acts going back to 1567 which laid down the Church's historic oversight of education and its obligation to superintend schools and enjoined all presbyteries to be diligent in exercising their powers.⁶ That the General Assembly thought this course of action necessary at this particular time not only reflected current political and social apprehensions, it was also a recognition that for a number of years the Church had not been as diligent as it ought to have been in carrying out its duties with regard to school education.

This chapter will examine that contention and in particular will consider the effectiveness of the 1794 Act and the 1799 Report. Two points will emerge: firstly, in spite of repeated exhortations from the Assembly drawing attention to this legislation, many presbyteries continually failed to report on schools within their bounds. Secondly, no matter how conscientious presbyteries had been, their powers were too limited to do much about the growing educational needs of the land. In the end it took the setting up of the new Assembly Education Committee to tackle this problem on behalf of the Church.

⁴ The Royal Bounty was money given each year by the Crown "for the reformation of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland for promoting the knowledge of true religion, and suppressing Popery and profaneness and superstition". In co-operation with the SSPCK it employed missionaries and catechists to go from house to house instructing people. In some instances it was used to help pay for schools and teachers.

⁵ See Appendix I.

⁶ AGA, 1799.

The Want of Schools

The 1696 Act for Settling of Schools made it the responsibility of the heritors in every parish to provide a school and the salary of the master. Where they refused the Act gave powers to presbyteries to appeal to the Commissioners of Supply⁷ who would then establish the school and pass on the cost to the heritors.⁸ In 1758, however, the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge reported to the General Assembly that, in spite of this legislation, within the bounds of the 39 presbyteries where the Society had erected charity schools, some 175 parishes out of a total of 380 were still without parochial schools.⁹ As a solution the SSPCK recommended that the Assembly should instruct every presbytery in Scotland to conduct a survey to determine which parishes had schools. The SSPCK also reiterated its threat to withdraw its schools from those parishes where no parochial school had been provided claiming that it was not the job of that organisation to do the heritors' work for them and "substitute their Charity Schools in Place of Parochial Schools, which are by Law appointed to be established through the whole country".¹⁰ The Society had already taken this same complaint to the Assembly in 1749. At that time it had forcibly expressed its criticism of presbyteries which "for some time past, and particularly of late, neglected to hold Visitations, and take the proper Steps for bringing these Laws [of 1646 and 1696] into Execution, but seem totally to depend upon the Charity schools established by the said Society"¹¹. These complaints and threats would appear to have had little effect. Four years later the matter was again before the Assembly.

In 1762 a committee which had been appointed to consider a reference to "the building and repairing of Kirks and Manses, and obtaining legal Schools where wanting", recommended that the Assembly should instruct presbyteries to carry out those Acts of Parliament which made provision for the building and repairing of churches and the setting up of schools. It also suggested that a committee should be appointed to oversee this and that presbyteries should report back to the next

⁷ The unelected precursors of County Councillors. They had the responsibility of collecting local taxes and representing the county landholders.

⁸ This Act repeated the provisions of a similar Act passed in 1646 but attempted to make it more effective by giving presbyteries this power of appeal.

⁹ AGA, 1758, 9.

¹⁰ In 1826 the Assembly's Education Committee was, for the same reasons, to adopt this policy when it was funding new schools.

¹¹ AGA, 1749, 12.

Assembly.¹² The Assembly agreed to these recommendations but it is doubtful if they were ever carried out. There is no account of any reports from presbyteries in the proceedings of the following Assembly. It would be the last years of the century before such a procedure would be followed.

There are two main sources of information which will help us form an opinion of the school situation in Scotland in the fifty years prior to the inception of the Education Committee, – the *Old Statistical Account*¹³ and the Government inquiry carried out in 1818.

On the whole the picture of school education depicted by the *Old Statistical Account* is not so much a want of schools as an education system deteriorating as a result of the poor salaries and qualifications of schoolmasters. The small parish of Kiltarn (Ross and Cromarty) with some 1,616 inhabitants, for example, could boast of a parish school which taught Latin, French, geography, geometry and mathematics to some sixty to eighty children,¹⁴ while a town like Paisley claimed to have an English school in each of its three parishes, a grammar school, a school for teaching writing and arithmetic and several private schools.¹⁵ Moreover it should not be forgotten that the SSPCK figures previously referred to, applied only to the thirty-nine presbyteries where it operated which was only about half of the presbyteries in Scotland at that time.¹⁶ Donald Withrington has questioned the accuracy of the SSPCK's claim on the grounds that to say there were parishes without parochial schools depended on what the SSPCK and those ministers submitting the figures defined as a "parochial school". He also argued that to say that there were no parochial schools is not to say that there were no schools at all. Withrington's conclusion was that "there can be little doubt that only a limited number of parishes were without public schools in 1758 and that fewer still had no means of education at all ... there was much more schoolbuilding and schoolkeeping in eighteenth-century Scotland than has commonly been allowed."¹⁷

¹² *AAGA (Index)*, 1762.

¹³ The *Old [or First] Statistical Account of Scotland* was compiled by Sir John Sinclair from information submitted by the parish ministers who had been invited by him to describe their parishes in detail. The etymology of the parish name, its natural resources, climate, industries, population size, a descriptions of its churches and, eventually, schools, were among the details requested. A complete copy of this publication in twenty-one volumes was presented to the General Assembly in May 1799.

¹⁴ *OSA*, vol. 1, 285.

¹⁵ *OSA*, vol. 7, 72.

¹⁶ Sir John Sinclair counted 78 presbyteries and 893 parishes in his *Analysis of the Statistical Accounts of Scotland* Part I (Edinburgh: Constable & Co., 1825) 80.

¹⁷ D. J. Withrington, "The SPCK and Highland Schools in Mid-Eighteenth Century", *The Scottish Historical Review*, 41 (1962), 88-89.

Undoubtedly there were many schools other than parish schools. Apart from adventure schools and subscription schools, there were a growing number of Charity schools. By the middle of the eighteenth century Edinburgh alone had four Hospital schools – Heriot's, the Merchant Maiden, the Trades Maiden and George Watson's. In addition in many of the major towns Burgh or Grammar schools had long been established. (In 1746 the Town Council of Ayr had adopted a scheme for a Grammar School teaching a wide range of subjects including Latin, Greek, natural philosophy, geometry and algebra. A similar Academy was opened in Perth in 1761.) While there may have been some kind of school in the majority of parishes, however, the need for more schools was recognised particularly in the remoter areas of the Highlands where distances made school attendance difficult. The parish minister at Forbes and Kearn in Aberdeenshire writing for the *Old Statistical Account* in the 1790s admitted:

There never has been any legal school in this district; only some of the ministers either kept a school themselves, or kept a boy for educating their own children, and admitted the children in the neighbourhood to partake of the benefit.¹⁸

Further the weight of Withrington's argument that few parishes in the mid-eighteenth century had no means of education has to be assessed over against the statistics which George Baird, Principal of Edinburgh University, placed before the Assembly in 1824 showing that certainly by the early nineteenth century there were large tracts of the Highlands and Islands where there was little or no educational provision. In his calculations Baird had relied on the results of a Parliamentary inquiry conducted by Henry Brougham which recorded 942 parochial schools in Scotland, (forty-nine more than Sir John Sinclair's estimated number of parishes), but the inadequacy of even that number to meet current needs was, according to Baird, demonstrated by the fact that it was being supplemented with 2,222 adventure schools.¹⁹ The accuracy of Brougham's figures and conclusions has been questioned by Withrington who was of the opinion that the English clerk appointed to collate the statistics for Scotland had difficulty applying Scottish terminology to the classifications which had been prepared for England.²⁰ Certainly the observations made by the parish ministers in

¹⁸ *OSA*, vol.11, 196.

¹⁹ In 1818 Henry Brougham had been appointed as chairman of a House of Commons committee appointed to report on "the charitable establishments for education in Great Britain". See *PP, A Digest of Parochial Returns made to the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the Education of the Poor (1818)* Vol III (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1968), 224-5.

²⁰ Donald J. Withrington, "Schooling, Literacy and Society" in *People and Society in Scotland*, T. M.

their returns showed just how varied the picture was throughout the country. In the County of Aberdeen alone the difference between parishes is striking: – "the parish school is small and in a ruinous condition" (Aberdour); "all the children are taught to read and most of them write and cipher" (Bourtie); "all the poor can read, and most of them write (Macher); "the parochial school is totally unfit to afford conveniently the means of education for the children of the whole parish" (Crathie Braemar). In the County of Argyll schooling was said to be sufficient in only three out of the thirty-two parishes, while in the County of Dumbarton [sic] in ten out of twelve parishes the means of education was described as sufficient for the poorer classes. By and large the only real problems noted were in the Counties of Inverness and Sutherland.²¹

The consensus view of historians today would appear to be that opportunities for elementary education in Scotland at the end of the eighteenth century and into the early years of the nineteenth were not as scarce as Brougham's calculations made out. Both T. C. Smout and R. D. Anderson have taken the view that by the end of the eighteenth century "the network of schools in the Lowlands was more or less complete", and that there was a basic network of schools allowing one to speak of "a genuinely national system".²² An examination of the 1818 returns certainly seems to bear this out. Parishes such as Dundee, Paisley, Renfrew, Port Glasgow, Dumbarton, Linlithgow and Clackmannan were all reported as being able to provide access to schooling for even the poorest classes. In the *Digest* Brougham's calculations showed that out of a population of 1,805,688, 176,525 children were attending school for at least part of the day, that is one in ten. Nevertheless it is clear that the extent of the provision cannot be judged solely by the number of parishes having schools or the kind of network described by Anderson. There were large gaps as the 1818 Survey clearly showed. The geography of the Highlands and the poverty of the people meant that for many children living there at that time there was little or no chance of attending school. Moreover a deteriorating situation in the towns was later identified by the *New Statistical Account* (1834-45).²³ Indeed, Smout concluded that the

Devine and Rosalind Mitchison (eds.) vol. I, 1760 -1830 (Edinburgh: John Donald Ltd, 1988), 176.

²¹ *A Digest of Parochial Returns* (1818).

²² R. D. Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People 1750-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 4 and 14, and T. C. Smout, *A History of the Scottish People 1560-1830* (London: Fontana Press, 1972), 425.

²³ Compare *OSA*, vol. 12, Barony of Glasgow – "there are few of the inhabitants ... who have not been taught to read; and most of them can write, and understand the common rules of arithmetic" with *NSA*, vol. 6 – "in a part of the overgrown Barony Parish there were a few years ago ... not less than 592 young persons between the ages of six and thirteen, and of these only 99 were attending any day-

provision of elementary education "deteriorated for most members of Scottish society in the half-century beginning around 1780", due to the shift of population from the countryside to the towns.²⁴

The supply of schools will be considered further in the next chapter when the argument for Church schools is made in the General Assembly. Whatever the findings of recent research, the Church could only proceed on the figures currently available to it.

The Plight of the Schoolmasters

It was not just a lack of schools that hindered the progress of school education in the second half of the eighteenth century, it was also the lack of good schoolmasters. Poor salaries and conditions were a discouragement to the recruitment of well-qualified men and had contributed to a decline in the status of the parish schoolmaster.

In 1762, there was presented to the General Assembly a petition "for the established School-masters in Scotland, praying for a general Collection to enable them to establish a Fund for a Provision to their Widows and Children, and to apply to Parliament for an Act to that Purpose". This petition was remitted to a committee with the recommendation that other possible ways of meeting the requests of the petitioners should be explored.²⁵ That same year the Moderator in his address to the King's Commissioner spoke on behalf of the schoolmasters,

praying, that if it shall be found necessary to apply to Parliament for increasing their present Salaries, His Majesty will be graciously pleased to give such Countenance to that Application as to his royal Wisdom shall seem proper.²⁶

Withrington has produced evidence to suggest that at a local level some landowners recognised the schoolmasters' plight and increased their salaries and that kirk sessions encouraged them to charge higher fees for new subjects such as French and geography;²⁷ nevertheless, the General Appendix published with the *Statistical Account* included a "Memorial", drawn up for the parochial schoolmasters in

schools".

²⁴ Smout, *History of the Scottish People*, 443.

²⁵ AAGA, 1762.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Withrington, "Schooling, Literacy and Society", 163.

Scotland in 1782 which presented a melancholy picture of their situation. It underlined the fact that the salaries of schoolmasters had not been increased in line with the general increase in wages nationally and made a passionate plea for salaries which would measure up to the importance of the work: "Suppose, then, that in Scotland there are 900 parochial schoolmasters, which is very near the truth; 800 of these will be found struggling with indigence, inferior in point of income to 800 day-labourers in the best cultivated parts of this island".²⁸

In 1784 the General Assembly received an overture from the Synod of Perth and Stirling regarding the inadequate provision for schoolmasters. This upheld the importance of parochial schoolmasters and acknowledged that "their present provision for maintenance is generally too small, and therefore that they deserve further encouragement from the public".²⁹ By 1785 the schoolmasters themselves were organised enough to be ready to petition Parliament regarding their salaries. An edition of the *Scots Magazine* published that year described "a general meeting of delegates from the established schoolmasters of Scotland" being held in the High School of Edinburgh "for a further consideration of the scheme concerning the augmentation of their salaries". At that meeting it was agreed to delay an approach to Parliament to allow time for further consultation with the heritors and royal burghs. The meeting unanimously declared "that the schoolmasters wish only to be put on the same footing in society as they were at their first establishment, in order to be fully useful" but that "they never intended to make application to Parliament without the knowledge of the landed interest".³⁰ This latter sentiment is an instance of that dependency of schoolmasters and ministers on the heritors and the landed gentry during the ascendancy of the Moderates, which, when it came to the provision for schoolmasters, may have stifled the voices of protest in the General Assembly. A. C. Cheyne was of the opinion that "the interests of the land-owning and governing classes quite possibly carried too much weight with clergymen who were often either relatives or dependants of a local laird or a distant lord."³¹ Indeed, J. H. S. Burleigh went further and claimed that ministers "in attempting to align themselves with the aristocracy may have lost contact with their parishioners".³²

²⁸ *General Appendix to The Statistical Account*, [OSA] vol. 21, 336 - 41.

²⁹ AAGA, 31 May 1784.

³⁰ *The Scots Magazine*, vol. 47, "Affairs of Scotland" (Edinburgh, 1785), 618 - 619.

³¹ A. C. Cheyne, *The Transforming of the Kirk* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1983), 111.

³² J. H. S. Burleigh, *A Church History of Scotland* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 303.

It would appear, then, that no matter how anxious the Church may have been to support the schoolmasters' cause, its hands were tied by a legal system which made heritors responsible not only for the salaries and housing of schoolmasters but also, in some cases, for the stipends and placing of ministers. Writing for the *Statistical Account*, the Rev. James Muirhead of the Parish of Urr in the Presbytery of Kirkcudbright lamented the poor salaries of teachers and deplored how the role of the minister had changed:

Of late years, the courts of law, and the landed interest, have entirely superseded the clergy, in the management of parish schools. Heritors will not so much as allow a minister, to vote in the choice of a schoolmaster. They will choose him from year to year; they will pull into fragments a salary of ten pounds; and the parish minister is neither able to dispute such proceedings in a law court, nor is it believed, that he would be well heard, if disposed to ask redress.³³

However reluctant ministers may have been to voice their protests in the General Assembly, they did not hold back when it came to expressing their concerns and criticisms in their contributions to the *Statistical Account*. This collection of reports from every parish in the country contains numerous references to the poor calibre of the schoolmasters and the gravity of their position. The minister of East Monkland parish made the point that the schoolmaster's salary, paid by more than a hundred heritors, was scarcely worth collecting³⁴, while the minister of Glasford parish in the Presbytery of Lanark maintained that, "the ploughman's wages have been doubled within these forty years past: The schoolmaster's condition, during that long period, has undergone no material change for the better".³⁵

Poor salaries meant that often schoolmasters were anxious to move on to acquire a better living. The account from Glasford (Presbytery of Lanark) commented that "within the course of six years, there have been five changes of schoolmasters. This rapid succession is justly attributed to the smallness of the living".³⁶ For many it meant taking on other jobs. In the parish of Heriot the teacher who was over 70 years of age was also precentor, session clerk, beadle and gravedigger³⁷, while at Applecross the schoolmaster's salary was augmented from cock-fighting.³⁸ Other

³³ OSA, vol. 11, 81 - 82.

³⁴ Ibid., vol. 7, 273.

³⁵ Ibid., vol. 7, 146 - 47.

³⁶ OSA, vol.7, 146.

³⁷ Ibid., vol. 16, 54.

³⁸ Ibid., vol. 3, 378.

accounts told of schoolmasters being old soldiers, shopkeepers, auctioneers and even schoolboys. In Dunoon four of the eight schools met only in winter and those schools were "taught by children from twelve to fifteen years of age who go from house to house to teach children younger than themselves".³⁹

Given the want of schools and the plight of schoolmasters, what could the Church do about it? Its powers to intervene in what was the legal responsibility of the heritors were limited, but the Church too had statutory obligations which included sharing in the appointment of schoolmasters and visiting and examining schools. Moreover, behind past legislation lay the ideal set out by the First Book of Discipline that educational opportunities should be available to all young people "to the profite of the Kirk and Commonwealth".⁴⁰ Where deficiencies were identified, as they ought to have been by kirk sessions and presbyteries in the course of their visits, it was up to the Church through its courts to press for improvements. How attentive and successful the Church was in this respect will now be considered.

The Role of the Church Established by Law

Even although the Church itself was not in a position to provide more schools and schoolmasters, it might be thought that at least it could have been actively involved in ensuring high standards and efficiency from those who were in post. The following comment appears in the submission made on behalf of the parish of Dunning, Perthshire, to the *Statistical Account*:

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, sensible that the invaluable blessings of religious life, and the happiness and permanent security of every well regulated government, are chiefly founded in the early education of every class of the community, have wisely appointed a Presbyterial visitation and examination, yearly, of all schools in Scotland.⁴¹

This certainly was the expectation, but how diligently was this duty actually carried out and how significant is it that this would appear to be one of only two references to the examination of schools by presbyteries to appear in the *Statistical Account*?⁴²

³⁹ Ibid., vol.2, 389.

⁴⁰ *The First Book of Discipline*, ed. Cameron, 132.

⁴¹ *OSA*, vol. 19, 438.

⁴² The *Statistical Account* for the City of Glasgow mentions visitation of schools by the Presbytery, vol.5, 529. As there were no parochial schools in Glasgow these would have been visits to private schools and Sunday Schools.

In the accounts of their parishes several clergymen wrote movingly of the lack of schools and of how ordinary people were willing to make great sacrifices to obtain schooling for their children; there were comments about the low salaries of schoolmasters and about what heritors had done or, more frequently, about what they had not done, but there was no mention of presbytery or kirk session involvement with schools.⁴³ So how important was the state of school education to ministers at this time and how much time and attention did they devote to it?

The duties of presbyteries and kirk sessions had been clearly set out in Acts of the realm and in General Assembly instructions going as far back as 1565 when the Assembly claimed as a right that "none be permitted to have charge of Schooles, Colledges, or Universities, or yet privately or publicly to instruct the youth, but such as shall be tryed be the Superintendents or visitors of the Church, sound and able in doctrine, and admitted be them to their charges".⁴⁴ This claim was ratified by an Act of Parliament in 1567.⁴⁵ Here the reference to the Church's power to examine teachers in "all scules to Burgh and Land" and to the instruction of youth "privatlie or openlie" is worth noting. John Strong maintained that the failure of the Reformers to introduce a national system of education controlled by the Church, "prepared the way for an increase in the power of the Town Council over schools" so that "the Town Council at once assumed the right of patronage and management of schools in its own burgh".⁴⁶ But did this "right of patronage and management" mean repudiating altogether the participation of presbyteries? Even some members of the Church seem to have had doubts. In 1800, for example, a member of Paisley Presbytery refused to take part in an examination of schoolmasters because "he did not conceive that presbyteries had any jurisdiction whatever over teachers of Youth, other than parochial schoolmasters, those on the Royal Bounty, and those appointed by the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge".⁴⁷ R. D. Anderson has claimed that

⁴³ Sir John Sinclair, "Proofs of Zeal for Education in Scotland", in the Appendix To Chapter II No. V of the *Analysis of the Statistical Account of Scotland Part Second* (London, John Murray, 1826), 21. "Thurso - The anxiety of parents for their children's instruction is so great, that there have been instances of their selling their clothes to obtain it, and to purchase books."

⁴⁴ *The Booke of the Universall Kirk of Scotland*, ed. Alexander Peterkin (Edinburgh: The Edinburgh Printing and Publishing Co., 1839), 29. This was the third of six "Articles" sent to the Queen for royal approval by the Ninth General Assembly which met on 25 June 1565.

⁴⁵ See this chapter page 1.

⁴⁶ John Strong, *A History of Secondary Education in Scotland* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1909), 64.

⁴⁷ NAS CH2, Paisley Presbytery, February 1800.

"the parish school legislation did not apply in royal burghs."⁴⁸ However, the Act of the General Assembly of 1645 had decreed that there should be a partnership:

Every Grammar School be visited twice in the year by Visitors, to be appointed by the Presbytery and Kirk Session in Landward Parishes, and by the Town-Councill in Burghs, with their Ministers; and that no School-Master be admitted to teach in a Grammar School, in Burghs, or other considerable Paroches, but such as after examination, shall be found skilfull in the Latine Tongue; And that after other trials to be made by the Ministers, and others depute by the Session, Town, and Paroch for this effect, that he be also approved by the Presbyterie.⁴⁹

These visitations were intended to ensure the provision of a high standard of school education and of suitably qualified schoolmasters. It may be gathered from the wording of the 1645 Act, the Assembly Act of 1565 and the Parliamentary Act of 1567, that it was certainly the intention that the Church should be involved in the superintendence of, and appointments to, all schools, including burgh and grammar schools. Dickinson and Donaldson seemed to agree with this when they wrote, "in the burghs the 'grammar schools' or 'burgh schools' were under the patronage and management of town councils, though there, too, much encouragement came from the Church. The Church, through the minister, exercised a large measure of control over the appointment of masters and their assistants, but the town council exercised an administrative control in such matters as school hours, vacations, the curriculum, repairs and equipment, and so forth".⁵⁰ This superintending power of the Church was established by the Treaty of Union in 1707 and was confirmed by a number of succeeding Acts. Whatever may have been the view of the Town Councils, it is clear that the Church certainly believed that its powers of superintendence applied to all schools. This belief may have been confirmed for the Church by the fact that, as is described below, Grammar Schoolmasters and Town Councils often invited the presbyteries to carry out a visitation and examination of their schools.

The existence of statutory and Assembly legislation enabling presbyteries and kirk sessions to examine schools, however, did not by itself guarantee their easy implementation. In a later section we shall illustrate the legal difficulties the Church

⁴⁸ R. D. Anderson, "Scottish Education Since the Reformation", *Studies in Scottish and Economic History* No. 5 (1997), 9.

⁴⁹ AGA, 1645, 11 (*Overtures for the advancement of Learning, and good Order in Grammar Schools and Colledges*). Certainly in 1706 the Assembly passed an Act recommending that "Presbyteries do visit all Public Grammar Schools within their Bounds" at least twice every year. (AGA, 1706, 10-11.)

⁵⁰ W. C. Dickinson and G. Donaldson, (eds.), *A Source Book of Scottish History*, 2d ed., vol.3 1567-1707 (Edinburgh & London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1961), 406-7.

faced in attempting to assert its authority. As it was, full use of the legislation for the benefit of schooling, depended on the commitment and attitude of the ministers who constituted the membership of the Church's courts. This we must now examine.

The Commitment of Kirk Sessions

How far schools were in fact visited and examined by kirk sessions is difficult to discover. The Church historian G. D. Henderson, in discussing the state of Scottish education and the role of the Elder in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, claimed that "everywhere the Church was the driving power, and the kirk session generally recognised very fully its duty of supervision ... schoolmasters in general were strictly supervised by the Session", and to a degree he was able to substantiate this from seventeenth century session records.⁵¹ On the other hand he offered very few examples from the eighteenth century and particularly from the later half of that century. Indeed, a random sample of kirk session records for the last two decades of the eighteenth century shows how difficult it would have been for Henderson to make a case for session involvement by that time, as references to schools and to school education are fairly infrequent.

The main involvement of kirk sessions seems to have been helping to pay for the education of poor children out of the Poor Fund and in augmenting the schoolmaster's salary by appointing him as Clerk⁵² or by putting him in charge of the Sunday School.⁵³ The minutes of Cramond Kirk Session for June 1797 revealed that paying for the education of poor children was such a strain on its resources that it could only keep them at school for three years in order to give other children the opportunity of attending.⁵⁴ The Kirk Session of Montrose Old for its part, decided that the best way to deal with poor children was to erect a "working school" or "school of industry" where these children "instead of spending their time in beggary, idleness and scenes of immorality should be obliged under a proper Master and Mistress to read, knit, card, spin etc and thereby be trained up instead of being

⁵¹ G. D. Henderson, *The Scottish Ruling Elder* (London: James Clarke & Co., Ltd., 1935), 151 - 155.

⁵² NAS CH2, Dumbarton Old Kirk Session 1785. The minutes of show that in December 1785 the Session agreed to appoint as joint Session Clerks two men who had been elected as schoolmasters by the Magistrates and Town Council with the advice and approval of the minister.

⁵³ NAS CH2, Cramond Kirk Session, December 1786.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, June 1797.

burdens on their Parents and Pests of Society to be useful to both".⁵⁵ This kirk session seems to have been more involved with schooling than many others. In 1801 it is to be found discussing estimates for a new school at Loanhead and co-operating with heritors in the examination of a schoolmaster who is then elected by the session, "to enjoy all the emoluments during the pleasure of the Session".⁵⁶

In November 1775 Dunfermline Town Council decided to remove the Doctor of the Grammar School. This was unanimously opposed by the Kirk Session of Dunfermline Abbey who were perfectly satisfied with him "as to teaching and Behaviour". Moreover the session claimed that, having set up a mortification for the purpose of paying part of the Doctor's salary from the interest, they had "equal right of patronage with the town Council in presenting and inbringing of the Doctor of the Grammar School". Further they were not at liberty to transfer this mortification to "any one who is to be employed in Mathematicks and navigation" as proposed by the Council. In the end the session (apart from the Moderator) agreed to undertake a re-trial of the schoolmaster along with representatives from the Town Council.⁵⁷ Of course as might be expected, there was always someone who took exception to a session being involved with schooling in this way. When Dunfermline Abbey Kirk Session was considering setting up a Sabbath Evening School one of the elders, a Mr Thomson, complained and stated his belief "that the Session had no power in establishing either a public or private schools [sic] or of giving anything out of the public funds to support said schools", this being the responsibility of the magistrates.⁵⁸

Apart from this kind of involvement in school affairs, references to the commitment of kirk sessions to regular visitation of schools are hard to find. This was perhaps because most sessions saw it as the job of the presbytery or because visits were so routine and common-place that clerks did not think them worth minuting. On the other hand it may be that this duty was neglected through a lack of interest and encouragement on the part of the minister. That this was very possible will be borne out when we come to consider the nature and character of the parish ministry as it was influenced by the Scottish Enlightenment.

⁵⁵ NAS CH2, Montrose Old Kirk Session, February 1788. While Spinning Schools were set up mainly in the Highlands by the SSPCK during the eighteenth century, industrial schools and female schools did not become a priority for the Church until the middle of the nineteenth century.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, August and November 1801.

⁵⁷ NAS CH2, Dunfermline Abbey Kirk Session, November 1775 and January 1776.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, December 1787.

The Commitment of Presbyteries

It is evident that in the last quarter of the eighteenth century presbyteries were actively involved in the examining and disciplining of schoolmasters and in ensuring that they subscribed to the Westminster Confession of Faith. Schoolmasters' salaries and the state of school buildings were also a matter of concern. Andrew Bain in his *Patterns of Error* has noted many examples of teachers being disciplined by presbyteries for a variety of reasons – sexual immorality, drunkenness, cruelty, contumacy, unsuitable behaviour.⁵⁹ While presbyterial superintendence of schools had long been established what was not clear was how exactly it was to be done and what it was supposed to cover. What is missing from church records is any suggestion of regular routine visits to schools. In most cases where schools were examined by presbyteries this was at the request of the local magistrates and often action was taken in response to problems or complaints raised by heritors or parents or by schoolmasters themselves.

In 1784 in Dornock it was the Heads of Families who complained to Annan presbytery about the lack of a schoolhouse, and when it was brought to the attention of the heritors they agreed to build one.⁶⁰ In 1790 heritors and Heads of Families petitioned the Presbytery of Forfar to dismiss the schoolmaster at Inverarity for failing to fulfil his duties.⁶¹ In Langholm it was the heritors who asked the Presbytery to investigate the state of the school and complaints against John Telfer the schoolmaster accused of fornication and "riotous intemperance".⁶² Had presbyteries been doing their duty conscientiously, in such instances they would have been the first to know about these problems and taken steps to try and resolve them. When a minister who had been teaching in the school at Glamis was being considered for the post of schoolmaster there, the pupils for whom he had been responsible were examined as to their "progress in the several branches of education", but normally after teachers were in place presbyteries do not seem to have checked up on standards of teaching or the performance of pupils until something went wrong.⁶³

There were a number of exceptions to this pattern. In 1782 Turriff Presbytery visited the parochial school at King Edward and examined the pupils in "the different

⁵⁹ Andrew Bain, *Patterns of Error - The Teacher and External Authority in Central Scotland, 1581 - 1861* (Edinburgh: Moubay House Publishing Ltd., 1989).

⁶⁰ NAS CH2, Annan Presbytery, June 1784.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Forfar Presbytery, August 1790.

⁶² *Ibid.*, Langholm Presbytery, August 1788.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, Forfar Presbytery, August 1790.

branches of Literature commonly taught at schools" and rebuked the master for not praying with his pupils before he dismissed them.⁶⁴ At the request of the schoolmaster of Perth Grammar School the magistrates of Perth and representatives of the presbytery met for the purpose of examining the students there.⁶⁵ In 1787 and 1788 Edinburgh Presbytery, is recorded as examining "English" schools.⁶⁶ The minutes of Dundee Presbytery show that from 1780, Dundee Grammar School was being examined yearly and in March 1787 the presbytery resolved to carry out yearly inspections of parochial schools.⁶⁷ Each year thereafter the minutes record reports of these visits. Also in 1787 Glasgow appointed a committee "to prepare a plan for carrying into execution the intentions of the Presbytery with respect to the Education of Youth". Schoolmasters and teachers "who have not already been found qualified by Presbytery" were to be examined "in order to discover the true state of education within the bounds".⁶⁸ Each teacher was to provide the presbytery with a list of all their pupils, an account of their progress and an account of the catechisms taught "and the attention bestowed on the morals of the children in each school". There is, however, no mention in subsequent minutes of any action being taken as a result of this investigation.

With regard to school visitations other notable exceptions were the schools funded by the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge⁶⁹ which presbyteries did visit regularly. As early as 1774 Glasgow Presbytery appointed a committee to examine the SSPCK school established to meet the needs of the Highland families who had migrated to the city.⁷⁰ The minutes of presbyteries such as Perth, Inverness, Lewis, Lorn and Turriff described frequent visitations to these schools, often called "charity schools", and close involvement in the appointment of teachers.

In the Presbytery of Lewis many of the teachers there were also missionaries responsible for rural churches and mission stations. It seems to have been the case

⁶⁴ Ibid., Turriff Presbytery, May 1782.

⁶⁵ Ibid., Perth Presbytery, July 1791.

⁶⁶ Ibid., Edinburgh Presbytery, January 1787. "English" schools offered pupils elementary instruction in reading, writing and English grammar up to the age of nine, often to prepare them for the study of Latin grammar.

⁶⁷ Ibid., Dundee Presbytery, March 1787.

⁶⁸ NAS CH2, Glasgow Presbytery, October 1787.

⁶⁹ The Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge had been founded in 1709. By 1714 it had established 17 schools and by 1808 some thirteen and a half thousand pupils attended SSPCK schools.

⁷⁰ NAS CH2, Glasgow Presbytery, March 1774.

that these teachers were appointed and supervised by the presbytery and were funded partly from the Royal Bounty and partly by the SSPCK. In 1785 it is recorded that the presbytery received a minute of the Royal Bounty Committee agreeing to establish a missionary at the mission station at Stornoway who was to preach two Sundays in five when the minister was at the other two stations in the parish and also appointing the missionary as a teacher in the school.⁷¹ In 1796 ministers were instructed to visit "all schools within their parishes" and in the following year the presbytery appointed committees "to examine the different Schools within their Bounds" including Stornoway Grammar School.⁷²

Withrington has referred to the "increasing number of Presbyterian visitation reports to be found in church records"⁷³ but in the sample of minutes examined for the purpose of this research it appeared that, besides those areas of presbyterial involvement noted above, in the fifteen years prior to 1794 there were few references in presbytery records to indicate that a routine duty of visiting schools was actually undertaken. Too often presbyteries were used as trouble-shooters rather than as agents for promoting a good education. In an article in the *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* Archibald Main had this to say:

The Church had failed to realize the ideal which it had set before itself since the days of John Knox. There was no uniform system of education throughout the parishes ... the poverty of the Church and of many heritors in the eighteenth century, the social and economic circumstances of the era, a lack of imagination on the part of many ministers, some lukewarmness regarding the nobility of the teaching profession in the parish schools, and perhaps an undue regard for a narrow theological discipline — such were some of the considerations which prevented a widespread system of sound elementary education in every parish of Scotland.⁷⁴

While the Church was anxious to establish its authority in the appointment and disciplining of schoolmasters, presbytery records provide little evidence to show that there was any real awareness of the deficiencies in the educational system which were beginning to show at this time. It is to the *Old Statistical Account* and not to presbyteries that we must turn for any real expression of concern. One explanation of this failure may lie in the interests and values of a parish ministry influenced by the

⁷¹ Ibid., Lewis Presbytery, December 1785.

⁷² Ibid., 1796, 1797 and 1798.

⁷³ Withrington, "Schooling, Literacy and Society", 172.

⁷⁴ Archibald Main, "The Church and Education in the Eighteenth Century", *RSCHS*, 3 (1929), 194.

spirit of Moderatism and the Enlightenment. This assertion we shall now attempt to justify.

The Influence of Moderatism on the Parish Ministry

It is difficult to avoid the impression that under the influence of the Moderate Party and the Edinburgh literati the main educational interests of churchmen in the second half of the eighteenth century lay in upgrading and expanding university education and in the broad cultural improvement of society, rather than in parochial education *per se*. Good manners, politeness, moral virtue and common decency were what counted and what children learned at home was seen as of considerable importance. According to John Dwyer, "the moderate clergy believed that education needed to combine nourishment with discipline. The key to their program of moral cultivation was the sensibility of the young".⁷⁵ There was concern for the emotions and morals of the young and there was criticism of "the preoccupation with the absurd rules of Latin grammar as opposed to a more general appreciation of the classical contribution to character formation".⁷⁶ In his chapter on the "Construction of Adolescence in Late Eighteenth-Century Scotland", Dwyer pointed out that "the new discussion of education paid virtually no attention to [the imparting of knowledge or skills]. Its focus was character formation and its range included virtually everything connected with manners and morals".⁷⁷ This philosophy of education was hardly likely to encourage an interest in the parish school with its traditional curriculum and in the ongoing tasks and hardships of parochial teachers in the classroom. If this was the predominant contemporary attitude to education then it is more than likely that the involvement of parish ministers and kirk sessions in schools declined and with it a corresponding diminution of the influence and authority of the Church in this field. It is worth noting that of the five main movers among the Moderate literati (Hugh Blair, William Robertson, Adam Ferguson, John Home and Alexander Carlyle) only Carlyle completed his schooling at a parish school, the other four had a grammar school education.⁷⁸ We cannot tell exactly what influence their educational

⁷⁵ John Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse: Sensibility and Community in Late Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd, 1987), 82.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁷⁸ Richard B. Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1985), 28. Alexander Carlyle went to Prestonpans parish school where he learned Latin and Greek but later he recalled that, "I had been taught to read, by an Old Woman, who kept a School, so

background may have had on how they saw the importance of visiting parish schools in the course of their ministries and how this in turn affected the ministries of the many who sought to emulate them, but it may have bred a notable indifference.

Such an approach to school education, moreover, cannot be attributed only to those ministers who strictly speaking belonged to the Moderate party. By the last quarter of the eighteenth century the differences between the Moderate and the Evangelical⁷⁹ parties in the Church were becoming less obvious, at least as far as cultural and intellectual interests were concerned. J. G. Lockhart, the biographer of Sir Walter Scott and an acute observer of his times, described the relationship of Moderates and Evangelicals in his witty and illuminating portrayal of the General Assembly in *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk*:

They [the Moderates and the Wildmen] stick ... with the most senatorial pertinacity, each to his own side of the Senate-house. ... I am at a loss to know what are the distinguishing tenets to which they respectively adhere ... so far as doctrine is concerned, the two parties profess themselves to be agreed. ... Were I to judge from what I have observed in the General Assembly, I should certainly be inclined to think that the attributes of *Wildness* and *Moderation*, are by no means confined to the opposite sides of the aisle. ... [They] may be seen, year after year, drawn up against each other without having an inch of debateable land to fight about.⁸⁰

Similarly the historian Richard Sher has noted that most of adherents of the Popular party followed a similar pattern of accommodation to the cultural and intellectual values of Moderatism during the second half of the eighteenth century.⁸¹

The parish ministers who contributed to the *Old Statistical Account* reflected this common legacy of the Enlightenment in the way they approached their subject matter. In these volumes are to be found the contributions of eloquent and eminently worldly-wise observers who often devoted more space to describing epidemics or the etymology of the parish name than they did to recording the state of education and the condition of the parish school. Anderson has suggested that "the remarks on education in the *Statistical Account* were naturally conditioned by the clergy's

perfectly, that at 6 Years Old, I had read a large Portion of the Bible to a Doz. Of Old Women..." *Anecdotes and Characters of the Times* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 4.

⁷⁹ Sometimes called the *Popular* or the *Wild* party.

⁸⁰ J. G. Lockhart, *Peter's Letters to His Kinsfolk*, 3 vols., 3rd ed. (Edinburgh, William Blackwood, 1819), vol.3, 31-37.

⁸¹ Sher, *Church and University*, 161. So also Ned C. Landsman's essay, "Presbyterians and Provincial Society: The Evangelical Enlightenment in the West of Scotland, 1740-1775", in J. Dwyer and R. B. Sher (eds.), *Sociability and Society in Eighteenth Century Scotland* (Edinburgh: The Mercat Press, 1993), 207.

religious perspectives, and they were perhaps inclined to conceal deficiencies which reflected on their own pastoral zeal."⁸² Referring to the ministers who contributed to the *Statistical Account*, Smout remarked that, "one has only to turn the pages of that remarkable compilation to see them come to life, not as pastors, but as intelligent gentlemen sowing clover, speculating on ornithology, applauding a new linen work or a new road, agitated over the expense of poor relief, nervous of the effect of rising wages on rural virtue and watchful for any signs of idleness among the labouring classes".⁸³

The question then arises: would ministers with these interests have happily contented themselves with the rather mundane routine of dutifully visiting the homes and schools in their parishes, or were they more likely to be represented by men like Thomas Chalmers before his conversion, clergymen who "regarded their parish as little more than a sinecure while they pursued eminence in other, academic, endeavours"?⁸⁴ Where there was a thirst for education did the clergy have the interests of their parishioners at heart and were they able to associate themselves with the needs of pupil and teacher?

Commenting on the influence of the Moderate party in the second half of the eighteenth century, Devine has claimed that "the Church was still the dominant force in both the schools and the universities, the twin cradles of Enlightenment".⁸⁵ In his discussion, however, he did not go on to substantiate this claim with regard to schools but concentrated entirely on describing the radical changes in the universities, leaving unanswered the question as to what this "dominant force" of the church actually meant in the parish situation.

A contributor to the *Scots Magazine* in 1801 drew attention to the seriousness of the gap between pastor and people which threatened the very future of the Church. "The established Clergy of Scotland," he wrote, "have lost a great part of that reverence and popularity among the lower classes, which distinguished their order at no very distant period". This writer went on to propose that since the educated clergy and the common people "no longer bear any resemblance to each other", what was needed to close the gap was to raise the literary aspirations of the people and the first

⁸² Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People*, 6.

⁸³ Smout, *History of the Scottish People*, 221. Many ministers were even tardy in submitting the accounts of their parishes to Sir John Sinclair. vol. 20, Appendix E, of the *Statistical Account* contains a series of letters written to clergymen who had failed to send in their submissions in time.

⁸⁴ S. J. Brown, *Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth in Scotland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) 71.

⁸⁵ Devine, *The Scottish Nation*, 77.

step towards this was to stop teaching the Catechism in schools. "Transfer the Catechism from the hands of the schoolmaster into those of the minister" and substitute in schools good literature which will raise the literary curiosity of people and "divert their minds of that predilection for technical divinity and mystical rant".⁸⁶ It would appear that R. B. Sher supported this writer's opinion of weaknesses within the Kirk when he maintained that "the intellectual and social decline of the Scottish Presbyterian clergy was acknowledged by several commentators during the 1790's and early nineteenth century".⁸⁷ Henry Cockburn, for example, blamed Principal Robertson's ecclesiastical policy for creating two classes of clergymen, "one, and by far the largest, of which had no principle superior to that of obsequious allegiance to patrons; the other, devoting itself entirely to the religion of the lower orders, had no taste or ambition for anything higher than what religion required". As a result, "the descent of the Scotch clergy throughout the last half of the eighteenth century was steady and marked ... not that there were no distinguished men among them; but there were not many, and they were always decreasing".⁸⁸ Cockburn's parish minister seems far removed from the sophisticated enlightened men who wrote for Sir John Sinclair but both types would account for the weakening of the Kirk's hold over moral behaviour described by C. A. Whatley – "Insolence towards ministers, parish schoolteachers and members of the kirk session was unusual but by no means unknown, and became increasingly common, as evidenced by the popularity of Burns' poems".⁸⁹ In fact Smout has suggested that it was as the strict Calvinism and authority and influence of the Church declined in the eighteenth century that Scotland's cultural achievements flourished – "... it was because the power of the old clerics was already waning that Hume got the chance to be sceptical and Burns to be satirical with impunity".⁹⁰

Certainly it would be wrong to give the impression that Church of Scotland ministers at this time were totally removed from parish affairs. Describing Alexander

⁸⁶ J. P. G., "The Present State of the Clergy of the Church of Scotland", *Scots Magazine*, vol. 63, 1801, 389-392.

⁸⁷ Sher, *Church and University*, 318. See also J. G. Lockhart who wrote, "the leaders of the Kirk, at the present time, are highly respectable men, but nobody pretends to disguise the fact that they are but indifferent representatives of Robertson and Erskine". (Lockhart, *Peter's Letters*, vol.3, 38.)

⁸⁸ Henry Cockburn, *Memorials of his Time*, (Edinburgh and London: T. N Foulis, 1910), 224 - 225. In fact William Robertson who was appointed Principal of Edinburgh University in 1762 was not only a leading churchman and an intellectual of international reputation, he was also a faithful parish minister.

⁸⁹ Christopher A. Whatley, *Scottish Society 1707-1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 282 and 165.

⁹⁰ Smout, *History of the Scottish People*, 481.

Carlyle's ministry at Inveresk Sher wrote, "he excelled as a preacher, helped to establish a Sunday School in his Presbytery, used his connections frequently on behalf of his parishioners, and was actively involved in the allocation of poor money and the administration of the poor house at Musselburgh".⁹¹ Without the leadership of men like Carlyle kirk sessions could not have operated as they did in looking after the needs of the people, be that in matters of discipline, in distributing funds to the poor or in allocating burial plots. The extent of the parish minister's actual involvement with parochial schools, however, remains uncertain. Many may have been unwilling to be involved in an area which could lead to a confrontation with heritors and landowners on whose financial support they depended. Reading Carlyle's own account of his life and ministry, one wonders just how much time he did spend visiting his parishioners since he seemed to be away from the parish so frequently. Certainly he said nothing about visiting schools.⁹² On the other hand writing on the life and ministry of Hugh Cuningham of Tranent, a contemporary of Carlyle, T. Angus Kerr observed that Cuningham's *Diary* contained "many records of faithful pastoral activities" and recorded that he regularly visited the parish school and examined the pupils.⁹³ Any attempt to assess how Church of Scotland ministers actually saw their calling in the latter half of the eighteenth century, is not helped by the fact that contemporary commentators like J.G. Lockhart (1794-1854) and Thomas Somerville (1741-1814) tended to concentrate on the preaching and oratorical skills of famous city ministers, rather than describe the pastoral oversight of their parishes.⁹⁴

From the available evidence it is apparent that we may form contradictory views of the parish ministry in this period. Someone like the twentieth century historian Andrew J. Campbell, who wanted to defend the clergy and the General Assembly, has actually provided a good illustration of these divergent opinions. He conceded that in all ecclesiastical parties there could be found ministers who were "indifferent to the work of the ministry and addicted to the pleasures of the table" but maintained that throughout the country the average minister was as dedicated and diligent as at any other time:

⁹¹ Sher, *Church and University*, 34.

⁹² John Hill Burton (ed.), *The Autobiography of Dr. Alexander Carlyle of Inveresk 1722 - 1805* (London and Edinburgh: T N Foulis, 1910).

⁹³ T. Angus Kerr, "The Life and Ministry of the Rev. Hugh Cuningham of Tranent, 1758-1801", *RSCHS*, 15 (1966), 43 and 49.

⁹⁴ See Lockhart, *Peter's Letters*, vol. 3, 38ff., and Thomas Somerville, *My Own Life and Times*, (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1996), 57-63 and 91-107.

Preaching, catechising, visiting the sick, taking oversight of the parish school, and administering the poor relief of the parish – in such matters there was no difference between the Moderate and the Evangelical. ... In the matter of schools, the records of the General Assembly show with what constant care the Church pressed on the work of education in the face of much popular apathy and the frequent opposition of the landed class ... then, as now, presbyteries and ministers did not always carry out the instructions of the General Assembly. To enforce the [1696] Act would have required litigation; and the Church had not funds for that. Miserable as the schools were, and wretched as were the pay and status of the schoolmasters, they would have been far worse had it not been for the help of the Church.⁹⁵

Campbell had to concede that the “recommendations, injunctions, and Acts of the General Assembly were only partially successful – so partially indeed that there is room for doubt whether the tradition which speaks so highly of old-time Scottish education had any basis in fact, except in a parish here or there”.⁹⁶ It is difficult to see how Campbell could have reconciled this admission with his claim that, “the Church pressed on the work of education with constant care”.

The Question of Authority

However anxious the Church may have been to fulfil the duties of examining schoolmasters and visiting schools, its authority in the sphere of school education was always limited by the role of the heritors with whom they shared the responsibility of appointing schoolmasters and whose legal obligation it was under the Acts of 1646 and 1696, to provide parochial schools and pay schoolmasters. A similar division of responsibility existed in the Burghs where Town Councils managed schools and paid teachers but where the Church claimed the right of visitation and a say in appointments made. Given this sharing of jurisdiction it is no wonder that there was often disagreement about where ultimate responsibility lay and a questioning of the privileges claimed by the Church. Most of the arguments concerned the method of examining schoolmasters by presbyteries on their appointment and the power of Church Courts to discipline and dismiss them.

For much of the time heritors and presbyteries were to be found working together in the presentation of schoolmasters and the care of schools. Indeed, there were times

⁹⁵ Andrew J. Campbell, *Two Centuries of the Church of Scotland 1707-1929* (Paisley: Andrew Gardner Ltd., 1930), 100-102.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 169-170.

when, as has been shown, heritors seem to have been more aware of the needs and problems of schools than presbyteries. There were, of course, other times when presbyteries and heritors clashed as happened when heritors were reluctant to provide the necessary funding for schools or for repairs to school buildings and stayed away from meetings called to discuss such matters. Those sections of the Acts of 1646 and 1696 which gave powers to presbyteries to put pressure on heritors to establish schools, may well have been difficult to implement by this time. In 1782 Forfar Presbytery sought the backing of the Procurator when the heritors refused to attend a meeting to discuss repairs to the school at Inverarity. Here it was apparent that, while the Procurator gave his support to the presbytery, as so often proved to be the case the presbytery's powers to compel the heritors to do anything were very limited and in this instance the presbytery had to seek the support of the Commissioners of Supply.⁹⁷

It is clear that on those occasions when the Church's Procurator was approached for a ruling or for support, he regularly expressed doubts about the power of presbyteries and passed the buck back to presbyteries for decision and action. As a result a case could be passed back and forth for years between heritors and presbytery and between presbytery and the Procurator. The dispute over the school at Abbotrule was a case in point. Here the heritors refused to keep open a school where two parishes were being annexed to a third. The case was raised in the Presbytery of Jedburgh in 1779 and by 1800 had still not been settled. In his ruling the Procurator made it clear that the presbytery had no power to compel the heritors to build the schoolhouse.⁹⁸ This impasse was a good illustration of the uncertainty that existed as to where the final authority lay in questions of this kind and it demonstrated the weakness of the Church's position when ignored or opposed by a civil body.

The same was true even when a presbytery was challenged by an individual. In June 1777, Mr. Alexander Ramsay, a grammar-school master in Dunfermline having taken the Oath of Allegiance refused to take the next step of subscribing to the Confession of Faith on the grounds that considered himself "teaching not in a public but in a private school" over which, he maintained, the Church had no jurisdiction

⁹⁷ NAS CH2, Forfar Presbytery, September 1782. It is recorded in the minutes of the Presbytery of Annan for March 1784 (NAS CH2), that the Presbytery had drawn up plans for a new schoolhouse at Cumbertrees and asked the heritors to "stent themselves" to meet the cost but the heritors refused to attend Presbytery to discuss the issue. In the end the Heads of Families agreed to pay half the cost. The 1696 Act laid down that where heritors failed to provide a school five commissioners of supply for the shire were directed to settle a school and lay the stent on the heritors.

⁹⁸ NAS CH2, Jedburgh Presbytery, 1779 - 1800.

since by law only Parochial schools could be examined.⁹⁹ The presbytery tried to dismiss Ramsay but when he appealed neither the heritor, who was the Marquis of Tweeddale, nor the Procurator of the Church nor the General Assembly were prepared to make a firm decision one way or the other and the civil magistrates refused to become involved. In the end Ramsay himself foreclosed the matter as far as the Kirk was concerned by joining the Relief Church.

Perhaps one of the most famous cases of this period concerned the appointment of a schoolmaster to the school at Bothwell This highlighted not just the disputed roles of presbytery and synod but, even more significantly, the jurisdiction of the civil courts, in this case the Court of Session, in ecclesiastical affairs. The case which was first raised in September 1790 in the Presbytery of Hamilton, came about as a result of some members of presbytery questioning the qualifications of William Allan the newly appointed schoolmaster and the method by which he had been elected.¹⁰⁰ When those who opposed Allan's appointment took their dispute to the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, Allan protested that such an appeal was not competent on the grounds that according to the law, only presbyteries could examine a schoolmaster, and that it was not competent for a synod to review the proceedings of the Presbytery in this matter.¹⁰¹ The case eventually went to the General Assembly in 1791. There parties were informed by the Procurator that "the question with regard to the power of the superior Ecclesiastical Courts to review the sentence of a Presbytery relative to the qualification of a schoolmaster, is now depending before the Court of Session". In November 1793 the Court of Session gave a decision which deprived the Superior Church Courts of their jurisdiction in questions relating to the qualifications and character of parish schoolmasters. The Court of Session found that the power of review lay in the Civil Courts and not in the superior courts of the Church. On hearing this the Synod immediately protested that this ruling was contrary to the law of the land and the Presbyterian government of the Church of Scotland upheld by the Treaty of Union.¹⁰² An appeal was then made by the Synod to the House of Lords and the ruling of the Court of Session was reversed.¹⁰³ Although the matter was

⁹⁹ NAS CH2, Dunfermline Presbytery, June 1777.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., Hamilton Presbytery, September 1790.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, April 1791.

¹⁰² Ibid., April 1794.

¹⁰³ The decision of the House of Lords is noted in the Synod minutes, April 1800. The case had been so expensive and protracted that appeals for financial help were made to all presbyteries by the General Assembly in May 1794.

eventually found in favour of the Church, the case clearly highlighted the threat by public bodies to the Church's position in matters of school education.¹⁰⁴

Certain conclusions may be drawn from this research into aspects of the Church of Scotland's involvement with school education over approximately two decades, 1774-1794. Firstly, while it is possible to cite examples of kirk sessions and presbyteries taking part in the appointment and disciplining of schoolmasters, few of the records describe attempts to carry out the long-standing Acts of the General Assembly regarding the supervision of schools in any other way. It would appear that presbyteries and kirk sessions were not fulfilling their obligations to visit and examine schools on a regular basis. When presbyteries did act this was often as a result of pressure from heritors or parishioners. Whereas the First Book of Discipline had required ministers and elders visiting schools to examine "how the youth have profited", few records indicate such an assessment being made. It may be, as has already been suggested, that such duties were taken for granted and not thought worthy of reporting at meetings or recording in the minutes. On the other hand it could be argued that matters concerning education, which had been brought so often to the attention of the nation in parliamentary and church legislation, should have been important enough to report on and record. While this judgement perhaps needs to allow for the fact that there appear to have been no clear guide-lines as to what was expected of a presbytery's visitation of a school other than what was laid down by the First Book of Discipline, as a general conclusion it would appear to be supported by what has been discovered of the attitude adopted by those ministers influenced by the spirit of Moderatism. The weight of evidence points to a parish ministry not particularly suited or equipped for the task of examining schools. On a more positive note, it should be recognised that, at a time when standards seem to have been deteriorating, even the limited role exercised by some presbyteries in overseeing the condition of school buildings and in examining the faith and character of schoolmasters must have had a beneficial effect on Scottish school education.

Secondly, what the minutes do show is that where church courts, in particular presbyteries and synods, were involved in matters concerning schools, disputes often arose with regard to their rights and responsibilities. Even Assembly Procurators seemed to have been unwilling to make decisive rulings as to power of the courts to enforce their will and the decisions of these church courts were often questioned by

¹⁰⁴ See also the case of John Telfer, Presbytery of Langholm 1788 - 1794 and AAGA, May 1790 and May 1791, and the case of James Halliday, AAGA, May 1793.

individuals teachers. In the secular world there were growing doubts as to the power and authority of presbyteries.

Threats and Fears

It will be evident from the above account that towards the end of the eighteenth century all was not well with school education in Scotland and that there were problems with the church's relationship to it. There were a considerable number of areas where schools were inaccessible for many children and often those who did go attended only during the winter months, at other times they were working to help with the family income. In remote parishes schoolmasters were often poorly paid and inadequately qualified.¹⁰⁵ The situation hardly justified the rather favourable picture painted by Rait and Pryde in their claim that, "since at the close of the century only ten parishes in all Scotland were without a school, it can be said that, though there were wide variations from one parish to another in teaching, attendance, accommodation and remuneration, the ideal laid down by Knox in 1560 had at last been broadly realized."¹⁰⁶

Further, it was questionable whether the Church had the means or the will to do anything about what appeared to be a deteriorating situation. Where heritors were failing to provide funding for schools and schoolmasters the Church seems to have found it difficult to make them. In his submission to the *Statistical Account* the minister of Morvern in the Presbytery of Argyll complained that although the schoolmaster's salary had been secured by a decree of the Commissioners of Supply none of the heritors except the Duke of Argyll had paid their share and that it would cost too much for the presbytery or the schoolmaster to take them to court, "where the opposition is so powerful, and the issue far from certain".¹⁰⁷ This problem of non-compliance was sometimes exacerbated by the fact that so many of the heritors were absentee landlords. For example in the parish of Girvan out of ten heritors only one resided in the parish.¹⁰⁸ Stewart J. Brown described the situation in Fife where, as in many other parts of rural Scotland, new farming methods meant unemployment and poverty for farm labourers but increased wealth and prosperity for landowners:

¹⁰⁵ Well over a hundred of the responses to the *Old Statistical Account* claimed that schoolmasters were not sufficiently provided for.

¹⁰⁶ R. Rait and G. S. Pryde, *Scotland*, 2d ed. (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1954), 292.

¹⁰⁷ *OSA*, vol. 10, 272.

¹⁰⁸ *OSA*, vol. 12, 341-2.

The Fifeshire gentry began emulating the manners and morals of their English counterparts. Non-resident landlords became more common, as landed families achieved the degree of opulence which enabled them to reside most of the year in Edinburgh or London. ... The children of the gentry were removed from the parish schools, and either educated at home by tutors or sent to public schools in England.¹⁰⁹

In addition there was a fear that moral standards were slipping. The ministers at Ecclesmachan (Presbytery of Linlithgow) and at Dalserf (Presbytery of Lanark) both used the same phrase to sum up their concerns. They maintained that, "the want of schoolmasters is the principal cause of ignorance, bigotry and sectarianism".¹¹⁰

Meanwhile, across the nation the pace of social change was beginning to quicken. 1778 marked the beginning of what Whatley has described as "Scotland's first industrial revolution".¹¹¹ New agricultural methods and land improvements were changing the face of the countryside as farmers and landholders strove to meet the needs of an ever-growing population and the expanding industrial townships in the Central Belt. According to Smout, "the crucial decades were the 1780's and 1790's. It was then that the production of cotton grew with unparalleled [sic] speed from virtually nothing to become by far the greatest industry".¹¹² To this could be added the growth in the tobacco trade, in the linen and paper industries and in coal-mining. All this was due to advances in technology – Hargreave's spinning jenny, Watt's steam-engine, Arkwright's water-frame, Crompton's spinning-mule. With industrialisation came urbanisation and the population of towns such as Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen increased rapidly. However, as has been noted, agricultural improvements also led to the displacement of former farm-workers and cottars, creating discontent within the rural population. In John Galt's *Annals of the Parish*, the fictional journal of an imagined Ayrshire parish minister, the central character expresses a view of the 1790's that may have been typical in many parts of the country:

The minds of men were excited to new enterprizes; a new genius, as it were, had descended upon the earth, and there was an erect and out-looking spirit abroad that was not to be satisfied with the taciturn regularity of ancient affairs

¹⁰⁹ Brown, *Chalmers*, 12.

¹¹⁰ *OSA.*, vol. II, 370 and 381.

¹¹¹ Whatley, *Scottish Society*, 219.

¹¹² Smout, *History of the Scottish People*, 230.

... in the midst of all this commercing and manufacturing, I began to discover signs of decay in the wonted simplicity of our country ways.¹¹³

The feelings of fear and insecurity which accompanied social changes were heightened by events in France. The French Revolution with its abolition of the *ancien régime* and its democratic licence was frequently referred to in the General Assembly and in presbytery minutes throughout the 1790s. Expressions of loyalty to the sovereign and support for what was held to be the God-given constitution are even more profuse than normal in a Church anxious to counteract "the seditious writings which were assiduously circulated" among the people.¹¹⁴ In November 1793 the Rev. George Palmer, a Unitarian minister from Dundee, was tried for publishing a seditious hand-bill on *Liberty and the Right of Universal Suffrage*. He was found guilty and deported for seven years.¹¹⁵ In April 1794 the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr discussed the events in France "which have filled all Christendom with alarm and horror". Members were still more alarmed when it was acknowledged that "men have been found, even in Scotland, who are capable of embracing with zeal and spreading with industry these very principles which, in France, have produced anarchy in the State and prepared the way for infidelity, blasphemy and atheism"¹¹⁶. Emma Vincent (now Emma MacLeod) has described the signs of rebellion throughout the nation with trees of liberty being planted up and down the country and political rioting in Lanark, Perth, Aberdeen, Dundee and Peebles. Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* (1791-2) was widely read and Vincent has claimed that the French Revolution:

Aggravated a climate of tension, suspicion, grievance and unrest. ... This heightened the insecurity of the Moderate Party of Churchmen about their dominant position within the Church of Scotland (which was increasingly challenged by the Evangelical or "Popular" party), and about the position of the Church of Scotland within national life and in relation to the government.¹¹⁷

Vincent sums up the attitude of Church of Scotland ministers to the French Revolution as being fundamentally conservative since "liberty and equality, as demanded by the radicals, were frightening concepts to most ministers".¹¹⁸ Her

¹¹³ John Galt, *Annals of the Parish* (London: Oxford University Press Edition, 1967), 128.

¹¹⁴ *The General Assembly's dutiful Address to his Majesty on the subject of the present War*, May 1793.

¹¹⁵ *Scots Magazine* vol. 55, "Affairs in Scotland, Circuit trials continued" (Edinburgh, 1793), 565.

¹¹⁶ Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, April 1794.

¹¹⁷ Emma Vincent, "The Responses of Scottish Churchmen to the French Revolution 1789 - 1802", *Scottish Historical Review*, 73 (1994), 191-3.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 198.

conclusion touched on two issues germane to the argument of this chapter, namely, the social and intellectual gulf that seemed to have grown between parish ministers and their people, and the decreasing power of the Moderate party:

The condition of the Established and Relief Churches was probably not greatly affected by their responses to the French Revolution. The Moderate decline had begun before the Revolution and their reactionary responses were rather the result of their distance from the lower classes than the cause.¹¹⁹

In January and again in December 1793 the Presbytery of Perth called on members to defend the Constitution of the country against any "sudden and intemperate Reform, especially if extorted from the legislature by violent demands of the people". It concluded that the French Revolution had not offered evidence that a similar revolution in this country would "either prove an antidote to moral evil or establish Religion on a firmer basis" and directed attention to the threat to the Church by the progress of impiety among "numerous and powerful people who till lately called themselves Christians".¹²⁰

Another issue contributing to the unrest of these times was the struggle for electoral reform. Inspired by Paine's writings Friends of the People Societies were founded and in association with similar bodies in England called for a more democratic representation of the people in Parliament. Suggestions that this movement in Scotland, influenced by Thomas Muir, was also associated with a strong republican nationalist sentiment have been explored by John D. Brims who concluded that the Scottish Friends of the People "sought to democratise the political process within the framework of the British union".¹²¹ Be that as it may, the actions of Muir and people who shared his views added yet another element to the general agitation. In 1792 there were protest meetings in several of the large burghs after the most recent motion for reform had been talked out by the House of Commons.

The demonising of the French Revolution with its irreligious influence had quite a different effect in some quarters. It stimulated an enthusiasm for mission and evangelism and an increasing number of lay preachers such as James and Robert Haldane, were to be found spreading their message throughout the country. In October 1796 a meeting of the Gratis Sabbath School Society was held to plan for

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 215.

¹²⁰ NAS CH2, Perth Presbytery, January and December 1793.

¹²¹ John D. Brims, "The Scottish 'Jacobins', Scottish Nationalism and the British Union" in R. A. Mason, ed., *Scotland and England, 1286-1815* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1987) 254.

the opening of Sabbath Evening Schools in Edinburgh and its neighbourhood. Its object was to set up schools where "children should be taught the leading and most important doctrines of Scripture, and not the peculiarities of any denomination of Christians".¹²² Those behind this scheme claimed that religious instruction could not be taught "in a rational way, as other branches of knowledge are taught", and that "the radical qualification" required by teachers was that they should be disciples of Christ. Among those who so qualified were "pious young men", "devout women", "young females", and "rich disciples of Jesus".¹²³ The first Gratis Sabbath School was opened in March 1797.¹²⁴ With similar missionary zeal the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel at Home was started by the Relief Church in 1797 and in 1798 the Glasgow Missionary Society was founded. Emma Vincent may well be right in concluding that the popularity of these was due at least in part to the "spiritual torpor within the Moderate-dominated Church of Scotland."¹²⁵

During this last decade of the century the number of dissenting Churches increased throughout the country. Describing the situation in Aberdeen the contributors to the *Statistical Account* stated that as well as three parochial churches,

in this place are three congregations belonging to the English, and two to the Scotch Episcopal Church. – Of the Seceders, is a congregation of Burghers, and another of Antiburghers, and one belonging to the Relief. – Here the Roman Catholics, the Methodists, the Bereans, and Independents, have each a congregation. – The Quakers have a meeting in this place; and a house has lately been opened, and occupied as a place of worship by a Dr Chandler.¹²⁶

Some of these denominations were starting up their own schools and there was a considerable growth in the number of Sunday schools, adventure schools – what Charles Camic called, "a multiform welter of privately operated establishments principally financed by student payments"¹²⁷ – and private schools. (The Barony of Glasgow is reported to have had fifteen private schools and "a charity school supported by Mr David Dale", the David Dale who founded his factory village which included a day school at New Lanark in 1786.)¹²⁸ In the words of T. M. Devine, "the

¹²² *The Instruction of the Rising Generation in the Principles of the Christian Religion Origin (Progress and Present State of the Edinburgh Gratis Sabbath School Society)* (Edinburgh 1812), 22.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 7-15.

¹²⁴ See Appendix II.

¹²⁵ Vincent, "The Responses of Scottish Churchmen", 212.

¹²⁶ *OSA*, vol. 19, 185.

¹²⁷ Charles Camic, *Experience and Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983), 142.

¹²⁸ *OSA.*, vol. 12, 122.

educational hegemony of the Kirk was breaking down in the eighteenth century with the dynamic growth of private schools and the expansion of the towns where the role of the Church had always been less significant....".¹²⁹ Changes in rural life led to a more mobile population which posed further problems for school education. Devine has quoted a case study showing that "two-thirds of the families listed for the village of Kippen in Stirlingshire in 1789 were no longer resident there in 1793",¹³⁰ while J. F. McCaffrey concluded:

Traditionally there was always some movement: of tradesmen to where work was available. ... In the early nineteenth century, however, such mobility became an increasing and more constant feature in people's lives. Anyone making even a cursory examination of census schedules in the nineteenth century will be struck by the different birthplaces of the children in the same families.¹³¹

By the early 1790's these issues forced the Kirk look again at its responsibility for schooling. It had seen its authority questioned, it feared the influence of the French Revolution and the social restlessness caused by it, it was aware of a "growth of licentiousness",¹³² and the information gathered for the *Statistical Account* by ministers had highlighted the deficiencies of school education throughout the nation. These were factors which all helped rouse the Kirk to action. Certainly it was no coincidence that the two most important pieces of legislation dealing with school education to be passed for several decades were brought forward in the last six years of the eighteenth century.

The Awakening of the Kirk

The 1794 Act and the Church's First Attempts to Enforce School Inspection

Apart from emphatically expressing loyalty to the King and Constitution, supporting the war effort and denouncing the dangerous principles of the French, the records of the General Assembly in the years immediately prior to 1793 show little awareness of the social changes that were rapidly taking place in the world around it. Certainly

¹²⁹ Devine, *The Scottish Nation*, 99.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹³¹ John F. McCaffrey, *Scotland in the Nineteenth Century* (Hampshire and London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1998), 3-4.

¹³² AGA, May 1794. For a good illustration of this see Whatley, *Scottish Society*, 283.

there seems to have been no attempt to consider how school education might be developed to meet the needs of the rural and urban developments described above. It continued to rely very much on the Royal Bounty supplementing and supporting the activities of the SSPCK.

It was an overture by a Mr. Rankin, a commissioner to the 1794 General Assembly, who had expressed concern "respecting the religious education of youth", that eventually persuaded the Church to take positive action with regard to schools.¹³³ In its response to this overture the Assembly noted with concern that the neglect of religious education in schools was largely to blame for the increasing immorality of the times.¹³⁴ The result was that the Assembly passed an *Act and Resolution respecting the Religious Education of Youth*.¹³⁵ As a means of dealing with what was seen as a growing evil, this Act enjoined all parochial schoolmasters and teachers in schools under the superintendence of the Church, to ensure that the Bible was read in schools regularly and that children memorised the Shorter Catechism. Ministers were instructed to visit and examine schools and teachers, and presbyteries were instructed to visit schools at least once a year and "exercise that authority which by the law of the land, as well as of the Church, is vested in them", and to report on their diligence to the next Assembly. In 1795 the Assembly appointed a committee to classify these returns and again reminded presbyteries to pay particular attention to this matter. Here was the Church's first attempt to enforce a law relating to school inspection. That the Assembly believed it necessary to adopt these measures was an acknowledgement that kirk sessions and presbyteries had been remiss in their superintendence of schools and had failed to identify that religious education had been "much neglected in many parochial and other English and Latin schools, particularly in the cities and towns of this kingdom".¹³⁶

This Act, *respecting the Religious Education of Youth*, is notable in a number of ways. Firstly it offered some confirmation that many presbyteries had neglected their duties as far as visiting schools was concerned and, interestingly, included schools in cities and towns. This is further illustrated by the wording of presbytery minutes following the 1794 Act which suggested that for most of them any kind of systematic or organised visitation of schools was a novel idea. Two exceptions to this, the

¹³³ AGA, 23 May 1794.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 1794, 34.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 34-5.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 34.

Presbyteries of Dundee and Glasgow, have already been cited.¹³⁷ These committees had been set up to carry out regular inspections of schools and to report back to the presbyteries. Following the 1794 Act this method was adopted in other places. In April 1795 Edinburgh Presbytery agreed that the best way to implement the Act was to create a number of committees to examine schools in different parts of the presbytery. In less than two months it had visited seventy-eight schools. This included a visit to the High School by representatives of the presbytery and the magistrates.¹³⁸ That year saw other presbyteries adopting the same procedure. Inverness agreed to visit parochial schools which "stand much in need of being better attended".¹³⁹ Turriff Presbytery resolved to visit "the several schools within their bounds".¹⁴⁰ In Jedburgh there was a great flurry of school inspections including grammar and private schools and by May 1795 all but three schools within the presbytery bounds had been visited.¹⁴¹ Almost all adhered closely to the wording of the Act and reported only on the Bible being read and the Catechism taught. There is no indication of any other subjects being examined.

In Dundee and Glasgow where the visitation of schools had been put in place prior to 1794, the reason for this attentiveness may have been that with the rapid expansion of industry and commerce, there was a felt need for ensuring that young people were being better prepared to take up the increasing number of new jobs. The situation in Glasgow, however, was unique in that, since there were no parish schools in the city, the schoolmasters to be examined would be teachers in private or endowed schools and hospitals. Here again we have another example of a presbytery applying the existing legislation in the case of all schools and not just to parochial schools.

Secondly, it is important to recognise that the 1794 debate centred on "Religious Education". (This is in itself an interesting term as one would have expected *Religious Instruction* which was the term which came to be used and was later enshrined in preamble to the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act.) At this time the main concern seems to have been not with education generally but with the morality of the young, reflecting the traditional attitude of the Church that one of the great aims of education should be the godly upbringing of young people for the peace and

¹³⁷ See Page 30.

¹³⁸ NAS CH2, Edinburgh Presbytery, April 1795.

¹³⁹ Ibid., Inverness Presbytery, April 1795.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., Turriff Presbytery, July 1795.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., Jedburgh Presbtery, May 1795.

prosperity of the nation.¹⁴² The 1794 Act does not define "the growth in licentiousness"; presumably it included the rise in whisky consumption, illegitimacy rates and Sabbath-breaking. Apart from that this new interest in religious instruction may well have been a reaction (perhaps an over-reaction) of the Church to the republican atheism associated with the French Revolution and attributed by some to the Friends of the People societies.¹⁴³ Smout has argued that support for this movement, even among the working class, was not as wide as was supposed and that many of the disturbances around this time "turned out not to be about politics at all", but were expressions of insecurity among the peasant farmers and protests at the price of corn.¹⁴⁴

Thirdly, it is surprising to find two important issues omitted from Assembly debates in the early 1790's, namely the poor salary and status of the parish schoolmaster and the need for more schools. In spite of the fact that well over a hundred ministers stated in their submissions to Sir John Sinclair that schoolmasters were not sufficiently provided for and called loudly for redress, there is no indication that any of them raised a voice in protest at the General Assembly during these years. This may be explained partly by the fact that only then were presbyteries beginning to take seriously their own obligations to visit schools and partly by the sense of futility at not being able to take any direct action. Into the bargain the stipends of ministers themselves at that time were also falling behind the increasing prosperity of the country and they were fighting, unsuccessfully, their own battle with heritors and the government for an augmentation. It may well have been felt that by pressing the case for the schoolmasters they would have been detracting from their own campaign.¹⁴⁵

The 1799 Report and Further Moves to Ensure Superintendence of Schools

The increase in Sunday Schools outside the control of the Church of Scotland and the growing strength of the secession churches during the closing years of the eighteenth

¹⁴² *The First Book of Discipline*, ed. Cameron, 130.

¹⁴³ Brims, "The Scottish 'Jacobins'", 247-8.

¹⁴⁴ Smout, *History of the Scottish People*, 415.

¹⁴⁵ A number of ministers who contributed to the *Statistical Account* drew attention to the need to increase stipends. See, for example the *Statistical Accounts* for Whithorn (vol.16, 297-8) – "We only humbly crave that our income may rise as the necessary expence of living increases", and for Dunbog (vol.4, 234-5) – "Unless a general augmentation of stipends becomes an object to persons of influence, the clergy of Scotland must degenerate". In 1810 a Parliamentary Act, (50. Geo.III.c.84) fixed the minimum stipend at £150 p.a., an increase of between £50 and £70 for some ministers.

century began to alarm the Moderate Party which, though no longer as influential, still held sway in the Assembly. Further, concern had been expressed by many synods about the number of unqualified ministers and preachers conducting services. The response of the Assembly when it met in 1799 was first to pass a "Declaratory Act Respecting Unqualified Ministers and Preachers", and then to issue a "Pastoral Admonition by the General Assembly to the People under their Charge". The Act warned ministers not to allow those not ordained or not licensed by the Church of Scotland to use their pulpits. The Admonition, which was to be read in all churches, warned members against false teachers, revolutionary principles and seditious books, pamphlets and tracts, since "in a neighbouring country an evil and pernicious spirit has arisen which like a pestilential vapour has spread its malignant influence over several surrounding states". It specifically pointed out the danger of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel at Home and its Sunday Schools, "in these giddy times when the love of innovation so much prevails".¹⁴⁶ The Assembly was particularly worried about missionaries from this Society who were going in to parishes, masquerading as teachers, and setting up Sunday Schools without the permission of presbyteries, ministers or heritors. In this connection, following an overture from the Synod of Aberdeen, an Assembly Committee was asked to examine existing laws which gave the General Assembly the right to inspect schools and examine schoolmasters. The committee was directed to suggest "the most effectual method of preventing unqualified persons from being employed in the important office of instructing Youth". The outcome was the adoption by the Assembly of the *Report Concerning Vagrant Teachers and Sunday Schools*.¹⁴⁷

Here the Kirk acted in the belief that the best means of defence was attack. It sought once more to impose its authority, by putting the seceded Churches and other evangelical bodies in their place, and by making sympathetic noises about the plight of the schoolmasters. It was perhaps the last major piece of legislation drawn up by the Moderate party. It certainly was an indication of the Church's increasing fears for the future of school education. The action it took was no doubt strengthened by the fact that it was to this General Assembly sitting in 1799 that Sir John Sinclair presented the newly published *Statistical Account of Scotland* with its depressing comments about the state of schools.

¹⁴⁶ AGA, 1799, 38-42.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 42-45.

The 1799 report began by quoting the Assembly Act of 1565, "that none be permitted to teach publicly or privately but such as were tried by the Superintendants, or Visitors of the Kirk, and found qualified", which was confirmed by the 1567 Act of Parliament.¹⁴⁸ It then proceeded to go over the various Acts from 1565 to the middle of the eighteenth century which laid down the "superintending power of the church over all schoolmasters and Teachers of Youth".¹⁴⁹ It was anxious to remind the Church and the nation that the authority of the Church in matters of school education and the supervision of schoolmasters as laid down in various Acts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, had been engrossed in the Treaty of Union. It recalled that the right to examine all teachers and schoolmasters had applied not only to those in parochial schools but also to "Teachers of Youth of all denominations and descriptions", including those in private schools.¹⁵⁰ In conclusion it enjoined all presbyteries "to be diligent in exercising those powers which the Laws of the Land and of the Church, have committed to them with respect to the education of Youth within their bounds", and to ensure all schoolmasters were sufficiently qualified. Presbyteries were instructed to prepare for the next Assembly lists of schools, the number of pupils attending, the subjects taught and the provisions made for the schoolmaster, and whether the schools were held on Sundays or on other days of the week.¹⁵¹ That there might be some opposition to the Church enforcing what it regarded as its legal rights, is anticipated by a recommendation that the Procurator of the Church should be ready to give his assistance and, at public expense, take the necessary action to "enforce the sentences or ascertaining the powers of the Judiciaries of the Church relative to schools".¹⁵²

From the date of this injunction until an Education Committee was proposed in 1824, matters concerning schools and schoolmasters were reported on to the General Assembly with increasing frequency but, one would have to add, also with increasing frustration at the lack of diligence on the part of many presbyteries. When the Committee on Vagrant Teachers and Sunday Schools reported to the Assembly of 1800 it had to admit that "not a fourth part of the Presbyteries had made any report",¹⁵³ and this was to be the pattern year after year. The following two years marked the highest number of returns (fifty presbyteries sent up reports in 1801 and

¹⁴⁸ For the wording of the 1567 Act see footnote on page 1.

¹⁴⁹ *AGA*, 1799, 43.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 1800, 37.

sixty in 1802) but from then on fewer presbyteries responded, thus making it impossible for the Assembly to compose an overall picture of the school situation.

At least one Church member thought that the increased activity on the part of presbyteries was not altogether desirable. The writer of a pamphlet published in 1812 expressed doubts as to the competency of presbyteries to interfere in the management of schools. He claimed that a presbytery, in measuring the success and progress of a school or the efficiency of a schoolmaster, would find it difficult to compare schools given their different circumstances and also the fact that there was no "fixed measure of proficiency by which all may be judged". He was of the opinion that the power of presbyteries could become "an instrument of oppression".¹⁵⁴ This pamphlet certainly raised some legitimate questions about the suitability of presbyteries to oversee schools and about their effectiveness. Presbyteries may have been qualified to examine a schoolmaster on his faith and character and even on his academic achievements but not on his ability to teach, which was a different matter altogether. Moreover, until an official format for submitting reports was devised by the Assembly, there was no way of standardising school visitations, each presbytery being left to carry them out as it saw fit.

There is some evidence that from time to time Burgh schools continued to oppose any examination by presbyteries. It took an Assembly judgement in 1817, for example, to assert the Presbytery of Brechin's "undubitable right to examine schools of every description within their bounds", in the face of what had been opposition from the Magistrates and Council of the burgh of Montrose.¹⁵⁵

As a consequence of the lack of co-operation by presbyteries, over the next decade the injunctions of the 1799 Assembly were repeated again and again as the reports on schools from presbyteries were called for. Presbyteries that had responded were commended but all too often there were expressions of concern that so many had not bothered to send in returns. There was also the anxiety that the poor salaries offered to schoolmasters were still a major deterrent in recruiting the right kind of person. The Assembly of 1802 commented that "in many parts of the country it has of late been found impossible to fill the parish schools with persons properly qualified and that the whole order is sinking into a state of depression".¹⁵⁶ Frequently the Assembly had to recommend that where presbyteries discovered that the law

¹⁵⁴ *An Examination of the Effects likely to result from the Interference of the Presbytery in the Management of Parochial Schools* (Glasgow, 1812), 10.

¹⁵⁵ AGA, 1817, 14.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 1802, 16.

with regard to the qualification of teachers was not being complied with, then legal action should be taken by the sheriffs of the counties.

To try to tighten things up and make the reports from presbyteries more structured (and so more comparable) the Assembly of 1813 sent down to presbyteries an even more detailed list of questions regarding the number of parochial schools established and needed in each parish, the salary and accommodation provided for the schoolmaster, and what other kinds of schools were in operation.¹⁵⁷ In 1819 a standardised printed schedule was produced and in 1820 copies of this were sent to every parish minister, to be completed and returned to the presbytery. With the failure of this new method to achieve any significant increase in the number of returns by 1823 when full reports were submitted by only twenty-eight out of seventy-eight presbyteries, it was obvious that some other means of supervising schools and establishing the Church's authority in education would need to be found. A number of factors highlighted the need for urgent action.

While many presbyteries may have been visiting and examining schools, with only a limited number making returns the Church could have no overall picture of the national situation and the Assembly seemed powerless to enforce its own regulations. The Committee on the Examination of Schools, while responsible for investigating the diligence of presbyteries, had no means of establishing new schools or appointing teachers where a need was identified.¹⁵⁸ Further, from the presbyterial returns which were submitted it was evident that many teachers were, at least as far as the Church was concerned, not qualified because they had neither taken the oath of allegiance nor signed the Formula, and there continued to be problems where those in charge of schools objected to presbyterial superintendence.¹⁵⁹ (The situation in Montrose has already been cited, and 1823-24 saw a dispute between Robert Owen and the Presbytery of Lanark over the inspection of the school at New Lanark.) Moreover, in addition to dissenter schools and private schools, the growing number of Catholic immigrants resulted in more Catholic schools and the founding of a Catholic Schools Society in Glasgow in 1817.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 1813, 40.

¹⁵⁸ *AGA*, 1823, 32. This report states that in the expanding industrial towns of Paisley, Greenock, Port Glasgow and Renfrew there were no Parochial schools.

¹⁵⁹ *AGA*, 1823, 32.

¹⁶⁰ McCaffrey, *Scotland in the Nineteenth Century*, 8, notes that "a Catholic Schools Society was established in Glasgow in 1817 by a group of leading merchants, in which a committee, half Catholic and half Protestant, appointed Catholic teachers using the Protestant version of the Bible".

Lastly, missionary and evangelical pressure was being brought to bear on the Moderate party of the Church by the Evangelical Party which was growing in power and popularity and was encouraging in some quarters a more parish-orientated ministry. One result of this was a growing number of Sessional schools established and managed by congregations and so not directly under the control of the General Assembly. The inspiration behind this new movement was undoubtedly Thomas Chalmers who instituted the first parish Sabbath-school society in Glasgow in 1816 and opened the first parish school there in 1820. In addition it is possible that the publication of Thomas McCrie's biographies of John Knox (1811) and of Andrew Melville (1819) created a new interest in the Scottish Reformation, reminding readers of the high ideals for school education set by the reformers and of how much still had to be done in order to ensure a school in every parish in Scotland.

Help for Schoolmasters

It is necessary at this point to return to that other pressing matter which in 1802 finally claimed the attention of the Church – namely the salary and conditions of schoolmasters. In 1799 the Assembly Committee which had drawn up the Report respecting Vagrant Teachers and Sunday Schools, supported a petition from the parochial schoolmasters. It agreed that the Parochial Schoolmasters were "a most useful body of men", who had contributed much to the improvement and the success of the nation and that "in many parishes their appointments are so small as scarcely to equal the gains of a day-labourer".¹⁶¹ The statement went on to say how desirable it would be if means could be found to encourage more men of sound principles to become schoolmasters, especially "in the present times when many are endeavouring, by various means, to instil into the minds of the rising generation principles not only inimical to Religion . . . but subversive of all order in Society". The Assembly, however, could do no more than encourage the petitioners to continue "by a diligent and unwearied attention to their office, to recommend themselves to the countenance and protection of the Landed Interest of Scotland".¹⁶² It is difficult to see what more the schoolmasters could have expected from the Church given that the power to augment stipends lay with the heritors and not with the Assembly. The most that could have been hoped for was that the representatives

¹⁶¹ AAGA, May 1799.

¹⁶² Ibid.

of the "landed interest", that is, the heritors who were attending in their capacity as elders of the Kirk, having heard the debate and the grievances expressed, would be moved to take some action to alleviate the situation.¹⁶³

It is to the credit of some parish ministers that they did not let the matter rest there. At its meeting in 1802 the General Assembly was faced with overtures from the Presbyteries of Lochmaben and Annan regarding the state of the parish schools in Scotland. In responding to these overtures the Assembly reiterated the usual sentiments about how important and useful schoolmasters were, but this time it did not stop there. Times had changed. Members had had the chance to digest Sir John Sinclair's *Statistical Account* with its accounts of the plight of schoolmasters. Moreover the turn of the century saw a weakening of Henry Dundas's hold on the affairs of the nation and, with the growing confidence of the Evangelical party in the Church, renewed criticisms of the system of patronage. It may be that ministers now felt freer to raise issues affecting the land-owning class, encouraged by the young Whigs who had founded the *Edinburgh Review* in 1802. Lastly there was the threat of a French invasion hanging over the nation. With the lessons of the French Revolution uppermost in mind rather than the improvement of school education, the Assembly in its wisdom decided that schoolmasters were essential for safeguarding the morals of the people and upholding the Constitution.¹⁶⁴ From what appears to have been the rather ulterior motive of protecting King and Country, the members passed "A Declaration and Instruction of the General Assembly in favour of the Parochial Schoolmasters in Scotland".¹⁶⁵ This instructed the Moderator and the Procurator to take every opportunity to make the Church's concern for teachers known and to correspond on the matter with His Majesty's Officers of State for Scotland, offering to support any plan they might come up with for the relief of schoolmasters. On this occasion the appeal from the Assembly was listened to (presumably because the Government agreed with the Assembly that schoolmasters could be "effectual instruments" in the contemporary political situation) and the result was the Parochial Schools (Scotland) Act of 1803 (sometimes referred to as the

¹⁶³ Iain F. MacIver has claimed that an analysis of members attending the General Assembly from 1820 - 1832, "clearly shows that the lay elders as a body were predominantly representative of two important elements of the contemporary Scottish ruling class: the lairds and the Edinburgh lawyers", and there is no reason to suppose that the lay composition of the Assembly around the turn of the century would have been any different. (Iain F. MacIver, "The General Assembly of the Church, the State, and Society in Scotland: Some Aspects of Their Relationships, 1815-1843" (University of Edinburgh, M.Litt. thesis, 1977), 62.)

¹⁶⁴ AGA, 1802, 16.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

Education Act).¹⁶⁶ This Act almost doubled the salaries by raising the minimum to three hundred merks (£16.13.4) and the maximum to four hundred merks (£22.4.5), these rates to continue for twenty-five years.¹⁶⁷ It laid down that where there was no schoolhouse, one consisting of two rooms and a garden was to be provided by the heritors. Where parishes were extensive or divided by the sea it was competent, but not obligatory, for the heritors to set up two schools and divide the salary between the two schoolmasters, thus establishing what came to be known as "side schools". For all this the heritors had to provide the additional funding. The superintending duties of presbyteries and ministers were restated, and although they were to continue examining schoolmasters, the heritors could decide on the extent of this examination and so control the curriculum. It could be said, therefore, that this Act actually reinforced the power of the heritors, and to that extent it lessened the power and authority of the Church. According to Withrington the Act "quietly transferred important powers from the Church to the state ... a quiet but important revolution in management had begun".¹⁶⁸ The main weakness of the Act was that it applied only to the existing parochial set-up and failed to take account of the educational needs of the rapidly expanding population in the burghs and urban areas. According to McCaffrey, "Scotland, in a list of 16 urbanised societies in Europe (measured by the proportion of their population in towns of 10,000 and above), had advanced from seventh place in 1750 to fourth in 1800".¹⁶⁹

Towards an Assembly Education Committee

Over the five or six years preceding the General Assembly's decision in 1824 to look into the possibility of setting up a committee with the specific remit of establishing schools, a number of factors had converged which would have helped the commissioners make up their minds.

Discontent among schoolmasters came to the fore again. In November 1824 the schoolmasters of Irvine issued a pamphlet containing *Heads of a Bill* to amend the

¹⁶⁶ An Act for making better Provision for the Parochial Schoolmasters, and for making further regulations for the better Government of the Parish Schools in Scotland. 43 Geo III, c 54.

¹⁶⁷ According to James Scotland, "The average for four hundred and seventy-four country parishes which sent in a clear return to Sir John Sinclair in the 1790's was £8.10.5." (James Scotland, *The History of Scottish Education*, 2 vols. (London: University of London Press, 1969), vol.1, 124.

¹⁶⁸ D. J. Withrington, *Going to School* (Edinburgh: National Museums of Scotland, 1997) 36-37.

¹⁶⁹ McCaffrey, *Scotland in the Nineteenth Century*, 1.

1803 Act and improve the lot of the schoolmasters.¹⁷⁰ A copy of the *Heads of a Bill* demanding a further increase in salaries, was transmitted to each presbytery for its consideration. It called on presbyteries to investigate complaints against schoolmasters and take appropriate action. At the General Assembly in 1825 a Committee on Parochial Schoolmasters was appointed "to watch over a Bill prepared to be brought into Parliament upon this subject and to offer to the framers of the Bill certain suggestions", such as the need for schoolmasters to be qualified to teach Latin and the right of appeal by schoolmasters against decisions of presbyteries to the supreme courts of the Church, to be restored.¹⁷¹ Nothing, however, came of this Bill nor of the *Heads* prepared by the schoolmasters of Irvine.

As we have seen, while presbyteries in their annual returns regularly reported on the lack of parish schools in some of the growing industrial towns and on the refusal of some teachers to sign the Church's Formula, the Assembly seemed powerless to improve on the situation. Whether out of complacency or indifference or as an admission of their ineffectiveness, many presbyteries failed to send in the completed schedules. Indeed there is some evidence to suggest that there was a general lack of support for any changes to the educational system. The anonymous writer of a pamphlet published in 1820, for example, reminded his readers of the opposition to any enlargement of school education following the mass demonstrations of the "Radical War" in Scotland and the Peterloo massacre in England:

I was greatly surprised lately to hear occasional whispers against instructing the poor ... upon soliciting subscriptions to a Sabbath-school I was plainly told, that in England, the present disturbances were chiefly, if not wholly, attributed to the late introduction of education among the lower classes, and my applications refused.¹⁷²

The writer then described the indifferent attitude of many who should have been taking more interest in what was happening in schools. Even wealthy patrons seldom made enquiries as to the attendance of children and their progress.¹⁷³ Aware of this complacency, the Rev. Charles Anderson, parish minister of Closeburn, called for a Parliamentary inquiry into the state of education in the Highlands claiming that many

¹⁷⁰ *Heads of a Bill to amend an Act made in the Forty-third Year of the Reign of his late Majesty George III for making better Provision for the Parochial Schoolmasters and for making further regulations for the better Government of the Parish Schools in Scotland* (Kilmarnock, 1824), 2.

¹⁷¹ AAGA, 1825, 44.

¹⁷² *Remarks on the Influence of Education on the Lower Classes of Society* (Glasgow: Young, Gallie, 1820), 3.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 7.

people still imagined a system far more universal and efficient than it actually was – "the old framework (established at the Revolution 1696) remaining with us had the effect of deluding Scotchmen with the belief that their country still possessed the full advantages of education".¹⁷⁴

At the same time there were those who were actively pursuing change by establishing their own schools – dissenting churches, private individuals, and parish congregations. In fact it was this activity which may have persuaded parish ministers that it was time for the Church to set up its own schools where the management and curriculum would be under its direct control. In the end the Church was convinced of the necessity for immediate action by the results of Brougham's survey and by the statistics produced by George Baird.¹⁷⁵

For the purposes of his report Brougham had asked the General Assembly in 1818 to circulate a number of questions to all parish ministers in Scotland with a view to establishing the educational provision in Scotland and an Assembly committee under the convenership of Baird was set up to undertake this task.¹⁷⁶ The questionnaire sent out asked for the population of parishes, the number who had not been taught to read, and whether or not the parochial school was "fit by its local situation, to furnish, with convenience and advantage, the means of education for the children of the whole parish". In the course of this investigation it came to light that the SSPCK, whose work was so essential in the Highlands and Islands, had been turning down applications for new schools and closing down some of its existing schools, due to shortage of funds.¹⁷⁷ Some 700 returns were received from ministers and passed on to Brougham who later returned them to Baird. It was on the basis of these findings that Baird decided to approach the Presbytery of Edinburgh in April 1824 seeking support for an overture to the General Assembly with a view to raising funds for setting up new schools throughout the country.¹⁷⁸ The results of the inquiry were reproduced by Baird and issued to commissioners attending the 1824 General Assembly to gain their support for his proposals.¹⁷⁹ According to Withrington, who was not convinced that the situation was as black as was being made out, the 1818

¹⁷⁴ R. C. Anderson, *A Statement of the Experience of Scotland with regard to the Education of the People with Remarks on the Intended Application of the Schoolmasters to Parliament* (Dumfries: J. McDiarmid, 1825), 18.

¹⁷⁵ See pages 18-20.

¹⁷⁶ George H. Baird, *Extracts from reports of the ministers of parishes in some synods of Scotland: made in 1818 and 1819, as to parochial schools* (Edinburgh: Duncan Stevenson, 1824), iv.

¹⁷⁷ Baird, *Extracts from reports*, v-vi.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, v-vi.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, iii-vii.

survey was used to shock the Church and its supporters into action, and "the most was made of its bad news in order to force as swift a reaction as possible".¹⁸⁰

Co-incidentally, and perhaps intentionally satirically, the edition of the *Scotsman* which reported on the Presbytery's discussion of Baird's motion, also carried a leader which commented:

We are glad to see that the state of education in *Edinburgh* is to be inquired into. At a recent meeting of Presbytery, Dr A Thomson remarked humorously on the disobedience in this respect of the clergy of Edinburgh, to the injunctions of the General Assembly. There certainly has been a supineness here; but the clergy, we trust, will now work along with the laity, not merely in promoting education, but in ascertaining the circumstances and improving the condition of the poor. The mechanism of the established church may be useful here.¹⁸¹

It now remained to be seen whether a "supine" clergy who had in the past often been neglectful of their duties towards schools, would be more supportive of the new initiative which was being proposed.

Conclusion

In an article on Scottish Parochial Schools in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1827 Henry Cockburn wrote:

It is impossible to resist the conclusion that our ancient system of popular instruction is in an alarming condition and that, if we really wish to make our parish schools continue to accomplish the purposes for which they were originally designed, we must cease to slumber over them with the half patriarchal half poetical dream which is apt to come over us when we think of those rural seminaries — and must do something effectual to revive them.¹⁸²

Whatever may be said about the availability of schooling in the forty or so years before the Education Committee set about its work, from the Church's point of view it was a depressing picture. Even although presbyteries throughout the land had been actively involved in the examination and disciplining of schoolmasters and had attempted to ensure the adequate provision of buildings, both the legal system and the nature of the ministry in the latter half of the eighteenth century had created a situation where the Church had had little impact on the development of school

¹⁸⁰ Withrington, "Schooling, Literacy and Society", 181.

¹⁸¹ *Scotsman*, 3 April 1824.

¹⁸² Henry Cockburn, *The Edinburgh Review*, vol. XLVI (Edinburgh, 1827), 111.

education. No uniform system of school inspection had been established and even after the 1799 Report presbyteries had proved reluctant to carry out their duties. More and more schools had grown up outside the parochial system over which the Church had even less control. Many of these schools were associated with the dissenting churches which had become increasingly popular with the evangelically-minded lower classes. C. G. Brown has calculated that by 1826, 38 per cent of the Scottish people were dissenters.¹⁸³ Even with these additional schools many hundreds of children were still without education. Few of the poorly paid crofters and fishermen living in the scattered hamlets of the Highlands and Islands could afford the fees for good teachers or the cost of schoolbooks. Inefficient teachers threatened to dilute educational standards. Absentee landlords (many of whom had associated themselves with the Scottish Episcopal Church) were not interested and in the new towns the old parish system was not appropriate. Aware of the inability of the existing scheme to meet the educational needs of the country and inspired by a desire to keep faith with the ideals of the Reformers, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland took the bold step of contemplating the provision of an educational system of its own. In doing so it was no doubt encouraged by those parish churches which had successfully established Sessional schools.

In this chapter a number of questions have begun to emerge which will merit fuller consideration later. These are mainly to do with the Church's motives in setting up its Education Committee. Was it, for example, mainly out of a concern for religious instruction and the "godly upbringing of youth", or was there a genuine desire to meet people's educational needs and to provide a system which would encourage social mobility and self-improvement? Was it in order to exercise its moral and social control of the nation which it saw threatened by the rise in the number of adventure schools and dissenting churches and by those instances where its superintendence of schools was questioned?¹⁸⁴ R. D. Anderson has claimed that after the 1696 Act which was part of the religious and political settlement following the 1688 revolution, "education was seen as an instrument of religious authority as much as an independent cultural force, reflecting the church's determination to

¹⁸³ Callum G. Brown, "Religion and Social Change" in *People and Society in Scotland*, vol. I, 1760 - 1830, 151.

¹⁸⁴ Sir John Sinclair estimated that, according to the returns in the Parliamentary Report of 1818, out of 5,081 elementary schools, 2,479 were fee-paying private schools. (Sir John Sinclair, *Analysis of the Statistical Account of Scotland*, Part II (London, John Murray 1826), 98-99.)

impose conformity and root out dissent."¹⁸⁵ How influential was this way of thinking in the Church in 1824 and thereafter? To such questions we must return.

¹⁸⁵ Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People*, 3.

APPENDIX I

In 1704 the General Assembly passed an *Act Anent Erecting Schools in the Highlands* (Acts of General Assembly, 1704, 15-16) and agreed that presbyteries and synods should endeavour to collect subscriptions and contributions "for erecting schools and educating youth in the Highlands and Isles". It also recommended that presbyteries and synods should send to the Commission of Assembly "an account of what "Paroches have or want Schools, and what places do most need them". In 1705 the Assembly passed an *Act concerning Schools and Bursaries, and for instructing Youth in the Principles of Religion* (AGA, 1705, 8-9) in which it ordained that ministers should "take care to have schools erected in every Parish, conform to the Acts of Parliament, for teaching Youth to read English". There is no indication that any schools were erected from funds collected. It would appear that such funds as were gathered were eventually handed over to the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge which was set up in 1709.

APPENDIX II

The setting up of independent Sunday schools in many of the principal towns in Scotland and the founding of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel at Home were largely the work of James Haldane. These Sunday schools were mainly evangelical in purpose and differed from the Sunday schools which had already been set up in a number of places to provide education for children who could not attend weekday schools either because they were working or because their parents could not afford the fees. The minutes of the Presbytery of Langholm for September 1799 record the Presbytery considering setting up Sunday schools "in the light of the progressive improvement of manufacturers and of advancing population".¹⁸⁶ The Statistical Account for the City of Glasgow states that eleven Sunday schools were begun in 1787. According to C. G. Brown they were also started to "divert youths from raucous and even criminal behaviour on the Sabbath".¹⁸⁷ In the wake of the French revolution the spread of Sunday schools associated with Haldane and lay preachers led many in the Church of Scotland to regard the movement with suspicion.

¹⁸⁶ NAS, CH2/235/4.

¹⁸⁷ C. G. Brown, "The Sunday School Movement in Scotland, 1780-1914" in *RSCHS*, (Edinburgh: 1983) vol. XXI, 8.

Chapter Two 1825 – 1834

The First Ten Years

Introduction – A Committee is set up

Whatever may be said today about the reliability of Brougham's findings, Principal George Baird was certainly persuaded by them and managed to use them to convince others of the urgent need for more schools throughout the land and in particular in the Highlands and Islands. In his presentation to the monthly meeting of Edinburgh Presbytery on 31 March 1824, Baird quoted examples from the returns which Henry Brougham had sent to him showing how few in the rural areas were able to read. Dr. Andrew Thomson, minister of St. George's Church who had himself been a schoolmaster in Markinch and was involved in setting up his own weekday school in Edinburgh, expressed the view that Baird was relying too much on facts which were by then out of date,¹ but the presbytery agreed to support Baird and to transmit to the forthcoming General Assembly an overture calling on the Assembly to appoint a committee to produce a plan for:

Increasing the means of education and of religious instruction throughout Scotland in general, where this may be needful, particularly in the Highlands and Islands, and in large and populous cities, where, in these times, the children of the poor demand the most deliberate and careful attention.²

In a pamphlet published in 1824 to persuade members of the ensuing Assembly to support the overture, Baird claimed that in spite of the fact that "landed proprietors are extending patronage and encouragement to the erection of schools as far as can reasonably be expected ... the number untaught appear, from unquestionable evidence, very greatly to exceed what it is generally believed to be". Figures in Brougham's report indicated that the Synods of Argyll, Glenelg, Sutherland and Caithness "were most scantily supplied with schools" and Baird urged support for his overture from ministers and elders "as the official guardians of the intellectual as well as the moral and religious cultivation of the people of Scotland".³

When the General Assembly met in May, Baird presented his overture, "Relative to the state of Religious Instruction, and of Education, in the Highlands and Islands,

¹ *Scotsman*, 3 April 1824.

² Baird, *Extracts from reports*, iii, and see the *Scotsman*, 3 April 1824 for a similar wording of the Overture and extracts from the ensuing debate.

³ Baird, *Extracts from reports*, iii-iv.

and in the great towns of Scotland". The Assembly unanimously accepted the terms of this overture and agreed to appoint a committee with Baird as convener, to make inquiries and collate the relevant facts and to come back to the next Assembly with a plan which the Church might adopt for increasing the means of Education and of Religious Instruction throughout the country. The Assembly further instructed its committee to find out what help heritors might be willing to offer and what funding, if any, the Government might provide for any proposed scheme.⁴

The following year the General Assembly endorsed this committee's proposals for the establishment of schools in the Highlands and Islands and recommended that Church collections should be taken up to provide the necessary funds. Once sufficient funds had been raised schoolmasters or catechists were to be appointed "in the stations that appear most urgently to require them ... after due communication with the heritors and others concerned".⁵ The 1824 committee was reappointed to undertake this work and became a standing committee of the Assembly. So began the life of the Education Committee, now regarded as the longest continuing standing committee of the Church of Scotland.⁶

This chapter will consider the first ten years of the committee's work. A useful event with which to conclude the discussion of this period is the publication in 1834 of George Lewis's pamphlet, *Scotland a Half-Educated Nation, both in the Quantity and Quality of her Education Institutions*.⁷ Lewis, editor of the *Scottish Guardian*, had claimed that Scotland with all her parochial schools and private schools still had only a tenth or twelfth, and in some places a fourteenth or fifteenth, of the population attending school and lagged far behind countries such as Prussia and North America. Are we to surmise from the argument of Lewis's pamphlet that this new Education Committee had made little impact on school education in the first ten years of its existence and had failed to overcome the weaknesses and deficiencies outlined in the

⁴ AAGA, 1824, 37.

⁵ Baird, *Statement as to the want of Schools and Catechists in the Highlands and Islands by the Committee of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, June 1825* (Edinburgh, 1825), 2.

⁶ For the purposes of this thesis the title of this committee, "Committee on Increasing the means of Education and Religious Instruction in Scotland", will normally be contracted to "Education Committee".

⁷ Lewis's pamphlet, *Scotland a Half-Educated Nation, both in the Quantity and Quality of her Education Institutions* (Glasgow, 1834), was based on the proceedings of a meeting of the Glasgow Educational Association where papers had been presented on the "Extension of the Parochial Schools of Scotland". Although Lewis would join the Free Church at the Disruption at this time he was a staunch supporter of the Established Church and its connection with parish schools.

previous chapter? From the wording of a report to the Assembly in 1833 this would appear to be the case:

[The Assembly] learn with regret, that while the number of persons of all ages still untaught to read is found to exceed in a great degree every previous calculation, and there exists a demand for additional schools to an extent far beyond the means hitherto at the disposal of the their Committee, their income for the last year has not increased so much as to reduce the deficiency of the preceding year, and contributions to their funds have been received from no more than 135 parishes.⁸

Why was the educational work of this committee not better supported when the need was so great? Was its work doomed to fail in the face of mounting competition from other popular causes, ecclesiastical and political? Donald Withrington has described Lewis's pamphlet as "intended to be a partisan statement on behalf of the Established Church in a period when it was under severe attack".⁹ How far were rivalries within and opposition without the Established Church, jeopardising the work of the Education Committee? These are some of the questions which will be addressed in this chapter.

The Education Committee Sets About Its Work

Since, by 1824, the Brougham report was some six years old, the Education Committee decided, that in determining the priority locations for the first Church schools, it first had to obtain up-to-date information on the existing educational provision. Accordingly, following the Assembly in 1824, a list of questions was sent out to parish ministers. Out of the 907 ministers approached some 800 sent in returns, a proportion which indicated a considerable interest in the project. These returns were laid before the General Assembly in May 1825. The new data confirmed Brougham's findings that the six northernmost Synods with 143 parishes had the most immediate need. It was estimated that at least 10,500 children in these Synods were without the means of education and that not less than 250 additional schools and 130 catechists were required. In one parish of 1,000 square miles and a population of 4,747, only 995 had learned to read.¹⁰ Gaelic, being mainly a spoken

⁸AAGA, 1833, 50.

⁹ Donald J. Withrington, "'Scotland a Half-Educated Nation' in 1834? Reliable Critique or Persuasive Polemic?" in W. M. Humes and H. M. Paterson (eds.), *Scottish Culture and Scottish Education 1800-1980* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1983), 71.

¹⁰ Baird, *Statement as to the want of Schools*, 3.

language in the Highlands, presented the challenge of teaching people to read in Gaelic as well as English and few schoolmasters were sufficiently fluent in both languages. Of course the very geography of these areas made attending school difficult and the widespread poverty in the Highlands meant that many parents could not afford school fees or books. Some, it was said, were willing to "sell their best clothes to educate their children".¹¹ Indeed, so anxious were the people for schooling that, according to Baird, it was "not uncommon for a boy to be sent by the joint subscription of the poor inhabitants of the hamlets of a glen, to be boarded and educated at a distance, and for this boy on his return to become the schoolmaster of his neighbourhood after the labours of the day, with himself and those who are to be his scholars [sic], are over".¹² At the same time Baird informed the Assembly that the information obtained from the returns to the committee's questionnaires showed that the rest of Scotland with 764 parishes in the Lowlands, the Central belt and the East, was "well supplied with the means of education, and that there is scarcely an individual who has not been taught to read". Probably this only reflected the views of ministers in the existing parishes and took little account of the situation in the new urban developments. Certainly it is doubtful if David Stow or Thomas Chalmers would have agreed with Baird's observation. Indeed, describing the efforts of Chalmers and Stow to set up first Sunday Schools and then day schools in Glasgow, Stewart Mechie has commented, "as soon as Stow came out into the open with his views and suggestions he was confronted with all the self-satisfaction of the Scottish educational tradition as well as the complacency of those who did not realize the evils to be remedied".¹³

In addition to the information obtained from the questionnaires sent out to parishes, Baird and his committee also had access to the annual statistics collated by the Assembly Committee on the Returns of Presbyteries as to Schools. These too assisted them in identifying areas of greatest need. As has been shown, however, before 1824 these returns had been of limited value as many presbyteries had been diffident about reporting their findings to the Assembly's Committee. While it would be another ten years before there would be any significant improvement here, the returns for the period 1824-34 provided the committee with useful information both on the progress of its own work and on the state of Scottish education generally.

¹¹ Ibid., 4.

¹² Ibid., 6.

¹³ Stewart Mechie, *The Church and Scottish Social Development* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960) 142. The Glasgow Infant School Society was formed in 1826 with Stow as secretary.

Presbytery Superintendence of Schools

Presbytery Returns – Responses 1824-34

A survey of the reports sent in to the Committee on the Examination of Schools from 1824 to 1834 revealed that many presbyteries continued to devise their own ways of tabulating their findings.¹⁴ In 1825 the Committee of Assembly on the Returns of Presbyteries as to Schools,¹⁵ reported that regular printed returns had been submitted by thirty-two presbyteries. Some presbyteries had only returned notes on their examination of schools and in other cases only individual parishes had responded. The Assembly were informed that, in all, returns had been sent in from forty presbyteries but "no report whatever [had appeared] for last year from any of the remaining 38 Presbyteries of this Church; and that several of these have neglected to make returns in the prescribed form for more than one year, and some of them for many years; so that a full view of the Schools in their respective bounds cannot be obtained".¹⁶ From existing records it is evident that some of the returns were very poorly filled in. Some columns are incomplete and details are often missing. Those who compiled them had a habit of writing "Ditto" or using a general phrase like "Common Branches Taught" without specifying subjects. For example in the parish of Snizort in Skye there were five schools – a Parochial school, an Assembly school, and three Gaelic schools. All five schools under the heading "Branches Taught" were credited with teaching English, Gaelic, writing, arithmetic, book-keeping, Latin and Greek. It is possible, but it would have been highly unusual, for a Gaelic school to offer this wide range of subjects.¹⁷ In his report to the Assembly in 1825 the convener of the Committee on the Examination of Schools, Dr William Singer, emphasised that full and accurate returns were now more important than ever "with a view to facilitate the great objects of the Assembly's Standing Committee for increasing the means of Education", but presbyteries seem to have been slow to oblige.¹⁸ In spite of this expression of urgency, it was noted in 1833 that two presbyteries had failed to send in reports for five years and that nine, including

¹⁴ None of the 1824 reports accessed in the National Archives of Scotland were made out on the standardised printed forms. The Presbytery of Paisley seems to have been in the habit of submitting only short hand-written summaries.

¹⁵ The title seems to vary from Assembly to Assembly.

¹⁶ AGA, 1825, 28.

¹⁷ General Assembly Papers, 1830, *Report of the Schools within the Bounds of the Presbytery of Skye*.

¹⁸ AGA, 1825, 29.

Glasgow and Stirling, had made no returns for the previous six years.¹⁹ This apparent lack of co-operation on the part of presbyteries may be attributed either to indifference or, as is more likely, to the time taken up with other more controversial issues, such as Patronage, which faced the Church. Either way it leaves the impression that school education was still not as high on the Church's agenda as might have been expected.

By 1834 the situation had improved to the extent that all but thirteen presbyteries had submitted some kind of return. In that year the particular Assembly committee set up to collate the returns was discontinued. From then on this task was left to the Education Committee itself.

Presbytery Returns 1824-34 Examined

The returns from presbyteries preserved in the National Archives of Scotland provide an important insight into the diverse state of school education throughout the country. It would appear that presbyteries expected to have access to inspect all schools, including private schools and charity schools.²⁰ The Assembly meeting in 1828, for instance, learned that the Episcopal schools in Montrose were regularly visited, even although the magistrates had originally objected, and that "even schools at New Lanark are not only open to examination but Scriptures are daily read through the prudence and attention of the Minister of Lanark".²¹ Three years later the Assembly emphasised that as well as schools run by the SSPCK and the Gaelic School Society, and other similar institutions, "female and charity and Sunday Schools should be included" in the returns.

Of course there were times when individual teachers made things difficult for a presbytery. Somewhat in the Highland tradition of "The Men", described by A. J. Campbell as "religious leaders sprung from the peasantry, austere, rigid and often fanatical, who asserted their power over ministers and people alike",²² there were schoolmasters who fancied themselves as preachers and took to "exhorting the people" and who refused to attend public worship as would normally have been expected of them. On one occasion, for example, the Presbytery of Lewis requested

¹⁹ Ibid., 1833, 29-30. The others were Cairston, Caithness, Chanonry, Dunkeld, Forres, Inveraray, and Tain.

²⁰ Ibid., 1832, 28.

²¹ Ibid., 1828, 28.

²² Campbell, *Two Centuries of the Church of Scotland*, 242. See also David M. M. Paton, "The myth and the reality of the 'Men'", in *RSCHS*, 31 (2001).

instructions from the Education Committee on how to proceed against the "schismatical Schoolmaster" at Barvas who signed the Formula but never attended Public Worship. The report stated that this teacher, "against every remonstrance exhibits himself as a public instructor or expounder on the Sabbath Evenings to an assemblage of people in the vicinity of the Church". Another report described three teachers in the parish of Stornaway as "vile schismatics" and "disaffected persons" whose teaching of youth was only a secondary concern, while "preaching is their hobby and delight".²³

Sometimes there were problems with the examination of private schools. A report from the Presbytery of Meigle described an incident where the presbytery was told quite categorically not to come by two private schoolmasters. One of them, an Antiburgher, declared that "he did not consider himself subject to the Presbytery of Meigle either as an individual or as a teacher".²⁴

While not all presbyteries used the official printed schedules provided by the General Assembly, the information supplied was generally comparable, listing all the schools in a parish, the type of school (e.g. parochial, burgh, private, SSPCK), the number of scholars attending, the subjects taught, the religious affiliation and qualification of the schoolmaster and some brief remarks supplied by those who had visited the school. In many cases these remarks noted that religious instruction was being given and added a comment on the general standard of education like "respectably taught", "taught in a superior manner" "indifferently taught", or, as in the case of Tolbooth parish, Edinburgh, "attention is paid to the Religious Instruction of the children but not to the extent that is desirable".²⁵ Sometimes there were explanatory comments on a local situation such as "there is a large Popish Establishment, a College, in this parish, [Maryculter] also a Popish Chapel",²⁶ or, "the deficiency in regard to the number of scholars attending the different schools within the bounds of the Presbytery of Abernethy during the last year, is owing to the scarcity of fuel over the whole Country, the people not being able to secure their peats on account of the late uncommonly rainy season."²⁷ Where there was a problem presbyteries did what was within their power to find a solution. The Presbytery of Peebles, for example, found the schoolroom at Manor so small as to be

²³ GAP, 1832, Presbytery of Lewis, *Schedule Respecting the Examination of Schools*.

²⁴ GAP, 1834, Presbytery of Meigle, *Schedule Respecting the Examination of Schools*.

²⁵ GAP, 1824-24, *Report on the state of schools in the Presbytery of Edinburgh, Report on Schools in the Parish of Greyfriars*.

²⁶ GAP, 1830, Presbytery of Aberdeen, *Schedule Respecting the Examination of Schools*.

²⁷ GAP, 1830, Presbytery of Abernethy.

completely inadequate and "highly detrimental to the comfort and health both of the Teacher and Children" and put pressure on the heritors to provide better accommodation. They agreed to carry out the necessary work the following year.²⁸

Presbyteries were also looking for good academic qualifications in teachers. Regarding the appointment of a schoolmaster to Kirknewton and East Calder in 1826, Edinburgh Presbytery noted in its minutes:

Mr Gairdner was examined on the following branches, required to be taught in the Parish School of the united Parishes of Kirknewton and East Calder, viz., English Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Practical Geometry, Geography, Latin, and French.²⁹

The Presbytery of Perth in making an appointment of a schoolmaster at Dunbarney examined him "on the various branches of education required to be taught in that Parish", namely English reading and grammar, handwriting, arithmetic, practical mathematics, Latin and Greek.³⁰

Perhaps most noticeable in the Presbyterian Returns was the number and variety of private schools throughout the country. As the demand for education had increased and the existing parochial and burgh schools had proved insufficient, private enterprise had filled the gaps. Stewart Mechie has claimed that " by the end of the Napoleonic wars twice as many children in Scotland were receiving some kind of education in private schools as in the parochial schools" and that by 1850 there were at least nine or ten types of schools in Scotland.³¹ This situation was certainly borne out by the Presbyterian Returns which showed a confusing diversity of provision both in the curriculum offered and in the qualifications of the teachers who delivered it. The extensive variety of small private schools, often existing in close proximity, is seen in the way they were designated in the returns by street names or by the name of the schoolmaster. The High Church Parish in Edinburgh, for example, listed three private day schools in Carrubber's Close, an SSPCK school in Warriston's Close, and a school in Anchor Close established and supported by a Mrs Douglas of Cavers. There was a school in the Castle established by the Government for children with army connections and at Cramond there was a Female School supported by Lady Rosebery chiefly for children on Lord Rosebery's estate.³²

²⁸ NAS CH2, Presbytery of Peebles, April 1826.

²⁹ NAS CH2, Presbytery of Edinburgh 1822-1833.

³⁰ NAS CH2, Presbytery of Perth, June 1829.

³¹ Mechie, *The Church and Scottish Social Development*, 138 and 147.

³² GAP, 1824-25, *Report on the state of schools in the Presbytery of Edinburgh*.

While in the towns the Parochial and Burgh schools offered a fairly comprehensive curriculum often including Latin and sometimes Greek and French,³³ it would appear that in the rural areas and in private schools in particular, the curriculum was usually very basic, covering little more than reading, writing and counting. Such "Adventure" schools were sometimes taught by totally incompetent people – "boys and aged females, a retired soldier, a fisherman, an innkeeper".³⁴ There were, however, a number of fascinating exceptions. In the small parochial school at Lochalsh with 98 pupils, Greek and Latin were taught,³⁵ and in a private school in Keith an Episcopalian minister taught French and Hebrew.³⁶ In the parish school at Lochmaben subjects taught included English, Latin, Greek, French, writing, arithmetic, navigation, mathematics and geography. In the small rural town of Applegarth in the same presbytery the curriculum included Greek, Latin and French.³⁷ It is evident that the curriculum, whether in parochial schools or in private schools, depended almost entirely on the academic ability of the schoolmaster. As far as parochial schools were concerned, James Scotland has claimed that "... men of some educational background were to be found in most parishes. In 1827, when nine hundred and six parishes had schools, over four hundred had masters who had enjoyed a four-year university course, and only two hundred and fifty had a dominie with no college education".³⁸ Nor should the curriculum taught in many Assembly schools in rural areas be overlooked. In the Assembly school at Barvas in the Presbytery of Lewis, the scholars were taught Gaelic, English, writing, arithmetic, mathematics, Latin and Greek³⁹ while in Dunoon the Assembly school was recorded

³³ GAP, 1830, Presbytery of Ayr, *Report Concerning Schools*. Ayr Academy curriculum covered Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Geography, Languages Ancient and Modern, Writing, Drawing and English Grammar and Composition. (GAP, 1835, *Report on schools*)

³⁴ *Circular of the Glasgow Educational Society* (n.p., 1834?)

³⁵ GAP, 1832, Presbytery of Lochcarron, *Schedule Respecting the Examination of Schools*. The Assembly school taught only Gaelic, English, Writing and Arithmetic.

³⁶ GAP, 1830, Presbytery of Strathbogie, *Schedule Respecting the Examination of Schools*.

³⁷ GAP, 1828, Presbytery of Lochmaben, *Reports on schools*. In his *Journal* (5 October 1834), Henry Cockburn bemoaned the fact that in schools Latin and Greek were being neglected and that the "tide is setting strongly against classical education". *Journal of Henry Cockburn 1831 - 1854*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas 1874), 69-70. This does not seem to be substantiated by the Presbyterial returns. There is plenty of evidence of Latin and Greek being available, particularly at academies and parochial schools. What is difficult to determine is the number who actually took advantage of this. For example, from the Education Committee Report to the General Assembly in 1834 it appears that Latin was taught at 29 out of the 86 Assembly schools, but only to 89 pupils.

³⁸ Scotland, *The History of Scottish Education*, vol.1, 191.

³⁹ GAP, 1830, Presbytery of Lewis, *Schedule Respecting the Examination of Schools*.

as teaching, English, Latin, Greek, French, Gaelic, writing, arithmetic, navigation, book-keeping and geography.⁴⁰

The records show that in most parochial schools the schoolmasters were members of the Established Church and were "qualified to Government", that is, they had signed the Church's Confession of Faith (the "Formula") and taken the oath of allegiance to the Government. In most private schools, on the other hand, the returns show that teachers were not qualified in this way and belonged to a variety of religious persuasions.⁴¹ The return of the Presbytery of Edinburgh in 1830 described teachers in private and society schools in the parish of North Leith as belonging to the Established Church, the Secession Church, the Auld Licht Antiburghers, the Roman Catholic Church and the Baptist Church.⁴² In some cases teachers were Church of Scotland probationers.⁴³ Strangely enough when the Education Committee was employing teachers in its own schools it would appear that it did not make being "qualified to government" a condition of employment. In 1834 the Assembly were informed that "a great number of the teachers of the schools in the Church (fully one half) are stated in the reports as not having qualified to government."⁴⁴

The fact that not all presbyteries submitted completed returns should not be taken as conclusive evidence that there were no schools visited in these districts. Visits may well have been carried out by individual ministers and just not recorded by the presbytery clerk. The usefulness of presbytery returns should not be underestimated: not only did they provide information for the Education Committee, they continued to keep the Church's right to visit and inspect schools in the public eye at a time when some would have liked to see the Established Church's statutory powers diminished.

The First Assembly Schools

In June 1825 the main Education Committee, comprising over forty members, appointed an "Acting Sub-Committee" of eight (four ministers and four elders) as an

⁴⁰ GAP, 1830, Presbytery of Dunoon, *Report of Schools*.

⁴¹ AGA, 1828, 27: "... in many Presbyteries a number of the teachers have not yet qualified to Government ..." Also AGA, 1830, 33, "... in the towns of Paisley and Greenock, out of fifty-nine schools in the former of these towns, forty-five of the teachers have not qualified to government, and out of thirty-four schools in the latter, twenty-nine of the teachers are in the same state."

⁴² GAP, 1830, *Report on schools in the Presbytery of Edinburgh*.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Report on schools from the Presbytery of Aberdeen.

⁴⁴ AGA, 1834, 38.

administrative executive, making day-to-day decisions and producing reports which then went to the main committee. George Baird acted as Convener and John Gordon as Secretary of this sub-committee which, with men like Dr. Andrew Thomson and Dr. John Lee as members, represented both the Moderate and Evangelical parties.⁴⁵ Baird informed the Assembly that in carrying out their remit they had the backing of the heritors in the Highlands and Islands who were "prepared to give continued and permanent proof of that willingness which they have already evinced, to make every requisite exertion for accomplishing the great object in view".⁴⁶ The sub-committee first met in June 1825 and in May 1826 the main committee submitted its first report to the General Assembly under four headings: Funds, Schools, Schoolmasters, and School-Books.⁴⁷

Raising enough money to start the work was obviously the primary concern. In a pamphlet published in 1819 Thomas Chalmers had examined alternative means of funding school education and had reached the conclusion that he favoured a system where education was partly endowed and partly paid for from fees.⁴⁸ It was this system that the committee also decided to adopt and it incorporated into the *Regulations to be followed by Teachers in conducting their Schools*, a paragraph stating that a teacher "shall be entitled to demand fees from the scholars, in all cases in which the Minister and Kirk-session do not certify that they are unable to pay them".⁴⁹ As a first step towards raising the necessary funding the committee produced 15,000 copies of a statement explaining the deplorable want of schools and catechists in the Highlands and Islands. Several copies were sent to every minister for distribution in his parish with a reminder that collections should be made and annual subscriptions encouraged in aid of the committee's work. "It was thought," the committee observed, "that the public throughout the whole country might obtain in this way complete and authenticated information as to the existing evils, and that they might thereby have their sympathy awakened for their suffering brethren."⁵⁰ As

⁴⁵ Andrew Thomson had set up a school in Young Street in Edinburgh in 1824. "In 1834 this school had a master, an assistant, and seven monitors; the master was paid £84 a year, the assistant £32, and the monitors 'according to efficiency'". Andrew Law, *Edinburgh Schools of the Nineteenth Century* (no place of publication, 1995), 14.

⁴⁶ Baird, *Statement as to the want of Schools and Catechists*, 7.

⁴⁷ *ECR*, 1826, 8 ff.

⁴⁸ Thomas Chalmers, *Considerations on the system of parochial towns in Scotland and the advantage of establishing them in large towns* (Glasgow: James Hedderwick, 1819).

⁴⁹ *Abstract of the Report of the Education Committee* submitted to the General Assembly May 1827, 28.

⁵⁰ *ECR*, 1826, 5.

a result of this appeal 420 parishes sent up contributions which, together with other donations and subscriptions, raised a total income for the committee of £5,488, "notwithstanding the non-residence of Heritors in many parishes, and notwithstanding that, in many districts, parochial collections had recently been made for Societies having similar objects as well as for various benevolent purposes".⁵¹

Next the committee had to put its mind to deciding where and how to begin spending this money. It reached the decision that in the first instance it would limit itself to locating places before interviewing and appointing teachers so yet another questionnaire was dispatched this time to more than 200 ministers who had made special requests for schools in their returns to the 1824 inquiry. Instead of confining this latest survey to ministers in the Highlands and Islands the committee made a point of sending it out to every parish in Scotland where applications for schools had been made in order to identify those places of greatest need, "in so far as this could be done consistently with obtaining the accommodations required". In addition the committee "took the liberty of corresponding with a number of proprietors in the parishes concerned, whose countenance and co-operation were indispensable to give effect to the measures contemplated".⁵² This step seems to have paid off for in November 1825 the committee was able to take up an offer of accommodation provided by the Society for British Fisheries and open its first school at Ullapool.⁵³ So active and diligent was the committee in pursuing its ends that by the time the General Assembly met in 1826 it was able to report on forty-one locations where schools had been opened or where there were plans for building.

Recognising that school education in Scotland at this time presented a bewildering scene with wide variations in what pupils might be offered, it was important that early on the committee should set out guidelines and regulations. In 1826 the committee brought to the General Assembly "the principles and rules which they have judged it proper to adopt in reference to stations for schools to be established".⁵⁴ Right from the outset the committee made it clear that in its choice of location it would adopt the same principle as the SSPCK had embraced some eighty years earlier, namely that it had no intention of relieving heritors of their statutory duties and would therefore not set up a new school in any parish where there was not already a parochial school. At the same time any new school would be located far

⁵¹ Ibid., 5-6.

⁵² Ibid., 9.

⁵³ Ibid., 9-10.

⁵⁴ These are reproduced in full at the end of this chapter as APPENDIX I.

enough away from the parochial school so as not to be in competition with it. There would need to be a sufficient number of school-age children to justify the new school building and to provide the necessary income from fees for the schoolmaster.

In spite of low salaries and poor conditions, there was no shortage of applicants for schoolmasters' posts. In the nine months following the first advertisement 130 applications were received. Those applying had to produce certification of their moral character and religious affiliation, their teaching experience and their ability. They also had to undergo the committee's own examination "with a view to ascertaining their fitness".⁵⁵

It would appear that by 1828 two types of schools had emerged. Both were to be examined by Presbyteries as "equally under the charge of the Church and under the same rules of ecclesiastical jurisdiction and government",⁵⁶ but were distinguished by the subjects taught and by the ability of the schoolmasters. Having conducted a tour of inspection of the schools in operation by that time, the convener and secretary reported back to the committee in the following terms:

The Assembly Schools in the Highlands are of two descriptions which the Committee have, from the beginning, had in view. At the first are taught the common branches of reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, and book-keeping: in addition to these Latin, mathematics and navigation are taught at the other. ... These different sorts of schools appear to us to have been properly allotted to the districts in which they were placed. ... We could not avoid remarking the superior manner in which even the common branches were taught at the second or higher class of schools.⁵⁷

From this it may be concluded that the curriculum followed in some schools was fairly basic, probably only a little wider than that taught in Adventure schools. In others it compared favourably with many burgh schools. The aim was to teach the majority of pupils to read (mainly in English but also in Gaelic where appropriate), to write and to count, but in the higher or more advanced category of Assembly schools able and interested pupils were given the opportunity to study subjects such as geography, mathematics, and Latin. In 1828, however, the committee reported that out of 5,670 pupils attending Assembly schools only 63 took Latin, 21 took practical mathematics (mensuration) and 16 geography.⁵⁸ This would remain more or

⁵⁵ ECR, 1826, 13-14.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 8.

⁵⁷ *Report as to the Highlands and Islands Schools by the Very Rev. Principal Baird Convener of the Assembly's Education Committee, and Mr Gordon Secretary* (1828), 2.

⁵⁸ ECR, 1828, 5.

less the pattern over the next six years although numbers taking any one subject (apart from English and Gaelic) fluctuated so much from year to year that trends are difficult to identify and, as with parochial schools, there were always a few doing some subject out of the ordinary. The following year (1829) for example, teachers in the 85 Assembly schools, with 6,486 scholars, returned figures showing 114 studying Latin, 57 taking geography, 6 taking French, 76 taking practical mathematics, 1 taking practical astronomy, 2 taking algebra and 1 taking Greek.

Since, at least to begin with, most schools were in the Highlands and Islands, the committee had to decide how much teaching was to be in Gaelic and how much in English. As a working compromise the committee printed sets of school-books in both languages but noted that it expected the English language to be "more or less taught in all schools". School-books had to be bought by the scholars and, to encourage reading, plans were made to organise itinerating libraries in some places.⁵⁹

The committee was anxious that its endeavours should be closely monitored. In the summer months of 1827 and again in 1828 the convener and secretary travelled hundreds of miles visiting and inspecting schools in the Highlands and Islands, paying particular attention to the needs of the Gaelic population and to the appropriateness of the education provided for females.⁶⁰ It was felt that the personal interest demonstrated by this kind of visit convinced "heritors and others of the good management and stability of the scheme", and encouraged them to come up with more funding for the committee's work.⁶¹ The possibility of appointing a full-time inspector of schools was explored in 1829 but it was agreed that this job was best left to the convener and to deputations from the committee.⁶²

Appointing Schoolmasters

Apart from the funding needed to build schools and supply materials, the Education Committee faced the difficulty of employing schoolmasters at a time when, as we have seen, there was considerable discontent in that profession. The morale of

⁵⁹ *ECR*, 1826, 14-15.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 1828, 11. "It only remains to observe that the attention of the Committee has of late been turned to the importance of instructing female youth attending schools under their charge, in those peculiar branches of education which are proper to their sex and suited to the stations in life for which they are destined." The Committee's idea was to build-on premises to existing schools for this purpose. Support for such a project was promised by the formation of "An Association of Ladies" under the patronage of HRH the Duchess of Clarence.

⁶¹ *ECR*, 1828, 10.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 1829, 6 and 10.

teachers was low. Marjorie Cruickshank has given a rather moving description of their lot:

Among the parish schoolmasters there were always a number who had failed to obtain their qualifications in divinity and who remained in the schools as 'stickit ministers'. Perhaps they bore their disappointment as best they could, or they became embittered even to the extent of losing their usefulness. Indeed the isolation of their surroundings often bore heavily on many and the lack of congenial company and of access to books had a dispiriting effect on their work.⁶³

In sparsely populated areas of the Highlands and in cities like Glasgow many schoolmasters could only afford to teach part-time. An Overture Anent Schoolmasters from the Presbytery of Annan was taken up by the General Assembly of 1825. The meeting expressed the view that the welfare of schoolmasters was "intimately connected with the best interests of the National Church and with the temporal and spiritual welfare of the country" and set up a committee to watch over the progress of a Parliamentary Bill "amending the condition of the Schoolmasters".⁶⁴ In an article in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1827, Henry Cockburn, discussing the impoverished state of schoolmasters, pointed out that the arrangements for "side schools" provided for by the 1803 Act had actually made matters worse since the salary when divided between the two masters allowed each only about £33, and there was no house provided for the second teacher.⁶⁵

In 1828 the Report of the Committee on the Returns as to Schools, drew attention to the provision made in the 1803 Act that there should be a revision of the schoolmasters' salaries every twenty-five years⁶⁶ and that year salaries were raised from £16 to £25 for those on the minimum salary and from £22 to £34 for those on the maximum.⁶⁷ Six years later a committee of Scottish schoolmasters asked the Assembly to support its petition to the government for salaries to be raised by one chaldar. It was claimed that:

This rise is no more than the their circumstances require. The average salary at present is about £30 and from the Returns to Mr Kennedy's Queries made to the House of Commons in 1825, it appears that the average amount of school fees is about £25, making the present average yearly income £55, and an additional

⁶³ Marjorie Cruickshank, *A History of the Training of Teachers in Scotland* (London: University of London Press, 1970), 19.

⁶⁴ AAGA, 1825, 35 and 44.

⁶⁵ [Cockburn], "Scottish Parochial Schools", *Edinburgh Review* vol. xlvi (June 1827), 117.

⁶⁶ AGA, 1828, 27.

⁶⁷ James Kay-Shuttleworth, *Public Education* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1853), 339-340.

Chalder would make the average income, under the amendment, £72 – a sum not too much certainly for the very laborious and important duties they have to perform and barely sufficient to support them...⁶⁸

Other requests were that the school houses which were provided should have more rooms and that the required qualification for schoolmasters should include "a competent knowledge of Latin and Greek".⁶⁹

The question of salaries and housing, however, was only part of a wider discussion which also included the whole method of appointing and supervising schoolmasters and there were those who thought this should be looked at before any salary rise was awarded. At the end of May that year a letter appeared in the *Scotsman* which pointed to "the manifold and daily complaints arising from the remissness and inattention of a great proportion of the parochial schoolmasters in the discharge of their official duties", and suggested a radical reform of the method of appointing and removing them:

In order to get these just grounds of complaint obviated, let the community then come forward ... and call upon the Legislature to enact a law to the effect, that in all time coming the Parochial Schoolmasters shall be elected by the suffrages of the heads of families in the respective parishes, and be liable to be removed at the termination of every 6 or 7 years, should their services be then found not to give the requisite satisfaction ...⁷⁰

This was followed by a response in defence of schoolmasters and the system of parochial schools in Scotland but the matter could not be closed as easily. The public debate was kept alive by a motion in the House of Commons in June 1834 by J. C. Colquhoun, MP for Dunbartonshire, for a bill to regulate and enlarge the provision for parochial education in Scotland.

In November, 1834 the *Scotsman* published a lengthy article entitled "Suggestions for the Improvement of Parochial Education, and of the Condition of Schoolmasters".⁷¹ This proposed yet another new method of selecting and appointing

⁶⁸ *The Petition of the Parochial Schoolmasters of Scotland*, 1834. *Memorandum of the amendments proposed by the parochial schoolmasters of several clauses of the Act 1803*. From this it would appear that at this time a chalder was worth about £17.

⁶⁹ *The Petition of Parochial Schoolmasters*, 1834. See also [James Pillans], "National Education in England and France", *Edinburgh Review*, vol. lviii (October 1833), 15, "It is still a prevailing practice in Scotland, to require, as of old, that the candidate for a parish school shall prove himself tolerably 'perfit in Latin'; this acquirement being taken as the test of a good education, and of respectable attainments in other parts of learning. The miserable Scotch schoolmasters' act of 1803, by giving the majority of heritors the power of deciding what branches shall be taught in our parish schools, has done its best to impair this honour and advantage of our country."

⁷⁰ *Scotsman*, 28 May, 1834.

⁷¹ *Scotsman*, 12 November 1834.

schoolmasters which would involve the presbytery, the parish minister, the heritors, householders whose property was valued at £150 or more and leaseholders paying not less than £10 in rent. As a heritor, with a parish schoolhouse on his land, the writer of this article had a number of innovative ideas. With regard to schoolmasters' salaries, he suggested that school fees should be collected and paid to the schoolmaster by a committee and where the income fell short of £100 per annum the difference should be made up by a levy on "the proprietors of land and the tenantry and householders according to their real rents". He complained that the present system imposed the burden of supplying schoolhouses and salaries on individuals "who cannot possibly derive any benefit from the schools". He proposed substituting "District" divisions for parishes and placing the responsibility for schoolhouses and salaries either on the inhabitants of these "Districts" or "on the public purse". In remote areas where pupils had a long way to travel to school, he proposed adding boarding houses which would be attached to the schools. This certainly would have relieved heritors of much of their financial burden but it also represented a diminution of the presbytery's influence.⁷²

Concurrently with this debate about the competency of schoolmasters and how they should be appointed and supervised, in August 1834 the Presbytery of Glasgow received a long and detailed report from a committee which had been set up in the previous December,

to make particular enquiry within their bounds as to the actual state of the scholars in proportion to the population – the time actually, at an average, spent at schools, [and] the mode of education pursued, particularly in reference to religious and moral excellence.⁷³

This report emphasised the importance of each minister reporting annually on all schools in his parish; the need to ensure that teachers who were interviewed not only had the necessary academic qualifications, but knew how to communicate with young people; the importance of encouraging the community as well as the heritors to take an active interest in their parish schools; the requirement that religious instruction be given its proper place with daily Scripture readings by the teacher – so that the Bible "was read with marked reverence and not just in the ordinary routine of

⁷² While these ideas were not taken up at this time, they would appear again in another form in the education bills of the 1850s and in the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act.

⁷³ NAS CH2, Presbytery of Glasgow, December 1833.

learning words and syllables” and the day always beginning with prayer; and that the reasonable claims of schoolmasters for better salaries and conditions should be met.⁷⁴ This was a remarkable attempt not only to achieve a thorough implementation of the existing system of school examination, but also to ensure that teaching skills were included in the inspection.

In spite of the uncertainties and hardships experienced by the teaching profession, the committee had no difficulties recruiting schoolmasters with the necessary dedication and qualifications for its new schools. In fact it seemed always to have more suitable applicants than it could employ, as this extract from the 1834 Report revealed:

From the setting up of the Scheme the Committee have received 460 candidates for schools; interviewed and examined 293, and found 139 qualified to take charge of schools of the first or second class; the most select of those whose qualifications were thus ascertained now form the teachers of this Establishment.⁷⁵

By 1834 the committee had succeeded in establishing some eighty-six schools providing an education for 6610 scholars in some of the remotest areas of the Highlands. It was clear, however, that the scheme did not have the whole hearted support of the Church. This may have been due to the many other commitments of Church members but it is also possible that some in Lowland Scotland bore a grudge against the Highlanders whom they still associated with Jacobite and Episcopalian sympathies.

Aims and Motivation

Reference has been made in the first chapter to the Church's historical involvement in school education and the extent of that involvement in the latter part of the eighteenth century and up until 1824, was examined. The decision of the Assembly in 1824, however, was the first time the Church of Scotland had actually taken steps to establish its own schools⁷⁶ and it is important to consider the Church's motives and aims in pursuing such an undertaking.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, August 1834.

⁷⁵ *ECR*, 1834, 9-10.

⁷⁶ See, however, Chapter 1, Appendix I, which describes the Assembly's abortive attempt to establish its own schools in 1704. Reference is made to this in the 1828 Education Committee's Report, 23.

Looking at the topics frequently mentioned in presbytery reports it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that much of the work was motivated by the desire to give people a basic education so that they would be equipped to read and so be helped to understand the Bible. Time and again when the Education Committee reviewed its progress, its great regret was always the number who were still unable to read.⁷⁷ Further the very title first given to the committee made it clear that its remit was "increasing the means of Education *and Religious Instruction* throughout Scotland ...", and presbyteries were specifically asked to report on the quality of the religious instruction being given in schools. It was, for example, with great satisfaction that the committee was able to report to the General Assembly in 1828 that the Scriptures were being read daily at Robert Owen's school at New Lanark. Reporting in 1832 the Education Committee felt able to claim that, thanks to the superintendence of presbyteries and the testing of teachers' religious knowledge on appointment, religious instruction was the best taught subject in most schools: – "It may be truly stated that in their whole complexion they might easily and speedily be distinguished as seminaries of religion".⁷⁸ In 1832 the committee which dealt with the returns from presbyteries recommended that these should include a formal statement on the daily use of "the Church Catechism, along with the Bible" in parochial schools.⁷⁹ The Presbytery of Kirkcaldy had already adopted this approach. In 1830 it agreed to recommend "to each parochial Teacher within their bounds that his school be opened or closed every day with prayer and that he cause a portion of the Scriptures to be read every day by some of the children in his school ... who are sufficiently advanced in their education to read them".⁸⁰ At this time many in the Church were outspoken in their condemnation of the Government's approach to the way religious instruction and the use of the Bible were to be dealt with in the system of National Education in Ireland and there were moves to ensure that the same thing did not happen in Scottish schools. The issue was debated in the General Assembly in 1833⁸¹

⁷⁷ AAGA, 1833, 50: The Assembly "learn with regret that ... the number of persons of all ages still untaught to read is found to exceed in a great degree every previous calculation".

⁷⁸ ECR, 1832, 20.

⁷⁹ *Report of the Committee appointed by the Assembly for Classing Returns as to Schools*, 1832, 30.

⁸⁰ NAS CH2, Presbytery of Kirkcaldy, 1830.

⁸¹ AAGA, 1833, 41-2. The Assembly agreed to petition both Houses of Parliament, "that no countenance of the Government of this realm ought to be bestowed on any system of National Education, of which instruction in the Holy Scripture does not form an essential part [and] that they have observed with much regret and disappointment, that a system of National Education is still maintained in Ireland, in which no adequate provision is made for the daily reading of the entire word of God, in the authorised version, without note or comment". Henry Cockburn's comment was, "the Assembly has disgraced itself by an outrageous vote against Irish education. Its first resolution

and in 1834 the Education Committee reminded the Assembly that "secular education does not appear to have been always considered as sufficient for the whole work of education ...but needs to be accompanied with instruction which embraces religion as its most essential part".⁸² The Assembly insisted that in its own schools the school day should be opened and closed with prayer and the Scriptures should be "read daily as a school book". The Mother's Catechism⁸³ and the Shorter Catechism were to be taught and school books compiled by Andrew Thomson were to be used for teaching Psalms, Paraphrases and passages of Scripture.⁸⁴ The Church also placed importance on Sabbath schools. In the opinion of the Education Committee "these Sabbath evening meetings can be viewed in no other light than as a continuation or variety of the daily schools⁸⁵ and in its report to the Assembly in 1834 the committee went as far as describing Sabbath schools as "important auxiliaries" to day schools, particularly as they offered opportunities for religious instruction to those in Highland areas who lived far from any place of public worship.⁸⁶

It would be wrong, however, to conclude from such statements that the advancement of religious belief or the desire to recruit church members were the only aims, or even the primary aims, of the committee. There was a hunger for education generally and the Education Committee's efforts were always directed at satisfying that hunger particularly in those areas of the country where the need was not being met: – "They were planted chiefly for the benefit of the young in localities where the poverty of the people will probably be as enduring as the qualities of their soil".⁸⁷ The returns from presbyteries were careful to list the various subjects taught in addition to reading and religious instruction, and the development of the two levels of instruction with the higher offering a more advanced curriculum was an indication that the aim of the Committee was to provide a secular education comparable with what was available in other schools. This argument is supported by the emphasis put on teacher training over the years.

implied that no class of our varied population should get education at the public expense at all, unless they took it along with instruction in the Protestant religion. This was carried by a great majority, made up of a union of religious with political bigotry". (Cockburn, *Journal*, Vol. I (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1874), p.45.

⁸² *ECR*, 1834, 15.

⁸³ This was a catechism produced to explain the meaning of the Shorter Catechism. It was the work of the Rev. John Willison (1680-1750) and published in Edinburgh in 1731.

⁸⁴ *ECR*, 1832, 5-6.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 1831, 6-7.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 1834, 12.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 1833, 8.

Perhaps the approach of the Education Committee reflected the two traditional strands which ran through Scottish education. On the one hand there were those who saw the purpose of education as not only providing a "godly upbringing", but also as equipping the youth to earn a livelihood and as a benefit to the nation. Here the emphasis was on the academic as much as the spiritual. Beyond the elementary stage young people, "if they be found apt to learning and letters ... must be charged to continue their studie, so that the Commonwealth may have some comfort by them".⁸⁸ On the other hand there were many who were inclined to regard education more as a tool to influence and shape the moral and social behaviour of the nation. Importance was placed on the moral character of the schoolmasters and the requirement that they should be "qualified to Government". In December 1834 *The Church of Scotland Magazine* published the speech of the Rev. Robert Buchanan, minister of the Tron Church in Glasgow, which, while it supported improvements in educational methods, maintained that:

To secure an efficient Scriptural Education, it is not enough that the Scriptures be introduced in an unmutilated form into Schools, but that the Teachers be themselves men 'sound in the faith,' and able to commend right principles to the understandings and hearts of the young.⁸⁹

By the mid-1830's there were a number of influential voices, like that of George Lewis, who sought to draw attention to the importance of concepts like "patriotism and piety" and who believed that "wisdom and knowledge and righteousness" went hand in hand.⁹⁰ "If the nation will not pay for the schoolmaster to prevent crime," wrote Lewis, "it must pay tenfold for the repression of social disorder and for coercing an unhappy, dissolute and reckless population."⁹¹

In his chapter looking at "The Scottish Church and Education" the Church historian Stewart Mechie had this to say:

Fear of revolutionary outbreaks like the French Revolution was widespread till the middle of the [19th] century, and it was commonly held that the great antidote was a Bible education. Thus, the aim of education, as far as the town masses at any rate were concerned, was rather moral discipline than the mere training of the mind. Education must involve the production of a good citizen and the only education capable of doing that was an education in which the Bible predominated.⁹²

⁸⁸ *The First Book of Discipline*, ed. Cameron, 132.

⁸⁹ *The Church of Scotland Magazine*, December, 1834, No. X, Vol. I, 377.

⁹⁰ George Lewis, *Scotland a Half-Educated Nation*, 75.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 43-4.

⁹² Mechie, *The Church and Scottish Social Development*, 145.

On the whole, however, it would appear that in its schools the Assembly attempted to achieve a balance between these two strands. Its aim was to improve the standards and the scope of school education *per se*, as much as to improve the moral conduct of the population. Where the academic emphasis appeared to be less prominent was in those places where the general ignorance of the population was so widespread (or in the case of Gaelic speaking districts where so few people could read and write in English) that schooling had to begin at the most basic level. We shall see that by the 1850's the Church was anxious to provide a secular education which would prepare young people for life and equip them with the necessary skills.

Other Matters on the Kirk's Agenda

When, in 1824, Baird requested Edinburgh Presbytery to transmit his overture with approval, he was fully aware that some of its members had other priorities in mind. In his speech he conceded that:

There were many good men who thought it their duty to support missions for the spread of the gospel in distant lands, and in that they had his most cordial support. But he was still of opinion, that it was our first duty to teach our fellow-citizens at home the truths of the gospel, which could be done in no other way as effectually as by teaching them to read the sacred volume.⁹³

While the terms of Baird's overture had eventually been approved by the Presbytery of Edinburgh, during the actual debate members of both the Moderate and Evangelical wings of the Church tried to undermine his argument. The Evangelical Andrew Thomson declared that while he was fully aware of the seriousness of the situation, he thought the facts were being overstated and he pointed to all that had been achieved by the Scottish Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge and by the Gaelic Society, in establishing schools since 1818.⁹⁴ In the same vein the Moderate John Inglis questioned the wisdom of making yet another appeal to the Church for money and reminded the presbytery that there already was an Assembly committee looking at "the state of religion" in the cities and towns which had recommended that a school supported by Government grants should be established in every parish.⁹⁵

⁹³ *Scotsman*, 3 April 1824.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

While it is true that there was general support for Baird's overture in the General Assembly, the comments of Inglis and Thomson should not be overlooked. They represented a hesitancy which would manifest itself over the next few years in the failure of the Church at large to provide the substantial funding needed for such an enterprise. In spite of regular appeals to the generosity of congregations, by 1832 the committee's funds showed a deficit of some £510 19 2d and regret was expressed then that there could be no further extension of the work until matters improved. That same year the committee reported that throughout the country "224 parishes have never made any contribution by special collections and only 179 have contributed for a second time".⁹⁶ That meant that less than one fifth of the parishes in Scotland had contributed more than once over the seven years since the work had started. Perhaps, as Inglis indicated, there was a general feeling that, despite the statistics which Baird had produced, existing legislation for setting up schools was adequate and it was up to the heritors to carry out what the law required of them. If this were the case, it would support the argument set out in Chapter One regarding the indifferent attitude towards school education which some ministers and Church courts sometimes adopted. What appeared to be disinterest when it came to visiting and examining schools, may have been rather, a resigned acceptance that there was not a lot they could do to improve matters given the statutory power and responsibilities of the heritors and the government.

As far as the members of congregations were concerned, the poor support may have been due not to a lack of interest in schools but rather to the fact that there were so many other appeals being made for new and ongoing charitable work. Over and above such local one-off collections as a "collection for distressed weavers in Rutherglen"⁹⁷, the minutes of the Presbytery of Glasgow show that congregations within the bounds could be expected to contribute, often annually, to a number of good causes, – including promoting education and religious instruction in the East Indies, the Glasgow Missionary Society, the Royal Infirmary, the Glasgow Bible Society, the British and Foreign Bible Society, and to the Glasgow Society for Promoting the Religious Interests of Scottish Settlers in British North America.⁹⁸ On the same day as the Education Committee had been appointed, the Assembly also appointed a committee to consider ways of propagating the Gospel in India. It is

⁹⁶ *ECR*, 1832, 11-12.

⁹⁷ *NAS CH2*, Presbytery of Glasgow, May 1829.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

rather ironic that the man who was reluctant to ask the Church for money for education, John Inglis, was the person who put forward this proposal in the Assembly. Later he would become the first convener of the committee responsible for the management of the mission to India.⁹⁹

From the start the Assembly were aware that there might be a clash of interests and the following year the question of which committee should have prior claim to congregational collections was debated in the Assembly. The *Scotsman*, reporting on this debate, noted that there was "a protracted discussion as to which object was to have preference", and "after a conversation of some length, it was agreed that Presbyteries be directed to order collections to be made for each of the objects at all churches and chapels within their bounds".¹⁰⁰ By 1833 the committee for the Propagation of the Gospel in India had also run into financial difficulties. In an article contributed to the *Scotsman*, Inglis wrote, "we are aware that the demands on your charity are both strong and frequent ... we must not conceal from you that our receipts for the last year have fallen far short of the requisite amount".¹⁰¹ A recognition of the importance of these two committees and the financial demands their work imposed on congregations was articulated in a debate which took place in Brechin Presbytery the following year. In 1834 that presbytery noted the shortfall in the mission to India funds and agreed to overture the Assembly to encourage Presbyteries and congregations to form associations to "inform the people what the Church is doing for the propagation of the Gospel" in order to promote support for missionary efforts at home and abroad.¹⁰² Soon several Presbyteries were attempting to form such associations.¹⁰³

Another call on a congregation's charity was the development of what would now be called "Home Mission" or "National Mission" work, much of it inspired by Thomas Chalmers's efforts to revive the parish ministry. Evidence of this new interest was the founding of the Glasgow City Mission in 1826 and the Edinburgh City Mission in 1832. Such missionary ventures to serve the urban poor were also a drain on the resources of congregations. Further it has to be remembered that the running costs of the "chapels-of-ease", built to cope with the needs of the growing

⁹⁹ The first foreign missionary of the Church of Scotland, Dr. Alexander Duff, sailed for India in 1829.

¹⁰⁰ *Scotsman*, 1 June 1825.

¹⁰¹ *Scotsman*, 20 March 1833.

¹⁰² *A Statement Drawn up by A Committee of the Presbytery of Brechin in reference to the General Assembly's Highland Schools and India Mission* (Montrose, 1834).

¹⁰³ See page 98.

city parishes, and of the new "government churches" (also called "Parliamentary Churches") in the Highlands and Islands, all had to be met very largely from local collections.¹⁰⁴ Investment in church extension was encouraged by the passing of the Chapels Act (*Declaratory Enactment as to Chapels of Ease*) by the Assembly in May, 1834. This gave chapels-of-ease their own territorial parishes with the same ecclesiastical constitutional rights as established parish churches. (*The Declaratory Enactment as to Parliamentary Churches* passed the previous year had done the same for the "government churches".) Incidentally, since the majority of ministers in the Parliamentary Churches and the Chapels of Ease belonged to the Evangelical party, these two Acts gave that group control of the Assembly for the first time since the 1750s.

Even more likely to affect collections for the work of the Education Committee was the fact that there was a variety of charities involved in school education of one kind or another all appealing to church members for subscriptions. An established society like the Edinburgh Gratis School Society, which set up sabbath schools, depended on the financial gifts of its friends and supporters, as did the lesser known Edinburgh Society for Promoting the Education for the Poor in Ireland.¹⁰⁵ The SSPCK, which had pioneered the building of charity schools and was probably the largest provider, was now finding itself in financial difficulties. In a pamphlet published in 1825, the Society pointed out that it had maintained some three hundred schools from 1800 until the last few years, when it had had to cut back on its work. It further explained that "after every retrenchment which they conceived it either practicable or justifiable to make, [the scheme] at present exceeds the real and calculated revenue upwards of £800." The pamphlet closed with these rather cautious words of hope:

The Society cannot, indeed, permit themselves to think, that, in an age like the present, so distinguished for liberality both of spirit and of contribution, the Public will turn a deaf ear to the appeal that is now made to them.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ See S. J. Brown, *Thomas Chalmers* 212-13: "In 1824, Parliament finally approved a grant of £50,000 for building churches in the Highlands and Islands, and by 1834, forty-three "government churches" had been built in these regions. Between 1790 and 1834 ... sixty six chapels had been erected by private contributions."

¹⁰⁵ *Scotsman*, 27 April 1825.

¹⁰⁶ *A short Account of the Object, Progress, and Exertions of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge* (Society-Hall, Edinburgh, March 1825), 2-7.

On the other hand the Gaelic School Society, which was responsible for about eighty-three schools in the Highlands, could report at a meeting held in Edinburgh in 1825 that the Society's funds had greatly improved over the last year.¹⁰⁷ There was also further public and private investment in schools at this time. Morningside school in Edinburgh (which still exists in Morningside Road and is now used as an Evangelical Church) was founded in 1823 by four local landowners who sold subscription shares of £10 to prominent people in the district.¹⁰⁸ In his *Memorials* Henry Cockburn described how he had initiated the fund-raising for Edinburgh Academy: "the sum of £10,000 was subscribed immediately; and afterwards about £2,000 more. We were fiercely opposed by the Town-Council, as we expected ...but after due discussion and plotting, our contributors finally resolved to proceed ..."109 The Academy was opened on 1 October 1824. In 1831 the trustees of Dr. Andrew Bell gifted £10,000 for the endowment of a school in Leith.¹¹⁰ It is evident, therefore, that with all these financial requests being made to church members and the public, the Education Committee was facing an uphill task in appealing for funds for the setting up its new schools and perhaps the romantic appeal of missionary work, whether at home or abroad, was likely to have been stronger than that of education.

While it may not be possible to gauge the extent of the impact which matters such as patronage, the development of missionary work, church extension and the growth of private schools, had on the work of the Education Committee, they certainly must have diverted much of the interest and financial resources of Church members from what was, at least in the view of the Education Committee, an urgent cause which affected the welfare of the whole nation.

Other Relevant Current Political and Educational Issues

Describing the social unrest in the 1830's the historian Andrew Campbell had this to say:

In Great Britain there was no Revolution of the Continental type. But the severe social distress of the period bred a mass of discontent ... many streams of agitation at last united to produce the formidable Chartist movement. ... Above all, there was the immense political ferment, which led to rapid changes of government, and which at last bore fruit in the Reform Bill of 1832. Every national institution was shaken by the tempest. The Voluntary Controversy in

¹⁰⁷ *Scotsman*, 2 February 1825.

¹⁰⁸ Law, *Edinburgh Schools*, 15.

¹⁰⁹ Henry Cockburn, *Memorials of His Time* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 389.

¹¹⁰ Law, *Edinburgh Schools*, 40.

Scotland was one of the many movements in which the spirit of the times found expression ...¹¹¹

The Education Committee's endeavours must be viewed in the context of this climate of unrest and social change. Many of the problems for the committee, and for the Church as a whole, stemmed from the rapidly growing population and its re-distribution. The population increased by eighty-eight percent between the 1750's and 1831.¹¹² Smout calculated that the rate of growth between 1811 and 1821 has never been equalled in Scottish history and that by 1820 "almost half the Scots occupied the central belt where only thirty-seven per cent had lived before".¹¹³ For the Church the growth of the new industrial towns posed a number of challenges. There was, for example, the pressing matter of church accommodation – the building of new churches and the creation of new parishes and endowments for these. In April 1824 the Presbytery of Glasgow calculated that while in Glasgow there ought to be church accommodation for 61,000, the actual accommodation, including chapels of ease about to be built, was only 27,000.¹¹⁴ The General Assembly's response to this problem was to appoint an Accommodation Committee in 1828 to seek Government financial support for the building of new churches.¹¹⁵

For the Education Committee the shifting and growing population was a reminder that its remit was to increase the means of education not only in the Highlands and Islands but "in the large and populous cities and towns". There the number on low wages or unemployed meant that there was little hope of families being able to afford private education for their children. This state of affairs was clearly illustrated by J. C. Colquhoun, MP, in a speech to the House of Commons in 1834 when, referring to school education throughout the whole of Scotland and in particular in the towns, he calculated that in Glasgow out of its estimated school-age population only one fourteenth actually attended a school, in Dundee it was one fifteenth, in Old Aberdeen one twenty-fifth, and in Paisley one twentieth. He pointed out how badly the situation had deteriorated over the last thirty years in a town such as Paisley. He recalled that "thirty years ago there was not a family [in Paisley] who could not read the Bible – all above nine could read or were at school whereas now there [were] on average 3000 families whose children [were] growing up wholly untaught."¹¹⁶ It was

¹¹¹ Campbell, *Two Centuries*, 207-8.

¹¹² Devine, *The Scottish Nation*, 252.

¹¹³ T.C. Smout, *A Century of the Scottish People 1830-1950* (London: Fontana Press, 1997), 241.

¹¹⁴ *Scotsman*, 17 April 1824.

¹¹⁵ AAGA, 1828, 36.

¹¹⁶ *Circular of the Glasgow Educational Society* (n.p., 1834?)

claims like these which must have provoked George Lewis to describe Scotland as a half-educated nation.

Social deprivation in the expanding industrial towns raised the question of how the needs of the poor could be met. Within the Church there was an upsurge of evangelicalism which regarded education as an important tool in combating some of the social and moral evils of the time.¹¹⁷ Men like Chalmers and Stow saw the establishment of schools as a necessary adjunct to the struggle with poverty and hardship. Defending Thomas Chalmers and his ideal of a godly commonwealth, the new *Scottish Guardian* newspaper, first published in 1832 under the editorship of George Lewis, claimed, "he [Chalmers] has insisted in season and out of season, that the labouring population can only be saved by their own foresight and self-denial; and that the best aid Government can bestow, is to grant them the schoolmaster and the teacher of Christianity in every district".¹¹⁸ With this assertion George Baird and those who supported the cause of schools and schoolmasters, would have been in full agreement. William Hanna, Chalmers' biographer, quotes Chalmers as saying, "it is education, and that only, wherein the whole positive efficiency lies for a permanent amelioration in the state of the lower orders."¹¹⁹ In this respect David Stow and those who helped him establish the Glasgow Infant School Society and later the Glasgow Educational Society, appreciated the importance of the system of parochial schools "founded as it is on the word of God, and providing as it does, through its connection with the National Church, that Teachers shall hold and inculcate upon the youth of the country the good doctrines of the Christian faith".¹²⁰ The Rules and Regulations of the Infant School Society stated that "Infant Schools are intended for the reception of Children, from the age of Two till that of Six years, with the view of imbuing their opening minds with the knowledge of religious truth – of training them up in the habits of obedience and good order – and of giving them such elementary instruction, as may prepare them for entering with advantage into Parochial and other Schools".¹²¹ Apart from the difference in the age groups catered for, the aims of David Stow and those of George Baird and the Education Committee were very

¹¹⁷ There was, for example, a dramatic increase in alcohol consumption. The temperance movement saw drink as a fundamental cause of crime and degradation. See Devine, *The Scottish Nation*, 350-4.

¹¹⁸ *Scottish Guardian*, 1 February 1833.

¹¹⁹ William Hanna, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers*, IV vols. (Edinburgh: Sutherland and Knox, 1851), vol. III, 305.

¹²⁰ *Resolutions moved at the annual meeting of the Glasgow Educational Society*, 1834.

¹²¹ *The First Annual Report of the Glasgow Infant School Society, 1829* (Glasgow: William Collins, 1829.)

similar. Only a matter of emphasis distinguished them. For Stow the order was "knowledge of religious truth" and with that "elementary instruction" while for Baird it was "education" and with that "religious instruction".

Another major issue in the early 1830's was the agitation for electoral reform. Those who were striving to raise interest in school education had to compete with a movement for political reform which took up much of the time and attention of the nation. In his *Journal* Henry Cockburn captured the excitement generated by the prospect of reform even among those who would not be among the new electorate:

26th April 1832. There was another Reform meeting held here on the 24th – the greatest that ever took place in Edinburgh. The occasion was the carrying of the second reading in the Lords by an alarmingly small majority ... the Trades assembled in the meadows and walked in procession with banners and music, and when the whole were convocated some calculated there were 20,000, and others 60,000, present.¹²²

Ever since the French Revolution there had been, in some political circles, a wariness about educating the poorer classes and so enabling them to become more articulate in voicing their demands.¹²³ Even greater, however, was the fear of extending the franchise to people who might be wholly uneducated. This made more attractive the arguments of those who were in favour of a more comprehensive system of national education, particularly in England. James Pillans, drawing on information published by the National School Society and the British and Foreign School Society, summed up the position in the *Edinburgh Review*:

Fear is becoming a powerful auxiliary to benevolence, in pleading the cause of the uneducated poor. When we contemplate, indeed, the vast masses of manufacturing population congregated in our large towns, and think that they have learned the secret of their own power, without the knowledge how to use it aright, we may well be apprehensive of danger, and desirous to know by what means it may be averted ... the extension of the political franchise has, of itself, given a new aspect to this question; for, without considering whether that privilege is ever to descend lower, we may safely affirm, that a large portion of the new electors, actual and prospective, belong to the uneducated and ill-educated classes of the community.¹²⁴

It was, however, the Scottish Burgh Reform Act of 1833 which was likely to have had the greatest impact on the Kirk and its work. Up until this time in many places

¹²² *Journal of Henry Cockburn 1831-1854*, II vols. (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1874), vol. I 5-29.

¹²³ See Chapter 1, 56.

¹²⁴ [James Pillans], "National Education in England and France", *Edinburgh Review*, vol. lviii (October 1833), 1-2.

the Burgh Council and the Kirk Session had been closely allied. "For long no clear distinction was drawn between town councils and kirk sessions. Within a burgh, however many its churches, there could only be one parish and one kirk session; and the town council had as much to do with the internal affairs of the churches as the kirk session."¹²⁵ Burgh schools though provided by the burgh council, were often examined jointly in with the presbytery. With the passing of the Burgh Reform Act councils now became more representative comprising a broad range of the middle class, including dissenters and radicals. "I trembled for the first burgh election [in Edinburgh]," wrote Henry Cockburn, "but on the whole I have been disappointed. The people on the whole have chosen better councillors than were produced by self-election ... the great comfort is that all classes are represented, and a legitimate vent given to all opinions ... for the Church the composition is not so good; dissenters often form the majority. The effect of this on Parliament and on the General Assembly will soon be seen".¹²⁶ In fact just one year after the Act, in May 1834, it was reported to the General Assembly that two teachers in the Burgh Schools in Stirling had refused to allow their schools to be examined "on the pretence that Burgh Schools are not subject to the jurisdiction of the presbytery" and that, on the same grounds, some presbyteries had been refused access to schools taught by Dissenters.¹²⁷

If, to the above concerns, were to be added other ongoing issues such as Poor Law Reform and Catholic Emancipation, both of which took up much of the time and energy of politicians and churchmen during these years, it can be seen that the Church's Education Committee was beginning its work at a time of political and religious ferment when there was much to compete for the interest and support of Church members and of the population at large.

The Limitations of the Church's Scheme

Within five years of the establishment of the first school the Education Committee had reached what was to be the optimum affordable number of schools for this decade. By 1830 eighty-six schools had been established. This was as many as the Church could safely provide for. The early hope that within a short space of time

¹²⁵ Campbell, *Two Centuries*, 198.

¹²⁶ Cockburn, *Journal*, 54.

¹²⁷ AGA, 1834, 38.

over 100 schools would be planted proved to be over ambitious.¹²⁸ Income derived from congregational sources fluctuated from year to year and made budgeting difficult. In 1828 the committee predicted that in the course of the ensuing year they would probably have established "as many schools as it may seem expedient to establish, till a longer experience shall have enabled them to estimate with some certainty what the permanent annual amount of the fund at their disposal is likely to be".¹²⁹ Next year, by which time there were eighty-five Assembly schools in existence, the committee decided that no more new schools could be considered and that the time had come to consolidate what had been achieved.¹³⁰ This proved to be a realistic appraisal of the situation since, in spite of the apparent success of the new schools, and the increase in numbers of pupils of all ages (5 to 40 years) attending, funding for the committee's work tended to decrease rather than grow. Reasons for this lack of support have already been suggested in terms of the Church's other interests and commitments at this time. As early as 1827 the committee had to report that its income was lower than it had been the previous year, although "collections from Glasgow, Greenock, and other manufacturing places, were much higher than could at all have been anticipated".¹³¹ Worried about this trend, a circular letter was sent out to all parish ministers asking how often the committee might be expected to receive contributions from church collections and what the average amount might be.¹³² Certainly the work of the committee would need to have been curtailed much sooner had it depended on these parish collections alone. As it was, year by year donations from benevolent societies and from individuals accounted for more than two-thirds of the committee's income. These and the interest from a Capital Fund of £5,000 set up from a private bequest helped to keep the committee afloat for a time but it was insufficient to provide for any extension of the work.¹³³ An early sign of the committee's financial difficulties was its decision to turn down applications for schools even when these were accompanied by offers of liberal accommodation from the heritors.¹³⁴ In 1832 the committee reported a deficit of over £500 and had to

¹²⁸ *ECR*, 1827, 6. This report stated that thirty-five schools had been set up and that eighty-six more were in the pipeline.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1828, 6.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1829, 5.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 1827, 4.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 1829, 15.

¹³³ In 1832 the committee received this bequest from Dr. Andrew Bell of Cheltenham who had endowed the school at Leith. (*ECR*, 1832, 1)

¹³⁴ *ECR*, 1830, 6.

appeal to parishes to help to clear this.¹³⁵ Following the Assembly at which this report was given, the Moderator, Thomas Chalmers, wrote to George Baird thanking him for the work of the committee but expressing the view that it was "impossible that the Scheme can be upholden without a system of yearly parochial collections throughout Scotland" and pointing out that there was a need for "a more extended knowledge both of its necessities and its claims".¹³⁶ Further appeals were no more successful, however, and the following year the Assembly learned that only 135 parishes had contributed to the scheme so that the demand for additional schools continued to exceed what the committee could afford.¹³⁷ Four years after the appointment of the Education Committee, the Assembly had expressed the view that its scheme for schooling in the Highlands would continue "to be strenuously supported by the heritors, the clergy and the whole community of Scotland".¹³⁸ Obviously such support had not been forthcoming. By 1834 with 80,000 people in the Highlands and Islands still unable to read and, according to its own calculations, almost 384 schools still required, the size of the problem seemed to have defeated the committee's most conscientious efforts.¹³⁹

The major blame for this failure must lie, not with the heritors, but with local congregations and ministers. In 1834 only 119 parishes contributed to the committee's work. The meagre sum of £1,177 was noted as the second largest since the start of the work. On the other hand Chalmers, as Convener of the Committee on Church Extension, was able to report to the General Assembly in 1835 that "collections, individual subscriptions and donations to the General Fund for Church Accommodation amounts, in this first year of its existence, to £15,167 12s 8¼d".¹⁴⁰ The total operating fund of that committee, including money subscribed for distinct building projects, came to just over £66,326 – an indication, surely, of the priorities of the people in the pews and of the Kirk's ministers.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 1832, 11 and 15.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 1832, 16. (Letter is dated Edinburgh, May 31 1832.)

¹³⁷ AAGA, 1833, 50.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 1828, 48-9.

¹³⁹ Figures vary from year to year. The Report in 1831 claimed that 50,000 individuals, one eighth of the Highland population could not read or write. 384 additional schools is the figure quoted in the 1833 report (7). This far exceeds the original estimate of 250.

¹⁴⁰ *Report of the Committee on Church Extension*, 1835.

Identifying Future Strategies

In the midst of all its on-going work and in spite of the apparent lack of support from the parishes, the Education Committee continued to think creatively about the broader aspects and needs of school education. By 1834 it had identified two areas of development which would very soon require the attention of the Church if its involvement in this sphere was to continue, namely government funding and teacher training.

Government Funding

It was obvious that the Assembly's contribution of eighty-six schools had only touched the surface of Scotland's problem. The Education Committee estimated that it required approximately £8,600 for the 384 schools still needed in the Highlands and Islands. Facing what was more or less a moratorium on its own schools' programme, the committee turned its attention to another possible source of funding. In order to alleviate the want of churches in the Highlands, the Government had recently built and endowed forty churches, aptly called "Parliamentary Churches" and in May 1833 the General Assembly passed an Act providing these churches with *quoad sacra* parishes (that is, with territorial districts over which the new churches would have spiritual jurisdiction).¹⁴¹ Recognising that further expansion of schooling in Scotland under the supervision of the Church might be achieved through establishing schools in these newly created parishes, the Assembly of 1833 came up with the idea that the Church might apply to the Government for funding:

These new parishes ... present this anomaly in the educational state of Scotland, that they have been left without the legislative provision of a school: and the bounty of the Government must be considered as incomplete, so long as it has not provided on the same, or some other equally sure foundation, the same number of schools as of churches, and in the same districts. To that extent, therefore, the claim for Government interference is of the strongest description.¹⁴²

The committee calculated that in the new *quoad sacra* parishes there was a population of 44,822 people of whom 14,836 could not read.¹⁴³ Noting that there

¹⁴¹ Acts 4th Geo. IV. c. 79 and 5th Geo. IV c. 90. And AGA, 1833.

¹⁴² *Educational Statistics of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Prepared by the General Assembly's Education Committee, 1833, 24.*

¹⁴³ ECR, 1834, 17.

were already indications that the Government was now prepared to allocate funding for the extension of education throughout the United Kingdom,¹⁴⁴ the Assembly decided to petition the House of Commons for aid in establishing schools in those parishes where the new Parliamentary churches had been erected.¹⁴⁵ In making this application the committee reminded the Assembly that in England to receive a grant towards the expense of maintaining a school, it was required that one half of the cost had to be defrayed by public subscription.¹⁴⁶ Were this to apply in the Highlands, the public in Scotland would need to contribute upwards of £4,000.¹⁴⁷

All this time the Education Committee was not unaware of the plight of schooling in the Lowlands of Scotland. In some of the "necessitous stations" the small salaries had been a disincentive as far as the engagement of good teachers was concerned. Although these were in densely inhabited districts which should have been able to provide enough pupils to make them viable, the people were generally too poor to afford fees. In some instances the schools only opened in the winter because during the summer the teachers had to look around for more profitable work. In 1832 the committee outlined its plan for adopting such schools and appointing teachers who would be better paid and better qualified.¹⁴⁸ The Assembly gave the committee authority to take the necessary steps to proceed with this plan "in reference to Lowland as well as Highland districts", but it was to be another five years before funds would be available for its implementation.

Teacher Training

Early on the committee had recognised that the matter of teacher training would have to be taken seriously. In 1826 the committee had agreed that Assembly school teachers should be conversant with the best modern methods and so should spend time attending the Sessional school in Edinburgh.¹⁴⁹

The Edinburgh Sessional School had first opened its doors in 1813 in Leith Wynd under the guidance of John Wood, an Episcopalian lawyer. By 1824 it had moved to Market Street and had established a widely admired curriculum and pedagogy and it

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 16. In 1833 Parliament voted £20,000 for the provision of schools in England and in 1834 set aside £10,000 for education in Scotland.

¹⁴⁵ *AAGA*, 1834, 57.

¹⁴⁶ This policy seems to date back to a speech made by the Lord Chancellor of England early in 1834. See Appendix II.

¹⁴⁷ *ECR*, 1834, 17.

¹⁴⁸ *ECR*, 1832, 9-10, and *AGA*, 1832, 46.

¹⁴⁹ *ECR*, 1835, 9.

was here that, by 1826, the Church had been sending its teachers for training.¹⁵⁰ Nor was such training confined to new teachers, the committee expected teachers who were already in posts to accept training during school holidays or at harvest time, presumably when many children would be working in the fields rather than attending school. In 1832 the Committee appointed for Classing Returns as to Schools reported, "it is with great pleasure the Committee observe, that the plan of instruction which is so successfully followed at the Sessional School in Edinburgh is adopted".¹⁵¹ Two years later the Assembly confirmed its belief in the "art of teaching" and in "the institution of model schools for the training of teachers to the practice of their calling", and proceeded to recommend schools in Arran and Tobermory to be used as "model schools" in addition to the one in Edinburgh.¹⁵² It was also decided to set aside a school in Lerwick and establish it as a model school for Shetland where "the business of education ... was in a great measure conducted by boys itinerating from house to house, or by fishermen in the intervals of leisure from their toils."¹⁵³

Due credit must be paid to the Church of Scotland for pioneering this work of teacher training and for attempting to raise the standard of school education by equipping teachers both academically and practically for their profession. This was the beginning of a task for which the Church would take responsibility up until the beginning of the twentieth century.

A Decisive Year

In many respects 1834 proved to be a watershed for the work of the Education Committee. It had reached a point where it could not proceed with new schools without further financial support and had been given the Assembly's backing to approach the Government for funding. Its financial crisis was not helped by those who stepped up the campaign to increase church accommodation. Early in 1834 William Collins, a Glasgow publisher, came up with a scheme to raise money by voluntary subscriptions and collections to endow and build twenty new parish churches in Glasgow over five years. Following the Assembly's approval of the Chapels Act in May of that year, the Church Building Society of Glasgow began its

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁵¹ *AGA*, 1832, 30.

¹⁵² *ECR*, 1834, 10-11.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* 11-12.

work and by the month of October £20,000 had been subscribed.¹⁵⁴ Around the same time a similar society was set up in Aberdeen. The enlarging of the Assembly's Committee on Church Accommodation under its new Convener, Thomas Chalmers, in May 1834 inaugurated a period of church-building activity with special collections and contributions being made by congregations all over the country. In the first year of its existence Chalmers's committee raised £65,000, more than ten times what the Education Committee had raised in its first year.¹⁵⁵ It was very apparent that church accommodation had a greater popular appeal than setting up schools. This disparity did not escape the notice of several presbyteries and in 1834 the committee reported that a number had formed themselves into associations to raise money for the various schemes of the Church at home and abroad. Annual parish collections were pooled and the total was then divided up by the presbytery. The Presbytery of Edinburgh had been operating such a scheme "for these Home and Foreign objects of the Assembly" since 1828.¹⁵⁶

The Education Committee, however, had continued faithfully to keep the cause of school education before the Church and its concern and disappointment at failing to meet the nation's needs did not go unnoticed. The *Scottish Guardian* was one of the first outside agencies to take up the cause of the Established Church and its schools. In 1834 it helped to promote the founding of the Glasgow Educational Society (or Association) which advocated the extension of the parochial school system through the medium of the national Church. It was a report on the proceedings of a meeting of this Association on the "Extension of the Parochial Schools of Scotland" at which George Lewis spoke, which formed the basis of his subsequent pamphlet, *Scotland a Half-Educated Nation*. Donald Withrington has summed up the purposes of the meeting and the pamphlet as:

To persuade an increasingly hesitant government to fill the gaps in Scottish educational provision by way of additional parochial schools and not through an extension of the voluntary/private system; and to retain, develop and underline the essential connection between all state-supported schooling, of whatever kind, and its supervision and control by the national Established Church.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Hanna, *Memoirs* Vol. III, 449.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 470.

¹⁵⁶ *ECR*, 1834, 15.

¹⁵⁷ Withrington, "Scotland a Half-Educated Nation" in Humes and Paterson (eds.), *Scottish Culture*, 56.

Prior to this meeting of the Glasgow Educational Association and the publication of Lewis's pamphlet, J. C. Colquhoun, President of the Association, had presented his Bill in Parliament to extend the Provision for Parochial Education in Scotland. As well as deploring the number of children attending school in Scotland,¹⁵⁸ Colquhoun argued for better salaries for schoolmasters. What today we might describe as a Schoolmasters' "take-home pay" (or total emoluments) is notoriously difficult to calculate since it included what the heritors or Church paid as a salary together with what he received by way of fees and earnings from other sources. (James Scotland has described one parish dominie in Mid Calder who received "£11.2.3 for teaching church music, £5 for precenting, £3.8s as session clerk, eight guineas for registration fees, two guineas as heritors' clerk and £5 for administering the poor fund".)¹⁵⁹ The basic salary paid by the Education Committee was £20 - £25 per annum which was about the minimum received by the parochial schoolmaster at that time.¹⁶⁰ Heritors were also required to supply the schoolhouse, a dwelling-house of at least two apartments, a small garden, and "free fuel and a croft of land that will maintain a cow during the summer and winter and when the latter two cannot be obtained a sufficient compensation in lieu of them".¹⁶¹ The amount earned from fees varied from school to school depending on its locality, the number of pupils and the number of subjects offered. The salary paid by the Church compared fairly well with that paid by other charitable organisations. One presbytery in the Highlands in its annual return noted that while teachers in Assembly schools were paid £20 to £25, those employed by the SSPCK were paid only £15.¹⁶² Assembly schoolmasters were disadvantaged in that they were not eligible for many of the perquisites which James Scotland mentioned. In his speech to Parliament in 1834 Colquhoun argued that any Government funding contributed towards Scottish education should be used to increase the salaries of schoolmasters rather than, as in England, applying the money to the erection of schools and schoolhouses. The General Assembly, he maintained, would have no trouble obtaining from heritors money for buildings if provision could be made for the masters.¹⁶³ Colquhoun's Bill was thrown out mainly because the sum he had asked for (some £60,000) was considered excessive. If the amount he had proposed

¹⁵⁸ See pp. 77-78.

¹⁵⁹ Scotland, *History of Scottish Education*, vol.1, 194.

¹⁶⁰ *ECR*, 1826, 9.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *GAP*, 1829, *Return from the Presbytery of Tongue regarding Schools*.

¹⁶³ *Circular of the Glasgow Educational Society*.

was necessary for education in Scotland, how much more, argued his fellow MPs, would be needed for England?

Conclusion

It is evident that the Education Committee was always aware of the pressing need for the religious and moral development of the nation's youth and of the need to ensure the Presbyterian orthodoxy of teachers. In the first chapter it was noted how the fears that followed on the French Revolution had brought this forcibly to the notice of the Church and in later chapters we shall have to re-consider just how important religious ideals came to be. In the meantime, however, it would appear that certainly for Baird and the committee's secretary, John Gordon (later to become one of the first government inspectors of schools in Scotland) the main object of the Church's scheme was "to supply schools for elementary instruction in those parts of Scotland in which, from local causes, schools have been wanting".¹⁶⁴ Whatever may be said about D. J. Withrington's doubts about the reliability of the Brougham report and his contention that even in the Highlands "there was schooling aplenty"¹⁶⁵, the Education Committee proceeded in good faith that the need for more schools had been established.

In trying to explain why Assembly schools received such limited support from the Church at large, cognisance must be taken of the effect of all the other ongoing issues of which mention has been made. There were many other demands on the commitment of Church members, many socially and politically attractive causes to rouse popular support. In addition there was the growing strength of the voluntaries encouraged by the extension of the franchise and the new powers given to congregations by the recent Veto Act. The Edinburgh Voluntary Church Association had been set up early in 1833 its object being, "to induce civil government to let religion alone, and allow every man, and every body of men, while they conduct themselves as good citizens, to manage their own religious concerns in the way they think most agreeable to the will of God".¹⁶⁶ Chalmers had opposed the Reform Bill in 1833, and his biographer William Hanna possibly expressed Chalmers' opinion that "excited by the first enjoyment of the political franchise, and over estimating

¹⁶⁴ John Gordon's evidence to the Argyll Education Commission – *First Report* (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable, 1865), 1.

¹⁶⁵ Withrington, *Going to School*, 39.

¹⁶⁶ *Scotsman*, 20 January and 2 February 1833.

perhaps the amount of their political influence, the members of this Society [the Edinburgh Voluntary Church Association] believed that the time had come for striking the decisive blow under which all Church Establishments were to fall".¹⁶⁷ The influence of the voluntaries, with their abhorrence of anything government supported, may have dissuaded some church members from supporting the work of a committee whose objective was to establish a church-controlled national system of school education. Certainly the opposition of an increasing number of schools and churches established by dissenters and outside the oversight and control of the Established Church, was a factor which the Kirk could no longer afford to ignore. Finding the funding for its schools became even more pressing. It was now evident, moreover, that any further expansion of the committee's work would be very limited without substantial financial help from outside and the Church recognised that it was time to appeal to the government. Of the increasingly powerful Evangelical party in the Church led by Chalmers, Withrington had this to say:

For the Evangelicals the best means of renewing the community-led parochial tradition and regaining the dominance of the Church, there [the large towns] and elsewhere in the country, was to squeeze out the non-public schools by erecting a greatly extended national system, financially supported by the state and closely supervised by the state Church.¹⁶⁸

For all the limitations of its work, and in the face of all the other concerns with which it had to compete in church and state, the pioneering achievements the Church's committee, even in this first stage of its work, deserved recognition. The committee and its Convener were all too well aware of how far short of their target they had fallen. Reporting in 1833 on the results of an inquiry carried out by parish ministers, the committee had to concede that whereas it had originally estimated that about 50,000 people might not be able to read, it now appeared that the number could not be less than 83,397 (28,073 between 6 and 20 years of age) out of a total population in the Highlands and Islands of 504,955. It was also calculated that the number unable to write was at least triple of that unable to read and that to ensure that the population in that part of Scotland could read in either Gaelic or English, there would need to be 384 additional schools.¹⁶⁹ It was calculated that even offering a salary as low as £20 per annum, the Committee would require £7,680 for salaries

¹⁶⁷ Hanna, *Memoirs*, 349.

¹⁶⁸ Withrington, *Going to School*, 40.

¹⁶⁹ *Educational Statistics of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Edinburgh: J. and D. Collie, 1833), 6-13.

and a further £1,000 for other necessary expenditure.¹⁷⁰ The *Scotsman* article reporting on these statistics quoted the committee as stating, "it belongs to the people of the Lowlands and to the people, indeed, of every other equally favoured portion of this country to provide so small an amount as £8,000 which would complete the elementary education of the people of Scotland."¹⁷¹ While this was a considerable underestimation of the work that still required to be done, much had been achieved.

In the first ten years of its existence the committee had courageously tackled the problem of how to provide education in remote areas and in Gaelic speaking communities. It had promoted the superintendence of schools by Presbyteries and its convener and secretary had begun personally visiting schools, thus setting a precedent for school inspections. Throughout this period the committee succeeded in gaining the respect and co-operation of heritors who were commended for having "done much for the education of the Highland people, beyond what was required of them by the Parochial School Act".¹⁷² This almost feudal dependence on the heritors, however, may actually have acted as a disincentive to support from the Church at large. Above all the Education Committee had succeeded in identifying Scotland's educational needs and in keeping these before the Church and the nation.

¹⁷⁰ *ECR*, 1833, 6-7.

¹⁷¹ *Scotsman*, 31 August, 1833.

¹⁷² *Educational Statistics*, 14.

APPENDIX I

Principles and Rules observed by the Committee in the establishing of Schools.

- I. That no School shall be established in any parish which has not already a Parochial School regularly endowed and supported agreeably to Act of Parliament.
- II. That no School shall be fixed at a station so near the Parochial School as to interfere [sic] with the usual attendance, or to injure the interests of its master.
- III. For every stationary or permanent school, a suitable, well aired and lighted school-room, with the requisite forms and tables, and a dwelling house of not less than two rooms for the teacher, together with a kailyard, and a croft of land sufficient for the maintenance of a cow, both summer and winter; and also the necessary fuel, or a proper compensation in lieu of these latter accommodations - must be provided by the proprietors or inhabitants of the district.
- IV. That Schools shall be permanently stationed at such places as can furnish regularly a sufficient and steady number of Scholars, and that there shall be alternating or itinerating Schools in those districts which do not furnish so many Scholars as seem necessary to justify the cost of a permanent establishment, and in which, it would be less easy to obtain a grant of the accommodations.

Heads of Regulations to be followed by Teachers in conducting their Schools.

- I. The teacher shall uniformly open and close his school with prayer every day.
- II. He shall call over a roll of his scholars every day; mark those who are absent, that he may take the best means of ascertaining the cause of their having been absent, and keep an accurate record of such absences, that he may be able to report distinctly and correctly to the Committee, from time to time, as to the degree of attendance given by each of his scholars.
- III. He shall teach the school --- hours every day, during summer, and --- during winter, except on Saturday, when he shall not be requested to teach above hours.
- IV. He shall be entitled to demand fees from the scholars, in all cases in which the Minister and Kirk-session do not certify that they are unable to pay them; but these fees shall in no case exceed the average of those that are paid at the parish school.
- V. He shall not be at liberty to introduce any book into his school, except such as have been previously approved of, and authorised by the Committee.
- VI. He shall cause the younger scholars to learn the Mother's Catechism, together with a verse of a Psalm, Paraphrase, or passage of Scripture, as soon as they are able to read these; and, as they advance, the Shorter Catechism with proofs, every day; which exercise they shall repeat on Saturday.
- VII. He shall prescribe portions of the Psalms and Paraphrases, or passages of Scripture, every Saturday to the scholars, according to the progress they have made, which they shall be required to commit to memory, and to repeat on Monday.
- VIII. When the Scriptures, or portions of them, are read or repeated, he shall be most careful that the scholars do so reverently; and he shall not allow them to trap one another, or lose and gain places, when they are employed in these solemn exercises.
- IX. He shall anxiously endeavour to explain to his scholars what they read or repeat, by putting suitable questions to them, as to the meaning of the words and sentiments expressed in it; and shall make it his special study to do so, particularly in regard to religion and moral duties.
- X. He shall, every half year, report to the Committee the state of his school, viz. the names and number of scholars that have entered and been in attendance - their age - the specific number of days they have been present or absent - the progress they had made before entering, and the progress they have made in their respective classes, during the half year - the

individuals who have particularly distinguished themselves in the different branches of education, and by their general good conduct, &c. With this view he shall be furnished by the Committee with printed forms, or tables, which he shall carefully fill up, and transmit to the Committee, on the 1st days of April and October.

XI. The vacation shall not exceed six weeks in any one year.

APPENDIX II

At a Meeting of the Glasgow Educational Society held in Glasgow, 24th February, 1834, Henry Dunlop, Esq. of Craigton in the Chair, it was unanimously resolved:—

1. That our freedom, our loyalty, our peace and plenty, our social comfort, and our national renown, arise from the intellectual, the moral, and above all, from the religious character, of our countrymen; and that a system of national education, on Scriptural principles, in connexion with the religious institutions of Scotland, and commensurate with the wants of the population, is essential to the perpetuity of our national prosperity.

2. That whilst Scotland, since the Union, has increased above twofold in population, and a hundredfold in wealth, no adequate provision has been made, out of her increasing wealth, for the education of her increasing population. The number of Parochial Schools remains nearly the same as at the period of the Union; and including schools of all sorts, national, charity, and private, there is good reason apprehend, that both the city and rural population of Scotland, but especially the former, are lamentably destitute of the means of efficient education, and that Scotland both in the quantity and quality of her educational institutions, is falling behind other European nations.

3. That this Meeting, calling to mind the unwearied efforts of the Church and nation of Scotland, in an early and barbarous age, and the precedence which this country long enjoyed, as an educated nation, desire to respond to the call of the present Lord Chancellor of England, who at the recent Wilberforce meeting at York, is reported to have said, " that the efforts of the people were still wanting to promote education and that Parliament would do nothing until they themselves took the matter in hand with energy and spirit, and with the determination to do something," in obedience to this call, as well as to a higher sense of duty in this important matter, this Meeting resolve itself into an Association for the extension and improvement of the means of sound and efficient popular instruction.

4. That the objects of the Association shall be to obtain and diffuse information regarding the popular schools of our own and other countries—their excellencies and defects—to awaken their countrymen to the wants of Scotland in particular—to procure petitions to the legislature soliciting parliamentary inquiry, and parliamentary aid, in behalf of the extension of the Parochial Schools, with such additional institutions and improvements as the present state of society in our cities, and recent advances in the art of instruction, may suggest or require.

The Church of Scotland Magazine No. II, Vol. I, April 1834, p.50.

Chapter Three 1835 – 1849

The Cost of Progress

Introduction

In previous chapters two main issues have emerged that are important for this thesis. Firstly there is the question of whether the chief motivating factor behind the Church of Scotland's provision of schools was a belief in the benefits of a good broad education *per se*, and in the need to supplement the parish schools, or whether it was a concern for the religious and moral instruction of youth, what George Lewis had called the grand aim of all education – "not to make men learned, but to make them good".¹ Secondly there is the question of authority and control. How important was it for the Church that, as R. D. Anderson has claimed, education could be a means of imposing its authority and "rooting out dissent"?² We shall bear these questions in mind in this chapter which will cover the work of the Education Committee during one of the most critical periods in the history of the Church in Scotland, the years 1835-49. These years saw the Evangelical party in the Established Church, supported by the growing middle class, increase in strength, while the influence of the Moderates declined. Overtures from presbyteries and synods urging the General Assembly to enjoin presbyteries "to resume the ancient and salutary practice of holding regular visitations" of their parishes, were an indication of a renewed interest in pastoral care and a desire to ensure the Church's control and influence in the nation's life.³ A sign of the same stirring was a greater interest in education on the part of presbyteries as seen in the increase in the number of overtures on schooling sent up to the General Assembly. These were sometimes quite critical of the Education Committee's policies.

The creation of new *quoad sacra* parishes in the Lowlands and the "government church" parishes in the Highlands only served to emphasise the gaps in the parochial educational provision. It was evident that in the Scotland of the nineteenth century the old feudal-like system which depended on heritors providing for parish schools and schoolmasters, was no longer appropriate or adequate. As a result there were greater demands on congregations and on other independent providers. The salaries

¹ Lewis, *Scotland A Half-Educated Nation*, 88.

² Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People*, 3.

³ GAP, 1836, *Overture from Synod of Perth and Stirling*. See also Presbytery of Nairn, April 1836, *Overture to the General Assembly Anent Presbyterial Visitation of Parishes*.

and conditions of schoolmasters did nothing to make the teaching profession more attractive and their plight continued to be a matter of concern for the Church.

In common with the other great schemes of the Church, the Education Committee laboured to increase its funds and extend its work during this time of political unrest and social hardship. These were the years of the Chartist and Anti-Corn Law agitations; the years when the potato famine first struck Ireland and then the Scottish Highlands (1846), resulting in significant immigration and migration; the years when widespread outbreaks of fever and cholera in the congested towns created a situation where "familiarity with death and sickness made people feel more vulnerable and life was a constant battle against dirt and disease."⁴ Faced with the need to extend its provision of school education and its inability to raise the necessary finance in these difficult times, the committee could not afford to turn its back on government aid. Yet many had grave misgivings at the thought of becoming increasingly dependent on Parliamentary grants and the school inspections which came with them, and in the process losing much of the Church's historic influence and control, particularly in the sphere of religious instruction. Such anxiety was only to be expected in a Church which before 1843 was living through the deepening dispute over patronage and afterwards experienced the trauma of the Disruption. These fears and misgivings came to a head in the General Assembly of 1849 when the convener of the Education Committee resigned over the Church's growing dependence on the Privy Council and on the powers of Government Inspectors of Schools. It will become apparent in this chapter that decisions made by the committee during this period in an attempt to ensure the continuation and expansion of its work, actually sowed the seeds of its own demise as a significant provider of school education in Scotland. At the same time the committee's emphasis on improving teacher training, its untiring efforts to extend its work and its eventual agreement to co-operate with the Government and submit to its inspection of schools, were evidence of its belief in the value of good schooling not just to the Church of Scotland but to Scottish society as a whole.

The Committee's Continuing Endeavours

The Standards and Conditions of Schools

Throughout this period schools were probably scrutinised and examined more

⁴ McCaffrey, *Scotland in the Nineteenth Century*, 32-33.

thoroughly than ever before. Most presbyteries continued to visit schools and send in annual returns to the Education Committee and many parish ministers submitted lengthy reports on individual schools in their localities. In addition there were occasional visits to schools by members of the Education Committee. T. R. Bone has pointed out that in Scotland this statutory form of national inspection of schools existed long before the appointment of Government inspectors in 1840.⁵ How effective it was in improving the system is debatable. Although presbyteries were involved in the examination of schoolmasters on their appointment, we have already seen how difficult it was to remove those who were unsatisfactory once appointed. Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, Secretary to the Committee of Council noted that:

[Presbyteries] have no power to examine the candidate as to his aptitude to teach ... when once appointed, he is practically irremovable. Neither neglect, cruelty, immorality, incompetency, physical infirmity, nor incapacity from age, have been found sufficient for his displacement.⁶

During the House of Lords inquiry in 1845 Allan Menzies, Clerk to the Dick Bequest,⁷ expressed the opinion that examinations by presbyteries had greatly improved but conceded that "there is occasionally, perhaps, too much Eulogy ... Presbytery express their opinions in the Presence of the children ... that is not a favourable opportunity for pointing out Faults or admonishing".⁸ Certainly the committee's report in 1846 claimed that ministers of the Church of Scotland were taking more interest in the supervision of schools. This supervision still included visits to all types of schools – Assembly, parochial and adventure schools. The breadth of the curriculum, especially the quality of religious instruction, the regularity of attendance, the performance of the teachers and the condition of school buildings were all included in their reports. Presbyteries, however, continued to meet with opposition in some places with regard to their right to examine schools. In 1836 and again in 1838 the General Assembly had to take up the case of the burgh schools in Stirling refusing to allow visitations from the Presbytery,⁹ and in the years 1846-48 the Assembly received reports on the continuing dispute between the Presbytery

⁵ T. R. Bone, *School Inspection in Scotland 1840-1966* (London: University of London Press Ltd, 1968), 11.

⁶ Kay-Shuttleworth, *Public Education*, 385.

⁷ The James Dick Bequest was made in 1827. A capital sum of £100,000 was invested for the benefit of country parochial schoolmasters in the counties of Aberdeen, Banff, and Moray.

⁸ PP, *House of Lords, Report of the Select Committee on Parochial Schoolmasters in Scotland, 1845, Minutes of Evidence*, 50.

⁹ *Scotsman*, May 1836 and May 1838.

of Elgin and Elgin Town Council over the right to appoint a teacher to Elgin Academy.¹⁰ In 1840 three dissenting teachers in Paisley and eighteen teachers in Glasgow, four of these in Roman Catholic schools, refused to admit the Presbytery's representatives.¹¹

While many reports on schools were positive, some were far from flattering. Frequently school accommodation was found to be inadequate with teachers having to teach different age-groups in the same classroom. Often the ability of the teachers was criticised and Adventure school teachers appeared to be the weakest. Of a school in Stirling it was said that the pupils behaved so badly that, "at the close of the examination they [the visitors from the Presbytery] could not address to him [the teacher] a single word of commendation".¹² Of a school in Islay it was said that the teaching served "no other purpose than stupefying the pupils".¹³ In Dundee where non-parochial schools were found to be so inadequate, the comment was made that "teaching is often a last resort for bread. When trade prospers, the birch is abandoned".¹⁴ Schools taught by female teachers came in for a lot of criticism. Doubtless reports like these made the committee even more determined to make teacher training a priority.

Another continuing problem was the irregularity of pupils' attendance, often due to the distances that had to be travelled. Visiting schools in Haddington and Dunbar, HMI John Gibson commented in 1840 that all the time teachers were struggling against "the poverty, ignorance, and prejudices of parents", many of whom were unwilling to spend money on the necessary books.¹⁵ To try and overcome this, evening classes were opened for children working in factories or in the fields, but sometimes the pupils were so tired that they were unable to learn very much. In 1837 a minister from Strontian remarked, "I am thoroughly convinced that the Highland schools will never fully answer the end for which they were intended, until it is rendered imperative on parents to send their children to school".¹⁶

Examinations and inspections by presbyteries and government officials invariably exposed the lack of good schooling throughout the country. The report of an inquiry set up by the Assembly in 1844 showed that, in the 790 parishes which sent in

¹⁰ AAGA, 1846, 47, 1847, 43 and 1848, 58.

¹¹ ECR, *Report on Returns from Presbyteries*, 1840, 23 and 25.

¹² *Ibid.*, 33.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁵ *Minutes of the Committee of Council*, 1840-41, 278.

¹⁶ ECR, 1837, Appendix II, 41.

returns, "parochial schools hardly amount to a third of the number required" and "329 localities were without schools of any description and this in different areas of the country". In the opinion of the Church's Education Committee Mull lacked fifteen schools, Ayr lacked ten and Hamilton nine.¹⁷ It was clear that there was a chronic shortage of schools and of funds.

Financing the Church's Schools

Raising sufficient income for the work undertaken was always a problem for the Education Committee. In addition to teachers' salaries, books and resources were a costly but necessary provision. Circulating libraries had to be restocked. Sometimes the schoolmaster was given authority to sell school books to pupils at reduced prices but normally text books were shared as few of the children from poorer backgrounds could afford to buy their own.¹⁸ In 1835 the *Scotsman* quoted David Welsh, professor of Ecclesiastical History at Edinburgh, as remarking in an Assembly debate on normal schools, that he had been in schools where, "there was only one book in the whole school; and he knew one where there were only two books, namely, the Proverbs of Solomon, and a tract on the Corn Laws."¹⁹

By 1834 it had become clear that the eighty-six schools which the Assembly's committee had been responsible for setting up had made little impact on the needs of the Highlands and still virtually nothing had been done for the rest of the country. The 1835 report claimed that in the Highlands and Islands alone, 80,000 were still unable to read or write and that 384 schools were still needed.²⁰ The committee now found it increasingly difficult to decide whether to continue to concentrate on meeting the needs of the Highlands or to step up its efforts to relieve the situation in the urban areas of Lowland Scotland. While it believed that the Highlands had the strongest claims it recognised that the further development of education in the Lowlands could not wait until its work in the Highlands was completed since that might never happen.²¹ The need for more parish schools had been made even more urgent by the creation of new parishes throughout the country following the passing of the Chapels Act in 1834 and the Church Accommodation Committee's national

¹⁷ *Minutes of the Committee of Council*, 1844 (Volume Two), 351 and 361-362.

¹⁸ *ECR*, 1840, 10-11.

¹⁹ *Scotsman*, 26 May 1835.

²⁰ *ECR*, 1835, 23-24.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 1835, 5-6.

church extension campaign. Funding had to be found for schools in these new parishes since the statutory legislation regarding the obligations of heritors did not apply.

Demands for better provision of schools were also being made in England at this time, however, and in 1834 Scotland received £10,000 as its share of a Parliamentary grant to national education. In 1836 and again in 1837 further Government grants of £10,000 were made for the erection of school-houses and for the education of the children from the poorer classes in the densely populated Scottish towns.²² A substantial proportion of these grants went towards the upkeep of Sessional schools.²³

In July 1836 the Convener, George Baird, prepared a letter to accompany the circulation of the committee's report in which he stated, "it will be seen that the available fund [for setting up Assembly schools] is completely exhausted ... and that there is now a necessity, such as existed at no former period, for an immediate and strenuous effort in [sic] behalf of this Scheme being made throughout the Church".²⁴ The Church had always to be reminded that any increase in Government grants depended on increased contributions from congregations.²⁵

In response to the committee's appeals various Church bodies attempted to help in different ways. In the city of Glasgow Sessional schools were largely supported from congregational givings. Reports to the Education Committee from the Tron parish and St John's parish were typical: "the [Tron] parish school is, properly speaking, a sessional school under the control of the kirk-session, the salary paid by the kirk-session, and raised from the congregation" – "the parochial schools [of St John's] are supported as to salaries, school, and dwelling-houses, from session funds. The school and dwelling-houses are free to the teachers".²⁶ In Edinburgh the Governors of George Heriot's Hospital regularly set aside considerable portions of its revenues for the elementary education of the poor. (In 1837 the sum donated was £3,000.)²⁷

In the towns and cities church members contributed to private endeavours. In 1837 the School Accommodation Society of Greenock was set up to meet the educational needs of the considerable population of poor Highlanders living there, and on the Moray Firth the Society of the Respectable Inhabitants of Nairn helped

²² *ECR*, 1836, 14 and 1837, 8.

²³ *NSA*, vol. 6, Supplement to the Article on Glasgow, 918-920.

²⁴ *Letter of George Baird to accompany Report of the Education Committee*, July 4 1836.

²⁵ *ECR*, 1836, 12.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1835, 39-40.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1837, 25.

with the education of the fishing population of that town.²⁸ In Glasgow a number of schools were supported by commercial businesses. Messrs. Denniston, Buchanan and Company, for example, provided a school and a school house and a salary of £20 for a teacher in the parish of Stanley, and in the Parish of Catrine James Finlay and Company provided £50 to a teacher "for teaching an evening school, composed of the young folks who are employed at their cotton manufactory during the day ... and £20 besides for two hours education given by the same teacher, during the day, to the young people subject to the Factory Regulation Act".²⁹

Presbyterial Associations worked hard to raise money for all four of the great schemes of the Church. In addition to these, County Associations were formed throughout the country. The committee reported to the 1840 General Assembly that,

a voluntary contribution by the land-owners and others has been proposed in the Lowland counties with a view to applying it to the better maintenance and the improvement of schools within the county from which it comes.³⁰

It was suggested that these associations should invite all sections of the population to participate and not confine their membership to landowners.

Individual church members were encouraged to join penny-a-week subscription schemes similar to those introduced by the Church Extension Committee. Indeed when it came to appeals these two committees often shared the same platform. In 1838 Baird told the Assembly, "Wherever an Association is formed or a Public meeting held in [sic] behalf of the great cause of Church Extension, the equal necessity for an extension of schools under this committee may be considered and pled",³¹ and the committee minute noted:

That the Church Extension Scheme, and the School Extension Scheme, do not represent two separate objects so much as two great means by which one object is aimed at, viz. the religious and moral improvement of the people, through the doctrine and Superintendence of the Church.³²

Chalmers, for his part, when it suited him, also drew comparisons with the work of the Education Committee – "The mention that we make of schools remind us of the overtures now before the Assembly for a measure of School Extension, that shall at

²⁸ Ibid., 1837, 24.

²⁹ Ibid., 1838, 17-18.

³⁰ Ibid., 1840, 18-19.

³¹ Ibid., 1838, 21.

³² Ibid., Appendix II, 37, *Minute of the General Assembly's Education Committee*.

least be commensurate with the Church Extension which is now going forward" – but he was also aware of the strings which might be attached to Government funding for education which would have been quite unacceptable to him, – "[we would] deprecate the analogy between schools and churches, if carried to the length of an indiscriminate endowment bestowed without reference to creed or denomination".³³ Despite continuous appeals and inducements (in 1837 the committee actually promised any contributor donating £500 or £600 the privilege of deciding where a school should be located³⁴) a note of despair was often heard in the committee's reports to the General Assembly.³⁵

Unable to provide sufficient funding from church contributions for all it would like to have undertaken, the committee decided to concentrate on two objectives, both of which meant obtaining Government finance. One was to persuade the Government to grant assistance for schools in the densely populated Lowlands centres and in the *quoad sacra* parishes of the Parliamentary Churches in the Highlands. The other was to put teacher training on a firmer basis by establishing normal schools. At its meeting in May 1835 the General Assembly gave its full support to the committee's proposals and agreed to petition the House of Commons for aid.³⁶ It was the committee's hope that while it could not afford to set up new schools in the new industrial townships, it could try to raise the standard of the existing schooling by improving the qualifications of schoolmasters and supplementing their salaries. It believed that this would encourage teachers to stay longer in the one school rather than look for better prospects elsewhere and that continuity and better teaching would make schooling more attractive.

In anticipation of receiving Government grants for extending school education in terms of their proposals, the committee drafted a new set of Rules and Regulations which they took to the Assembly in 1835 for its approval. These outlined their plans for augmenting the salaries of "deserving teachers in the Low Countries" and stipulated that preference would be given to districts "where the people are poorest and most ignorant ... not only in the Highlands and Islands, but in such districts of the large and populous towns as may require them", but added that "any parish which receives an Assembly school will be required to transmit annually a parochial collection to the general fund of the committee". It stood by its previous condition

³³ AAGA, 1837, *Report of Church Extension Committee*, 25.

³⁴ ECR, 1837, 17.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1836, 12.

³⁶ AAGA, 1835, 58-59.

that no new school would be set up in a parish which did not already have a parochial school. Concerning schoolmasters nothing was said about Church membership or being "qualified to Government". It only required that teachers should have "a competent knowledge of the principles of the Christian religion", and continue the traditional practice of opening and closing the school with prayer, teaching the Catechism and reading and explaining a portion of the Scriptures daily. The appointment and dismissal of all teachers employed under this scheme belonged exclusively to the committee.³⁷

Government Funding for Schools

In the summer of 1834 Parliament set in motion yet another inquiry on schooling in Scotland and decided to defer consideration of the Church's petition until the returns from parish ministers had been examined.³⁸ The petition, therefore, was held back until May 1836 when a number of the Scottish peers, among them the Duke of Sutherland, the Duke of Argyll and the Marquis of Breadalbane, presented a memorial to the Treasury on behalf of the committee. While the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his response indicated that there might be support for the objectives outlined by the committee, it was also made clear that any money forthcoming would be for new work and not for the already existing Assembly schools.

The years 1835-38 were not the most propitious of times for Assembly's Education Committee to be approaching the Government for aid for school education. Another major Assembly committee was also looking to Parliament for help. Chalmers hoped for Parliamentary endowments for the new *quoad sacra* parishes which had been established as part of the Church Extension scheme. While Melbourne's Whig Government may have been sympathetic, it was too dependent on the support of radicals and voluntaries to make any rash promises. Scottish voluntaries believed that there was already enough church accommodation and were opposed in principle to Government support for any established church. It was a setback for the hopes of the Church Extension Committee when in July 1835 the Government would only agree to the setting up of a Royal Commission of Inquiry on Religious Instruction in Scotland to examine church accommodation. Perhaps Chalmers should not have expected more at this time considering that Melbourne's

³⁷ *ECR*, 1835, Appendix I, pp. 33-37.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1836, 8.

Government was simultaneously embroiled in the controversies surrounding the funding and reform of the established Church of England and also with the pressing issue of tithing and funding for the Church of Ireland:

The need for additional church accommodation was greater in England than in Scotland, and if the State were to provide new grants of public money for church extension in Scotland, it would in fairness have to provide far larger grants for church extension in England. The demands of church extension for Britain's expanding population represented an open-ended commitment, which the State could not afford to undertake.³⁹

By 1835 there were Ecclesiastical Commissions in England and in Ireland, in addition to the Royal Commission of Inquiry in Scotland, all concerned with the same problem – how best to support and strengthen the established churches, what aid each should be given and how to collect and redistribute the ancient revenues of the church be these tithes, episcopal incomes or unappropriated parish tithes.

In the field of education also the Government was confronted almost contemporaneously with the needs of the three countries, Scotland, England and Ireland, and here again the involvement of religious interests complicated the issues. It was not just a matter of finding and allocating funding, nor was it just a case of identifying the most deserving: it was a question of how appropriate it was to use taxpayer's money to support church bodies who were responsible for schools and who had a particular interest in religious instruction, and which of these bodies to support.

When in 1831, the Government had set up the National Board of Education in Ireland composed of Catholics and Protestants and introduced a system of non-denominational "mixed" schooling which departed from the Scripture education favoured by some Protestant groups, the Church of Scotland had been quick to protest. The General Assembly had particular concerns about the way the Bible was to be taught (chosen portions of Scripture being selected rather than the whole Bible), and the fact that religious instruction would be given separate from the rest of the school curriculum.⁴⁰ In England the two organisations mainly responsible for parish education both had strong religious backing, – the National Society which was the organ of the Church of England and the British and Foreign Schools Society which was supported mainly by the Dissenters. In addition there were always some who

³⁹ S. J. Brown, *The National Churches of England, Ireland, and Scotland, 1801-1846* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 225.

⁴⁰ AAGA, 1833, 41-2. See Chapter Two, 81.

favoured a purely secular education. The Central Society of Education was formed in 1836 to try and persuade the Government to exclude religious instruction from schools. Just as the situation in Ireland had been complicated by the existence of two denominations, Catholic and Protestant, the question of what kind of religious instruction should be given in schools was also one which perplexed the Government when assistance for schools in England was considered in the 1830's:

The main division of opinion was not between religious education and secular education, but between two different notions of religious education. One opinion wanted a general and simple education in religion without any instruction characteristic of a particular church ... the other opinion held that religious instruction was useless unless it included training in membership of a church.⁴¹

In England investigations of Commissioners into a number of endowed schools had revealed vast funds which had been embezzled or misapplied. In May 1835 Lord Brougham submitted a proposal to the House of Lords that a Board should be established by the Government to supervise the proceedings of the trustees of these schools. This was supported by the Bishop of Gloucester and the Archbishop of Canterbury with the proviso that the education given should be based on religion. The *Scotsman* newspaper reported this with the comment, "We need not say, that what these Prelates mean by religion, is not simple Christianity, but the rites and doctrines of the Church of England exclusively ... thank Heaven, the new Irish National Schools, as modelled by Lord Stanley's bill, made the first effectual breach in that odious narrow system, which would fasten the yoke of this sort of Protestant ascendancy round the neck of the rising generation".⁴² From 1833 the Treasury paid an annual grant of £20,000 to the National Society and the British and Foreign Schools Society in proportion to the amount of voluntary subscriptions which they raised. The National Society with its ability to tap into the large Church of England membership always qualified for the larger part of the state grant.

When it came to the General Assembly's application for a grant to extend school education in Scotland in 1836, this matter of religious instruction was less of an issue. The Church of Scotland had always been proud of the fact that pupils of all denominations were welcome in all schools under its supervision (including the parochial schools) and that in its own schools allowances had been made for Catholic

⁴¹ Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church Part I 1829-1859* (London: SCM Press, 1987), 338.

⁴² *Scotsman*, 27 May, 1835.

parents to withdraw their children from religious instruction. The Education Committee had reported to the Assembly in 1829 that Catholic children were attending Assembly schools,

on the same terms as to the Protestants, and ... the teachers have been directed not to press on the Catholic children any instruction to which their parents or their priest may object, as interfering with the principles of their own religion.⁴³

Moreover the committee were always anxious to point out that the education delivered in the Assembly schools was comprehensive enough to allow many of the scholars to leave their traditional family occupations and set out on new careers. In its reports the committee carefully balanced the moral benefits with the educational benefits of its schools. The 1835 report commented on the various careers taken up by former pupils – manufacturing businesses in the large towns, masters of sailing ships, adventure teachers – but was circumspect enough to add, "religion, it must be remembered, is a principal and overruling element in the plainest education given at the assembly schools".⁴⁴

Defending the parish school system in Scotland, Kay-Shuttleworth wrote:

The existence of common Schools in Scotland has been greatly facilitated, by the agreement of the great majority of the inhabitants in religious doctrine, on the basis of the Shorter Catechism of the Assembly of Divines. ... Up to the period of the disruption of the Free Church, public attention had been scarcely awakened to the existence of features in the Parochial Schools, inconsistent with an equality of civil privileges ...⁴⁵

This said, it is interesting to note that in 1836 the Education Committee, changed its official designation without even reporting that it had done so. Whereas up until then it had been called the "Committee of the General Assembly for increasing the means of *Education and Religious Instruction* [my italics] in Scotland particularly in the Highlands and Islands", from 1836 it is called the "Committee of the General Assembly for increasing the means of *Education* in Scotland particularly in the Highlands and Islands" – the phrase *and Religious Instruction* having been dropped from the title. This may have been an attempt to make clear that the committee regarded its primary task as improving school education in Scotland. Assembly reports, however, continued to draw attention to religious instruction as a subject which Presbyteries must always inspect in their visits to schools. It has already been

⁴³ ECR, 1829, 11.

⁴⁴ ECR, 1835, 20-22.

⁴⁵ Kay-Shuttleworth, *Public Education*, 359-60.

noted that in the Rules and Regulations drawn up for its schools, the committee had stipulated that every day the teacher should open and close his school with prayer, teach the Mother's Catechism and the Shorter Catechism and read and explain a portion of the Scriptures.⁴⁶ The emphasis on religious and moral education may have been seen as necessary in the committee's appeals to the church-going public whose main concern was likely to be with the morals of the young.

Plans for Model Schools

The success of Mr. Wood's Sessional School in Edinburgh had persuaded the Education Committee that it was now necessary that before taking up their posts all teachers should spend time there and become "acquainted with the best methods of teaching now in use". It was time to establish "a Model School more completely organised and upon a scale commensurate with the wants of the country".⁴⁷ The original intention of Wood's Sessional school had been to improve the standard of teaching in the subjects commonly taught in elementary schools. As it became the expectation that all teachers ought to spend some time at a normal school before taking up a post, the need for more advanced training became apparent. In 1835 the Education Committee proposed that initially training would be of two standards. Those being trained in subjects taught at "the higher class of schools" (parochial schools, burgh schools, and privately endowed schools) would attend for two years, while those expecting to take up posts where only the three Rs would be taught, would only be required to attend for eighteen months.⁴⁸ Existing teachers who wished to take advantage of this training were to be admitted at any age and all those who completed their course would receive a diploma certifying their qualifications. At first teachers were slow to take advantage of the training available, but gradually the numbers increased. Even short periods of training were seen to be beneficial.

As a result of the Church's approach to the Government for a grant in 1836⁴⁹ the following year Parliament agreed to give £10,000 "for the erection of school-houses ... for the education of the children of the poorer classes, and for the erection of

⁴⁶ Chapter 2, Appendix I.

⁴⁷ *ECR*, 1835, 9-10. A Correspondent wrote to the *Scotsman* describing the Sessional School as "a hot-bed of Toryism and Prelacy", and accused John Wood of being a high Tory Episcopalian who was anti-Church and who indoctrinated the pupils with his views. (*Scotsman*, August 1838)

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 1835, 11-12.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 1836, 9-10.

Model Schools in Scotland".⁵⁰ That same year the Assembly learned that Wood's Sessional School would now be known as the General Assembly's Normal Seminary in Edinburgh.⁵¹ In the following year negotiations were completed for the hand-over of the property and the superintendence of the school to the Assembly's committee on the understanding that each of the Kirk Sessions of Edinburgh would "have the privilege of sending twelve children for education in the school gratis, [or] at such rates as the respective Sessions shall deem advisable..." and that it would continue as a school for the education of poor children. As an indication of its use the committee informed the Assembly that "the Edinburgh school is now attended by 250 pupils, of whom 60 are taught gratis, and the rest at a low rate of wages. As a normal school, it has received and instructed, less or more, 50 pupils in the profession and practice of teaching, within the last twelve months". Of these, thirty-seven went to teach in Assembly schools and thirteen to other schools.⁵²

Although by this time there were growing fears that with further Parliamentary grants might come Government interference in Scottish education and so a diminishing role for the Church in the superintendence of schools, in the presbyteries there was considerable support for the Education Committee's course of action and a recognition of the financial problems it faced. The Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale overtured the General Assembly to find ways, with Government help if necessary, "for extending the blessings of our Parochial System of Education to all classes of the population; and especially for securing the erection and endowment of Parish Schools in connection with all the newly erected Places of Worship".⁵³ During 1837 overtures in similar terms were sent up by the Presbytery of Aberdeen and by the Synod of Aberdeen, both of which drew attention in particular to the needs of the expanding population in the large towns. "The Presbytery of Dalkeith, recognising the need for the professional training of schoolmasters, expressed concern that there was no required course of study and no standard qualifications for teachers as there were for other professions."⁵⁴ As might be expected, however, not everyone in the Church agreed with the committee's policies. The Presbytery of Alford was outraged that the committee was spending its money on teacher training rather than on

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1837, 8.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.29.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 1838, pp.22-23.

⁵³ *GAP*, 1837, Overtures to the General Assembly from the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, *Overture Anent Education*, May 1837.

⁵⁴ *GAP*, 1836-37, *Overture from the Presbytery of Dalkeith*, April 1837.

building schools. Having considered the Education Committee's report on the continuing educational need of the Highlands, it overtured the Assembly to,

counteract the evils that must manifestly arise by misapplying the funds which they (the Assembly) have received from the people of Scotland for the sole purpose of establishing and maintaining elementary schools, particularly in the highlands and islands.⁵⁵

This protest was a warning to the committee that alarm bells were beginning to ring in some parts of the Church. It was a foretaste of the opposition that would shortly come not only from Dissenters but from the mainstream of the establishment itself.

Ambivalence Towards Parliamentary Grants

Of the £10,000 granted by Parliament in 1837, £6,000 was to be applied, "for the purpose of assisting in forming a permanent endowment for a schoolmaster in each of the forty Highland [Parliamentary Church] districts". This was the first time grants had been made towards schoolmasters' salaries and it was described by the Education Committee as "the commencement of a system of paternal liberality on the part of the Government".⁵⁶ This allocation, however, was hardly generous. It was calculated that invested at 3½%, £6,000 would only provide nine or ten salaries, still leaving another thirty-one to be provided for. Nevertheless, encouraged by this financial assistance, the committee pressed on with its scheme for extending education in the Lowlands and by the Assembly of 1838 could report that it had made contributions towards the salaries of teachers in schools in Aberdeen, Glasgow, Leith, Dundee, Dunkeld, Dunblane, and Chirnside and that it had now established schools for the benefit of the poor in most of the principal towns of Scotland – Edinburgh, Leith, Glasgow, Greenock, Perth and Aberdeen.⁵⁷

While there is no reference in the Acts of Assembly or in the Education Committee's reports to any Government interference in the Church's traditional supervision of Scottish schools prior to the setting up of the Committee of the Privy Council on Education in 1839, many presbyteries were suspicious of "Greeks bearing gifts". The settlement in Ireland had not been forgotten: the establishment by the Whig Government in 1831 of the National Board of Education in Ireland, with its

⁵⁵ GAP, 1836-7, Presbytery of Alford, May 1836, *Overture respecting Highland Schools*.

⁵⁶ ECR, 1837, 8-9.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 1838, 16-21.

compromise on the issue of Scripture education, still rankled in Scotland. Many feared that the influence of Radicals and Dissenters might prevail and that religious instruction would no longer retain its privileged place in the school curriculum. Moreover the disputes over the appointment of parish ministers that had arisen since the passing of the Veto Act had raised the whole issue of the extent of the Established Church's jurisdiction in relation to the civil authorities. If the state could intervene as it had done in the appointments to the parishes of Auchterarder and Lethendy (1837-8), how far might it, as paymaster, seek to dictate policy and appointments in schooling? Suspicions like these found expression in a number of overtures sent up to the Assembly from presbyteries and synods. When the Synod of Moray met in April 1837 it passed two overtures. One referred to the historic connection between the Church and the educational institutions of the country and the attempts "recently made to introduce such changes as would destroy this connection, and wrest from the Church the right which it has, by the Articles of Union, and the laws of the land, to superintend all Universities, Schools, and Seminaries of Learning". It called on the Assembly to secure the traditional right of having "Christian Education imparted in connection with secular learning". The other overture called on the Assembly to convey to the Government its distress and apprehension regarding the educational system in Ireland.⁵⁸ In a similar vein the Synod of Aberdeen voiced its concern at the "violation of the Church's undoubted right of Visitation and Superintendence of the Universities and Established Schools" and passed an overture regarding possible innovations being introduced into Scotland's educational system and in particular "attempts now being made ... to admit into our Seminaries and Universities, Teachers of every Religious Creed, and of no Religion at all, and thus to open a wide door for Popish Delusion and Infidel Apostacy, as may be clearly seen from the Educational System introduced into Ireland ...".⁵⁹ The Presbytery of Kincardine O'Neil too feared innovations which might undermine the Church's right of superintendence of schools.⁶⁰ Thus in the years leading up to the passing of the Highland Schools Act there was considerable ambivalence in Scotland towards the acceptance of Government grants for schools.

⁵⁸ GAP, 1837, Overtures by the Synod of Moray: 1. *On the Connection of Religion and Learning*, April 1837: 2. *On the System of Education in Ireland*, April 1837.

⁵⁹ GAP, 1837, Overture from the Synod of Aberdeen, *Against Innovations on the Educational System of Scotland*.

⁶⁰ GAP, 1837, Overture from the Presbytery of Kincardine O'Neil, May 1837.

In 1838 a Parliamentary Committee began yet another an inquiry into the state of education in Scotland. Anticipating the possible introduction of some kind of Government inspection of schools and no doubt hoping to delay or thwart any such plans, the Education Committee took pains to ensure that all Scottish Members of Parliament were fully informed of the information given to the inquiry regarding the extent of the Church's superintendence of schools in Scotland. It placed in the hands of MPs copies of their response to the inquiry which showed that schools "of every description" were inspected yearly by presbyteries, and that sometimes there was "a further superintendence by schools, – as by Education Societies, by corporations, by private associations".⁶¹

In May 1838 the Education Committee reported to the Assembly that a Bill laying down the conditions which would accompany grants from the Exchequer to schools in those newly erected Government parishes in the Highlands, was at the committee stage in Parliament. These would be similar to the regulations governing the appointment of parochial teachers. This arrangement proved acceptable to the Assembly⁶² and in August the Bill was passed as the Highland Schools Act. (An Act to facilitate the Foundation and Endowment of Additional Schools in Scotland – ACT, Vict.1st and 2nd, cap.87.) This Act was not received with unanimity throughout the country. Henry Cockburn recorded in his *Journal* that Dissenters were petitioning against the Government grant "and doing everything to make it unpopular; and all because these schools are put under the presbyteries of the Church".⁶³ The Education Committee was anxious that teachers appointed under the terms of this Act would not be paid less than the existing parochial schoolmasters. In the event the Treasury agreed to calculate each salary individually, while reminding the committee that "it was never the intention of the Government or of the Legislature to relieve entirely the Heritors or inhabitants of these districts from the burden of providing the means of education to those who stood in need of it".⁶⁴

The passing of this Act coincided more or less with the setting up of a new Privy Council committee, the Committee of Council on Education, "to superintend the application of any sums voted by Parliament for the purpose of promoting Public

⁶¹ *ECR*, 1839, 20.

⁶² *Scotsman*, May 1838.

⁶³ Cockburn, *Journal*, vol.i, 170, March 1838.

⁶⁴ *ECR*, 1839, 22-23 and 39. According to the Act salaries were to be calculated as the sum equal to the interest of double the estimated value of the school.

Education".⁶⁵ From now on this committee would be responsible for the allocation of grants for school education in Scotland as well as England, and for determining the conditions on which these grants would be made. Soon after it was constituted the Committee of Council made it known that no future grants would be made "for the establishment or support of Normal Schools, or of any other Schools, unless the right of inspection be retained", and that it was satisfied that no other funds were available and a school-house had been obtained.⁶⁶ Almost immediately synods and presbyteries began to voice their objections. Again, as in previous years, the old concerns about Scripture education and the Irish situation reappeared.

Although the Board of Education had been formed in Ireland some eight years previously and had met with considerable success,⁶⁷ the Synod of Moray still bewailed the fact that the system in Ireland was conducted, "in a manner so as to exclude almost altogether the Sacred Scriptures from the Schools ...".⁶⁸ The Synod of Angus and Mearns reminded the Assembly of the need for a uniform series of school books, "which shall be recommended by their tendency to promote a knowledge of the truths of Christianity; and, in particular, of the principles and history of the Church of Scotland."⁶⁹ The Presbytery of Glasgow too, was worried about the future of religious instruction and overtured the Assembly to petition Parliament to reject any educational schemes,

which do not provide the fullest security for inculcating upon the rising generation, as a part of the regular business of their ordinary school instruction, the doctrines of the unmutilated Word of God, as laid down in the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Articles of the Church of England ...".⁷⁰

Similarly the Synod of Dumfries asked the Assembly to address Parliament, "praying that any system of National Education which they may be pleased to establish by legislative enactment may be based on the Protestant Religion, and that the salutary influence of the Parochial Clergy in superintending the schools within the bounds of

⁶⁵ *Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education*, 1839, vii. In the following pages this committee will be described as "the Committee of Council".

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, June 1839, viii, and September 1839, 2.

⁶⁷ Brown, *The National Churches*, p.363: "The Board of Education formed by the Whigs in 1831 steadily expanded its provision of a non-denominational popular education. There were 789 schools with some 107,000 pupils in 1833. By 1841 that had increased to 2,337 schools and over 281,000 pupils."

⁶⁸ *GAP*, 1839, Overture from the Synod of Moray, *Anent Irish National Schools*.

⁶⁹ *GAP*, 1839, Overture from the Synod of Angus and Mearns, April 1839, *Anent School Books*.

⁷⁰ *GAP*, 1839, Presbytery of Glasgow, May 1839, *Overture Anent Education in England*.

their pastoral care may not be compromised".⁷¹ Protest as it may, it soon became clear that nothing the Church of Scotland could do would change the mind of Parliament. A new system had been agreed upon and established and henceforth the Church would need to co-operate with it or go without financial assistance from the Government. It should be said that the formation of the new Committee of Council initially met with similar opposition in England:

The cry of 'Danger to the Church' was raised in the country ... and the opportunity was too favourable to be lost by the leaders of the Opposition of that day, aiming a blow at the Government, by taking up that cry within the walls of Parliament.⁷²

While it was true that from now on schools in Scotland receiving Exchequer grants would be open to HM Inspectors in addition to Presbytery examination, as yet this posed no real threat to the Church's authority. At this stage, moreover, fears regarding the removal of religious instruction in schools were groundless. Indeed, the fact that this was one of the subjects to be inspected, confirmed its place in the school curriculum. As we shall see, however, the presbyteries of the Kirk were not convinced. For our purposes here it is important to notice that the above protestations were expressions of concern, not for school education in general, but for the future of religious instruction, especially instruction about the Protestant faith and the Church of Scotland. It did not seem to be important to these presbyteries and synods that government grants and inspection might benefit Scottish education as a whole.

The On-Going Building Programme

There were social and economic problems which the Education Committee had had to take into account from the commencement of its work. These became even more pressing towards the middle of the century. Describing conditions in the Lowland towns Smout wrote:

The age of great industrial triumphs was an age of appalling social deprivation ... I am astounded by the tolerance, in a country boasting of its high moral standards and basking in the spiritual leadership of a Thomas Chalmers, of

⁷¹ GAP, 1839, Overture from the Synod of Dumfries, 1839, *On National Education*.

⁷² [George Grey], "Committee of Council on Education", *Edinburgh Review*, vol. lxxv (April 1842), 108.

unspeakable urban squalor, compounded of drink abuse, bad housing, low wages, long hours and sham education.⁷³

As for the Highlands with its vast distances and difficult terrain and scattered hamlets, it appeared that no matter how many schools were established, there were never enough. The committee was always ready to acknowledge the size of the task it had undertaken. Time and again it reminded the Assembly that it could only attempt to supplement the existing system. In spite of all the difficulties it faced the committee never gave up in its attempts to provide more schools and a more highly qualified teaching profession. It even tried to convince itself that the Disruption was only a minor obstacle. The committee claimed that posts vacated by those who joined the Free Church of Scotland were soon filled. In the months before and after 1843 negotiations to take over the running of the Normal School in Glasgow continued, apparently without very much concern that most of the staff would secede to the Free Church and lose their jobs, and that founding members such as David Stow and Professor David Welsh, both of whom had gone over to the Free Church, would be sacrificing a dream they had worked long and hard to realise:

Though there was a change of circumstances in the state of the Church in 1843, yet the General Assembly did not for a moment pause in the great works of usefulness in which it had been engaged, and never did it think of abandoning the scheme which the liberal offer of the government had enabled it to project.⁷⁴

The committee believed that its schools could continue to operate very much as they had always done. They would be acceptable to every denomination and would not be discriminated against by "any of the Dissenting or Seceding bodies, on account of what they taught on the subject of religion, — much less on account of their dependence on the Church".⁷⁵ In reality the effect of the Disruption on the Established Church's educational scheme was greater than it cared to admit. It lost the use of the schools and schoolmasters' houses which had been provided by heritors who seceded to the Free Church, recognising that, "accommodations have been in all cases held during the pleasure of those who gave them, and were never bestowed as an absolute, irrevocable gift".⁷⁶ Half of the teachers in Assembly schools left voluntarily or were dismissed, and the Church lost its right to examine

⁷³ Smout, *A Century of the Scottish People*, 2.

⁷⁴ *ECR*, 1845, 13.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 1844, 9.

⁷⁶ *ECR*, 1844, 8.

more than three hundred others who were sympathetic to Free Church principles. Perhaps most seriously of all the Disruption weakened the Kirk's claim to be the national Church with statutory oversight of parish schools. In spite of these difficulties, and in the face of competition from the Free Church, by 1849 the number of Assembly schools had risen from 146 in 1843 before the Disruption to 208, 58 of these in Lowland parishes, and the committee had accepted responsibility for normal schools in Edinburgh and in Glasgow.⁷⁷

On 14 January 1840, Principal Baird, Convener of the Education Committee, died at the age of 78. Baird had been the first to draw the Church's attention to the serious state of education in the Highlands and Islands and had been the driving force behind the committee since its inception in 1825. In assessing the needs of the country he had not been content to draw conclusions only on the basis of submitted reports, but at great personal inconvenience and in a time of poor health, he had, on at least two occasions, toured the Highlands from Argyll and Kintyre to Lewis and Orkney and Shetland, surveying the situation for himself. In doing this he had set an example to future HMI John Gordon, the committee secretary, and other committee members, demonstrating how useful such an independent inspection of schools could be. Baird's death coincided with the end of one era and the beginning of another in the Established Church's relationship with school education in Scotland.

Kirk and Government – The Tensions of Partnership

The Dispute over State Funding and Government Inspections

With regard to its policy of appointing inspectors to Scottish schools, the Committee of Council assured the Church that it would select:

Gentlemen who possess the confidence of the Church of Scotland, while their acquaintance with the technical details of elementary instruction, and their zeal for the education of the poorer classes, will afford a guarantee that they are fit agents ... for promoting the improvement and extension of such elementary education as may secure the religious and moral improvement of the children of the poor.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ By 1849 the Free Church had 428 schools fully supported by Church funds, and two normal schools, one in Glasgow and one in Edinburgh. (*Free Church of Scotland Assembly Proceedings*, 1849, 248.)

⁷⁸ [Sir Joshua Walmsley] *The School in its relation to The State, the Church, and the Congregation, being an explanation of the Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education, in August and*

The Kirk's anxieties, however, were not so easily assuaged. In January 1840 John Gordon, Secretary to the Assembly's Education Committee, wrote to the Committee of Council seeking clarification about the regulations relating to inspection and how inspectors would be appointed. In its reply the Committee of Council informed the Church that inspectors would be appointed by the Crown on the recommendation of the Committee of Council and after consultation with the Education Committee. The Committee of Council gave its assurance that it would co-operate fully with the Church in school inspections.⁷⁹ These reassurances, however, still did not silence the Education Committee's critics in the presbyteries. When the Assembly met in May 1840 it had to deal with at least two overtures and a motion from the floor. The Presbytery of Alford complained that the whole procedure had been illegal, not having had the consent of the House of Commons, and called on the Assembly to instruct ministers and elders and members of the Church, "not to solicit or accept any part of the public grant for Schools in Scotland, under the condition of their being subject to the inspection of inspectors named by her Majesty in Council ... and to adopt measures to secure the authority and superintendence of the Church".⁸⁰ In similar terms the Presbytery of St Andrew's warned the Assembly that the Church could have no guarantee of the soundness of the religious principles of the school inspectors who might, "ultimately wrest from the Ministers of the Church that power of superintending and directing the religious education of the youth". It overtured the Assembly "not to sanction any measure for receiving any Grant of public money, in aid of Education, coupled with the very obnoxious condition that any inspection of Schools shall take place which shall not originate in and be carried on by the Church itself".⁸¹

In presenting its report to the General Assembly in 1840 the Education Committee took great care to explain its discussions with the Committee of Council regarding the proposals to introduce Government inspectors. The Assembly were informed of the Committee of Council's reassurance that any inspections would be carried out in co-operation with the Church and that inspectors would not interfere with the instruction, management or discipline of the school, or "press upon them any

December, 1846. (London, John Murray, 1847.), 28. See also *Minutes of Committee of Council 1839-40*, 20.

⁷⁹ *Minutes of the Committee of Council*, 1840, 19-20.

⁸⁰ *GAP*, Overture from the Presbytery of Alford, May 1840.

⁸¹ *GAP*, 1840, Overture from the Presbytery of St Andrews, May 1840, *Anent The Government Plan for Inspection of Schools*.

suggestions which they may be disinclined to receive". The Committee of Council, it was stated, believed that joint consultation in the appointment of inspectors would be to the benefit of all concerned.⁸² Given these reassurances the Education Committee advised the Assembly that by a majority it had decided that there appeared to be no grounds for refusing the proposed Government grants. A long discussion of the committee's report and recommendation ensued. Eventually Daniel Dewar, Principal of Marischal College, Aberdeen, moved that the Assembly should agree to the committee's proposals with the reservation that the committee should ensure that nothing was done "in receiving the Government Grants of money prejudicial to the Government and discipline of the Church".⁸³ Speaking against this motion and being highly critical of the way the committee had handled the matter, Norman MacLeod of St Columba's, Glasgow, moved that, "the exclusive superintendence of the Church was an essential part of her constitution" and that the proceedings of the Education Committee should be disapproved and any Government grant rejected. Dr. MacLeod, however, was persuaded to withdraw his motion in favour of a proposal that the Assembly should defer approval and that the matter should be sent down to presbyteries for their consideration. When the vote was taken Dewar's original motion to adopt the committee's report and recommendation carried by 157 votes to 105.

The decision taken by the Assembly in 1840 would have major repercussions for the Church's involvement with school education in the future. It was a major concession and an acknowledgement that it could no longer afford to be independent. Yet in another sense it was an indication of the Church's confidence in its reputation and standing in this field and in the quality and importance of the Education Committee's work. That committee certainly believed that its policy and achievements made it a worthy partner of the Government and that, with the force of the ancient statutes behind it, it was in a strong enough position to hold its own in any discussions. Future dealings with the Government would test the committee's conviction that it could negotiate from a position of strength.

⁸² *ECR*, 1840, 23.

⁸³ *AAGA*, 1840, 44ff.

The First Government Inspections

The Church had been promised that inspectors would only be interested in collecting facts and that they would not interfere with the running of the schools. This "collecting of facts" turned out to be very thorough and covered every aspect of school life. In a section of the Committee of Council minutes for 1840 headed *Instructions For The Inspection of Schools*, it was laid down that inspectors were expected to report on the living conditions of schoolmasters, the books used, the layout of classrooms, organisation and teaching methods, methods of discipline and punishment, school attendance, and the targets and attainments of pupils in a wide range of subjects. Where schools were connected with the National Church, inspectors were to explore "how far the doctrines and Principles of the Church are instilled into the minds of the children".⁸⁴ Any application for a grant towards building a new school had to be accompanied by detailed plans of its dimensions and provision. An example of what was involved may be seen from one of the first inspections to be carried out in Scotland. In June 1841 HM Inspector of Schools John Gibson submitted to the Committee of Council a report on his inspection of schools in the Presbyteries of Haddington and Dunbar. The inspection had lasted just over six weeks and had included parochial schools, burgh schools, endowed schools, adventure schools and female schools, sixty-four schools in all. Gibson's report included details of the situation and size of school buildings, whether children were assembled and dismissed with prayer and the Bible read, the subjects taught and the books used for lessons. He remarked on the irregularity of attendance and suggested that proper registers should be kept. He noted that there was a need for good but inexpensive school-books and that generally speaking school accommodation was unsatisfactory. On the whole teachers in parochial schools came out best while teachers in side schools and adventure schools were the most ineffective and least well qualified. Reflecting on the latter he wrote, "the education of a great proportion of our population rests on a precarious, unsatisfactory, and infirm basis".⁸⁵ In many respects this report was not significantly different from the kind of reports prepared by presbyteries for the Assembly's Education Committee. Apart from gleaning information about developments in different parts of the country and being able to offer advice and share ideas, it is not clear from the minutes what the Committee of

⁸⁴ *Minutes of the Committee of Council*, 1840, 30-31.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 1840-41, 271-285.

Council intended to do with the facts it was collecting or how far these would be used to influence its funding decisions. There was a feeling in the Education Committee that this method of inspection did not produce an accurate assessment of the effectiveness of the educational system.⁸⁶

Gibson's inspections included visits to Sessional schools and Assembly schools. In June 1842 he reported that eight of the ten Sessional schools in Aberdeen and Fordyce were admirably taught. In a report on his visits to Highland schools he drew attention to "the wretchedness and insufficiency of the accommodations provided for the teachers on the General Assembly's education scheme". He also remarked on the benefit of even a minimal teacher training and concluded that the standard of Assembly teachers who had attended a normal school was far superior to the best of those parochial teachers who had undergone no regular course of professional training.⁸⁷

In 1844 Gibson joined the Free Church and had to relinquish his post. He was replaced by John Gordon, who had been secretary to the Education Committee since its inception in 1825 and had accompanied George Baird when he visited schools in the Highlands and Islands.

Further Plans for Model Schools

As far back as 1835 the Education Committee had obtained the Assembly's backing to approach the Government for funding so that more teachers could attend Wood's Sessional School in Edinburgh. During the discussion of the report that year David Welsh, in supporting the committee, had entertained the Assembly with his descriptions of some schools he had known.⁸⁸ "Many schools in the country," he said, "were taught by disbanded soldiers, disabled sailors, by shepherds and by ploughmen. ... He had known some instances of persons being appointed to teach a school on the strength of certificates from their former employers, given, not because their former employers were satisfied of their excellence, but because they wished to get rid of them as nuisances."⁸⁹ Five years on things had not improved much and in the summer of 1840 the Education Committee wrote to the Committee of Council

⁸⁶ *ECR*, 1842, 16.

⁸⁷ *Minutes of the Committee of Council*, 1842-43, 658 and 669.

⁸⁸ Welsh was one of the founders of the Glasgow Infant School Society. In this capacity he is likely to have had an intimate knowledge of elementary schools. Given his involvement with the Society's model school in Glasgow, he would have a special interest in a model School in Edinburgh.

⁸⁹ *Scotsman*, 26 May, 1835.

exploring the possibility of funding for the erection of a new normal school building in Edinburgh. This was followed up in May 1841 with a more formal application from the committee.⁹⁰

In considering this request the Committee of Council had to take into account discussions it had been having with the Glasgow Educational Society. This society had been set up to manage the model schools which David Stow had pioneered in Glasgow.⁹¹ By 1839 the Society was heavily in debt, mainly as a result of undertaking the erection of its new Normal School at Dundas Vale which had been opened in 1837 but was not yet completed. In spite of substantial Treasury grants, by 1841 the debt stood at £11,000 and there seemed little hope of the society ever clearing this. Before investing further Government money in a scheme which, although offering valuable training for future teachers, appeared to be a financial disaster, the Committee of Council decided to send HMI John Gibson to Glasgow to inspect the school. In his report Gibson expressed concern at the standard of students being accepted for training. He claimed that almost any boy or girl of 13 or 14 years of age could meet the entrance requirements.⁹² Those enrolled the previous year had been a motley collection. One had been a Church of Scotland minister, one had been a carpenter, one a dancing teacher, one a portrait painter, one a baker, three had been shopkeepers and twenty-one had been teachers from small adventure schools. Gibson concluded that the training received at the Glasgow Normal School was totally inadequate and contrasted unfavourably with that provided by the Assembly's Normal School in Edinburgh.⁹³

Not wishing to lose the benefits of the Glasgow Normal School, the Council sent Gibson back to Scotland later that year with the instruction that he was to confer with both the directors of the Society and representatives of the General Assembly's Education Committee. As a result a plan was drawn up whereby the Glasgow institution would be placed under the direct control of the Church's Education Committee in return for a grant which would go towards building and running a new normal school in Edinburgh and also towards paying off the debt incurred by the

⁹⁰ *Minutes of the Committee of Council*, 1841-42, 34-37.

⁹¹ The first model school was opened in Glasgow in 1827. In 1834 George Lewis was responsible for reconstituting Stow's Infant School Society as The Glasgow Educational Society.

⁹² *Minutes of the Committee of Council*, 1840-41, 412.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 419. See, however, "Committee of Council on Education" in the *Edinburgh Review*, vol. lxxv, April 1842, 137, where the writer [George Grey] said of Gibson's report, that "notwithstanding some defects pointed out by Mr Gibson, [the Normal Seminary at Glasgow] appears to be the best as yet in existence, to which England is indebted for some of her most efficient teachers".

Glasgow Educational Society.⁹⁴ It was agreed that the Committee of Council would give £5,000 to be used to defray a portion of the debt incurred by the Glasgow Educational Society, on condition that the Education Committee would be responsible for the remainder of the debt and that the Glasgow Educational Society would hand over the buildings at Dundas Vale to be maintained and conducted by the Church as a "Model Elementary Schools (for the children of the poor of the city of Glasgow), and as a Normal School (for the instruction and training of schoolmasters of elementary schools, for the children of the labouring classes)". The Council further agreed to give the Church a grant of £5,000 on the condition that the General Assembly raise another £5,000 and that the total [£10,000] be used to pay for Model Elementary Schools for the children of the poor in Edinburgh, and for a normal school. In both Glasgow and Edinburgh the right of the Government to inspect the model and normal schools was secured. It was agreed that £1,000 (a £500 annual Government grant and a £500 subsidy from the Church) together with fees and subscriptions, would pay for the running of these establishments.⁹⁵

There were a number of other conditions stated in the terms of acceptance which would later become matters of contention. The first was that if it seemed to the Committee of Council that the normal schools were not being maintained and conducted satisfactorily by the Church, the annual payments of £500 would be stopped. Secondly, a rector was to be appointed in each establishment and thirdly the Committee of Council was to have a say in the appointments of rectors or headmasters and could at any time withdraw their approval of a rector or headmaster who then must resign.⁹⁶ The Church's committee did not object to the Council having a say in the appointment of a rector but took exception to the latter part of the clause arguing that it involved an interference with, and control over the management and discipline of the school. This was held by the Education Committee to contradict an existing agreement set down in a communication of July 1840 from the Committee of Council which applied to conditions laid down when Parliamentary grants were given to those setting up new parish schools (in quoad sacra parishes). This stated that there would be no interference in the management or discipline of the schools.⁹⁷ The Council agreed to withdraw this clause and in May 1842 the General Assembly accepted the Committee of Council's proposals and urged its Education Committee

⁹⁴ ECR, 1848, Appendix XI, 44-46. Also *Minutes of the Committee of Council*, 1841-42, 48.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p.45.

⁹⁷ ECR, 1848, Appendices XI and XII, 45-7.

to set about raising its share of the costs without delay. It is important to note that in a letter sent in November 1842 to the committee, Kay-Shuttleworth made it clear that the Committee of Council regarded the building of the new school in Edinburgh and the take-over of the school in Glasgow as all part of the one plan and so any grant depended on the fulfilment of both parts of the agreement.

The disputes and uncertainties before and after the Disruption meant that the years 1842-1844 were not the best of times to be trying to raise money from congregations and the committee "found cause to regret that the occasion for pleading should have fallen upon a period so unpropitious"⁹⁸. By April 1843 subscriptions towards the new Edinburgh school only amounted to £1,600 and a proportion of this was conditional on there being no secession.⁹⁹ The committee was therefore far short of its target of £5,000. In July the Council wrote to the Education Committee asking why no more had been heard about the new Edinburgh Normal School. (The Council do not seem to have taken any account of the Disruption.) The Church's failure to raise its share of the £10,000 total had meant that the scheme to build the Edinburgh school had not gone ahead. This in turn meant that the Committee of Council refused to advance the Church any money since it regarded the two schemes (for Glasgow and Edinburgh) as part of the one plan. The Assembly's committee remonstrated against this but the Council were adamant that this had been part of the original agreement.¹⁰⁰ The committee eventually had to accept this and in August wrote back assuring the Council that the plans for both schools would proceed.

By September 1843, however, partly as a result of losing the support of members who had joined the Free Church, the Education Committee had only managed to raise £1,000 towards the cost of the new school in Edinburgh. Concluding that the necessary £5,000 was well beyond its reach, the committee went back to the Committee of Council with the suggestion that the projected cost of the new building should be reduced and that the committee and the Council should now each contribute £2,500. The Council agreed but stipulated that the new school must be adequate to meet their requirements which included accommodation for two hundred children in the model school. The Education Committee accepted the Council's conditions and proceeded to commission the building of the new school at a cost of

⁹⁸ *ECR*, 1843, 19.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1845, 39.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 1848, Appendices XVIII and XIX, 52-5.

£8,000. The opening ceremony took place on 19 May 1845, with the building free of debt.¹⁰¹

After a period of uncertainty as to what would happen to the staff of the Glasgow school following the Disruption, the Established Church made it clear that only its members would be employed. People like Stow who had gone over to the Free Church were forced to leave and in May 1845 the Normal School in Glasgow was opened under the management of the Established Church.

Kirk and Government – A Strained Relationship

Two contemporaneous and interconnected disputes between the Established Church and the Privy Council developed over the years 1845 to 1848. The common theme was the funding of the normal schools in Edinburgh and Glasgow. In one case the dispute mainly concerned Government grants for the funding of teacher training and in the other case the disagreement was over the committee's management and maintenance of its normal schools.

The Funding and Training of Student Teachers

With the increasing emphasis on teacher training came the need to determine the duration and content of the prescribed courses. In the years 1835-36 there were only twenty-seven teachers in training at Edinburgh and of these fifteen had been placed by the committee. By 1839 the number had risen to 122 and soon the demand for trained teachers outstripped supply.¹⁰² To encourage teachers to undertake even a minimum training the committee urged them to attend "the best conducted seminaries in their respective neighbourhoods ... schools that are fit to be taken as the models."¹⁰³ Soon all teachers seeking employment by the Church were expected to undertake some training.¹⁰⁴ As numbers grew so did the financial outlay of the committee.

To enter a normal school candidates who intended to teach in Assembly schools had to sit an entrance examination and were expected to display an aptitude for

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 1845, 15 and 17.

¹⁰² Ibid., 1839, 17.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 1840, 12.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 1848, Appendix VIII, 38: *Memorial in regard to the General Assembly's Normal School, to the Privy Council Committee, February 1841.*

teaching. Those who could not afford the entrance fee were exempt and the committee contributed towards their keep. They were expected "to be in connection with the Church of Scotland", but those not seeking employment by the Church were not asked about their religious affiliation. The committee stated that the length of attendance was never prescribed and depended on the knowledge and skills acquired before starting the training course and the type of school students hoped to teach in. It varied from one to ten or twelve months but seldom was longer than six months. "Those who are under the control of the Committee never depart until the master certifies that they have the full benefit of his instructions", the others were free to leave when they wished – most departing without a certificate showing their qualifications.¹⁰⁵ It would appear that the actual period of attendance varied considerably. HMI Gibson on his visit to the Presbytery of Tain noted that "five out of the seven Assembly teachers had been trained in the Edinburgh normal Seminary, one had been in attendance there upwards of two years, another eighteen months, another four months, while the others had been students in that seminary only two months".¹⁰⁶

The duration of courses would soon become a matter of dispute with the Committee of Council, the Church believing that the training of its teachers had to be tailored to suit the kinds of situations they would have to face; for example, "in the branches of knowledge that relate to the pursuits both of mercantile and agricultural life".¹⁰⁷ The standard curriculum covered the 3 Rs as well as the elements of science, English composition, geography and religious instruction. (In 1843 the Assembly instructed the committee to include instruction in reading music for "promotion of psalmody in schools". Evidently, although Latin and Greek were taught in a number of schools, they were not seen as 'useful' subjects.) By 1845 the committee had decided that no teacher would be appointed to an Assembly school who had not undergone a period of training at one or other of the normal schools. It also reminded the Assembly that, "the views of the Church are to secure a Bible Education to the people, and likewise that kind of instruction which will enable them to fulfil some of their most useful domestic duties".¹⁰⁸ Students at Glasgow and Edinburgh continued to receive their practical training in the model schools which were run in conjunction

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 39.

¹⁰⁶ *Minutes of the Committee of Council*, 1842-43, 668.

¹⁰⁷ *ECR*, 1845, 20.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 1845, 14.

with the normal schools at both locations and which were attended by some five to six hundred children from the poorer classes in those cities.

Just as the Established Church's normal schools were beginning to pick up following the difficult years of the Disruption, they were faced with problems arising from the Committee of Council's decision to introduce a new scheme for funding parochial schools and schoolmasters and normal schools. In June 1847 Kay-Shuttleworth wrote to the committee and explained that instead of annual grants, the committee would receive an allowance for each student attending a normal school and that this would vary depending on how long the student attended the school.¹⁰⁹ In addition there would now be a category of students called Queen's Scholars, being those who had "successfully passed through an apprenticeship in parochial and subscription schools". The cost of training these was to be shared by the Government and spread over three years.¹¹⁰

The committee received this communication with considerable dismay. It involved a whole new approach to budgeting and to prescribing the appropriate courses for students. It believed that the Privy Council had broken its original agreement with the Church and anticipated "unpleasant differences between them and the Privy Council Inspector in regard to the qualifications of the student teachers ... who must be brought forward as candidates for the yearly allowance".¹¹¹ The committee, therefore, wrote back to Kay-Shuttleworth explaining how this new scheme would be unworkable since often a student's course had to be terminated to allow him to take up a teaching post which had to be filled. Vacancies could occur at any time and the committee were obliged to fill them with teachers who might have attended a normal school for only a few months, but were otherwise adequately qualified. For the committee to depart from this practice and enforce periods of attendance from one to three years would mean "seriously deranging and injuring the interests of elementary education in Scotland".¹¹² Where students stayed for only a year or less the committee would lose whatever remuneration would have been paid to them in their second and third years. There was no alternative but to reject the Privy Council's proposals. This led to the start of an acrimonious correspondence of charge and counter-charge which lasted over a number of months. The Committee of Council accused the Education Committee of failing to ensure that its normal

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 1848, Appendix XXIV, 58.

¹¹⁰ [Walmsley] *The School in its relation to The State, the Church, and the Congregation*, 52-53.

¹¹¹ ECR, 1848, Appendix XXV, 64.

¹¹² Ibid., 64-65.

schools fulfilled the objects for which they had been set up and for which they had been financially supported by the Government, and in reply the committee protested that the Council did not understand that its schools were specifically designed to meet the particular needs of school education in Scotland. It was the committee's contention that where teachers were too well trained, they were likely to be less willing to take up posts in those "remote and obscure places of the land among the children of the simple and honest cottagers – whose aim is well directed, for their families, to the plain reading of the Bible, and the common arts of reading and casting accounts".¹¹³

The Committee of Council claimed that in proposing the new financial arrangements it was only trying to increase the income of the normal schools. At present it gave £500 per annum to the Edinburgh School. By subsidising the students individually, including the Queen's scholars, the grant could come to between £1200 to £1500. It also pointed out that some thirteen years previously, in 1835, the Education Committee had itself stated its intention that "two distinct classes of teachers shall be educated at the normal Seminaries – one for the elementary schools, the other for those of the higher or mixed kind". It also suggested that the committee could find ways round the problem of filling urgent vacancies such as employing temporary schoolmasters or retaining in their service "a class of supernumerary masters".¹¹⁴ In reply the Education Committee claimed that the Privy Council had no power to dictate to the Church what curriculum it should follow or to prescribe a minimum period of attendance.¹¹⁵

Copies of this correspondence were printed as part of the Education Committee's report to the 1848 General Assembly. In that report the committee enlarged on its fears and objections. It argued that the new scheme whereby teachers in training were expected to undertake courses lasting up to three years, would change the whole nature of normal schools and turn them into "Collegiate Halls" which would be more like colleges of education. Education in its broader, more formal sense was the task of universities, which in Scotland were open to all, whereas the main function of the Church's normal schools was to communicate "the art of instruction" and "the best way to teach":

¹¹³ Ibid., 25.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 75.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., Appendix XXVII, 86-7.

Your Committee never supposed that normal Institutions in Scotland were to compete in any branch with the colleges of Scotland. ... It may be otherwise in England. There the universities are shut against all who do not conform to the National Church. Hence, in normal Institutions there, it may be necessary to make arrangements for teaching the circle of the sciences, and also necessary to retain pupil-teachers during a noviciate of many years. But no such necessity exists in Scotland.¹¹⁶

There was also the fear that, under the Committee of Council's new scheme for the introduction of monitors or apprentice teachers in parochial schools, normal schools would be put out of business since there would not be "a school in the land which may not be raised up into the character and emoluments of a normal Institution".¹¹⁷

Members of the General Assembly which met in May 1848 were not persuaded by Kay-Shuttleworth's assurances that the new scheme would raise standards in the normal schools,¹¹⁸ and agreed to send a deputation to London to take the matter up with the Council. It eventually dropped its proposals and agreed to fund normal schools according to the existing 1846 contract.¹¹⁹

The Management of the Church's Normal Schools

Satisfying the requirements of the Committee of Council was now proving to be a perennial problem for the Church. In 1847 the Committee of Council sent HMI John Gordon to inspect both normal schools. On the basis of Gordon's report, the following year the Committee of Council decided to withhold its annual grant of £500 to the Glasgow school. It maintained that the situation in Glasgow did not merit the grant. Gordon's report had confirmed that no rector had been appointed since 1845 when the committee had taken over the management of the school. Moreover the committee's outlay on the school had been less than the agreed £500, and the staffing and teaching were unsatisfactory. The Committee of Council argued that without a rector the school at Glasgow could not be properly maintained and conducted and referred back to the original agreement which stated that where either of the schools were not managed to the Council's satisfaction the annual payments could be withheld.¹²⁰ The Committee of Council also claimed that it had already spent

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 22-23.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 26.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., Appendix XXVIII, 89-90.

¹¹⁹ ECR, 1849, 21: *Extract from the Minutes of the General Assembly's Education Committee, 1 March 1849.*

¹²⁰ Ibid., Appendix XXVI, 68.

much more on the Church's normal schools than it had on similar institutions in England.¹²¹ The Education Committee wrote back refuting the Council's arguments and contradicting most of the financial statistics it had presented. It argued that the Committee of Council might have spent less on English establishments but this only explained why these were so inferior to Scottish Model schools and quoted HMI Moseley's report on the Chester Diocesan Training School, which the Council had itself produced as an example:

Of ten in number who were about (in one month or more) to complete their course of instruction and enter on the office of schoolmaster, only two of them can be said to have exhibited a reasonable amount of knowledge in grammar, and there are three who appear to be altogether uninstructed in it.¹²²

Again the committee claimed that it had never understood that the financial arrangements for both schools were to be regarded as part of the one plan and that even without a rector, the school in Glasgow was well run and well taught – "the mere temporary want of a teacher with the title of 'Rector' [should not] be the standard by which the efficiency of their school is to be measured".¹²³ So the controversy continued with neither party ready to make any concessions.

At this stage of the Church of Scotland's development of its normal schools it is important to assess the significance of the situation described above. In spite of all the disputes between Kirk and Government regarding the running and method of financing these schools, it should always be remembered that both parties firmly believed in the necessity of teacher training. The Government recognised the value of the pioneering work which the Church had done and was willing to encourage and subsidise its growth. The problem was that the Government was dealing with issues at a United Kingdom level and the Church objected to measures which seemed inappropriate to the Scottish situation. Unfortunately the more ambitious the committee was to extend its provision, the more it became financially dependent on the Government, which in turn was in a stronger position to dictate conditions and policy. These same ambitions meant that the Church took on the commitment of managing the Glasgow Normal School which from the start was a millstone round the committee's neck. While plans for the take-over were laid before 1843, we must question the wisdom of proceeding with the scheme after the Disruption. It was

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹²² *Ibid.*, Appendix XXVII, 80-81.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 84.

known that the Glasgow Association had accumulated massive debts and HMI Gibson's report had been highly critical of the quality of the training offered. With the loss of most members of staff to the Free Church the committee ought to have foreseen that there would be difficulties with staffing and management. Why then did the committee go ahead and land itself with all the financial and operational problems that came with the agreement? Was it just to spite the Free Church or was it that it saw the deal offered by the Government as too good to turn down? Certainly the Government grants must have been a big incentive and it is likely that the committee's genuine interest in supplying schools with properly trained schoolmasters influenced its decision. Given the Church's commitment to what it saw as the peculiar needs of the Scottish situation, however, it was probably inevitable that there would be clashes with the Government. The positive side to all this was that the Church persevered and teacher training continued to develop.

Concern for Schoolmasters

With its involvement in teacher training it was natural that the Church should maintain an interest in the conditions and salaries of schoolmasters. In 1834 it had supported the Scottish schoolmasters' petition which asked the Government to raise salaries by the value of one chalder, about £17.¹²⁴ As long as the salary of a teacher in a parochial school was determined by statute and calculated according to the value of a chalder, however, no real improvement was possible without a change in the law; indeed, it meant that there was always the possibility of a decrease. With the land-owning classes still in the majority in Parliament even after the 1832 Reform Act, heritors were unlikely to vote for a change that would mean increased outlays for them. The legislation which had made heritors responsible for the salaries of parochial schoolmasters and which doubtless had once protected the teachers' livelihood, had now become an impediment in their struggle for a better standard of living. Under the Highland Schools Act (1838) the Government proposed to pay teachers not less than £22 which was taken as the minimum allowance for parish schoolmasters.¹²⁵ According to the returns from presbyteries in 1841 salaries ranged from £25 to £34 "with variable school fees". This same report gives the example of thirty-three parochial schools in Dumfries-shire where the total emoluments [salaries

¹²⁴ Chapter Two, 77-78.

¹²⁵ *ECR*, 1837, 9.

plus fees] of teachers did not amount to more than £60, while in large town parishes a salary of £51 was shared among two or more teachers.¹²⁶ HMI John Gordon reported to the Committee of Council in 1844 that the average income across 1,557 schools was only £19.¹²⁷

In the burghs where salaries were met by the town council and where the 1803 Act was held not to apply, teachers were sometimes better off but the opposite could also be the case and councils would pay even less than the statutory amount. In Highland parishes and in the industrial Lowlands where many parents could not afford to pay much in the way of fees, a benefactor or a Kirk Session would pay the fees for them. One presbytery [not specified] drew attention to an innovative practice in a mining area where,

the master of the coal-work deducts from the wages of the men a sum sufficient to defray the school-fees for their children. ... The deduction is made every fortnight, for every child betwixt the ages of three and fourteen; the consequence is, that scarcely any of the children betwixt these years do not attend school.¹²⁸

On the whole teachers in rural schools had only the basic salary to live on. In some towns, Alloa and Linlithgow for example, where there was a greater demand for more advanced subjects, teachers were better paid.¹²⁹

The needs of teachers did not go unnoticed by the Church at large. Ministers must have noted how low teachers' salaries were compared to their stipends. For example in the small Dumfries-shire parish of Penpont with a population in 1831 of some 1,232 persons the minister's stipend was £210 while the emoluments of one of the two parochial schoolmasters came to £45, a salary of £29 and fees of £16. The other teacher there received a salary of £22 and fees of £9. In Sanquhar where the minister's stipend was over £300 (18 chalders), the teacher received a salary of £34 and fees came to only £15.¹³⁰ Even in a grammar school the difference between the minister's stipend and the teacher's salary was considerable. In the town of Kirkcudbright with a population of 2,697, the average stipend of the ministers was £280, but in the grammar school a teacher received only £50 in salary and £60 in

¹²⁶ ECR, *Report on Returns from Presbyteries*, 1841, 9-10.

¹²⁷ *Minutes of Committee of Council*, 1844 (Vol. 2), 368.

¹²⁸ ECR, *Report on Returns from Presbyteries*, 1841, 5-6.

¹²⁹ PP, House of Lords, *Report of the Select Committee on Parochial Schoolmasters in Scotland, 1845, Minutes of Evidence*, 5.

¹³⁰ NSA, Dumfries-shire, 515.

fees.¹³¹ In 1841 the Synod of Perth and Stirling agreed to overture the Assembly on the need to increase the salaries of Scottish schoolmasters¹³² and in 1842 the Presbytery of Tain asked the Assembly to draw Parliament's attention to this concern.¹³³ In 1844 the General Assembly supported yet another petition drawn up by the parochial schoolmasters in which it was submitted that "instead of Oatmeal, the Salary should be fixed solely in Money, and that the Minimum be £40 and the Maximum £50".¹³⁴ [The average Salary by that time was about £30.] In an attempt to strengthen their position and further their cause many schoolmasters took the matter into their own hands. In 1847 they formed themselves into the Educational Institute of Scotland with the aim of certifying the qualifications of teachers and thus improving their professional standing.

In April 1845 the House of Lords set up a Select Committee to inquire into the conditions of Scottish schoolmasters.¹³⁵ This committee heard evidence from past and present HMIs of Scottish schools, representatives of Scottish schoolmasters, a minister of the United Secession Church, two university professors (James Robertson, Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Edinburgh and William Pyper, Professor of Humanity at St Andrews, both of whom had been parish ministers), and two members of the Church of Scotland's Education Committee. The picture painted was generally very bleak, particularly with regard to the provision of books and resources for learning. There was no fixed standard of qualifications for schoolmasters, the salaries and housing arrangements were totally inadequate and there was no provision for superannuation. The evidence of this committee was recorded but no action was taken on it. That same summer a Bill was passed by the Commons making arrangements for the Commissioners of Supply to appoint a schoolmaster where heritors and presbyteries had failed to do so. Nothing was said, however, about altering salaries and conditions.¹³⁶

In an attempt to tackle the problem of schoolmasters' salaries at national level the Committee of Council drew up new regulations which were put into effect in 1848. These stated that teachers would be granted a sum of money from the Government

¹³¹ NSA, Kirkcudbright, 28 and 33.

¹³² GAP, 1842, Overture by the Synod of Perth and Stirling, October 1841, *Anent Augmenting the Salaries of Schoolmasters*.

¹³³ GAP, 1842, Overture from the Presbytery of Tain, April 1842, *Anent Parochial Schoolmasters*.

¹³⁴ AAGA, 1844, 45 and AAGA, 1845, 56. For copy of the *Petition of the Parochial Schoolmasters of Scotland*, see Assembly Papers, 1844.

¹³⁵ PP, House of Lords, *Report of the Select Committee, 1845*.

¹³⁶ Hansard, 3rd series, vol. 82, 716. Also PP 1845, V, *A Bill Intituled An Act for Amending an Act for making Provision for Parish Schoolmasters in Scotland, 1845*, 4 July, 9 Vict.

equivalent to what they were being paid from voluntary subscriptions or local funds. Moreover schoolmasters who took on apprentices or pupil teachers (sometimes called monitors), to be trained in teaching skills, would be paid an augmentation for the time spent in tutoring.¹³⁷ These apprentice teachers (boys and girls often under thirteen years of age), would be paid a salary by the state ranging from £10 at the end of the first year to £20 at the end of five years, provided they passed an annual examination set by the inspectors.¹³⁸ At the end of their apprenticeship in school they could win a Queen's scholarship and go on to a normal school. Those who gained a Certificate of Merit at a normal school would have their salary as teachers augmented by the Government. Schools where teachers were in receipt of any Government funding had always to be open to inspection, this included the inspection of religious instruction. It was laid down, moreover, that to qualify for any augmentation of salary schoolmasters had to forego the perquisites they received from undertaking other jobs. In Scotland the job of Session Clerk was exempt and in small parishes that of clerk to the heritors.¹³⁹ Finally the Committee of Council was particular about the size of the schoolmaster's house which had to have at least four rooms.¹⁴⁰ These new provisions had a mixed response in Scotland. Strangely enough the proposals seem to have escaped the attention of Presbyteries and the Assembly in 1847, but they did lead to public meetings in Edinburgh and the *Scotsman* printed a long leader on the subject giving accurate details of the Committee of Council's proposals.¹⁴¹

At a meeting of the Edinburgh Town Council Councillor Thomas Russell, a Dissenter and a fierce critic of the Established Church,¹⁴² spoke out against the Government scheme partly on the grounds that it had been introduced without a full discussion in Parliament but mainly because many of the schools to benefit would be those subsidised by the churches in England and Scotland which would "in effect enforce the spiritual as well as the secular education of the youth of the country, institute a new religious establishment, and endow the most opposite creeds".¹⁴³ Adam Black, the Lord Provost of Edinburgh who was himself a Liberal and a Free

¹³⁷ [Walmsley] *The School in its relation to The State, the Church, and the Congregation*, 33-40.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹³⁹ Kay-Shuttleworth, *Public Education*, 373. "Explanatory Letter to Her Majesty's Inspectors on the Administration of the Grants under the Minutes of 1846."

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Scotsman*, 14 August, 1847.

¹⁴² In 1836 Russell had spent a period of imprisonment in Calton jail, Edinburgh, for non-payment of the Annuity Tax. See Thomas Russell, *A Letter to Members of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh: M Paterson, 1836.).

¹⁴³ *Government Scheme of Education, Speech of Mr Russell in the Edinburgh Town Council*, 6 April, 1847 (Edinburgh: T. & W. McDowall), 1.

Churchman, replied in support of the Government's proposals believing that the financial arrangements would encourage the extension of school education.¹⁴⁴ When the vote was taken the Lord Provost's motion carried by twenty votes to twelve.

Perhaps the biggest stumbling-block to the implementation of the new scheme in Scotland was the Committee of Council's interpretation of the funds provided by the heritors. According to the Committee of Council because heritors were legally bound to pay schoolmasters' salaries, these could not be regarded as voluntary contributions and so could not qualify for the proportional addition under the new arrangement. The Government's augmentation of salaries would only apply to any increase above the legal minimum [£25 - £35] which heritors might choose to make.¹⁴⁵ Heritors would also have to ensure that the size of the house provided met with the Committee of Council's regulations. For their part schoolmasters had to decide whether it was worthwhile relinquishing the perquisites on which many had depended to supplement their income.

While supporting the cause of parochial schoolmasters the Assembly found it difficult to increase the salaries of its own teachers. At this time the Church was still paying its teachers between £20 and £25 and most of them were appointed to situations where the fees, if any, were small. Poor salaries and conditions were a deterrent to the recruitment of well qualified teachers. In 1845 the Assembly's committee had before it forty-five applications for schools with the offer of accommodation already agreed, but it could not afford to pay for teachers.¹⁴⁶ Often teachers trained by the Church spent only a few years in an Assembly school before seeking more lucrative posts as parochial or burgh school teachers. This meant that the Education Committee had to take teachers out of training after only a six months or so to fill these recurring vacancies. This practice eventually led to a head-on collision with the Committee of Council when it proposed financing the Church's normal schools according to the length of time teachers spent in training. Given all these difficulties it was not surprising that by 1850 very little had happened to improve the lot of the Scottish schoolmaster.

¹⁴⁴ *Speech of the Right Hon. Adam Black, in Edinburgh Town Council, 7 April, 1847* (Edinburgh: A. Fullerton & Co.) 5ff.

¹⁴⁵ Kay-Shuttleworth, *Public Education*, 372, "Explanatory Letter to Her Majesty's Inspectors".

¹⁴⁶ PP, House of Lords, *Report of the Select Committee, 1845*, Minutes of Evidence, 122.

Kirk and Government – The Rift Widens

These rather acrimonious disputes between the Established Church and the Privy Council proved to be but the first stirrings of an even bigger storm which was already gathering. When the General Assembly met in May 1848, it was faced with a number of overtures opposing the Government's procedures both with regard to the proposed method of funding the normal schools and the scheme for augmenting parochial schoolmasters' salaries.¹⁴⁷ The Synod of Merse and Teviotdale thought that the Education Committee should publish more information showing the general public just how well schools were doing under the superintendence of the Church.¹⁴⁸ The problems with the Government's proposals for raising teachers' salaries were highlighted by William Muir who pointed out how impossible it would be for schoolmasters in the Highlands to raise additional contributions either from fees or from heritors which would take their salaries above the legal minimum and so allow them to claim the government augmentation.¹⁴⁹ After further negotiations the Education Committee eventually persuaded the Committee of Council to drop its new scheme for funding normal schools but the Council refused to change its mind on the matter of the grants due to the Glasgow Normal School or about their interpretation of the salaries provided by heritors. As far as the Committee of Council were concerned the legal obligation on heritors to provide the schools and salaries in the parishes of Scotland, still disqualified them from the Government supplement. The Education Committee saw this as punishing "the Church and Heritors of Scotland, for the enlightened foresight by which the Ecclesiastical and Civil Authorities of this part of the United Kingdom, in the provision which they made for the Education of all classes of the community, anticipated, by nearly two centuries, the Ecclesiastical and Civil Authorities of England".¹⁵⁰ When it came to those Assembly Schools, however, where the salary paid by the committee was no more than £20, teachers could apply "for a proportional amount of aid from the public funds". This was a derisory upper figure to propose. It would rule out most schoolmasters paid by the Church and those who could apply would have to relinquish all perquisites and agree to examination by HM Inspectors, nevertheless

¹⁴⁷ AAGA, 1848, 49-50.

¹⁴⁸ AAGA, 1848, 51.

¹⁴⁹ *Scotsman*, May 1848.

¹⁵⁰ ECR, 1849, 23-4.

the Education Committee agreed to recommend the acceptance of the Committee of Council's proposal to the Assembly. This, it must be said, was a majority decision carried by fourteen votes to five. A number of committee members including William Muir, the Convener, were against making such a recommendation and recorded their dissent.

Muir and those who sided with him, had three problems with the Government scheme. They believed that the Church's authority would be threatened where the augmentation of the salaries of Assembly schoolmasters depended on inspectors' reports and on examinations based on standards fixed by the Council and conducted separate from the supervision of Presbyteries. Further, they thought it was wrong in principle to accept the Government supplementation for Assembly teachers while parochial schoolmasters were left out since "the cause of the Parochial, is so bound up with the cause of the Supplemental Schools".¹⁵¹ Muir also pointed out that there had been no proper discussion of the Committee of Council's proposals to introduce pupil teachers or monitors. He saw in this the possibility of half-trained teachers "spreading over the land a number of adventure schools, not elevated above the rank of hedge-schools".¹⁵²

In May 1849 the General Assembly was asked to decide between the Education Committee's majority recommendation and Muir's objections. There was in addition an Overture from the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale expressing concern about what it regarded as efforts now being made "to remove the Parish Schools of Scotland from under the control and superintendence of the National Church".¹⁵³ After a long debate the Assembly finally agreed to accept the committee's recommendations while regretting that nothing had been done to assist parochial schoolteachers.¹⁵⁴ Unable to agree with this decision, Muir resigned and would not be persuaded to change his mind.

While the General Assembly had voted against Muir's position it nevertheless took some cognisance of his fears and decided to present the Privy Council and both Houses of Parliament with a declaration making it clear that it regarded the Church's superintendence of all schools as unchanged, "subject only to the right of

¹⁵¹ *ECR*, 31.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁵³ *AAGA*, 1849, 49 and *GAP*, 1849, Overture from the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, May 1849, *Overture Anent Parochial Schools*. The attention of the 1848 Assembly had already been drawn to a Bill being considered by the Commons entitled "A Bill to facilitate the removal of Burgh and Parochial Schoolmasters in Scotland". (*AAGA*, 1848, 60.)

¹⁵⁴ *AGA*, 1849, 49.

Government inspection in those supported by public funding", and that it would resist any measures which it regarded as "in violation of ... the rights and privileges guaranteed to the National Church of Scotland by the Revolution Settlement, Act of Security, and Treaty of Union".¹⁵⁵ These sentiments were then embodied in the Acts of Assembly in the form of a "Protest, Declaration, and Testimony, on the subject of National Education".¹⁵⁶ This document, which was to be transmitted immediately to Parliament, re-stated the Established Church's belief in its statutory responsibility to watch over the great religious and educational interests of the nation, and its renewed allegiance to a system of education based upon the religious and *Godly upbringing of youth*. It protested against the violation of the rights of the Church by the measures, "now demanded by various Dissenting Bodies over the country, touching the existing relations between the Established Church and the Parochial Schools of Scotland". The reasons for Established Church deciding to issue this statement and for its hesitancy about accepting the Committee of Council's proposals, become clear when we appreciate the growing opposition to its position at this time, both in other denominations and in political circles.

The previous year (1848) Lord Melgund, MP for Greenock, had written a pamphlet in support of a national system of education in Scotland and attacking the Privy Council's financial support of the education programmes run by the Established Church and the Free Church which he saw as "two great antagonistic societies at present embarked in an unseemly struggle for supremacy".¹⁵⁷ The Committee of Council's policy, he maintained, only fostered sectarianism. Melgund believed that in Scotland unlike in England, a national system already existed in all but name and all that was needed was to abolish the Established Church's traditional jurisdiction and superintendence of parochial schools, although he conceded that the Church had sought to advance the cause of education, "rather for the good of the country at large than for her own selfish and sectarian aggrandisement".¹⁵⁸ Melgund was confident that his ideas had the support of dissenting bodies such as the United Presbyterian Church¹⁵⁹ and that the Free Church, too, was not wholly averse to the idea of a national scheme for education so long as religious instruction could be

¹⁵⁵ AAGA, 1849, 49 and ECR, 1849, 15-16, *Extract Minutes of the General Assembly*, May 1849.

¹⁵⁶ AGA, June 1849, 29-32.

¹⁵⁷ Lord Melgund, *Remarks on the Government Scheme of National Education as applied to Scotland* (Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1848), 6.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

¹⁵⁹ The United Presbyterian Synod had opposed the policy of the Committee of Council as "sectarian, partial, and unjust" and agreed that it was not the business of the government to provide for religious instruction. See *Proceedings of the United Presbyterian Synod* May 1847, 15, and May 1850, 263.

secured. Men like James Begg held that "the promotion of secular education is not one of the primary duties of the Church of Christ as such ... it is a manifest obligation, resting on all civil Government ... to give their subjects the means of at least elementary instruction".¹⁶⁰

It is little wonder, then, that the commissioners of the 1849 Established Church Assembly, aware of what was happening around them, felt an increasing sense of isolation. The Church's defence of its position, however, did not deter Lord Melgund who, the following year, decided to put his proposals to the test in Parliament and produced his School Establishment (Scotland) Bill, (A Bill to Reform and Extend the School Establishment of Scotland).

Conclusion

No matter how much the Church might protest and attempt to defend its statutory rights, it was evident that the more it became financially dependent on state funding, the more its control over school education was gradually eroded. It would be wrong, however, to be too critical and imagine that such developments were peculiar to the Established Church of Scotland. All over the United Kingdom Churches and voluntary societies, even comparatively strong ones like the Free Church of Scotland, found it impossible to expand their work in school education without Government help. The National Society in England¹⁶¹ had depended on state grants since 1833. It was clear that voluntary effort alone could not cope with the demands of an expanding population in an increasingly urban industrial nation where in all classes of society there was a growing recognition of the benefits of education. It is possible that in their negotiations with the Committee of Council, the committee expected a more sympathetic hearing from Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth than seems to have been the case. He was, after all, a graduate of Edinburgh University; he had established a training college for teachers at Battersea in 1839 and was known to have been an advocate for better social conditions and educational opportunities for poor children.

Perhaps the real failure of the Churches in Scotland was their slowness to recognise the social revolution happening around them of which the movement in favour of a national system of non-denominational education was one manifestation. In the field of education for example, a support organisation for teachers was

¹⁶⁰ Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Free Church, May 1850, 207.

¹⁶¹ The main Church of England body responsible for schools. The British and Foreign Schools Society, primarily supported by Dissenters, was the other.

evolving in the form of the Educational Institute of Scotland, set up in September 1847; within a year two thousand Scottish teachers had joined. The EIS articulated their vision of a national system of education with improvements in salary and a high standard of professional training. Much of what the EIS stood for the Church of Scotland's Education Committee had been striving to attain since its inception. Indeed, in this period many of the Government's educational aims were shared by the committee. Greater co-operation would have been to the benefit of education as a whole but the Church's fear of losing its prestige and authority damaged relationships and the Church became defensive rather than forward-looking. Describing the stance of the Churches in the middle years of the nineteenth century, A. C. Cheyne wrote, "Churchmen, it is clear, still accepted the existing order with almost unquestioning complacency, still taught submission as the prime virtue of the disadvantaged ... there was continuing hostility within the Church of Scotland and the Free Church to popular democracy ... Trade Unions were still viewed with aversion and dislike".¹⁶² Such an attitude would seem at odds with the aims of those who believed that in establishing schools and training teachers the Church had set out to empower people and enable them to lead more independent and responsible lives.

It must not be forgotten that for the Education Committee "godly upbringing" meant not just religious instruction but included offering an all-round education which would prepare young people for life and work in their society. From time to time the committee felt it necessary to draw this to the attention of the Church. In 1843 the Education Committee reported to the Assembly that over the previous five years 715 pupils had left school "to engage in employments not open to them at home and for which they could not have been competent without the instruction they received at school". In this number there were land-surveyors, civil engineers, overseers, road contractors, shipmasters, clerks in banks and counting-houses, and 180 schoolmasters.¹⁶³ This figure was also given by Norman MacLeod in his evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on Parochial Schoolmasters in Scotland in 1845. He is recorded as saying, "In the course of the last Five Years 715 young men, educated at these schools have left their native land to engage in Employment not open to them at home, and for which they could not have been competent but for the Information received at our schools."¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Cheyne, *The Transforming of the Kirk*, 118.

¹⁶³ *ECR*, 1843, 9.

¹⁶⁴ PP, House of Lords *Select Committee on Parochial Schoolmasters of Scotland*, 1845, 129.

Taking into account the many overtures from presbyteries and synods opposing co-operation with the Government and changes in the educational system, and the battle the committee often had to fight to persuade the Assembly to support its policies, it is possible to conclude that the Education Committee, and even the General Assembly, was sometimes out of step with the Church at large. The impression we have from the reports and minutes is that for the committee, faithful to the ideals of the Reformation, the education of Scotland's youth was an end in itself, whereas for the Church at large the school was a channel whereby it could demonstrate its authority and a bulwark for the Protestant faith. This is why the Assembly defended the system of parochial schools in spite of its obvious inadequacy.¹⁶⁵ One manifestation of this division was the anti-Catholic sentiments that were so often evident in Presbytery overtures. The fear of Papists was fuelled no doubt by the growing number of Irish Catholic immigrants following the famine of 1846. According to Devine, by 1851 7.2 per cent of the Scottish population were Irish-born.¹⁶⁶ Most of these had settled in cities such as Glasgow and Dundee. This meant a corresponding rise in the number of Catholic schools. Many in the Church may well have seen this as a threat to the Protestant confession of faith and to the educational system which promoted it. The Education Committee on the other hand, was content to further the idea of the inclusion in its own schools and in parochial schools of children of all denominations.

On the other hand the fact that the Assembly did agree, though sometimes reluctantly, to the Government's terms when it came to introducing school inspection or new ways of funding teacher training colleges, was an indication that there were those in the Church who saw state intervention, not as something to be regretted but as a positive step forward and as a way of building on what the Church had already achieved. This said, while the 1849 *Declaration and Protest* bore all the hallmarks of an Established Church with its back to the wall defiantly defending its statutory rights and privileges and its historic faith, the Education Committee did have its own reasons to feel aggrieved and to share the Assembly's protestations. The committee may well have felt that what was at stake was the peculiarly Scottish national system

¹⁶⁵ W M Hetherington, writing admittedly from one Free Church perspective, claimed that, "the national system of parochial schools does not furnish more, probably less, than one-fifth of the education existing in Scotland ... the immediate extinction of the whole of our parish schools would not render matters much worse than they are; and no possible attempt to expand them, in their present condition, could meet the wants of the community." Hetherington, *National Education in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1850) 5.

¹⁶⁶ Devine, *The Scottish Nation*, 487.

of education which with all its faults and deficiencies had been in existence since the legislation of the seventeenth century. Now this was being gradually undermined by a Privy Council which was bent on bringing English schools under government control and which for the last decade had been reluctant to acknowledge the uniqueness of the Scottish system. The Privy Council in applying its regulations for inspections and grants to Scotland, was applying these to a parish school system which had no equivalent in England. Whereas in Scotland parish schools and the authority of the Church of Scotland had been established by Acts of the Scottish Parliament and by the Act of Union, in England parish schools by and large were Church schools not regulated by statute. In a sense Scotland could claim to have had a national system of education going back to the seventeenth century in a way England could not. Moreover, there were significant differences in the standard of education delivered. In Scotland elementary education was not seen as just for the poor. It had long been the tradition that the sons of the gentry attended the same schools as the sons (and daughters) of the poor, and it had been the ideal of the Reformers that all who were able should be given the chance of a university education.¹⁶⁷ The curriculum in many parish and Assembly schools was not limited to teaching the three Rs but included Latin and Greek so that it was possible for the village school to prepare a boy for university. This was a system, therefore, which required teachers themselves to be well-educated and many were university graduates. Guaranteed a basic income and accommodation by law, the Scottish schoolmaster had a professional status not shared by his counterpart in England. All this explains why the Church of Scotland's Education Committee saw the system of pupil-teachers as likely to dilute the standards of Scottish teachers and why it resented the fact that licentiates were not recognised as qualified. It is also why the committee protested so vehemently when the Privy Council refused to recognise the fact that schoolmasters in Scotland could leave normal schools after only a few months and still be well equipped to teach.

That the Assembly felt the need to issue its 1849 *Protest and Declaration*, however, was an expression of its fears and insecurity as much as it was a statement of its faith and conviction. In the face of opposition from other denominations, which it wrote off as "Dissenting Bodies", the Church defiant was also a Church defensive. Whatever view it still held of the need to deliver a broad school education it would

¹⁶⁷ When the Committee of Council on Education was calculating the number of pupils requiring elementary education in England in 1859, it arrived at a number "by eliminating those who belong to the upper and middle classes". *Edinburgh Review*, April 1860, 348.

appear that its interest in upholding its authority and its confession of faith through religious instruction in schools had now become paramount. If this were the case it would certainly lend weight to R. D. Anderson's contention that education was seen as an instrument of religious authority "reflecting the church's determination to impose conformity and root out dissent".¹⁶⁸

Writing in 1850 James Begg of the Free Church calculated that Scotland still needed twice as many schools as it then had and that only 260,000 children out of a possible 600,000 were receiving an education. Repeating the claim made by George Lewis some sixteen years previous, Begg argued that the only possible conclusion was that "Scotland is scarcely a 'half-educated nation'."¹⁶⁹ Unhappily the Church of Scotland's concern for its own survival as a denomination at this time seems to have prevented it from acknowledging the limitations of the parochial school system and its own important but totally inadequate contribution to the needs of the nation, and accepting the necessity of a radically new approach. As the failings of the existing educational structures became even more apparent and as the pressure for change was increasingly brought to bear by Melgund and others similarly minded, it remained to be seen whether the attitude of the Church would be one which would accept the need for change or one which would become even more defensive.

¹⁶⁸ Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People*, 3.

¹⁶⁹ James Begg, *National Education for Scotland Practically Considered* (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1850), 5.

APPENDIX

The Fate of the Teachers – 1843-45

The actual numbers of teachers who had to relinquish their posts in Assembly schools as a result of the Disruption is variously reported by the Churches and equally variously interpreted by historians. The accuracy of the count is not helped by the fact that some chose to count parochial and Church of Scotland Assembly teachers as Church of Scotland teachers while others count them separately. The following examples give some indication of the different opinions.

Church Reports:

A large proportion of the teachers employed by the Committee have recently seceded from the Church, amounting to 70 out of 146. (Church of Scotland Education Committee Report, 1844, 10.)

The returns, however, in many instances have not yet been received, - the outstanding arrears still amounting to more than one half of the whole circulars issued ... partial as are the returns, they present us with the fact, that 360 teachers adhere to our principles. Of these, 80 are parochial schoolmasters, 57 Assembly, 27 Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, 196 privately endowed and adventure teachers ... (Proceedings of the Free Church Assembly 1843, 64.)

A Free Church report in 1844 amended the above statement and stated that by that time there were 122 salaried teachers, “63 of whom were formerly parochial and Assembly teachers, and the remaining 59 either trained at our Normal Seminary, or formerly engaged as private teachers.” (Proceedings of the Free Church Assembly held in Edinburgh 1844, 167.)

A report in 1845 offered yet another figure: “the ejected parochial and Assembly teachers amounting to about 120 ...” (Proceedings of the Free Church Assembly, May, 1845, 235.)

Comments from Historians:

When the Establishment used its powers and influence to oust teachers who connected themselves with the Free Church, the result was that some 400 teachers were out of employment for whom the Free Church felt itself morally responsible. (S. Mechie, *The Church and Scottish Social Development*, p. 147.)

80 parochial schoolmasters and some 280 teachers in Assembly, SSPCK and other schools connected with the Church of Scotland, joined the new denomination. (H. M. Knox, *Scottish Education*, 28.)

The Glasgow Assembly of the Free Church in 1843 showed that no less than 360 [teachers] had left the Established Church because of their beliefs and were now out of work. Eighty had left parish schools, fifty-seven those of the Assembly, twenty-seven those of the SSPCK and a hundred and ninety-six endowed and adventure schools. (James Scotland, *Scottish Education*, vol. I, 249.)

It should be noted, however, that Scotland quotes the figures given at the Free Church Assembly of October, 1843 which, according to the Free Church's own report, were only provisional.

Within about a year of the Disruption, 212 Church of Scotland teachers and 196 private school teachers, or a total of 408 teachers, had been dismissed for holding Free Church principles. This number included the entire staffs of the Normal Schools in both Glasgow and Edinburgh. (S. J. Brown, *Chalmers*, 342.)

Chapter Four 1850 – 1863

The Call for Reform

Introduction

As far as schooling in Scotland was concerned the years from 1850 to the passing of the Education (Scotland) Act 1872 were dominated by the debate on national education. 1850 saw the first of a series of Bills considered by Parliament, all proposing changes to the Scottish education system and, in particular, that powers traditionally held by the heritors and the Established Church should be transferred to locally elected boards. The volumes of pamphlets published at the time bear witness to the interest aroused by the debate. Within the churches criticism of the existing system of school education came mainly from those connected with the recently formed United Presbyterian Church¹ and the Free Church of Scotland although when it came to proposing a solution, the latter denomination was not always of one mind. Critics were often scathing in their condemnation of the part played by the Established Church. Robert Candlish, who was appointed convener of the Free Church Education Committee in 1846, was of the view that, "the whole of the parish schools ... may now be regarded as practically in the hands of a corrupt religious Establishment",² while Lord Advocate James Moncreiff, a Free Church elder and the presenter of a number of education bills in the 1850s, was convinced that "the present System of Superintendence and Management of the Parochial Schools has been found greatly defective".³ James Begg claimed that the spirit of Knox having left the Established Church "is the best of all reasons why the schools of Knox should be wrenched away from such an unnatural alliance".⁴

On the political front the campaign for change was set in motion in 1850 by Lord Melgund's Bill and by the formation of the National Education Association of Scotland. While this Association disappeared after only a few years many of its main

¹ The United Secession Church and the Relief Church united in 1847 to form the United Presbyterian Church.

² Robert S. Candlish on *The Sustentation of Schoolmasters*, speaking at the Free Church Presbytery of Edinburgh, July 1846, 3.

³ PP, Public Bills II, *A Bill to Make Further Provision for the Education of the People in Scotland*, 3 March 1854, 17 Vict., 1-2.

⁴ James Begg, *National Education for Scotland Practically Considered* (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1850), 9.

aims were incorporated in the Bills which Melgund and later Moncreiff presented in Parliament.

Those who argued for changes to the system of Scottish education were agreed on a number of main points. These were: that the existing means of education in Scotland were inadequate to meet current needs largely due to the deficiencies of the parochial school system; that something had to be done to improve the lot of schoolmasters; that the expansion of education was one way of dealing with the rising crime rate and increasing immorality, particularly in the densely populated urban areas; and finally, that the Established Church's statutory monopoly with regard to the supervision of parish schools had to be abolished. Many of those who objected to the existing scheme maintained that the denominational system, whereby the different Churches were allocated funds by the government, was divisive and that it should be replaced by a national government-supported system of parish schools managed locally and not answerable to any one denomination. On this point there was considerable division within the Free Church. James Begg supported a national non-denominational system of education while Robert Candlish, fearful for the future of religious instruction and intent on outdoing the Established Church, was happy to accept the Committee of Council's grants for Church schools.

This chapter will describe how the Established Church of Scotland reacted to the proposed changes and to its critics from 1850 until 1864, when a Royal Commission to inquire into schooling in Scotland was set up under the chairmanship of the Duke of Argyll. Whereas in the previous decade the Kirk had felt its status undermined by Parliamentary legislation and decisions of the Privy Council, now it was forced to defend its position and its traditions in the face of hostility not only from politicians but also from fellow Presbyterian churches. We shall consider the social and ecclesiastical circumstances which influenced the Church's decision-making bodies and how the Education Committee persevered in its efforts to create better educational opportunities for Scotland's youth.

The Argument for Change

The Shortcomings of the Established Church

In the 1850s the inefficiency of presbyteries in their superintendence of schools and the ineffectiveness of these visits were frequently raised by opponents of the

Established Church and used as reasons for insisting on the need for change. One supporter of reform wrote to the Lord Advocate:

Even in those Presbyteries where the duty of superintendence is most regularly observed, the inspections are comparatively useless. *Once a year there is a field-day*, [sic] and at other times the Schoolmaster regards himself as free from restraint ... we have known a parish containing upwards of 4000 souls, the school of which had not been visited by any member of the Presbytery of the bounds during the long space of 13 years.⁵

Thomas Guthrie, who had gone over to the Free Church in 1843, looking back at his ministry in the rural parish of Arbirlot before the Disruption, told a public meeting held in support of national education that although he had lived next door to the parish school for seven years he had no recollection of ever visiting it for the purpose of examining its efficiency except on that one day each year when the presbytery's committee came to examine it and even this examination was nothing but "a decent sham and the dreichest business I had ever to do". He claimed that hardly "a single parish minister ever made it his business to attend to the religious instruction in one of the thousand parish schools in Scotland", and since the minister of the parish seldom entered the school to see to the godly upbringing of the scholar all the pretence about godly upbringing was "simply cant": – "the godly upbringing depended solely upon the schoolmaster, and his godliness depends on his signing the formulae of the Established Church".⁶ The Established Church was seen as powerless when it came to getting rid of bad teachers. Its statutory authority was much resented and the expectation that all parish schoolmasters would be members of the Church of Scotland was attacked as outmoded and limiting:

The idea of extending or continuing a system in the present state of Scotland, which gives the power of nominating teachers to a class so limited that it often consists only of the parish minister and the factor of some great landlord – which confines the choice of teachers to a small body, and, generally speaking, the least zealous body in the community – which gives the management of

⁵ *The Necessity of a Reform of the Parochial School System of Scotland; by one who has long witnessed its defects, in A Letter to the Rt. Hon Andrew Rutherford, MP, Her Majesty's Lord Advocate* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1848), 26.

⁶ [Thomas Guthrie] *Report of the Proceedings at the Public Meeting of the Friends of National Education in The Music Hall, Edinburgh, January 1854*. (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1854), 63 and 92. Guthrie was minister of Arbirlot Parish 1827-1837.

schools exclusively to the courts of the Established Church – is of course ludicrously absurd.⁷

In his speech to the Commons on his 1854 Bill, the Lord Advocate, James Moncreiff, claimed that "for the period of a full century, until twelve or fifteen years ago, the superintendence of the Presbytery over the Parochial Schools was in most cases little better than a name ...in many instances the Parochial Schools have, in the course of the period I speak of, been debased and degraded beyond all imagination".⁸

The Established Church refuted these criticisms by producing annual reports which noted the regularity of presbytery visits and the detailed information submitted. In 1852, for example, some sixty-eight presbyteries (out of eighty-three) transmitted returns showing that 2,330 schools had been examined.⁹ These returns normally contained full accounts of the efficiency of the teacher, the standard of the accommodation, the attendance record of the pupils and the curriculum being covered. Attention was drawn to whatever was unsatisfactory particularly where the buildings or the accommodation failed to meet government requirements and so prevented the teacher qualifying for the salary augmentation.¹⁰ Sometimes thoughtful conclusions of a general nature accompanied the reports. In 1862, for example, the Presbytery of Ayr observed that for any system of education to be effective there would have to be some kind of legal requirement making attendance compulsory: – "it is certainly worthy of consideration how far it might be the duty of the civil Government to adopt some gently compulsory mode of securing a certain amount of education for every child within the realm".¹¹ In addition to presbyterial superintendence, the secretary of the Education Committee continued to carry out routine visits to Assembly schools throughout the country.¹² It is difficult to assess what presbytery examinations actually achieved, neither the presbyteries nor the education committee give accounts of action taken following the reports submitted.

⁷ James Begg, *National Education for Scotland Practically Considered* (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1850), 8.

⁸ J. Moncreiff, *Speech of the Lord Advocate of Scotland in the House of Commons Feb. 23 1854, on the Bill for the Education of the People of Scotland* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1854), 15.

⁹ ECR, 1852, *Presbyterial Reports on the State of Education in Scotland*, 1852, iii-iv.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1851, 7 and 10.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1862, *Presbyterial Reports*, 16.

¹² ECR, 1855, 9 and ECR, 1856, 8.

School Attendance

Those agitating for reform made much of the number of children not attending school and to this was often linked expressions of concern for the immoral state of the nation. W. M. Hetherington, minister of Free St Paul's, Edinburgh and editor of the *Free Church Magazine*, calculated in 1850 that 500,000 children were unprovided for by parish schools and, even taking into account all the non-parochial schools, there still remained at least 200,000 children, between the ages of six and fifteen for whom there were no means of education, public or private, and who grew up in "utter and debasing ignorance".¹³ He noted the "rapidly advancing tide of intemperance, immorality and crime ... and increasing instances of juvenile depravity which fill our police and prison reports" and laid this at the door of the deficient educational system.¹⁴ At a public meeting in Edinburgh in 1850 Sheriff James Craufurd stated, "the disproportion between the population and the means of instruction is necessary the source of crime, especially juvenile crime; and we propose, as a remedy, a system of national education".¹⁵

That more schools were needed was never disputed by the Kirk but it recognised that the real problem lay in the irregular attendance of pupils. In 1850 the committee had conducted its own inquiry into the "Means of Education in Scotland" and had concluded that there were many poor and destitute children in the large towns who did not take advantage of the schooling that was available and many who left school at an early age to earn a wage.¹⁶ Even the Established Church's opponents had to concede that attendance at school was not a reliable way of estimating educational provision since many parents sent their children out to work to eke out the family income instead of sending them to school: – "The social revolution brought about by the vast increase of manufactures of every kind, has tended greatly to lower the desire once felt for education in Scotland, and to produce the ignorance and depravity which we deplore."¹⁷ By the early 1860's there was even talk in some

¹³ W. M. Hetherington, *National Education in Scotland viewed in Its Present Condition, Its Principles, and Its Possibilities* 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Johnstone & Hunter, 1850), 5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

¹⁵ *Report etc.* (This is a report of a public meeting held on 9 April 1850 in Edinburgh with a view to forming an Association for the support and prosecution of a national system of education.) with Appendix noting the resolutions from this meeting. (Edinburgh: n.p., 1850?), 17.

¹⁶ *ECR*, 1850, 43: "Minute of the General Assembly's Education Committee, stating the Results of a recent Inquiry concerning the Means of Education in Scotland (April 1850)."

¹⁷ Hetherington, *National Education*, 6. But see Appendix showing increasing numbers attending Evening Schools.

quarters of introducing some kind of entry examination for applicants seeking employment, as a means of inducing more to attend school.¹⁸

The early Factory Acts (1833 and 1844) which ensured that children below thirteen attended school for two and three hours, applied only to the textile mills. Indeed, Smout claimed that child labour actually increased in the third quarter of the century.¹⁹ Certainly in the rural areas children of agricultural workers only attended school in the winter when they were old enough to earn a wage which was from nine onwards.²⁰ It is questionable whether the reorganisation of the parochial school system as proposed by Moncreiff and his Free Church supporters would have solved this problem. Local school boards might have not have been any more effective than the pressure brought to bear by the parish minister. Only legislation making full-time education compulsory would have helped.

In 1863 with the introduction of the Revised Code²¹ pending, the Education Committee made the keeping of attendance registers compulsory for all Assembly schools. It adopted the position that children who attended school less than 100 days throughout the year "cannot be said to be under education at all".²²

Social and Moral Issues

For some churchmen any move to democratise the franchise always raised fears of social unrest and highlighted weaknesses in the educational system. In 1834 George Lewis had described the uneducated masses as a "blind giant" which, given the power and let loose from his prison, could overthrow the existing order:

Each new extension of the political charter lays a stronger and stronger necessity upon the governors, for their own security, to educate the people ... if the nation will not pay for the schoolmaster to prevent crime, it must pay tenfold for the repression of social disorder, and for coercing an unhappy, dissolute, and reckless population.²³

Sixteen years later the same view was being expressed at a meeting called to set up the National Education Association of Scotland:

¹⁸ *ECR*, 1861. *Presbyterial Reports*, Glasgow, 22.

¹⁹ Smout, *A Century of the Scottish People*, 95.

²⁰ See R. D. Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People*, 85 & 126.

²¹ The Revised Code proposed basing grants on numbers attending school for at least 176 days per annum, and on the attainment of certain standards in the 3Rs. See pp. 207-8.

²² *ECR*, 1861, 11.

²³ Lewis, *Scotland A Half-Educated Nation*, 3 and 44.

When we look to the advance of the great cause of civil and religious liberty – to the recognition of the rights of the franchise ... we proclaim with pride and gratitude that this is an age of progress, and not decay. On the other hand it is too evident that pauperism, intemperance, and crime are increasing; and, beneath the surface of the society in which we move, there are ever and anon heavings of power, and flashes of fire, warning us of a danger we have too long neglected ...²⁴

How far the social and moral problems of this time could be laid at the door of the inadequate provision of school education is difficult to determine. In a "Pastoral Address on the Increase of Immorality in Rural Districts" the General Assembly seemed to have some doubts about the wisdom of educating boys and girls in the same classroom. It expressed the hope that female schools would be a check on "the coarseness of manners which often results from the practice of teaching the young of both sexes promiscuously".²⁵ Apart from juvenile crime many of the issues related to adult behaviour and the changing customs which accompanied the fast growth of urban areas. Inadequate housing, low wages and poor church attendances could hardly be blamed on inefficient teachers. The concerns which took up most time in presbyteries and general assemblies in the 1840s and 1850s, notably intemperance, sexual promiscuity and Sabbath observance, were shared by all the churches.

In 1850 the *Scotsman*, describing Scotland's drink culture, commented with biting sarcasm:

It may seem strange that Edinburgh, the headquarters of the various sections of a clergy more powerful than any other save that of Ireland, should, in respect of drunkenness, exhibit scenes and habits unparalleled in any other metropolis, and that Glasgow, where the clergy swarm, should be notoriously the most guilty and offensive city in Christendom.²⁶

The Kirk's reply was a Pastoral Address to members on the "Prevailing Sin of Intemperance" which called on ministers to preach about the dangers of strong drink. It pointed out that as a result of drunkenness in just over twenty years "the annual commitments for serious crime in Scotland, have risen from about 1800 to nearly 5000".²⁷

There were those who believed that the answer to the immorality of the times lay in the growth of Sunday schools. In 1850 the Presbytery of Perth and the Synod of

²⁴ Sheriff Craufurd, *Report, etc.*, 16.

²⁵ AGA, 1861, 79-81.

²⁶ *Scotsman*, 22 1850. Quoted by T.M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation*, 350-1.

²⁷ AGA, 1850 p. 45.

Perth and Stirling sent up overtures asking the General Assembly to collect statistics on Sabbath-schools and to find a way of increasing their efficiency and to place them "more prominently under the care and supervision of the Church".²⁸ Around the mid-1850's the Education Committee began including in its reports to the General Assembly the number of children attending Sunday schools who had not been attending the weekday schools. These were Sunday schools which supplemented the school education programme and taught basic subjects like reading and writing to children who were working on weekdays. In 1849 the Edinburgh Sabbath School Teachers' Association submitted a report to the Education Committee stating that it had twenty-seven schools attended by 2215 children and staffed by 229 teachers under its superintendence.²⁹ One writer claimed that in Glasgow in 1851, "there were 1 in 9 scholars on the roll of the whole population ... while there were 43,046 Sabbath scholars, or 1 in 7½".³⁰ The Glasgow Sabbath School Union gave the figure as 1 in 10 in 1854, twice as many as in 1838.³¹ It is likely, however, that these figures refer to Sunday schools under the supervision of local congregations whose main object was evangelical outreach and mission rather than educational. Whereas earlier Sunday Schools had been established to fulfil both an educational and an evangelical purpose, with the passing of the Factory Acts and the possibility of children attending schools at least on a half-day basis on weekdays, there was less need for missionary-motivated Sunday schools to provide instruction in reading and writing. C. G. Brown has noted that "by 1865, the Glasgow Sabbath School Union claimed that there was not a single affiliated Sunday school providing reading and writing at normal meetings. Between 1820 and 1870, Sunday schools gradually lost their role as educational establishments and became more rigorously religious institutions".³² Both educational and evangelical Sunday schools could claim that, in their own way, they tackled the problem of immorality and crime.

One other matter which may be considered under the heading of social and moral issues was the prevailing attitude to Roman Catholics.³³ The main Presbyterian

²⁸ GAP, 1850, Overtures March 1850 and April 1850.

²⁹ NAS CH1, Minutes of the Education Committee, 1849.

³⁰ *A Voice from the Church, being a review of the Resolutions and Speeches at the above meeting. With a vindication of the Church of Scotland from the aspirations of Lord Panmure, Drs. Cunningham, Guthrie & others* (Edinburgh: Alexander C. Moodie, 1854) 17.

³¹ *Report of Speeches delivered at a Public Meeting in Glasgow to oppose the Lord Advocate's Education Bill for Scotland, May 1855* (Glasgow: Maurice Ogle & Son, 1855) 12.

³² C.G.Brown, "The Sunday School Movement in Scotland, 1780-1914", *RSCHS*, 21 (1981-3), 15.

³³ There also seems to have been considerable opposition to Jews holding positions of authority. In 1848 and again in 1853 Perth Presbytery agreed to petition Parliament against Bills for the admission

Churches saw the increasing numbers of Roman Catholics as a threat to the Protestant tradition in Scotland and as a challenge to the prevailing system of school education. In the 1850s there was hardly a Presbytery in the land which did not have something to say about the dangers of "Papism". The sentiments of Dunfermline Presbytery were typical:

This Presbytery cordially joins in the universal reprobation uttered against the Pope, in the Edict instituting a Romish hierarchy over this Protestant Country ... agrees to memorialise Her Majesty to take steps to meet the emergency ...[and] instructs ministers to familiarise their people with the difference between Protestant truth and Papal error.

Two years later the same Presbytery, in common with many others, petitioned the Commons to discontinue grants to Maynooth College.³⁴ Even as late as 1858 fears were being expressed by presbyteries and synods that children might be influenced by books issued to schools by the Privy Council which were "of a decidedly Popish character containing historically false passages",³⁵ and the Commission of Assembly agreed to petition Parliament to set up an inquiry into how the Committee of Council on Education selected text books and their use of public money in purchasing them.

While both the parish schools and the denominational schools in Scotland had a long history of inclusiveness, it would appear that the growing strength of the Roman Catholic Church made the main denominations even more determined to ensure that, whatever the outcome of the national education debate, Scottish schools would be Presbyterian schools and that teaching from the Authorised Version of the Bible and the Shorter Catechism would continue to be the main thrust of religious instruction. In a letter to the Marquis of Lansdowne proposing the reform of the educational system, Robert Candlish, who supported the continuation of Free Church schools and opposed Begg's ideas for a national system, defended "the liberal spirit" which had always been a characteristic feature of Scottish education with schools "freely open to all without respect to creed, or Church, or party", but at the same time insisted that "still they are Presbyterian schools ... radically and essentially the parochial school

of Jews to seats in Parliament. James Bryce in *A letter to the Earl of Aberdeen on Public Education in relation to Scotland and its Parish Schools* claimed that following the passing of the Universities Test Act (1853), "there is now no statutory obstacle to these Chairs [Lay Chairs] being filled by Jews, Papists, or Infidels." (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1854), 2.

³⁴ NAS CH2, Dunfermline Presbytery, 1850 and 1852.

³⁵ NAS CH2, Paisley Presbytery, April 1858.

system of Scotland is a Presbyterian institution".³⁶ Such dogmatic assertions may have been historically accurate but they were obviously resented by the Roman Catholic Church which now felt itself strong enough to make its voice heard. A letter written by Bishop James Gillis to the Lord Provost of Edinburgh in 1854 made the Roman Catholic position clear with regard to school education:

We never can, and never will send our children to a school of which the master is not a Catholic, approved by his Bishop, or by those representing his Bishop's spiritual authority; and in which secular, as well as religious instruction, is not imparted to the scholars, in the unmistakeable and untrammelled spirit of Catholic teaching ... History never can be taught fairly to a Catholic child by a Protestant teacher; for the very documents that go to establish the hereditary claims of the pupil, would throw the master out of court.³⁷

The Roman Catholic position was not helped by the proposed legislation which, to satisfy the secular lobby and the Voluntarists, treated religious instruction as a subject outwith the curriculum rather than as an integral part of a child's education. Further, to meet the demands of the Presbyterian Churches this religious instruction would be based on the Shorter Catechism and what Gillis described as "the Protestant version of the Bible". Whereas, as Candlish maintained, in the past Roman Catholic parents were happy to accept that, in the absence of Catholic schools, their children should attend denominational schools, it would appear now that with the growth of Catholic schools, there was pressure on Catholic parents to send their children to their own Church schools. Here were clear indications of how difficult it would be to include Roman Catholic schools in the kind of national system of education which the reformers were proposing.

Advocates for Change

The National Education Association's Proposals

Founded in 1850, the National Education Association of Scotland was set up with a view to supporting a national system of education. It was concerned about the

³⁶ Candlish, *A Letter to the Most Noble the Marquess of Lansdowne on the Reform and Extension of the Parish School System of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1850) 4.

³⁷ Gillis, *A Letter to the Rt. Hon. Duncan Maclaren, on the proposed 'Voluntary' Amendment of the Lord Advocate's Education Bill for Scotland, by Rt. Rev Bishop Gillis* (Edinburgh: Marsh and Beattie, 1854), 6 and 12.

increasing intemperance and crime in Scottish society and was critical of the "too often slovenly and anything but pious reading of the Scriptures, which form the staple religious instruction in so many of our parish schools".³⁸ The High School in Edinburgh was held up as an example of what could be achieved:

In the High School of Edinburgh we have an example of a national unsectarian school in full operation. The local board of patrons consists of men of all sects and parties; the teachers belong to the Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Dissenting denominations; but this occasions no unfriendly feelings among either teachers or taught, nor has it ever been objected to by the parents of the pupils.³⁹

In common with others who argued for change the Association started from the premiss that "a system of sectarian education ... is fraught with social evils of the gravest kind" and that under the supervision of the Established Church parish schools were "defective and objectionable in consequence of the smallness of the class invested with the patronage, the limited portion of the community from which the teachers are selected, [and] the general inadequacy of the remuneration".⁴⁰ It believed that state-funded education should be made available freely to everyone. In place of the heritors and presbyteries of the Established Church, local boards were to be elected by the male heads of families. These boards would appoint teachers, determine the curriculum and manage the schools. The local boards would be supervised nationally by a central board. Teachers would not be required to subscribe to any religious test and religious instruction, over which the government would have no control, would be determined by the heads of families and the local boards:—"The duty and responsibility of communicating religious instruction to children, have been committed by God to their parents and through them to such teachers as they may choose to intrust [sic] with that duty."⁴¹

The Position of the Free Church

Within the Free Church of Scotland there was agreement that the Established Church's monopoly with regard to the appointment of teachers to parish schools had

³⁸ *Report, etc.*, 11.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 4 & Appendix.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Appendix, 35-38.

to be broken. Beyond that there were a number of divergent views as to how the education question should be tackled.

There was considerable support for Candlish's the view that the Free Church had to continue with its programme of supporting and building its own schools. Others, like Begg and Guthrie, believed that, having left the Established Church at the Disruption on the principle that there should be no state interference in ecclesiastical matters, the Church should not be dependent on state funding for its schools and training colleges. Begg denounced the existing Government scheme of an "indiscriminate endowment of denominations" where even Popery came in for its share, on the other hand he argued that no denomination, not even the Free Church, was in a position to finance enough schools to meet the nation's needs. For Begg nothing short of a fully developed scheme of national education would suffice. Indeed, Begg saw that a national system could be advantageous for both the Free Church and the Established Church given such agreement and co-operation:

There is no reason why, in a National system of Education, the Established Church should not have its fair share of influence in proportion to its numbers. ... it would probably be all exerted on the side of securing the teaching, not of the principles of the Free Church, for that is not necessary, but of the Bible and Shorter Catechism. They will be our opponents until the new measure is passed; but afterwards they will be our auxiliaries in preventing the schools from becoming secularised.⁴²

For Begg the promotion of secular education was the obligation of the civil Government and not "one of the primary duties of the Church of Christ as such". On the other hand religious instruction was "a clear scriptural obligation resting on all parents ... aided by the ministers of Christ".⁴³ His opponents, however, were not convinced that any such national system would secure a scheme of religious instruction based on the Scriptures and the Shorter Catechism. Led by Robert Candlish the majority of ministers in the Free Church General Assembly believed that, while deprecating the statutory position of the Established Church, they should press ahead with raising the necessary finance for the Free Church's own school education scheme. Indeed, the *Educational Journal of the Free Church*, reporting on a debate on parochial schools in Edinburgh Presbytery, quoted Candlish as having said that:

⁴² Begg, *National Education*, 33.

⁴³ *Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland*, 1850, p. 207.

He did not think that their primary and paramount duty, as a church, was to agitate for a reformation of the parochial schools, any more than to agitate for the reformation of the parish churches. The primary and paramount duty of the Free Church in the matter of education, was to provide the means of education ... to their own adhering people, and to all who would receive it at their hands.⁴⁴

Fear of what effects a national system might have on the Free Church's own education scheme made others similarly cautious of any proposal to dismantle the existing parochial school system. One minister addressing Glasgow Presbytery admitted that bad as the parochial schools might be, "I am persuaded that they are better than anything that the 'national' is likely to provide in their room".⁴⁵

In 1850 Candlish was able to report to the Free Church General Assembly that twenty-eight overtures from synods and presbyteries had been sent up in favour of their Education Committee's programme for establishing Church schools. With this support for pursuing the Church's own scheme, Begg's motion in favour of a national system was soundly defeated by 254 votes to sixteen. Three of the above twenty-eight overtures did, however, pray "for action in connection with a national system of education, apart from the prosecution of their own Scheme".⁴⁶ Candlish, ever the astute political churchman who kept his own counsel, may have had some sympathy with these three overtures. It is apparent that, while opposing Begg and advocating the advantages of the Church's schools, he was at the same time pursuing his own vision of what a national system might look like. In 1850 he wrote to the Marquis of Lansdowne proposing that instead of parochial teachers having to be members of the Established Church, all that should be required was for them "to subscribe to their belief in the Presbyterian Standards, as these are held and maintained by all the Presbyterian bodies". Teachers were to be appointed by householders and heads of families with all the Presbyterian churches having a right of periodical visitation and inspection but not of "authoritative control".⁴⁷ Soon afterwards a group of Free Church ministers and elders, among them Hetherington, Cunningham, Candlish and A. E. Monteith, Sheriff of Fife, wrote to the Committee of Council on Education in similar terms. The statutory role of the Established Church was to be removed but, as

⁴⁴ *Educational Journal of the Free Church of Scotland*, May 1849, 174.

⁴⁵ Robert Bremner, *Speeches on the Education Question delivered in their Respective Presbyteries by a number of Free Church ministers* (Perth: James Dewar & Son, 1850), 25.

⁴⁶ *Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland*, 1850, 199.

⁴⁷ Candlish, *A Letter to the Most Noble the Marquess of Lansdowne*, 7.

a concession to the churches, there was to be a role for "the different Presbyterian bodies still interested in the oversight of schools":

If it were thought desirable, for greater security, that a right of periodical inspection, and of lodging complaints before the General Board, should be recognised in the Presbyteries of the Established Church, – or in the Presbyteries of all the Presbyterian bodies, – but without giving them any jurisdiction, it does not appear that there need to be any serious objection to such a provision.⁴⁸

The authors of this letter suggested that there should be a Central Board but no local boards. This Central Board would deal with complaints about teachers. They included in their draft proposal the subjects which a teacher would have to teach. Among these were rudimentary Latin and religious instruction which was to be taught exclusively from the Authorised Version of the Bible and the Shorter Catechism.⁴⁹ For once William Cunningham, Principal of New College, and Robert Candlish seem to have been on the same side and both associated themselves with this letter but its proposals did not go far enough to bring about any reconciliation with Begg and Guthrie.

The Position of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland

The United Presbyterian Church took an approach which was even more radical than that of the Free Church in believing that the whole system, whereby the Government through the Committee of Council gave grants to the different denominations to run their schools, perpetuated sectarian animosity and strife and brought "teachers and pupils into such dependence on Government as might be perilous to civil liberty".⁵⁰ Further it parted company with the majority in the Free Church in holding that the provision of religious instruction for young people did not fall within the province of the civil government but belonged "exclusively to the Parent and the Church".⁵¹ For the United Presbyterians the legislation which restricted the appointment of parish teachers to those who were members of the Established Church was out of date. It

⁴⁸ *Proposal for a System of National Education in Scotland – Unto the Rt. Hon The Lords of the Committee of Council on Education (On the part of certain Ministers and Elders of the Free Church of Scotland, resident in Edinburgh.)* (Edinburgh: W. P. Kennedy, 1851?), 5 & 10.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 9-13.

⁵⁰ *Proceedings of the United Presbyterian Synod*, 1847, 79 and 1850, 263.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 1847, 78.

had been drawn up at a time when nearly the whole population belonged to the Established Church with a view to excluding Episcopalians and Roman Catholics. Now, it was claimed, the "establishment is in a decided minority, and the test excludes a much greater number of Presbyterians than it admits".⁵² The United Presbyterian Synod was in favour of placing the management of schools under local boards, but disagreed with any attempt to legislate for religious instruction as part of the school curriculum even although it might be taught at certain stated hours or at the end of the school day and at a time when parents could withdraw their children. It believed that the introduction of religious instruction must always be left to the discretion of the local boards.⁵³

By the mid 1850s, therefore, in all but those closely associated with the Established Church, there were hopes of changes to Scottish school education and, even where there was disagreement about how provision should be made for religious instruction, there was the desire that some form of national system would replace the Kirk's statutory hold on parish schools.

The Education Bills 1850-59 Considered

From 1850 to the passing of the Parochial and Burgh Schoolmasters (Scotland) Act in 1861 five Bills to reform and extend school education in Scotland were brought to Parliament. All started from the claim that the means of education in Scotland were inadequate to cope with the growing population and its concentration in the Central belt, and set out to supplement the parochial schools.⁵⁴ All were in agreement that whereas the Established Church had statutory powers to examine parochial schools, now some form of national system should bring these schools under the superintendence and inspection of a National Board with parish committees consisting of ministers, heritors and householders or heads of families, taking responsibility for the management of existing schools and the establishment of new ones. Education was to be paid for partly out of local taxes and partly by the Treasury. The law whereby only members of the Established Church could be schoolmasters was to be repealed. From 1854 onwards all the Bills attempted to secure a higher salary for schoolmasters. Over the years the various Bills differed

⁵² *Educational Journal of the Free Church of Scotland*, May 1849, 175.

⁵³ *Proceedings of the United Presbyterian Synod*, 1854, 511.

⁵⁴ Between 1821 and 1851 the Scottish population grew by 38%. Source: *Scottish Population Statistics*, ed. J. G. Kyd, (Edinburgh, 1952), xvii.

mainly in the proposed constituency of the Central Board and in the concessions made to the various denominations particularly with regard to the delivery of religious instruction.

Viscount Melgund's Bills 1850 and 1851

Viscount Melgund, the Liberal MP for Greenock, was the first to bring before Parliament proposals along the lines of those noted above. He suggested that a General Board of eleven people should be chosen to supervise all the parochial schools in Scotland. The Parish Committee comprising the minister, the heritors and representatives of the Board, had powers to buy land and build schools, appoint and supervise all schoolmasters and to fix the curriculum and the fees. Schoolmasters no longer needed to subscribe to any declaration of faith. Before a new school was established the parish committee had to satisfy the General Board that adequate funds were available over and above what was needed for the schoolmaster's salary. The funding of school education had to be met half by the committee locally and half by the Treasury. Melgund's proposals thus left considerable powers with parish ministers and local heritors. One section of the Bill actually stated that in parishes where a parish committee had not been established, the minister and heritors would continue to appoint the schoolmaster and superintend the parish schools. This Bill and another similar one again brought forward by Melgund in 1851 were both rejected by the Commons, the latter losing by only thirteen votes.

Moncreiff's Bills 1854, 1855, 1856 and 1857

In 1853 The General Assembly of the Established Church congratulated the Committee on Parochial Schoolmasters and Schools for its endeavours in supporting the rights and privileges of the Church and the cause of religious education in Scotland. The Assembly rejoiced that Melgund's attempts to amend the existing legislation had once again been successfully defeated. Its celebrations, however, proved to be rather premature. The cause was taken up by the Lord Advocate James Moncreiff, MP for Leith, and was to become his great passion for the next ten years. Encouraged by the passing of his Bill to remove the religious test for university

professors (except for appointments to theological chairs), Moncreiff pressed on with proposals to reform school education.⁵⁵

Moncreiff's Bills incorporated the general pattern of reform which had been proposed by Melgund but with certain important changes. In several instances these had to do with trying to reach a consensus by making concessions to the Presbyterian churches. Whereas Melgund's Bills had made no clear statement regarding the teaching of religious instruction, the Preamble to the 1854 Bill revealed a strong Free Church influence and that some cognisance had been taken of the Scottish tradition to which Moncreiff himself belonged:

Whereas Instruction in the Principles of Religious Knowledge, and the Reading of the Holy Scriptures, as heretofore in use in the Parochial and other Schools in that country [Scotland], is consonant to the Opinions and Religious Profession of the great Body of the People, while at the same Time ordinary Secular Instruction has been and should be available to Children of all Denominations: And whereas the Means of Education in Scotland fall far short of what is required by the Circumstances and increased Population of that Country, and the present System of Superintendence and Management of the Parochial Schools has been found greatly defective, and ought to be altered and amended...⁵⁶

Not unnaturally the Established Church was outraged at this latter assertion which it indignantly repudiated as "untrue and calumnious; ... and most unworthy to be entertained by the Parliament of Great Britain".⁵⁷ Nor was the Kirk at all placated by Moncreiff's reassurance that his proposal to abolish the confessional test for schoolmasters "was not conceived in a spirit of hostility to the Established Church ... nor with any desire to diminish the security, which now exists, for the religious teaching of the people".⁵⁸ "To my mind," he stated, "the schoolmaster throws away the best weapon in his armoury when he excludes religion from his teaching."⁵⁹ It was Moncreiff's intention that, while dismantling the existing system of supervision by the Established Church, religious instruction would be provided and taught by the schoolmasters whose fitness would be examined by inspectors appointed by the

⁵⁵ The Universities (Scotland) Act was passed in 1853 by a majority of 106 votes to 17. It was agreed that every professor would make a declaration that he would not teach any doctrine opposed to the divine authority of the Bible or to the Westminster Confession.

⁵⁶ PP, Public Bills: 1854 II *A Bill to Make further Provision for the Education of the People in Scotland and to amend the Laws relating thereto* (3 March 1854. 17 Vict.) 1-2.

⁵⁷ *Abridgment of Commission of Assembly*, 1853-54, 66.

⁵⁸ *Speech of the Lord Advocate*, 12-13.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

Board of Education. His concession to the secular lobby and the United Presbyterian Church Synod was that religious instruction while "forming part of the ordinary teaching of the school", would be offered at certain stated hours so that Catholic and Dissenting parents who objected to what was being taught could opt out. The make-up of a Board of Education (Melgund's "General Board") now included the current president of the Educational Institute of Scotland and was heavily weighted in favour of government officials, six including the chairman. One critic described it in these terms:

The Secularists have gained indeed a great victory, for a more Secular Board we cannot possibly conceive ... what possible good such a Board can do we are wholly at a loss to learn. The Eight Nominees of Government will be most probably well paid officials, profoundly ignorant of education; the Delegates of the Universities will be ditto; and the President of the Educational Institute will be all alone in his glory ... there can be no doubt that the Board will be a job, and the nest of jobbery.⁶⁰

The abolition of the religious test meant that schoolmasters might be of any Protestant denomination but, as a concession to the Established Church, Moncreiff left the election of schoolmasters with the minister and heritors of the parish, their fitness having first been approved by the district inspector. Further the general management of the parish schools would be left in the hands of heritors and parish ministers. New schools would be managed by Town Councils within the burghs and in rural areas by ratepayers. All schools would be under the over-all supervision of the national Board of Education. Educational Districts were to be set up with inspectors for each district. The new schools established by local committees were to be designated as "public schools" and the public schoolmaster could be dismissed by the Board of Education "with or without notice and without any reason". Moncreiff's Bill would have guaranteed schoolmasters a minimum salary of £50, abolishing the traditional system whereby salaries had been fixed according to grain prices. Of this £50, heritors would continue to pay £34 and the remainder would be made up by the Privy Council. To make it possible for schoolmasters to retire owing to age or illness a retiring allowance of £25 was to be paid, half by the heritors and half by the Privy Council. As another concession to the churches Moncreiff would have made it lawful for the Board to grant aid to "Industrial or Reformatory schools" – "to cleanse out the fountainhead of crime" and convert "the Arabs and Pariahs of our great towns

⁶⁰ Hugh Scott, *The Scottish Education Question* (Edinburgh: Bell and Bradfute, 1854) 7.

into good and useful citizens" – and to Denominational Schools in poor localities" provided the inspector reported these to be efficient and deserving and open to children of all denominations.⁶¹ Moncreiff proposed raising the money for this scheme by a property tax of a penny in the pound.

Moncreiff's Bill was lost by only nine votes, with thirty-six Scottish MP's voting for it and fourteen against it. G.W.T. Omond noted that this was a Scottish Bill defeated by an English vote, with English dissenters, Conservative MP's and Roman Catholics all voting against it.⁶² Lord Panmure speaking for the Free Church which had, with some reservations, supported the Bill, commented:

I will say of that bill, that it has been rejected by the voice of England, and not by the voice of Scotland. I consider the principle of that bill as being approved by the people of Scotland, inasmuch as thirty-six out of the whole number of Scottish representatives voted in favour of the principle of that bill.⁶³

Moncreiff had had the support of the Scottish burghs and the Liberal middle-class.⁶⁴ He himself was angry at the disinterest of some eighty or ninety English MPs, resident in London, who had been absent from the Commons when the division was put.⁶⁵ Years later he admitted that the English members had been afraid of the Bill being an encouragement to those advocating changes in England.⁶⁶

Although his Bill to reform the Scottish educational system had been defeated, Moncreiff pressed on with his aim of achieving a greater financial stability for schoolmasters and in June 1854 he persuaded the Government to pass an Act guaranteeing that salaries would be held for another year at the level fixed in 1828. Had they been calculated according to the 1854 price of grain the maximum salary would have fallen from £34 to £25 and the minimum from £25 to £19.⁶⁷ These

⁶¹ PP, Public Bills 1854 II A *Bill to Make further Provision etc*, 13-14.

⁶² G. W. T. Omond, *The Lord Advocates of Scotland*, Second Series 1834-1880 (London: Andrew Melrose, 1914) 182.

⁶³ *Speeches of Dr Candlish, Lord Panmure, Professor Miller in the General Assembly 25th May 1854*. (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1854) 9.

⁶⁴ A *Petition of the Merchants, Bankers, Solicitors, Surgeons, Traders and other inhabitants of the Burgh of Peterhead* supported the Bill but asked that religious instruction "should be of an entirely non-controversial character and inoffensive to all Denominations of Christians". (AD56, 47/1, 1854.)

⁶⁵ AD56, 47/1, (*Confidential*) *Memorandum by the Lord Advocate on Education in Scotland*, 22 February 1855.

⁶⁶ *An Educational Retrospect being an address delivered by the Right Hon. Lord Moncreiff, on the occasion of the Opening of Kent Road Public School, 24 April, 1886*. (Glasgow: Morison Brothers, 1886) 12. In 1850 the English MP W. J. Fox had brought forward to Parliament a Bill entitled "To Promote the Secular Education of the People in England and Wales" which had proposed setting up parish education committees to manage new schools.

⁶⁷ PP, 1854 V. 2 June 1854. 17 Vict.

figures were looked at again in 1857 when it was agreed that Sheriffs and Stewards should make a new calculation which would be applied as from 1859. The calculation was again to be based on the average price of a chalders of oatmeal.⁶⁸

Recognising that he had only narrowly been defeated in March 1854, the Lord Advocate did not give up. In March 1855 (with a slightly amended version appearing in July) he brought forward yet another Bill to "Provide for the Education of the People of Scotland".⁶⁹ Here, to try and placate the Established Church, Moncreiff dropped the phrase in the Preamble which had described the parish schools as "greatly defective" and merely stated that the system of management "ought to be altered and amended". Changes were made to the constituency of the General Board to include the Lord Provosts of Edinburgh and Glasgow and the Provosts of Perth and Aberdeen. Schools committees were to have powers to appoint female assistant teachers and to separate male and female pupils into different classes as they saw fit. Responding to the ill-feeling created by his previous proposal that public schoolmasters could be dismissed without reasons being given and without the chance to appeal, Moncreiff now proposed that the Board could only dismiss them "after due inquiry". In response to criticisms from the secular lobby the suggestion that the Board might aid some denominational schools was dropped. This Bill, although amended at the committee stage and brought back to Parliament in July 1855 with the representation on the General Board again widened to include four persons elected by the Commissioners of Supply for the Counties of Inverness, Aberdeen, Renfrew and Ayr, was again defeated.⁷⁰

There can be little doubt that events in England were making Moncreiff's task more difficult. During 1855 three Bills were brought forward in an attempt to promote the establishment of new schools in England outwith the control of the Church of England: one by Lord John Russell, "To Promote Education in England", another by Sir John Pakington, "For the Better Encouragement and Promotion of Education in England", and yet another "To Establish Free Schools in England and Wales".⁷¹ All three failed but must have alarmed the English establishment where there was an even greater resistance to change. MPs south of the border who wanted to protect the Church of England's privileged position with regard to its schools, were

⁶⁸ PP, Public Bills 1857 III. 13 August 1857. 20 & 21 Vict. (no. 2)

⁶⁹ PP, 1854-55 II. 28 March 1855. 18 Vict.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 2 July 1855. 18 & 19 Vict.

⁷¹ PP, Public Bills 1854-55 II, 8 February 1855, 18 Vict., 16 March 1855, 18 Vict. (No.2), and 29 March 1855. 18 Vict.

not going to vote for a change to the Scottish system and so weaken their own case. Omond noted that this gave some credence to "The National Association for the Vindication of Scottish Rights" (formed in 1853) which argued that Scottish interests were being neglected at Westminster.⁷² In Scotland itself, however, most heritors supported the Established Church's position and the General Assembly acknowledged that it was "gratefully sensible of the support which has recently been given to the cause of sound Education, by a large body of the nobility and gentry throughout Scotland".⁷³ The position of the heritors is interesting. Presumably any democratisation would have diminished their power. On the other hand many of Moncreiff's proposals included provision for ratepayers being assessed for the upkeep of schools which could have meant a considerable financial saving for the heritors. Over and above their statutory obligation to parish schools, over a third of Assembly schoolmasters had their salaries augmented by heritors to enable them to claim government augmentation.⁷⁴ Some of the heritors, however, were Episcopalians and there was no love lost between them and the Free Church. One Free Churchman wrote, "it is well known that the great majority of our Scottish Heritors are hostile to the religion of Scotland. They are Scottish Episcopalians ... who believe that Scotland has only one church to which they themselves belong".⁷⁵ The heritors for their part opposed Moncreiff's Bills as expressions of Free Church Liberal politics. Describing Professor James Robertson's fund-raising campaign as convener of the Established Church's Committee for the Endowment of Chapels, Drummond and Bulloch wrote, "his traditionalism appeared in the fact that he looked first, not to the industrialists or the trading classes, but to the old landed families, even if many of them had now given their first loyalty to the Episcopal Church ... they were still willing to contribute to the National Church and Robertson canvassed them assiduously". In 1860 a letter supporting Robertson was signed by some twenty of the Scottish nobility, eleven of whom were Episcopalians.⁷⁶

Undeterred, Moncreiff returned in 1856 with yet another but much less ambitious Bill, "To Regulate and make further Provision for Parochial Schools in Scotland". Here the Lord Advocate attempted to rescue two of the provisions included in his

⁷² Omond, *The Lord Advocates of Scotland*, 185.

⁷³ AAGA, 1854, 46.

⁷⁴ ECR, *Statistics For 1861 From Returns Transmitted By Teachers*, 42-47.

⁷⁵ Rev W. Wilson (Free St Paul's, Dundee), *A Plea for Congregational Schools* (Dundee: William Middleton, 1854) 5.

⁷⁶ Andrew L. Drummond & James Bulloch, *The Church in Victorian Scotland, 1843-1874* (Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1975) 121.

previous Bills. One was concerned with ensuring that schoolmasters would be paid a fixed agreed salary of not less than £35 and not more than £50, with arrangements for retiral allowances. The other removed the required confessional test. Otherwise this Bill left the parochial school system unchanged and Moncreiff went out of his way to win the support from the Established Church by stating explicitly that the authority of Presbyteries would continue to be recognised: – "the Powers and Jurisdiction of Presbyteries over Parochial Schools, excepting so far as expressly altered by this Act, shall remain in full Force".⁷⁷ In spite of such concessions this Bill was also lost but the next year Moncreiff succeeded in attaining one of his main objectives with the passing of the Parochial and Schoolmasters (Scotland) Act. This secured for schoolmasters a salary fixed for twenty-five years based on the 1859 price of oatmeal.

Moncreiff's 1856 Bill did not mark his final attempt to change the educational system in Scotland. He would return with new Bills in 1861 and again in 1862. These further Bills, however, would not be as conciliatory. 1856 marked the end of Moncreiff's effort to make concessions to win over the Established Church.

The Kirk's Response to the Bills of Melgund and Moncreiff

Throughout the 1850s there was no significant change in the Established Church's attitude to the various attempts to reform the system of parochial school education in Scotland. In November 1853 the Church set up special sub-committees to canvass the support of MPs and "influential landed Gentlemen" and to keep the public informed of the Church's position through the press.⁷⁸ One response was a Declaration of support published by the landed class.⁷⁹ Whenever there was news of a forthcoming Bill the General Assembly or a Commission of Assembly would meet and immediately launch an attack on whatever was being proposed. In a debate on University Tests in the Assembly in 1853 it was resolved:

That, zealous to maintain inviolate the securities which, in the good providence of God, have been given to the Church of Scotland by national compact and

⁷⁷ PP, Public Bills 1856 V 27 June 1856 19 & 20 Vict., *A Bill (as amended in Committee) to Regulate and make further Provision for Parochial Schools in Scotland*, 5 Clause XIV.

⁷⁸ *Reports of Parliamentary Sub-Committee* (1853-62), November 1853.

⁷⁹ NAS AD56, 47/1, "Declaration by Justices of the Peace, Commissioners of Supply, and Heritors" (Edinburgh, 1854). This contained over 200 signatures.

legislative enactments, they view with extreme jealousy all movements towards changing her constitutional privileges.⁸⁰

That sentence fairly well summed up the attitude of the Established Church throughout the debate on national education. Unlike the Free Church there were no major divisions in the ranks. Where there was any difference of opinion, this centred round how best to state their case to the government. There were some who would have adopted a more conciliatory approach which recognised those instances where the proposals being considered coincided with the aims of the Church. The debate which took place over the issues raised by Melgund's Bill in the 1851 Assembly, for example, was long and heated and the special committee "appointed to watch over measures brought before the Legislature" came in for some criticism regarding the wording of information describing the Kirk's position given to MPs. Some felt that the conditions on which the Committee of Council offered grants compromised the Church's principles and that, when pressing for an increase in schoolmasters' salaries and the extension of the parish school system, no credit should be given to the Council "as a source of support to our schools".⁸¹ The majority, however, accepted the Church's dependence on Privy Council funding and the more liberal minded were even willing to recognise that other denominations also had a right to benefit from government funding. The 1849 "Protest, Declaration and Testimony" had included the phrase:— "while they by no means look with an envious eye on the aid given by the State to the educational institutions of other denominations"⁸², and the Commission of Assembly meeting in March 1850, hoping that more substantial funds would be forthcoming from Parliament, had resolved, "fully to acquiesce in the principle which provides for the allocating of a just proportion of such funds, in aid of schools belonging to other Christian denominations".⁸³ There was a considerable minority, however, who saw this as the Church sanctioning "the endowment of all sects and abandoning the rights of the Church of Scotland established by law".⁸⁴ Again, in the debate on Moncreiff's 1854 Bill, although the majority in the General Assembly opposed it, there were those who saw something positive in those clauses aimed at securing better conditions for schoolmasters, including some provision for retirement allowances, and who, while noting that the provisions for religious

⁸⁰ AAGA, 1853, 46.

⁸¹ Ibid., 1851, 51 and 56.

⁸² AGA, June 1849, 31.

⁸³ ACGA, 1849-50, 79.

⁸⁴ AAGA, 1851, (Sess.10) 44 - 45.

instruction were "radically defective", would have gone as far as to admit to being "gratified to observe that the Bill contains, to a certain extent, a recognition of the importance and necessity of such instruction".⁸⁵ A number of elders gave a cautious support to some of the proposals in the 1854 Bill but wanted to retain the test for schoolmasters and the superintendence of presbyteries,⁸⁶ while one church member remarked that he could not see why "the intellect of Scotland should be tied to the apron-strings of the Established Church or any reason why the heritors should be limited in their choice of schoolmasters to those who belonged to the Established Church. Did the Established Church really require the aid of the parochial schools as nurseries for the Church?"⁸⁷ In 1859 an overture from the Presbytery of Cupar, recalling successive attempts to abolish the test and the signing of the Formula by parish schoolmasters, decided it might undermine these moves if the Established Church openly acknowledged the claims of other Presbyterian denominations to have their schools endowed by the State and placed on a similar footing with Parochial Schools provided the teachers took the Oath to the government and signed the Formula acknowledging the standards of the Westminster Confession of Faith, "as may be satisfactory to the Presbyterian Body with which the school is connected, or which exercises jurisdiction over it".⁸⁸ In spite of such differences of opinion, the declaration made in 1849 continued to be supported in the General Assembly and was consistently reiterated no matter what was proposed by those who sought to change the system.

In defence of its position the Established Church made three main contentions. Firstly it held that Kirk's authority and superintendence was guaranteed by statute and secondly that the place of religious instruction within the school curriculum was of paramount importance and could only be secured by insisting that schoolmasters must be members of the Kirk. Lastly, while admitting that much still needed to be done to meet the educational needs of Scotland's young people, the Church denied that the existing provision was as deficient as its critics claimed and pointed to its own contribution:

⁸⁵ *ACGA*, 1853-54, 67. The motion to include this phrase in the Church's response to the Bill was defeated by 47 votes to 37.

⁸⁶ *Report by the Sub-Committee of the Elders' Union of the Church of Scotland on the Lord Advocate's Education Bill, 1854* (Edinburgh: Paton and Ritchie, 1854).

⁸⁷ Sir Alexander Maitland in *Speeches at the County Meeting held in Edinburgh May, 1854, on the Lord Advocate's Bill with Appendix showing how other Counties voted on the Bill* (Edinburgh: Thomas Allan & Co, 1854).

⁸⁸ *GAP*, Presbytery of Cupar, 1859, *Overture anent Schoolmasters' Formula*.

There are connected with the Church of Scotland more than double the number of schools in connection with all other denominations put together ... the members of the Established Church subscribe annually more for educational purposes than all the other denominations put together ... there is spent on schools in connection with the established Church five times as much as is spent on schools in connection with the Free Church ... we have school accommodation ... more than sufficient to afford every child in the community six years' schooling ... we have a supply of teachers sufficient for the demand ... [The first thing to be done is] to devise means by which those who will not, may be induced to send their children to school.⁸⁹

By 1854 when the results of the 1851 Census were made public, the defenders of the Established Church believed that they could show that Scottish education was not nearly in as perilous a state as its critics had claimed. The Census had shown that, even allowing for incomplete statistics, ("the inquiry in Scotland was a voluntary measure [unlike England] ... the enumerators were less careful ... and parties less willing to supply the information"⁹⁰), the proportion of the population at day schools was 12.76 per cent, that is 1 in 7.84. Making allowances for deficient returns, the figure was estimated at 1 in 7 of the Scottish population.⁹¹ This figure was frequently quoted by supporters of the Established Church as contradicting "the exaggerated statements so often made of the deficiencies as to education in Scotland ... no part of Scotland exhibits anything like the deficiency in education which prevailed over England not many years ago when the proportion in 1818 was 1 in 17 and in 1833 1 in 11".⁹² (The English MP W. J. Fox informed the House of Commons that the figure for England and Wales was 1 in 13.⁹³) Some went further:

In those parts of the country, still forming the greater portion of Scotland, in which there are neither large towns, nor extensive manufactures or mines, nor Highland tracts or mountains, or many separate islands, there are nearly 1 in 5 at school some time during the year – as large a number as it is possible in any circumstances to expect.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ John Cook, *The Education Question in Scotland* (Being a Reprint of Articles which appeared in the Fife Journal) (Cupar, Fife, 1853) 11 and 16.

⁹⁰ *Results of the Census of 1851 with respect to the Religious and Educational Establishments of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1854) 10.

⁹¹ PP, 1851, "Report", *Census of Great Britain Population*, 11 (Irish University Press, 1970) ix and x.

⁹² Censor, *An Examination of the Census Report and Tables of Religious Worship and Education for Scotland, 1851*, (Reprinted from the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* of 15 and 20 July, 1854) 15-16.

⁹³ W. J. Fox, *Speech in the House of Commons on National Education* (Effingham Wilson, Royal Exchange, 1850) 5.

⁹⁴ *A Voice from the Church*, 15.

Whatever deficiency there was, it was argued, "is not owing to any defect or imperfection in the principle, or the working of the Parish school system, but arises from the fact that this system has not been extended so as to keep pace with the increasing population", and nothing in the proposed legislation would benefit those living in the Highlands and Islands or in the densely populated districts of the new towns.⁹⁵ There was nothing that better paid and well-qualified teachers could not put right under the superintendence of presbyteries and subject to examination by inspectors "who hold their appointment from Government, but who must be members of the church". It was maintained that "it would be contrary to every maxim of sound policy to substitute ... an untried system, however plausible in itself, for institutions which for upwards of a century and a half, have been identified with the social improvement of the country".⁹⁶ The new Education Boards on the other hand, had "all the character both of irresponsibleness and tyranny".⁹⁷

Earlier in this thesis we raised the question of whether the Established Church considered religious instruction more important than the delivery of a broad curriculum which would prepare people for life and work. One result of the proposals for a national education system over this period was that for many in the Church the "godly upbringing of youth" became central. This was seen as the distinctive contribution of the parish schools to the well-being and prosperity of the nation.⁹⁸ The Presbytery of Dalkeith believed that the parochial school system had succeeded in "implanting in the minds of the youth of the land those principles which not only prepare man for the right discharge of the duties of this world, but lead to his preparation as an immortal being, for the world to come."⁹⁹ The Presbytery of Edinburgh called on the Assembly to take measures "to maintain the Parish Schools in strict connection with the Church, as one essential means of prolonging their religious and moral influence".¹⁰⁰ The various government Bills were accused of making no provision for ascertaining the religious character and faith of the teachers and no adequate superintendence of religious teaching in schools. The indictment of the 1850 General Assembly was typical. It opposed Melgund's Bill as separating the religious and secular elements of education and as ignoring the statutory role of the Established Church as secured by the Revolution Settlement and the Treaty of Union

⁹⁵ AAGA, 1851, (Sess.10) 45, and ACGA, 1851, 62.

⁹⁶ ACGA, March 1850, 79.

⁹⁷ Ibid., March, 1854, 66.

⁹⁸ ACGA, 1853-54, 63.

⁹⁹ NAS CH2, Presbytery of Dalkeith, February 1854.

¹⁰⁰ GAP, 1851, *Overture from the Presbytery of Edinburgh anent Parochial Schools*.

inasmuch as it: "proposes a complete separation of the system of National Education from the Church of Scotland, and leaves no guarantee for the National Instruction of youth in the principles of the Christian religion".¹⁰¹

The debate often centred on two aspects of this issue. One was that the new proposals were too secular, the other was the accusation that the present system was sectarian. The Established Church maintained that to treat religious instruction in the way suggested by the education Bills (that is, having it taught at stated times and not as part of the compulsory curriculum) would create a secular system of education. The Presbytery of Cupar claimed that any move to do away with the oath taken by schoolmasters would "be destructive of the religious constitution of the schools".¹⁰² The Synod of Ross was of the opinion that "a system of education merely secular, without provision for religious instruction might be National, but could not be Christian".¹⁰³ The Lord Advocate's response to the accusation that he was introducing a secular system of education is interesting:

How can there be any accurate distinction taken between Secular and Religious Instruction? For if by Secular we mean that which belongs to the present day, which is conversant with the things of daily life, which deals with daily duties, which relates to the services we owe to our families, to the community, and to the State, in short, our perpetual obligations to God and man, there is nothing more secular than religion.¹⁰⁴

As for the present system being sectarian, the Established Church flatly denied this. It held that the accusation that denominational schools had a tendency to foster a spirit of sectarianism had "but a very partial foundation in truth ... and that, in respect of its alleged *ultimate* [sic] prejudicial bearings on society, it is wholly destitute of validity".¹⁰⁵ Indeed the local district boards proposed by Melgund (and later by Moncreiff) were likely to be even more sectarian since:

It is morally impossible that causes of difference should not be of frequent occurrence, which must give rise to heats and divisions ... and inflame, therefore, among the members of the boards so affected, mutual sectarian animosities.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ AAGA, 1850 65.

¹⁰² GAP, 1859, *Overture from the Presbytery of Cupar anent Schoolmasters' Formula*.

¹⁰³ GAP, 1851, *Overture from the Synod of Ross anent Education*.

¹⁰⁴ *Speech of the Lord Advocate*, 19-20.

¹⁰⁵ ACGA, 1849-50, 79-80.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

While there may have been a few within the Established Church who might have negotiated with Moncreiff, the vast majority would have nothing to do with his proposals. The failure of the Kirk to consider more seriously the possibility of reaching some agreement with Moncreiff at this time had profound implications for the future of its contribution to Scottish education for, as was noted earlier, from the mid-fifties onwards Moncreiff's attitude towards the Established Church hardened. Throughout the 1850's the Education Committee's achievements in planting schools and training school teachers and the recognition of its work in the funding support it was receiving from the Committee of Council, prevented it from recognising the strength of the opposition and the vulnerability of its position.

Assembly Schools 1850-63

While dealing with these attempts to introduce a new national system of education took up much of the time and attention of the Education Committee, other aspects of its work were not neglected. During this period it consolidated its school education programme in various ways. Between 1849 and 1863 the number of Assembly schools actually fell from 208 to 195 (of which 25 were female schools) but in that same period it had branched out into industrial schools and had established 63 sewing schools.¹⁰⁷ That more schools were not planted at this time was due to a number of factors. There was competition and opposition from other denominations particularly in the Highlands and Islands where the Free Church often built schools in close proximity to Established Church schools: "The competition of Free Church schools has of late reduced the emoluments of many teachers on the Assembly Scheme".¹⁰⁸ In 1849 Robert Campbell, teacher at Skerry in Sutherland, complained that "in consequence of the violent and personal exertions of the Free Church", the people were afraid to send their children to his school, and suggested that the school should be closed.¹⁰⁹ The Presbytery of Uist complained that the teachers of the Free Church attracted children to their schools by handing out biscuits, clothes, books, and stationery.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ *ECR*, 1849, 6 and 1863, 6.

¹⁰⁸ NAS CH1, Minutes of the Education Committee, February, 1850.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, August 1849.

¹¹⁰ *ECR*, 1861, *Presbyterial Reports*, 68. By 1849 the Scottish Episcopal Church had opened a training college in Edinburgh and the 1851 Census records 36 Episcopal Church schools but this denomination does not seem to have been regarded as a threat at this time.

The main reason for the Established Church not making further educational provision during this period, however, was its inability to raise sufficient funds. The committee had a struggle to balance its books. The matter was not helped by the fact that up until 1853 it was still endeavouring to pay off the debt incurred in connection with the Glasgow Normal School buildings. In that year the committee reported to the General Assembly that its funds were "at present exhausted". It noted that there were at least 150 places where schools were needed and where accommodation would be provided but which "are still unsupplied with Schools, no means being possessed for remunerating a Teacher".¹¹¹ The financial report in 1851 showing an Annual Expenditure of £6,400 and an Ordinary Income of £5,200, of which only about half came from congregational collections, was typical. Often appeals had to be made for special purposes such as the development of agricultural instruction in the Highlands and the establishment of more female schools, industrial training for girls having become one of the Committee of Council's latest priorities. The committee informed the Assembly in 1862 that there had been a poor response to an appeal for donations towards setting up more female schools but that the situation had been saved by "the liberality of Miss Burdett Coutts who undertook to fund seven sewing schools in connection with Assembly schools", by the Bell Trustees who helped the committee with the maintenance of twenty sewing schools and by the Duke of Sutherland who agreed to support five such schools at Assembly schools on his estates.¹¹² The Duke also made land available for agricultural instruction and offered "to make the necessary provisions for the teaching of this branch at any suitable station or stations in the County of Sutherland". Apart from the financing of these new developments, the Church had continually to consider the viability of existing schools. Certainly where the uptake was low or where buildings were in a poor state of repair, the Church had no alternative but to close schools.¹¹³

As for making better provision for its teachers, the Established Church found the Committee of Council's regulations a considerable impediment. In 1848 it had tried to persuade the Council to reverse its decision with regard to the conditions relating to government augmentation but having failed the matter was dropped.¹¹⁴ As a result Assembly schoolmasters were often unable to take advantage of the government's scheme and the Established Church lost some of its best teachers. In 1856 the

¹¹¹ *ECR*, 1853, 23.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 1862, 20-21.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 1857, 7.

¹¹⁴ See Chapter Three, 145.

Assembly was warned that many teachers leaving normal school with certificates did not go to Assembly schools but to places where there was a school building and schoolhouse accommodation which met Government requirements and so qualified for augmentation.¹¹⁵ While in some places heritors were willing to supplement schoolmasters' salaries, there were a number of situations where presbyteries seem to have been unable to persuade heritors to maintain or provide buildings which met the Committee of Council's requirements and so help schoolmasters qualify:

The condition of the School-houses in these islands [Skye, Harris, Uist and Islay] seems to be as hopeless as it is bad. ... there can be no doubt that one great defect of the present system of administering the public grants, is its want of elasticity. The most destitute localities, are in consequence of their very destitution, excluded from the benefits of the Parliamentary Grant. The number of parishes in Scotland which are quite unable ... to comply with the conditions of Government grants, either for building or for augmentation of salaries to the Teachers, is very considerable.¹¹⁶

Kay-Shuttleworth calculated that the failure to meet the government's regulations had meant that in 1852 grants to schools in connection with the Established Church (presumably including parochial schools) were about £1,350 less than those made to the Free Church and other schools. His solution was that the Established Church should make a greater effort to raise extra funding from collections so that "the 1049 Parochial Schools might all enjoy an average Government augmentation of the stipends of their Masters of at least £20" but he conceded, "I do not venture to presume that a voluntary contribution of £20,000 would be made by heritors and subscribers at once. I very much fear that a third of this sum would not be obtained ..."¹¹⁷ Even to make such a suggestion showed how out of touch Kay-Shuttleworth was with the Scottish scene where for a long time the Established Church had been struggling to pay its teachers £25 per annum from these very contributions. Towards the close of this decade, however, most Assembly teachers had managed to raise their total emoluments one way or another, through augmentation or through fees or by taking on pupil teachers. By 1859 the average income of 112 teachers in Assembly Schools in the Highlands and Islands was about £50. For 41 teachers in other parts of the country the average was over £63 while teachers in female schools

¹¹⁵ *ECR*, 1856, 9.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1859, 7-8.

¹¹⁷ Kay-Shuttleworth, *Public Education*, 375-6.

could earn up to £33.¹¹⁸

Where the Education Committee was itself unable to provide funding for schools it recognised the considerable contribution of "local exertions" and private endowments such as the Dick and Milne Bequests from which several schools benefited. As has been noted previously, increasingly schools were being established by local churches and by private individuals.¹¹⁹ In the parish of Carnock (a mining district in Fife), for example, the proprietors of the Forth Iron Works provided a school for their workers' families and appointed a headmaster with three assistants, one of whom was a female teacher for girls, in the parish of Dunotter the minister built a school at his own expense, and in the parish of Robertson (Selkirk) a school was set up by the Duke of Buccleuch.¹²⁰ It was reckoned that by 1850 there were 104 sessional schools in Scotland, many of them in Glasgow.¹²¹ Where such local efforts affected congregational collections for the national fund, however, the committee was a little ambivalent:

There are not a few parishes and individuals who have been giving little or nothing to the Education Scheme, on the ground that they are doing what is necessary for the maintenance or provision of Schools in their own district. These things ought they to have done, and not to leave the other undone. If every parish were to confine itself to its own wants, there would be no common fund at all.¹²²

Teacher Training

The development of teacher training was the most encouraging sphere of the Education Committee's work at this time. As had been foreseen by Muir and others who had opposed the Church's financial agreement with the Committee of Council in 1849, as time passed the General Assembly's Education Committee found itself continually having to adapt to conditions laid down by that Council, but in many ways this proved to be no bad thing. The funding arrangements for normal schools in Scotland was a case in point. In 1848 the Committee of Council had reluctantly agreed not to enforce its proposed new scheme in Scotland. By 1852, however, it had decided that certain changes relating to the salaries of teachers in Training Schools

¹¹⁸ *ECR*, 1859, 5.

¹¹⁹ See Chapter 3, 111-112.

¹²⁰ *ECR*, 1850, 9. Also *ECR*, 1854, 21 and Appendix I, *Report on School Endowments in Scotland*, 24.

¹²¹ *ECR*, 1851, 27 and 1852, 19 where it is noted that there were 31 sessional schools in Glasgow.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 1853, 23.

and the supply of books for students, which had already been in operation in the rest of the United Kingdom, would then be applied to the normal schools in Edinburgh and Glasgow. The proposals meant a reduction in the Council's annual grant with this loss being compensated by book grants and by per capita payments for each student according to the standard of the certificate received at the end of each year. In addition each year Queen's scholarships would be awarded to a number of pupil-teachers (or apprentices) going on to normal schools, on examination by HM. Inspectors.¹²³ According to the Committee of Council grants would now cover five-eighths of the total cost of training students, an average of £25 for each student, and of £45 or £50 for each Queen's scholar.¹²⁴ Having calculated that this new plan would be to their financial advantage the committee agreed to these proposals and the following year it was able to report that "the number of students successful this year [in obtaining a Government certificate] secured for the Church a considerably larger payment than would have been received under the previous arrangement".¹²⁵

The Church had only begun to benefit from this new system of funding, however, when the Committee of Council proposed further changes. These involved the introduction of a three-year course for students with awards and grants increasing proportionally each year. Whereas the majority of students had normally attended for only one year, there was now a financial incentive to normal schools to urge students to undertake a longer course. Moreover, the restriction on the intake of Queen's scholars, formerly one-fourth of the students in residence during the year, was lifted. This meant an increase in income from that source. Acknowledging that a longer period of instruction should mean better qualified teachers, the General Assembly accepted the Committee of Council's proposals, insisting only that Latin should remain a compulsory subject for apprentice teachers and for students being presented for Queen's scholarships.¹²⁶ For the Church the down side of having better qualified teachers was that even more opted for better paid posts in parish schools rather than Assembly schools. In 1856 the Education Committee drew the attention of the

¹²³ See *ECR*, 1852, 32, "Correspondence relative to Proposed Change", where a letter from the Committee of Council states that, "there are now 248 boys apprenticed in 100 parochial and other schools connected with the Church of Scotland". Twenty of these were in ten General Assembly schools.

¹²⁴ *ECR*, 1852, 10-11. And Appendix IV, Correspondence from the Committee of Council, 13th January, 1852 p.32.

¹²⁵ *ECR*, 1853, 12.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1855, 13-17 and *AAGA*, 1855, 46.

Assembly to the possible long-term effects of low salaries being paid to teachers in Church schools:

Where students stay for two years and leave even better qualified this problem will worsen and the committee will have to appoint men who have received no training and whose services the committee have been able to procure just because they have had no professional education.¹²⁷

This situation pertained until 1863 when questions were raised by the Committee of Council on the number of Queen's Scholars being admitted to training colleges in Scotland.¹²⁸ It would appear that having advised all those above the age of eighteen who wished to undertake teacher training to present themselves for Queen's Scholarships and sit the appropriate Privy Council examination, so many had been successful that the number attending normal schools had risen above what the Committee of Council was prepared to support. In 1858 the Assembly's Education Committee had successfully resisted a Privy Council demand that a number of students who had already started the course should be dismissed.¹²⁹ In 1863 the Church reported that the number of Queen's Scholars was continuing to rise and was met with the demand that over ninety would have to be dismissed and that in future numbers would have to be restricted to the 1862 level.¹³⁰ Part of the disagreement centred on the question of whether the supply of teachers was in excess of available posts. The outcome of the dispute was that the Committee of Council decided to alter the whole system and to do away with Queen's Scholarships altogether. Henceforth the Church would only receive government grants for those students who had qualified after two years training and had completed a two-year probationary period in an elementary school. The Education Committee saw these new funding provisions as a possible threat to the future of the Church's normal schools since its intake of students would be limited and since it would lose out on students who failed to complete the four-year training period.¹³¹

The curriculum to be followed by teachers in training was extensive. Students were expected to be proficient in "all branches of a liberal education". This included

¹²⁷ *ECR*, 1856, 10.

¹²⁸ The term "training college" is first used in the 1862 Education Committee Report. For a number of years subsequently the terms "training college" and "normal school" seem to have been interchangeable. "Model schools" attached to normal schools for practical training in a classroom situation, became known as "Practising Schools".

¹²⁹ *ECR*, 1863, *Historical Statement*, 8.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

¹³¹ *ECR*, 1863, 13-14 and Appendix A 36-38.

School Management, the Theory and Practice of Education as well as English, arithmetic, elementary geography (Great Britain and Palestine), general history, natural history, singing, religious knowledge and at a later stage Latin, Greek and mathematics.¹³² There was also a growing emphasis on practical subjects such as sewing, agriculture and drawing. It was discovered that not all students were fit to cover so many subjects so the committee decided that it would divide students into different classes, the lower class taking fewer subjects than the rest. Recognising the usefulness of lessons in agriculture, the committee opened this subject to everyone:

[Not only] for such as may engage in cultivation upon a large scale nor for those only who may afterwards have small holdings to cultivate but promiscuously for all children of the Highland poor who may choose to attend the schools in which instruction of the kind may be given.¹³³

The 1854 report records that two student-teachers, having taken the courses offered in the principles of agriculture had been appointed to Assembly schools "which have assumed an industrial character, and in which instruction in the principles of agriculture now forms one of the regular branches for the more advanced pupils, along with opportunities of manual occupation upon the ground attached to the Schools".¹³⁴ This attempt at ensuring that young people received an education which would make it easier for them to earn a living in the remoter areas of the Highlands is worth remembering when so often the emphasis was seen to be on religious instruction.

With the increasing emphasis on female education and the "industrial arts" of house, laundry and kitchen work, the committee decided in 1858 that there was sufficient money in the funds of the Edinburgh Normal School to allow it to purchase a large house to provide accommodation for female student teachers where "they would also have the advantage of residing under the protection of judicious Matrons".¹³⁵ (The Scottish Ladies Association had already been running a boarding-house for female students from the country since 1848.)

¹³² NAS CH1, Minutes of the Education Committee, July 1850.

¹³³ NAS CH1, Minutes of the Education Committee, December 1851.

¹³⁴ *ECR*, 1854, 7.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1858, 13.

As for the curriculum in Assembly schools during this period, while religious instruction and the 3Rs remained high on the agenda, with mathematics and Latin being offered in a considerable number of schools to a few of the pupils,¹³⁶ there was also an emphasis on developing practical skills. Hence we find an increasing number of female schools and sewing schools for women and agricultural industrial schools for men. In line with the training offered at the normal schools, it was the view of the Education Committee that, "in the present destitute condition of the inhabitants of a large portion of the Highlands and Islands, these Industrial Schools would be of the utmost moment: provision against absolute want and starvation may be first required: but the most beneficial consequences may be expected from the employment of means for training the young to habits of useful industry; without these means, indeed, it will be almost vain to look for any permanent improvement in the condition of the people".¹³⁷ In support of this view a schoolmaster in Lerwick (Bressay) could claim:

Several are the instances I could mention of young men who received their education here, rising to no inconsiderable eminence in the various departments of industrial occupation to which they have devoted themselves.¹³⁸

During the 1850's it became government policy to promote instruction in "Industrial Occupations". The Census of 1851 recorded that in Scotland there were fifty boys' schools and 809 girls' schools teaching practical subjects.¹³⁹ In particular it was seen as important to educate girls to enable them to "discharge properly the duties which will in all probability, at some future time, devolve upon them as wives and mothers".¹⁴⁰ The Committee of Council had put pressure on the church by declaring that for the purposes of aid in mixed schools where there was no female teacher to instruct the girls in sewing and cutting, only the boys would be counted.¹⁴¹ The Education Committee estimated that by 1862 in landward parishes alone there

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1852, 7.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1851, 14. The principle that education should prepare people for work was not new. D. J. Withrington has noted that, "by the middle of the [18th] century new subjects, with a strongly vocational emphasis were gradually being introduced, firstly into burgh schools, then by masters of initiative and ability into rural schools". Withrington, "Schooling, Literacy and Society", 163.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹³⁹ *Census of 1851*, 40-41.

¹⁴⁰ *ECR*, 1855, 12.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Appendix b, 32.

were "800 or 900 separate female schools in all, and, in addition to this 500 or 600 sewing departments".¹⁴²

On the other hand, if literacy is taken to include writing as well as reading ability, there seem to have been some gaps here. That same 1862 report noted comments from the Presbytery of Wigtown that "the number of those who take lessons in writing in the parochial schools is not much above one-half of those who are taught reading; while in the non-parochial schools [including Assembly schools presumably] it is considerably under one-half, and there is a still smaller number, in proportion, studying arithmetic".¹⁴³ The Assembly statistics revealed that there were many pupils on the roll who did not attend a Writing class. For example the Education Committee Report for 1859 noted, from the presbytery returns submitted, 11,448 pupils on the roll of Assembly schools of which only 7,366 (64%) were learning to write.¹⁴⁴ (This would correspond with R. D. Anderson's conclusion regarding "the persistence until well into the nineteenth century of reading literacy unaccompanied by the ability to write".)¹⁴⁵

In 1855 the Education Committee had persuaded the Committee of Council to retain some knowledge of Latin as compulsory for all pupil teachers entering a normal school as a Queen's Scholar.¹⁴⁶ In fact, while Latin may have been offered widely, the number of pupils actually taking it seems to have been very small, only about 1.5% compared to 5% in parochial schools. Regulations issued by the Assembly in 1863 required schoolmasters to teach Music "where practicable", and the elements of Drawing – "when this can be done without interfering with other subjects of instruction".

One notable feature of this time was the gap between the subjects Assembly teachers were trained in and the subjects actually taught in Church schools. The Rector's Report of the Glasgow Normal School, May 1850, recorded instruction being given in English (Reading, Grammar and Composition), Natural Science, Geography, History, Latin, Greek (not compulsory), Arithmetic, Mensuration, Mechanics, Geometry, Trigonometry, Algebra, Music and Religious Instruction.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² ECR, 1862, *Abstracts of Reports of Presbyteries*, vi.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, iv.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 1859, 10. See also, for example, Assembly Papers for 1859, where it is reported that in the case of objections to the presentation of the Rev. Angus Macintyre to the Parish of Kildalton, Islay, a Petition of Objectors showed that out of 237, sixty-five, that is less than one in four, could not sign their names, of these forty were women and twenty-five were men.

¹⁴⁵ Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People*, 141.

¹⁴⁶ ECR, 1855, 17-18.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 1850, 33-34.

When this curriculum is compared with what was actually being taught in many Assembly schools it is clear teachers were often too well qualified. It is no wonder many opted for parochial schools.

It would appear that the broad comprehensive curriculum covered in normal schools in Scotland was out of step with what was expected of their counterparts in England. In a letter to the Committee of Council in 1854, Henry Moseley HM Inspector of Schools, had insisted that government grants to normal schools were "expressly for the promotion of elementary education". In his proposed curriculum, which he claimed was based on the principle of "attempting a little and doing it well as opposed to the practice of attempting a great deal and doing it ill", there was no time set aside for languages such as French or Latin nor for practical subjects such as agriculture and female domestic skills.¹⁴⁸ Some years later this approach was highlighted in the objects of the Revised Code which claimed to pick up defects identified by the Royal Commission [the Newcastle Commission], particularly that far too much attention was being paid to subjects "less essential to children of the labouring classes" and not enough to "the elementary arts of reading, writing and arithmetic". The Code laid down that grants would be made only for children passing examinations in these subjects and having a satisfactory attendance record.¹⁴⁹ Regarding this arrangement R. D. Anderson has commented:

The Code also encouraged mechanical cramming, to ensure the examination passes on which the teacher's fate hung, and discouraged any subjects outside Lowe's [Robert Lowe was Vice-President of the Committee of Council] rigid definition of elementary education. ... In Scotland there were particular objections to the Revised Code. ... Scottish critics claimed that Scotland should have its own inquiry before changes were made. They objected to the failure to recognize higher subjects, which was seen as a threat to the university link, and complained that well-qualified teachers would be reduced to barren routine.¹⁵⁰

On this matter of recruitment to universities the committee in 1862 was proud to list the names of former students of training colleges who, having served as teachers for two or three years, had gone on to win awards at Scottish universities.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ ECR, 1855, Appendix IV *Correspondence*, 50.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 1862, 6.

¹⁵⁰ Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People*, 58.

¹⁵¹ ECR, 1862, 26-27.

The Kirk and Parliamentary Legislation 1860-63

Further Moves towards a National System of School Education

By 1860 it was apparent that James Moncreiff was not one to give in easily. Heartened by his success in steering the Parochial and Schoolmasters (Scotland) Act 1857 through Parliament, he decided to bring forward yet another Bill in an attempt to reform Scottish education. Described as "perhaps James Moncreiff's most important single contribution to Scottish education",¹⁵² the 1861 Bill again contained measures which Moncreiff hoped would help to win over some of his adversaries in Scotland. He recognised, for example, that the poor salaries and conditions of schoolmasters had always been one of the Established Church's main concerns and that the solution proposed by the 1857 Act had met with opposition in the General Assembly. In his new Bill, therefore, he first addressed this problem putting forward an answer which Scottish schoolmasters had been advocating for many years, namely that salaries should be fixed at a certain rate independent of the price of oatmeal. Moncreiff proposed that salaries should be not less than £40 and not more than £60, the appropriate figure being agreed by the heritors and minister of the parish and payable according to the Valuation Roll one half by proprietors and one half by tenants or occupiers.¹⁵³ The schoolmaster was to be able to retire on an allowance not exceeding two-thirds of his salary. As far as the choosing of teachers was concerned the parish minister could still act with the heritors in the appointment but the examination of appointees was to be by four boards of examiners set up in connection with the universities thus removing this power from presbyteries. There was to be no test of faith or signing of a confession of faith, instead teachers would make the following declaration:

I, —, do solemnly and sincerely in the presence of God profess, testify and declare that as schoolmaster of the parish school at — in the parish of —, and in discharge of the said office, I will never endeavour, directly or indirectly, to teach or inculcate any opinions opposed to the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, or to the doctrines contained in the Shorter Catechism agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, and approved by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, in the year 1648; and that I will faithfully conform thereto in my teaching of the said school, and that I will not exercise

¹⁵² Wilson H. Bain, "'Attacking the Citadel': James Moncreiff's Proposals to Reform Scottish Education, 1851-69", *Scottish Educational Review* 10 (1978), 9.

¹⁵³ The Bill as amended in Committee raised this to a minimum of £50 and a maximum of £80.

the functions of the said office to the prejudice or subversion of the Church of Scotland as by law established, or the doctrines and privileges thereof.¹⁵⁴

This latter measure was intended to placate those denominations jealous of the Established Church's powers to appoint as parochial schoolmasters only those who accepted its doctrinal position and at the same time win the approval of all who wanted to retain the Protestant tradition. It would, however, certainly not have pleased the Scottish Episcopalians and was totally unacceptable to Roman Catholics.

The disciplinary powers of the presbytery in cases of complaint against schoolmasters were transferred to the sheriff of the county although the minister and heritors or presbytery clerks could still make complaints in writing to the sheriff charging schoolmasters with immoral conduct or cruel treatment of pupils. Moreover where it could be shown that schoolmasters were neglecting their duties due to infirmity or old age, the heritors and minister, with the concurrence of HM Inspector and the presbytery, could require the schoolmaster to resign. Finally heritors and ministers were encouraged to appoint female teachers at salaries not above £30, to give instruction in "industrial and household training" as well as elementary education.

While the Church had prior knowledge of Moncreiff's intentions, it seems to have been caught out by the speed of the Bill's preparation and progress. The Commission of Assembly meeting in March 1859 viewed with anxious concern "the movements now carried on to subvert the institution of the Parochial Schools, or so as to change their constitution as to separate them from the Church of Scotland", and once again expressed its determination to stand by its statutory powers assured that religious instruction could only be guaranteed where teachers continued to sign the Formula of the Established Church and the superintendence of schools by that Church was continued.¹⁵⁵ The Commission resolved to petition both Houses of Parliament accordingly. In May 1861 the Assembly instructed its Committee on Parochial Schoolmasters to ensure that any Bill introduced contained, "adequate securities for the religious belief of the schoolmasters"¹⁵⁶, yet exactly one year later, the Act having received royal assent in August 1861, that same committee was bemoaning the fact that the Bill had been passed "without an opportunity being given to the

¹⁵⁴ PP, Public Bills 1861 III 7 June 1861 24 Vict., and 12 July 1861 24 & 25 Vict.

¹⁵⁵ ACGA, 1859, 81.

¹⁵⁶ AAGA, 1861, 67.

Church of Scotland in General Assembly, of expressing an opinion ..."¹⁵⁷ True the Moderator had called an Extraordinary Meeting of the Commission on 9 July 1861, where the Church went through its usual routine of commending anything that would improve the lot of schoolmasters and condemning everything that threatened its own position, but by that time it was too late to protest.

For his part the Lord Advocate believed he had done his best for the Kirk and told the Commons that he had brought the Bill forward late in the session "to enable the General Assembly to consider the measure".¹⁵⁸ It is doubtful, however, if at this stage Moncreiff, having heard the Established Church rehearse its position so often, would have paid much heed to it. His main objective had been to find a compromise that suited all the other parties, particularly the other denominations. It is also doubtful if the Church would have settled for anything less than a full restoration of its superintending powers. Such an attitude meant that the Church was slow to pick up on the number of irregularities in the Bill and those places where it still had some say. For example J. S. Barty pointed out that the Act only mentioned the test of the schoolmaster's religious affiliation and ignored the "Oath to Government" which also had to be taken and is not mentioned in the Bill.¹⁵⁹ Barty also maintained that presbyteries still retained some right to examine schools since "how can a Presbytery complain or prosecute, or concur with others in complaining and prosecuting a Schoolmaster, without the unchallengeable right to inquire and examine into the manner in which he discharges his functions".¹⁶⁰ Certainly presbyteries still retained the right to fix the hours of teaching and the length of the vacation. The reaction of the Church, however, was totally negative. Even the concession of allowing parish ministers to attend heritors' meetings was seen by some as only creating trouble for the future. The Presbytery of Linlithgow pointed out the difficulties parish ministers could have in attempting to exercise the rights conferred by the Act and of "the danger to which the influence of the Parish Minister for good may be exposed, by his being involved, as a party having a voice in the election of the Parochial Teacher, in

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 1862, 46.

¹⁵⁸ Hansard, 3rd Series vol. 164, June-August 1861, 1825-26.

¹⁵⁹ J. S. Barty, *Remarks on the Parochial and Burgh Schoolmasters Act, 1861* (Edinburgh and London, William Blackwood, 1862) 6.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 36. In fact the Report of the Committee in 1863 showed that presbyteries were still visiting parochial schools and submitting returns. 999 parochial schools were examined and reported on. (iii)

the embittered sectarian strife to which, under the Act, the said election may be expected to give rise".¹⁶¹

Before the Assembly had time to work out all the implications of the 1861 Act, it had yet another of Moncreiff's Bills to contend with:– "A Bill to make further provision for the Education of the People in Scotland".

Moncreiff's latest attempt to introduce a national system of education into Scotland was, if anything, perhaps his most radical. His intention was to legislate for the establishment of additional parochial schools in towns and in rural districts but the implementation of the Bill's proposals would have completely undermined the Established Church's own efforts to meet Scotland's educational needs. Indeed, it would have eventually eliminated all the Presbyterian denominational schools by cutting off existing government grants. Clause 37 stated:

No contribution or payment shall be made by the committee of council to or in respect of any schools in Scotland other than those regulated by this and the recited acts, excepting schools maintained by Episcopalian and Roman Catholic religious denominations.¹⁶²

Indeed, as the Church pointed out, the very existence of all schools apart from parochial schools, was threatened by the direction that Commissioners in determining whether additional schools were required "shall not take into consideration any school other than a parochial school which is not maintained by a Permanent Endowment".¹⁶³ Further the Bill made no attempt to secure a place for religious instruction in the curriculum and went so far as to remove entirely any requirement for a schoolmaster to make the declaration set out in the 1861 Act. The Assembly's Education Committee pointed out that this seemed to fly in the face of existing Privy Council regulations whereby no grant was given to any school where religious instruction was not taught.¹⁶⁴ It is no wonder that the Presbytery of Ayr felt justified in overturing the Assembly to oppose the Bill and to ensure that any measure introduced into Parliament, "shall be a fair and honest extension of the old and long-tried parochial system [and shall] secure any subsidiary system ... that the

¹⁶¹ GAP, 1862, *Overture from the Presbytery of Linlithgow anent the Parish Schools of Scotland*. Assembly Papers 1862.

¹⁶² PP. Public Bills (2) 1862 Vol. II, *A Bill to make further Provision for the Education of the People in Scotland*, 21 March 1862. 25 Vict., Clause 37.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, Clause 9.

¹⁶⁴ ECR, 1862, 58.

same justice shall be done in Scotland as to England, especially in regard to any arrangements regarding capitation grants".¹⁶⁵

The Bill was discussed at the Commission which met in April 1862 and again at the General Assembly in May where it was taken together with an overture from Paisley Presbytery calling on the Assembly to petition Parliament for a "Royal Commission to inquire into the whole condition and wants of Education in Scotland, prior to any further legislation on the subject".¹⁶⁶ In spite of the crippling effect the Bill would have had on Assembly schools some members of the Assembly felt obliged to acknowledge its main aim which was to enlarge the parochial school system and establish additional schools. A motion "that the Commission do not petition against this Bill" went to a division but lost by sixteen votes to three. On this occasion the Established Church's opposition was widely supported. The convener found that both Scottish and English MP's agreed with him and so too did "the landed proprietors ... and many other parties, of different denominations, deeply alive to the importance of maintaining securities for the religious instruction of the young".¹⁶⁷ Moncreiff eventually withdrew the Bill having concluded that "without full inquiry into the educational state of Scotland it was of no use to go on with this incessant knocking at the doors of Parliament."¹⁶⁸

The Revised Code

If, as it would appear, the Church had been caught out by the speed with which the 1861 Act had passed through Parliament, it was certainly well prepared for the introduction of capitation grants and the Revised Code produced by the Committee of Council. As early as May 1859 the Education Committee had warned the Assembly that a system of capitation grants, based on the number of scholars attending a minimum of 176 days in the year, would be extended to Scotland the next year.¹⁶⁹ At that time it was the committee's view that the introduction of this system would be of considerable benefit to Scotland, particularly the Highlands, since the allowance paid would not depend on the state of the buildings. Further as 7/10^{ths} of

¹⁶⁵ GAP, 1862, Overture from the Presbytery of Ayr, *Anent Education in Scotland*.

¹⁶⁶ AAGA, 1862, 37, and GAP, 1862, Overture from the Presbytery of Paisley, *Anent Education in Scotland*.

¹⁶⁷ ECR, 1862, 17.

¹⁶⁸ Moncreiff, *An Educational Retrospect*, 12.

¹⁶⁹ Capitation grants had been introduced by the Committee of Council into schools in England in 1853.

the capitation grant was to be regarded as representing local voluntary contributions, more teachers would be able to claim the government augmentation.¹⁷⁰ In February 1860 the committee received a letter from the Committee of Council explaining that as a Royal Commission of Inquiry into the state of education in England and Wales (the Newcastle Commission) was reviewing all forms of government funding, including capitation grants, it had been decided not to include Scotland in the estimate for capitation grants for the year 1860-61. The Council also stated that it intended to ensure that there would be no "distinction between one part of Great Britain and another, in the advantages derivable from the Parliamentary grant for education".¹⁷¹ In 1861, the Vice-President of the Committee of Council, proposed a Revised Code for England and Wales. This would replace grants made for different purposes, salaries and pensions, school books and apparatus etc., with an annual grant to cover all expenditure payable to school managers and calculated on the attendance and performance of the pupils – payment by results. In its report in 1862 the Church's committee produced a comprehensive account of the proposed Revised Code and its implications for the funding of schools. It claimed that throughout the whole kingdom strenuous opposition had been organised "for the purpose of overthrowing the obnoxious Minute".¹⁷² Its own conclusion, however, was that while objecting to many of the details of the Code, it would give "a modified support to its general principles":

They are of opinion that the Revised Code – in so far as it aims at encouraging more regular attendance at school, promoting Evening Schools, estimating results before making grants, throwing greater responsibility on School Managers, and, in connection with this, simplifying payments – is well worthy of their support.¹⁷³

The committee, however, were not slow to pick up on the conflict between the proposals of the Revised Code and those of Moncreiff's 1862 Bill and pointed out that the latter "does not merely increase the probable burdens of managers, but

¹⁷⁰ *ECR*, 1859, 8-9. Thomas Wilson has argued that this arrangement did not always help poorer schools since managers "substituted the money from the capitation grant for contributions which should have been paid out of their own pockets. Thus the minute ... was used as a substitute for local effort in wealthy areas". Thomas Wilson, "A Reinterpretation of 'Payment by Results' in Scotland, 1861-1872" in Humes and Paterson, eds., *Scottish Culture*, 98.

¹⁷¹ *ECR*, 1861, Appendix A.

¹⁷² See Wilson's description of the widespread opposition in, "A Reinterpretation of 'Payment by Results'", 102.

¹⁷³ *ECR*, 1862, 9.

deprives them of their schools altogether ... not merely reduces the sources of maintenance of Normal schools, but summarily abolishes them".¹⁷⁴ As it turned out Moncreiff's Bill was withdrawn and the Revised Code was suspended for a year. In May 1863 the Education Committee was in a position to announce to the General Assembly that the Code would take effect as from 30 June in the case of applications for grants for new schools and for Pupil-Teachers, and would be applied generally after 31 March 1864.¹⁷⁵ In preparation for this the committee issued new guidelines and regulations for teachers outlining a new curriculum and, for the first time, making it compulsory to keep a register. It entered into negotiations with the Privy Council hoping to persuade it to restore the £5 additional grant for schools in Gaelic-speaking districts and to permit it to employ licentiates of the Church as teachers. Both requests were rejected. The Committee of Council advised the Church to employ mistresses rather than masters where schools in the Highlands were short of money. It also rather harshly reprimanded the committee for employing sewing-mistresses for the industrial instruction of girls instead of trained female teachers "who might relieve the master of all the younger children, and teach the girls sewing as well":

Their Lordships desire to impress upon your Committee the imperative and immediate necessity which exists for taking some pains to connect and mutually adapt, more than at present, the normal and elementary parts of public education in Scotland.¹⁷⁶

As it turned out the Revised Code did not apply in Scotland until May 1864 and operated fully for only six weeks, that is until 10 June when the appointment of the Argyll Commission was announced, and payment by results was not introduced fully into Scotland until the Scotch Code of 1873.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 70.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 1863, 8 and 39.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 27-28.

¹⁷⁷ Wilson, "A Reinterpretation of 'Payment by Results'", 103. It should be noted that the part of the Revised Code relating to the individual examination and assessment of pupils by inspectors according to a Table of Standards laid down by the Committee of Council was introduced into Scotland in 1864. The results of these examinations, however, were not used as a basis for calculating salaries until 1873.

Conclusion

At the close of the last chapter we were left with the impression of a beleaguered Established Church defiantly defending its statutory rights and its Protestant principles in the face of attempts to undermine its authority by both politicians and by other presbyterian denominations. In this chapter we have seen it stand its ground even more firmly. Now it speaks from a position of growing confidence. This is an Established Church which has entered into a new chapter in its history. The beginning of the recovery of the Established Church in the 1850s and 1860s has been described by a number of historians. T.M. Devine noted, "it [the Established Church] soon experienced something of a renewal under the leadership of men such as Norman Macleod of the Barony Church in Glasgow and James Robertson, Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Edinburgh. Their concern was to demonstrate that only an Established Church could be truly national and care for all the people".¹⁷⁸ To this may be added Burleigh's comment that, "by his urgency in pressing the endowment scheme Robertson did much to awaken in a deeply discouraged Church a belief in its usefulness and a sense of its continuing mission as a national Church".¹⁷⁹ The statistical evidence for this recovery has been offered by C. G. Brown who noted that by the 1860's "the Church of Scotland was slowly regaining ground in attracting members and adherents", accounting for 48 per cent of Presbyterian church members in contrast to the Free Church's 32 per cent and the United Presbyterian's 20 per cent.¹⁸⁰

With regard to its statutory supervision of parochial schools and the confessional test taken by parochial schoolmasters, the Church was unyielding. Unlike the late 1840's the intransigence of the Established Church was no longer an expression of anxiety at losing control and authority, but rather the indication of a clear conviction in its God-given responsibility to defend the faith. It believed it was being true to itself and its historic principles in opposing Moncreiff's Bills. It had a genuine belief in the value of the parochial school system, what it had done and could do for Scotland, and saw Moncreiff's proposals as undermining this. In the face of the growing strength of the Roman Catholic Church and of a society perceived as

¹⁷⁸ Devine, *The Scottish Nation*, 378.

¹⁷⁹ Burleigh, *A Church History*, 377.

¹⁸⁰ C.G. Brown, *The Social History of Religion in Scotland Since 1730* (London: Methuen & Co., 1987) 65.

becoming increasingly secularised, to weaken the Church's hold on schools was to threaten Protestant beliefs and jeopardise the future of religious instruction.

There was much that was true and logical in the Established Church's arguments. It was not the existence of the test taken by schoolmasters that created the shortage of schools, nor the poor attendance, so why put the blame on these? What was being proposed did threaten the place of religious instruction which all parties agreed was necessary for the moral welfare of the nation. It would, moreover, have been possible for the government to increase its aid and give a fairer share to the educational programme of all denominations thus obviating the accusation that the system incited a sectarian spirit. What all the churches stopped short of admitting was that no matter how many more schools they themselves tried to set up, there was a limit to what the voluntary sector could accomplish and, even more significantly, there was a limit to what could be expected of the heritors. A parochial school system which was territorial and which was dependent on the co-operation and generosity of the landed class could no longer cope with the situation as it had developed.

It has been noted that on all sides throughout this controversy there were signs of a willingness to accept change. Would a compromise solution have been possible? Moncreiff while pursuing his vision of a system of national education saw that this could not be achieved without making some concessions to the churches. By 1854 the Free Church's position had progressed to the extent that, with some suggested amendments, its General Assembly was happy to support the Lord Advocate's Bill "To Improve and Extend the School Establishment of Scotland".¹⁸¹ It would appear that there was a sizeable body within the Free Church, including that astute church politician Candlish, willing not only to reach some agreement with Moncreiff, but also to work alongside the Established Church had that Church been willing to surrender its monopoly on the oversight of parish schools. Begg, too, had visualised the Free Church and the Established Church co-operating to secure religious instruction within a national system?¹⁸² One Scottish MP suggested that since almost all religious denominations in Scotland subscribed to the Westminster Confession, all that needed to be done was to alter the wording of that part of the test which referred to submitting to the discipline and authority *of this Church*, meaning the Established Church.¹⁸³ On a similar vein the Rev. R. J. Bryce commented that it had been bad

¹⁸¹ *Commission of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland*, March 1854.

¹⁸² See page 166.

¹⁸³ James Johnstone, *Letter to the Lord Advocate of Scotland on the Education Bill by a Scotch MP* (Westminster: Vacher & Sons, 1855), 8.

tactics to seek the total abolition of tests. "I am persuaded," he wrote, "that a Bill relaxing existing restrictions without abolishing them; and substituting for the barbarous system of Tests a rational method of securing the object of such restrictions as shall remain, might easily be carried in a single session."¹⁸⁴ Had the Free Church succeeded in having a say in the parochial school system alongside the Established Church, it might have settled for that. As late as June, 1861 a commissioner at the Free Church Assembly spoke in favour of taking one step at a time and concentrating on the removal of the test.¹⁸⁵ It has been shown that even within the Established Church's ranks there were those who recognised the positive aspects of Moncreiff's proposals. The Kirk, moreover, had demonstrated its willingness to accept change as, for example, in the positive attitude it adopted to the proposed Revised Code. It is disappointing that this Church, in its robust defence of its principles, should have not have seen fit to explore further the implications of some of Moncreiff's earlier proposals. The Bills he introduced in 1856 contained clauses stating that the minister and heritors would have powers to depose a schoolmaster on grounds of moral conduct or behaviour, and that "if any schoolmaster when elected declares he is not a member of the Established Church, the Minister and Heritors shall direct him to be examined in such a manner as they think fit, in addition to his examination by the Inspector". It also stated that "the Powers and Jurisdiction of Presbyteries over Parochial Schools, excepting so far as expressly altered by this Act" were to remain in force.¹⁸⁶ Had the Church entered into negotiations at this time it might have ended up in a stronger position than it did in 1861. Unfortunately the majority were not interested in making terms with either Moncreiff or the Free Church. Certainly after 1861 any agreement among the three Presbyterian Churches seemed as far off as ever. Moncreiff's 1862 Bill annoyed the United Presbyterians because it continued Privy Council grants to the Episcopalians and Roman Catholics.¹⁸⁷ The Free Church believed that under the 1861 Act the Established Church had still too much influence and that in 1862 Moncreiff had

¹⁸⁴ Rev R. J. Bryce, *Practical Suggestions For Reforming The Educational Institutions of Scotland being an attempt to point out the necessity for desectarianising schools. In Two Letters to the Lord Viscount Melgund MP.* (Edinburgh: William Oliphant and Sons, 1852)

¹⁸⁵ *Proceedings of the Free Church Assembly*, 1861, 289.

¹⁸⁶ PP, Public Bills 1856 V, 9 April 1856. 19 Vict. *A Bill to Regulate and make further Provision for Parochial Schools in Scotland*, and 27 June 1856. 19 & 20 Vict. *A Bill (as amended in Committee) to Regulate and make further Provision for Parochial Schools in Scotland.*

¹⁸⁷ *Proceedings of the United Presbyterian Synod*, 1862, 548.

"framed his bill upon the principle of going as far as he possibly could in the way of conciliating the lairds and the Established Church".¹⁸⁸

Moncreiff might have won more support from the Established Church had he been more courageous in pursuing the cause of the schoolmasters. Over the 1850s the Church had expressed its continuing concern for the salary and conditions of parish schoolmasters. It commended Stirling's Bill which suggested that the salaries of Parochial Schoolmasters should be not less than £35 and not more than £50, and Lord Monteaule's Bill which was in favour of improving the circumstances of schoolmasters and also provided "adequate security for the Religious element in Education".¹⁸⁹ When the Government did pass an Act in 1857, it failed to provide any real security for teachers by continuing the existing tradition of relating salaries to the average price of oatmeal.¹⁹⁰ The consequence was that in 1859 the new figures actually meant a reduction of the maximum salary from £34 to £27 and a reduction of the minimum salary from £25 to £20. In its protest the Assembly's Committee on Parochial Schoolmasters claimed that it had the support of the majority of the heritors. Once again Moncreiff had missed an opportunity to win over the Church.¹⁹¹

Moncreiff's repeated attempts at reform may be seen as a kind of softening up process culminating in the 1861 Act. The interest he took in the welfare of the schoolmasters, the place he was initially willing to give to religious instruction and his show of favour towards the heritors, the Episcopalians and the Roman Catholics, all helped to win him support in different quarters, and yet, somewhat paradoxically, thwarted any possible conciliation. Little by little he succeeded in convincing his opponents of the need for radical changes in Scottish school education and more and more the Established Church was seen as being reactionary and obstinate. Yet it was driven by motives much less vindictive and much more altruistic than those of the Free Church or the United Presbyterians, both of which were willing to put religious instruction and the church's influence in schools at risk in the attempt to undermine the statutory position of the Established Church. As a result, in the 1861 Act all the Presbyterian Churches were losers and religious instruction was left exposed and vulnerable.

¹⁸⁸ *Proceedings of the Free Church Assembly*, 1862, 305.

¹⁸⁹ PP, Public Bills 1854-55 VI. 8 February 1855 18 Vict. *A Bill to Amend the Law relating to Parish Schools in Scotland*, and AGA, 1855 and 1856.

¹⁹⁰ PP, Public Bills 1857, III 13 August 1857. 20 & 21 Vict. (No. 2) *A Bill concerning the Parochial Schoolmasters in Scotland*.

¹⁹¹ *Report of the Committee on Parochial Schoolmasters and Schools*, 1860.

APPENDIX

Any assessment on the desire for education at this time should take into account the growing popularity of Evening Schools. Many of those who had left school early to go out to work later felt the need to further their education. Consider, for example, these statistics from the Census of 1851 showing the numbers and occupations of those attending Evening Schools (PP, 1851, *Census*, 79):

Occupations and Numbers of those attending:

Agricultural Labourers	561
Miners	249
Factory Operatives	2397
Domestic Servants	553
Weavers	349
Bleachers	287
Warehousemen	278

In addition there were Printers, Shoemakers, Shopkeepers Clerks, Fishermen, Seamen, Soldiers, Policemen, Architects and Engineers.

The majority of Evening Schools taught Reading, Writing and Arithmetic, but many also taught history, book-keeping, navigation, physical science, and religious instruction. The Census recorded 11 which taught Modern Languages and 37 which taught Ancient Languages.

Chapter Five 1864 – 1872

Towards a National System

Introduction – The Situation in 1864

In the period 1864 to 1872 the most important developments for Scottish education were the Royal Commission set up in 1864 to inquire into schooling in Scotland and the Parliamentary legislation leading up to the Education (Scotland) Act of 1872. The commission, under the chairmanship of the Duke of Argyll, began with fifteen members, with three more being added in December, 1865. Among its number were representatives from both houses of Parliament and members of both the Established Church and the Free Church. There were Conservatives like Charles Baillie, MP for Linlithgowshire, who came from an old Scottish covenanting family, and Liberals like Alexander Murray Dunlop, MP for Greenock, a member of the Free Church and author of the "Claim of Right". The Dissenter, Adam Black, twice Lord Provost of Edinburgh, and Lord Belhaven, for many years Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, were also members. Much of the Education Committee's time was devoted to assessing the importance of the Royal Commission's findings for the Church and responding to its recommendations and thereafter to the various Bills brought before Parliament by those who wished to see a national education system secured for Scotland once and for all.

As has been shown, the 1861 Act failed to achieve the fully developed system of national education in Scotland that many had hoped for and Lord Advocate Moncreiff's further attempt in 1862 failed through lack of support. The Established Church still retained a significant influence in the management of schools. The 1861 Act had conferred on presbyteries the right to present a complaint to the government if a schoolmaster contravened the prescribed declaration to uphold the teachings of the Westminster Confession and the doctrines of the Established Church. The Act also provided for the involvement of presbyteries where a schoolmaster was charged with immoral or cruel conduct or disqualified on the grounds of infirmity or inefficiency. Thus, in spite of the fact that the presbytery's judicial function with regard to schools had been much curtailed by the 1861 Act, presbyteries continued visiting schools, parochial and non-parochial, and annually sent in comprehensive reports to the Education Committee. These reports noted numbers of pupils attending and numbers learning particular subjects. In 1864, the Presbyterian Returns indicated that the highest branches of instruction (eg. languages and mathematics) were very

well represented and that "religious instruction still continues to hold that prominence in the school-work which it has always held".¹ In its Report to the General Assembly in 1865 the Education Committee observed that some 3,000 schools were "either by their constitution subject to Presbyterial visitation, or assenting to it" and claimed that in the previous year visits had actually been made to 1004 Parochial schools and 1593 Non-Parochial schools, "comprising Burgh, Assembly, Society, Sessional, Endowed, Public Works, Subscription, and Dissenting".² That old ways die hard was well illustrated by A. J. Belford's description of the appointment of a teacher to a post in 1866:

When George Andrews, who retired in 1913 from the headmastership of Gartconner School, Kirkintilloch, was appointed in 1866 he was examined by a committee of Waterside weavers in their aprons and shirt sleeves. He was asked to sing a psalm and told that hymns didn't count. Then he had to lead in prayer, and lastly had to give a discourse on the Prodigal Son. In terms of his appointment he had to whitewash the inside walls of the school once a year; pay feu-duty and all the rates as landlord; and give the school for preaching and funerals. He had to teach all the scholars, 120 of them, in one room, and on warm summer days had to take them outside where he worked in his shirt sleeves. He conducted an evening class, when the pupils brought their own pen and ink, their slates and pencils, and a candle, and a bottle to stick it in.³

While the Established Church continued to defend the system of parochial and voluntary aided schools, in the country as a whole the support for a national non-denominational system continued to grow over this period. As D. J. Withrington has commented, "even more emphatically than in earlier times, the extension and improvement of schooling (preferably within the context of a new national system) became the antidote to political and social ills".⁴ The general dissatisfaction and the desire for change were regularly expressed in statements made to the Argyll Commission. James Taylor, a United Presbyterian minister from Glasgow and the education spokesman for that denomination, reminded the commission that opposition to the present system came not only from his own denomination and that of the Free Church but also from Scottish MPs and from members of the Established

¹ *ECR*, 1864, 20.

² *Ibid.*, 1865, iii-iv.

³ A. J. Belford, *Centenary Handbook of the Educational Institute of Scotland* (Edinburgh: The Educational Institute of Scotland, 1946), 113.

⁴ Withrington, "Towards a National System", 107.

Church itself.⁵ In the interviews conducted by the commission it was clear that for one reason or another few were happy with the existing scheme. Of those who gave oral or written evidence to the commission ninety-nine out of the 136 indicated that they favoured a new system and of these forty-three were ministers and laymen of all denominations and thirty-five were teachers.⁶ This chapter will consider the Established Church's responses to the conclusions of the Argyll Commission and the Parliamentary Bills which followed. We will describe the Church's final endeavours to retain some say in the supervision of parish schools and to maintain its own schools. Eventually the Church came round to accepting the inevitability of a new national system so that by the time Lord Advocate George Young presented his Education Bill in 1872, its main concern was to secure the inclusion of religious instruction in the curriculum.

The Reports and Findings of the Argyll Commission

The Commission's remit was to offer an opinion on whether or not the funds voted by Parliament for school education in Scotland were being used "in the way most beneficial for the interests of the people" and to suggest how educational provision could be improved.⁷ One of the commission's first tasks was to ascertain as accurately as possible the existing state of education in Scotland. To obtain an independent over-all assessment of the educational provision the commission sent out schedules to registrars with the direction that when these had been completed they should be checked by the ministers connected with each school. Where a minister of any denomination disagreed with the registrar's figures he could return a separate schedule.

The findings and recommendations of the commission were published in reports covering oral and written evidence given by 136 ministers and laymen of all denominations and written evidence submitted by Assistant Commissioners appointed to investigate the state of education in Elementary schools and in Burgh and Middle Class schools throughout the country. Glasgow was the only major city to be visited by the commissioners who considered it "as affording a reasonable test

⁵ *ACR, First Report* (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable, 1865), 129 and 135. Taylor claimed that one third of those who supported the resolutions of the Education Association at its formation were leading laymen of the Established Church.

⁶ *ACR, Second Report, Elementary Schools* (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable, 1867) 106.

⁷ *ACR, Second Report*, v.

of the state of the city population".⁸ From the information gathered in its cross-examination of witnesses and from an extensive examination of schools throughout the country, the commission reached a number of conclusions. On the basis of these it produced its recommendations and draft education bill. We shall mainly consider those conclusions and recommendations which had a bearing on the Established Church's involvement in school education.

Report on Burgh And Middle Class Schools

In 1866 Assistant Commissioners Thomas Harvey, who three years later was appointed as rector of Edinburgh Academy, and Alexander Craig Sellar, who was to become a Liberal MP, were appointed to carry out a survey of burgh and middle-class schools. They submitted their report at the end of 1867. At the same time HMI Daniel Fearon, who had been taking part in the Schools Inquiry Commission in England, was sent to Scotland to investigate the state of middle-class education in Scotland and make a comparison with the same class of schools in England.

These commissioners found that over-all "the Burgh and other Secondary⁹ schools of Scotland are in a satisfactory condition, and superior to the majority of the English Grammar schools".¹⁰ They reported that the number of pupils attending Secondary schools in Scotland was significantly higher than in France or England. It was remarked that "boys at Scottish day-schools work nearly twice as many hours each year as boys at the three principal English schools. The hours appear to be too long in Scottish schools".¹¹ It was noted that seventy-one per cent of teachers in middle-class schools had been to university though not all had graduated.¹² The report maintained that the connection between the Parochial and Burgh schools and the Universities was an essential element in Scottish education and argued that "in any changes which may be made in the School-system of Scotland, the connection between the Universities and the schools should be strengthened and not relaxed".¹³

⁸ *ACR, Second Report*, xxi.

⁹ We take "Secondary schools" to mean schools teaching subjects beyond the elementary stage, normally the Burgh and Middle-class schools.

¹⁰ *ACR, Third Report, Report on Burgh And Middle Class Schools* (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable for H. M. Stationery Office, 1868), vol.1, xi.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, xiii.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, x-xi.

Report on Elementary Schools

From the statistics submitted by the registrars and ministers the commission concluded that, with 1 in 6.5 of the whole population on school rolls, "whatever might be the case in individual districts, the want of schools was not so great as had been generally supposed" and that "whatever may be the quality of the education, Scotland is well, if not adequately, supplied with teachers and places of instruction".¹⁴ The Education Committee welcomed this finding as supporting the existing system. In its report to the 1867 General Assembly it claimed that "the number of schools wanted does not exceed one hundred, and that the number of superfluous schools equals, if it does not exceed, this number".¹⁵ The commission concluded, nevertheless, that averages such as 1 in 6.5 of the population produced by these statistics concealed the true state of affairs in particular localities where the percentage of children attending school was much lower. In the committee's view, however, the reliability of the commission's calculations of the percentage of children attending school suffered from the fact that there was no consistency with regard to the age when children were taken as starting school. In one report A. C. Sellar and C. F. Maxwell¹⁶ considered the number of children between the ages of three and fifteen while acknowledging that in Scotland "it is not the custom to send children to school much before they are five or six years of age".¹⁷ In a later report they took into their account children above 4 and under 15 but conceded that "children in the rural districts enter school about 5 or 6 years old, as a rule, rarely younger, and not often older, and they leave at all ages between 6 and 16".¹⁸

The commission concluded that, while "a very large amount of substantial and efficient education is furnished by voluntary efforts", on the whole the efficiency of non-parochial schools was very unequal and the whole system could not be relied upon.¹⁹ Based only on its inquiry into the state of education in Glasgow, it judged that the facts obtained furnished "conclusive proof, that the voluntary system has

¹⁴ *ACR, Second Report*, xx.

¹⁵ *Special Report by the Education Committee to the General Assembly showing the Nature and Effect of the Recommendations and Draft Bill of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into Schools in Scotland* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1867), 4.

¹⁶ Assistant Commissioners appointed to investigate the Lowland parishes.

¹⁷ *ACR, Report on the State of Education in the Country Districts of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable, 1866), 14.

¹⁸ *ACR, Second Report*, xxv.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, xxxviii.

hitherto proved utterly inadequate to effect the education of the masses of the population congregated in large towns".²⁰

It was evident from the reports that lack of schools was not the main problem. (The main exception to this was the Western Highlands and Islands. Sheriff Nicolson, being himself a Highlander and a Gaelic speaker, was appointed as Assistant Commissioner to report on the state of education in the Hebrides. His report underlined the difficulties of establishing schools in scattered communities where people were predominantly Gaelic-speaking. He reached the conclusion that some 230 more schools were needed there.)²¹ Although the need of more schools might have been the case in some rural and urban areas, much of the evidence pointed to the fact that the present system was unable to ensure that the available accommodation was used to the best advantage.²² Many of the poorest children attended school only irregularly and few stayed on at school beyond the age of twelve. The commission were informed that in Glasgow only one in three children of school age actually attended school.²³ This was blamed on the inability of the denominational system to erect enough schools, on the fees being too high and on parents having to send their children out to work.²⁴ While the commission would have liked to see some form of compulsory education introduced, it admitted that this was impractical at that time. It contented itself with pointing out that many of the representatives interviewed had been in favour of extending the Factory Acts to cover rural districts and new industries such as the tobacco works in Glasgow²⁵ and expressed its opinion that such an extension would be desirable.²⁶

The condition of school buildings and the standard of teaching were also subject to scrutiny by the Assistant Commissioners. Here the situation in the Hebrides proved to be the most worrying with fifty-two percent of the buildings needing to be repaired or rebuilt and the standard of teaching requiring improvement in a similar number of schools.²⁷ In Glasgow school premises and the standard of teaching were

²⁰ Ibid., lvi.

²¹ Ibid., lxxxi.

²² *ACR, First Report*, see evidence of Robert Lee (Established Church), 88, Dean Ramsay (Scottish Episcopal Church), 163 and James Craik (Established Church), 166.

²³ Ibid., 115.

²⁴ Ibid., 128.

²⁵ Ibid., see views of Robert Candlish (Free Church), 112, Robert Buchanan (Free Church), 115, James Taylor (United Presbyterian Church), 128, James Begg (Free Church), 155 and James Craik, 166.

²⁶ *ACR, Second Report*, clxxxiii.

²⁷ Ibid., lxxiii.

reported as "good" in seventy-two per cent of the schools examined. In the rest of the country, seventy-one per cent of the buildings in the schools visited were considered "good" or "fair" and over seventy-one per cent of the teaching was noted as "very good", "good" or "fair".²⁸ Sellar and Maxwell concluded that "the elementary education of the country is, on the whole, better than was generally anticipated, but it might very easily be made much more satisfactory than it is ... the defects of the present system are, want of organisation, want of supervision by some competent central authority powerful enough to make its influence felt by every individual connected with it, and want of thoroughness in the matter of teaching".²⁹ Figures were produced showing that in 1864 in Scottish schools standards in writing and arithmetic (though not in reading) were inferior to those in England.³⁰ They did concede, however, that, unlike the situation in England, "the mass of the Scottish population in the rural districts have received the elements of education".³¹ Indeed, the superiority of the parochial system in Scotland was demonstrated by an examination of the percentage of men and women able to sign the marriage registers in 1855 and in 1861:

Comparing then the returns in Scotland with those in England, it appears that in 1855 there was 88.6 per cent of the men, and 77.2 of the women, in Scotland who signed the marriage register in writing; while in England, in the same year, the percentage was only 70.5 for the men and 58.8 for the women. In 1861 the percentage in England was somewhat larger, but still Scotland showed a decided superiority. In the returns for particular counties where there are no large towns, and where the parochial system has been fairly tried, the results are still more favourable. Thus, in Peebles, 100 per cent, of the men who married in 1861, signed the register in writing, and in Dumfries, the percentage was 97.³²

With regard to the proficiency of teachers the commission seemed to feel that while normal school training was important, by itself it was inadequate for anyone teaching above elementary level and in Burgh and Middle-class schools it was essential to have both training in the art of teaching and a university education:

The Normal-school stamp of a man is inferior as an intellectual type to the well-trained university man. ... Their method of teaching is too contracted for the higher class of schools. In schools professing a secondary education, where the scholars are older and more advanced, the narrowing influence of exclusively

²⁸ *Ibid.*, cxli.

²⁹ *ACR, Report on the State of Education in the Country Districts of Scotland*, 175.

³⁰ *ACR, Second Report*, ci.

³¹ *Ibid.*, cvii.

³² *Ibid.*, cvii.

Normal-school training, and the stereotyped method of instruction derived from it, are at once apparent and do not appear to be productive of good results.³³

In spite of what would appear to be reasonably satisfactory results the commission concluded that, taking into account the number of children not at school, the quality of teaching and the state of the buildings "the existing schools are in a large measure defective"³⁴ On the whole the parochial system was seen to be inadequate, especially in the towns, and required upgrading. Much of the blame, it was held, lay with the denominational system and the supervision of presbyteries, a conclusion which touched at the very heart of matters fundamental to the role of the Established Church.

The Denominational System and the Supervision of Presbyteries.

Could religious instruction be secured without the supervision of presbyteries and the denominational system and did the parish minister need to be *ex officio* on any local management committee? Addressing these questions took up much of the commission's time and the opinions given were many and varied. Naturally there were representatives of the Established Church who held strongly to the view that presbyteries still had a necessary and useful role to play. Men like John Cook, convener of the Assembly's Education Committee, and William Muir, a former convener who had resigned in 1849 in protest at the committee's acceptance of government grants, held that presbytery examinations were efficient and that the influence of the Church was necessary to ensure the survival of religious education.³⁵ James Craik, minister of St George's parish church in Glasgow, and a man with considerable experience of schooling in Glasgow, was adamant that "the denominational system secures the attendance of clergymen in schools ... it is the superintendence of the clergymen which, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, really gives life and vigour and spirit to the school".³⁶ Not all associated with the Established Church shared this view. William Stevenson, Professor of Ecclesiastical History in Edinburgh University and formerly a parish minister in Arbroath and in South Leith, told the commission, "I am not aware of any advantage arising from it

³³ ACR, *Report of the Assistant Commissioners on the State of Education in the Burgh and Middle-Class schools in Scotland*, 79.

³⁴ ACR, *Second Report*, clxxiv.

³⁵ ACR, *First Report*, Cook, 55 and Muir, 286.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 167.

[the denominational system], beyond the simple fact of conciliating the jealousies of different parties ... I know of no practical advantage, no advantage in respect of education, arising from it ... the religious education of Scotland might with perfect safety be left to the Scotch people themselves".³⁷ Even Simon Laurie, the secretary of the General Assembly's Education Committee, was a little ambivalent – "I think they [presbytery examinations] are of great value. I don't think them very effective as testing the accuracy and amount of instruction given in school, but they have a powerful effect in another way: the fact that the Presbytery is expected once a year tends to stimulate the efforts of the schoolmaster and the children, and it has an influence on the parents".³⁸ Representatives of the Free Church on the other hand believed that local parties would ensure a place for religious instruction and that what was important was "the appointment of a thoroughly pious and duly qualified schoolmaster".³⁹ On all sides there was agreement that the denominational system was not an important factor for most parents. Thomas Guthrie, whose great passion was for Ragged Schools and a Bible education for the poor, claimed that "the people of Scotland will send their children to that school where education in the three Rs is best and most rapidly given", but that people would not send children to a school where the Bible was not taught.⁴⁰ James Taylor, from the United Presbyterian Church, supported this view: "They [the Scottish people] persist in sending their children to the best school, no matter to what denomination it belongs ... so that the natural tendency of the denominational system is ... to a great extent counteracted".⁴¹ In its findings the commission reached same conclusion:

People of every class and every denomination are agreed that Scotland is fully ripe for a national system. Parents of all denominations send their children indiscriminately to schools belonging to different denominations than their own, knowing well that, in doctrine and system, the religious instruction in schools of one denomination does not differ from that given in schools of another, the Roman Catholic schools alone excepted. There is no reason on religious grounds why there should not be a national system ...⁴²

³⁷ Ibid., 63 and 65.

³⁸ Ibid., 35.

³⁹ Ibid., H. Moncreiff, 84. See also Candlish, 110 and Begg 149.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 245.

⁴¹ Ibid., 128.

⁴² *ACR, Report on the State of Education in the Country Districts of Scotland*, 176. Table II published in the *Second Report*, 24, bears this out. This clearly showed that many pupils attended schools different from their own denominations.

With regard to the importance of presbytery visits to schools the commission found that while the annual examination was "a pleasing and useful practice, and tends to increase the general interest which both parents and children take in the education of the parish", throughout the country teachers were of the view that presbytery examinations, as examinations, were 'a mere farce', and that this opinion was shared by parents, heritors and even a few of the clergy.⁴³ The commission claimed that this conclusion was confirmed by their own independent examinations of a number of Assembly schools, the results of which indicated that these schools did not perform nearly as well as the reports from presbyteries had led them to expect. The Assistant Commissioners reported that:

The present management of the schools is left almost entirely in the hands of the minister. When he is an active man, interested in education, the management is efficient; but in cases where the minister is careless, and everything depends upon the Presbytery examinations, the management is not efficient. The annual complimentary visit of the Presbytery is of little practical value.⁴⁴

It was admitted, however, that compared to other denominations the standard of instruction in the Parochial and Assembly schools was , if anything, superior.⁴⁵

The Argyll Commission's Recommendations and Draft Bill ⁴⁶

To rectify matters the commission proposed to set up a Central Board with powers to establish as many new schools as may be required throughout the country. The Board would decide which schools would qualify for government grants and would oversee the management of every school in the country. It would impose on ratepayers the sum necessary for the new schools and could employ "special commissioners" to visit schools in addition to regular inspectors. It had the power to inquire into the efficiency of teachers and to dismiss a teacher without appeal. The schools established by the Board would be called "New National Schools", and would be part of a national system. In the rural parishes, they would be managed by school committees one half of the membership being drawn from the landed proprietors and heritors and the other half elected by the ratepayers. In the burghs, school committees

⁴³ *ACR, Second Report*, xxxiii-xxxiv.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, xxxiv.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, xcvi.

⁴⁶ *ACR, Second Report*, Chapter VIII, clxxiii. These applied to Elementary schools. Recommendations for burgh and middle-class schools are found in *Second Report* on page 88.

were to be nominated by the town councils. New schools would be financed partly by local assessment and partly by government grants and would be open to children of every rank and denomination. Under this system teachers would have been answerable to three bodies, a Central Board, the Local School Committee and to the Privy Council through its Scotch department which would control the inspection of schools.

It was intended that parochial and parliamentary schools would for a time be designated as "Old National" schools but with the agreement of the majority of the local management committee (the heritors and the minister) they could be brought under the authority of the Central Board as Adopted National schools while retaining their existing system of management. Other schools, including denominational schools, could – again with the consent of the management committee – become part of the new system as "Adopted National" schools. They would still be funded from voluntary sources and if found to be efficient by inspectors could still claim parliamentary grants. Further Old National and Adopted National schools could become New National schools if two-thirds of the existing management committee agreed. Where new national schools were set up or others adopted, the local committee would appoint teachers and fix the curriculum and hours of instruction. The Committee of Council would continue to inspect all parochial schools and all schools in receipt of grants and offering elementary education, but inspectors could be of any religious denomination. The commission recommended that no new denominational schools set up two years after the passing of the Act would receive government funding.

Although in its reports the commission had pointed out the deficiencies of the existing system it had also said many positive things about it and when it came to drawing up its conclusions and solutions (which were almost unanimously agreed by the commissioners), it seemed anxious to reach a compromise. Much as it might have wanted, the commission realised that it would be impractical to accept immediate financial responsibility for all the schools supported by voluntary effort which "represent an immense amount of denominational, local, and individual energy in the cause of education", yet "to leave them as they are, would be to perpetuate a state of things necessarily defective".⁴⁷ At the same time it was necessary to establish new schools and there was pressure from those who had given evidence to change the way parochial schools were managed and to abolish denominational schools. At the

⁴⁷ Ibid., clxxvii.

inquiry there had been a considerable diversity of opinion as to whether any ministers (parish or otherwise) should be *ex officio* members of a local committee and there was doubt as to whether some of the ratepayers would make capable managers. Robert Buchanan, a Free Church minister in favour of abolishing denominational schools, had spoken for many when he maintained that no minister should be an *ex officio* member and if there were to be ministers on the new school boards they should be elected like anyone else.⁴⁸ The commission's solution was to set up a system which, at least for a time, would incorporate old and new:

By a judicious improvement of the Parochial or National schools ... and by taking advantage of the existing schools outside that system ... the existing schools may be rendered thoroughly efficient; we also think that provision may be made under which these schools may all, in time, assume a National character".⁴⁹

As part of its strategy the commission decided that, for the time being at least, it would not tamper with the existing management of parochial schools. The qualification for heritors to sit on the board would remain the same and the parish minister would continue as an *ex officio* member. Schoolmasters, however, would no longer hold their posts *ad vitam aut culpam*. They would be required to hold a certificate of competency and in all instances would be selected without regard to their Church affiliation.⁵⁰ A minimum salary of thirty-five pounds exclusive of fees was proposed.

As for religious instruction the commission, having heard a considerable body of evidence on how this should be continued in schools, left the matter very much as it was but introduced a Conscience Clause which gave parents the statutory right to withdraw their children from any religious teaching to which they objected.⁵¹ Where existing parochial or denominational schools were adopted as New National schools or where New National schools were established, the local school committee would decide whether or not to include religious instruction on the curriculum. Where they decided to have religious instruction, however, it would not be subject to government inspection.

⁴⁸ *ACR, First Report*, 117. See also Taylor, 132.

⁴⁹ *ACR, Second Report*, clxxiv.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, clxxv.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 98.

The commission proposed that the Revised Code which had been introduced into Scotland in May 1864 with the examination of children in the three Rs should be fully implemented apart from Article 4 which limited government funding "to promote the education of children belonging to the classes who support themselves by manual labour". The commission agreed that this did not do justice to the situation in Scotland where historically schools "have been frequented by persons of every order".⁵² The commission also produced figures to show that since the introduction of the Revised Code, standards in the three Rs had improved.⁵³

In May 1867 a Bill was drafted incorporating these recommendations, "A Bill to Extend and Improve the Parochial schools of Scotland, and to make further Provision for the Education of the People of Scotland". The Bill indicated a reluctance to introduce a fully implemented national system too quickly. As a compromise it contained the seeds of conflict. The denominational system remained but the new Board could declare a denominational school unnecessary and a Church would then need to object on behalf of its school. By creating a Scotch department it went some way towards distancing Scottish education from what was seen by many as the Anglicising influence of the Privy Council but it is doubtful if it went far enough to satisfy those who were concerned about the erosion of Scottish culture and the Scottish education tradition. On this matter the Established Church had the support of the increasingly strong Educational Institute of Scotland. On the whole the EIS disapproved of the commission's recommendation, particularly with regard to the salary and conditions of teachers. In 1865 the EIS had agreed on a Programme of Educational Reform which argued for the retention of parish schools as presently constituted and had expressed the view that:

The Central Board in Scotland should have the sole control of the whole national schools in Scotland; it should have sole administration, including the examination of schools, the distribution of parliamentary grants voted for Scotland from the date of the proposed Act; and that thereafter the administration, the inspection of schools, the examination of schoolmasters, and the distribution of Parliamentary grants by her Majesty's Committee of Council should cease and determine.⁵⁴

This view was echoed by a Committee of Parochial Schoolmasters who believed that "Scottish schools should be entirely disengaged from the Privy Council Minutes, and

⁵² Ibid., cv.

⁵³ Ibid., ci.

⁵⁴ Belford, *Centenary Handbook*, 131.

the funds voted for education in Scotland should be administered by the Scottish Board without reference to any system of education in England, present or prospective".⁵⁵

Presumably by introducing the Conscience Clause and by taking religious instruction out of the compulsory curriculum the commissioners hoped to please the dissenters and the secularists. By implementing the Revised Code and making it necessary for all teachers to hold a government certificate of efficiency they believed they could raise the standard of elementary education and so increase school attendance. The commission also appeared anxious to win over the Churches and in particular the Established Church. It recognised the contribution of the voluntary-supported schools and allowed parish ministers to remain on parish school committees. Parochial schools and denominational schools, where found efficient and necessary by inspectors, would still be able to claim parliamentary grants. These concessions, however, did little to convince the Assembly's Education Committee that the proposals would be to the benefit of Scottish education and the Church was not slow to identify what it regarded as the weaknesses and inconsistencies of the commission's proposals.

Church Responses to the Recommendations and Bill of the Argyll Commission

The Education Committee responded to the Argyll Commission in two major reports, a *Special Report Showing the Nature and Effect of the Recommendations and Draft Bill* which was made available to the 1867 General Assembly and *Remarks on the Recommendations and Draft Bill* drawn up by the Convener, John Cook, which was published in the December of that year and incorporated in the committee's report to the Assembly in 1868. The former offered the committee's initial reaction to the First and Second Reports of the Commission which had covered Country Districts and Elementary Schools. The *Remarks* followed the completion of the commission's Report on Burgh and Middle-class Schools in December 1867.

With regard to findings of the commission the Education Committee claimed that the reports added little to what was already common knowledge:

That the Parochial and Denominational Schools are not sectarian ... that under inspection [they] are, as a rule, efficient ... that very many schools not in receipt

⁵⁵ NAS AD56, 47/3, "Memo by a Committee of Parochial Schoolmasters on Parochial Schools (Scotland) Bill", April 1869.

of Government aid or under inspection are insufficiently accommodated and inefficiently taught ... that the non-connection with the Privy Council arises mainly from the local want of the means for erecting or improving buildings and paying the minimum salary ... that Adventure Schools are of a very inferior character ...⁵⁶

That the commission had identified deficiencies in the Scottish education system should not have surprised anyone, Cook commented, since no one involved in establishing schools ever imagined that "one school in every parish could be commensurate, everywhere and in all circumstances, with the educational wants of the country".⁵⁷ Indeed, that was why denominational and subscription schools had been set up and had not been "forced into existence by denominational rivalry"⁵⁸ Certainly the Presbyterian schools had never been sectarian in any restrictive way nor, he claimed, had they encouraged intolerance in parishes. For the committee any inefficiency in the education system "resolves itself into questions of accommodation and salary".⁵⁹

The committee reported to the 1867 Assembly that the Bill's proposals were even more objectionable than those of Moncreiff's 1862 Bill because they involved the eventual dismantling of the whole parochial system and abolishing of denominational and voluntary supported schools.⁶⁰ Further, in its opinion, the conclusions were based on mistaken calculations and in some cases seemed to fly in the face of the findings contained in the Commission's own reports.

The committee pointed to what it saw as some glaring inconsistencies in the commission's proposals. There was the matter of the different age-groups the commissioners had considered in calculating the number of children attending school and the different conclusions it had reached as a result. Again, on the one hand the commission had admitted that the simplest way to increase the provision of education would be to extend and improve the existing parochial school system and recommended that there should be no change to the existing management of

⁵⁶ *Special Report by the Education Committee to the General Assembly* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1867), 3.

⁵⁷ *Remarks on the Recommendations and Draft Bill of the Royal Commissioners on Education by John Cook* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1868.), 19. Following the 1867 Assembly these were drawn up and presented by the Education Committee Convener, John Cook, and a special sub-committee appointed for the purpose. They were made available to the Committee in December 1867.

⁵⁸ *ACR, Second Report*, clxxiii.

⁵⁹ *Special Report*, 5.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

parochial schools.⁶¹ The commissioners deemed that it was neither practicable nor desirable "to throw aside, or at once to take over at the expense of the nation, or of the locality, the schools which have been erected by voluntary efforts".⁶² On the other hand, the Education Committee pointed out, the commissioners had gone on to suggest that a Parochial school, if agreed at a meeting of the Heritors and minister, might be converted into a New National school where the management would be in the hands of a school committee.⁶³ According to the Church, these proposals for the schools to be adopted eventually into the new national system had been made in order to meet those few cases where ministers or heritors had little interest in a school, or, "to make it easy or desirable for Heritors to relieve themselves of a portion of their existing burdens at the expense of their fellow-parishioners and of the State".⁶⁴

Thus a system which the Commissioners again and again declare to have worked well ... is gradually to be exchanged for one untried and *prima facie* less likely to be efficient; and this simply on the resolution of Heritors in any one parish proceeding, not on any general principle, but stimulated ... by the prospect of pecuniary advantage, or by the suggestions of a Central Board.⁶⁵

In spite of its assertions that the most desirable and the simplest solution would be the extension of the parochial system and that "in framing any general system of Education nothing should be done to discourage private liberality",⁶⁶ the commission was proposing to do the opposite.

In their examination of subscription schools the commissioners had laid the inefficiency of these at the door of "the management of the school being in the hands of the parents of the children, or boards elected by them".⁶⁷ However, commented the Assembly's committee, surely the constitution of the new local committees would be no different.

The Education Committee believed that religious instruction would be put at risk by leaving it to the new school committees to decide if it should be available, by removing the need for teachers to enter into any kind of religious agreement and by making the subject no longer open to inspection. This contradicted one of the main

⁶¹ *ACR, Second Report*, clxxv.

⁶² *Ibid.*, clxxiv.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, clxxxi.

⁶⁴ *Special Report*, 8.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

⁶⁶ *ACR, Second Report*, clxxix.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, xxxvii.

conditions on which Committee of Council grants had been made to schools since its inception in 1839, namely that the youth of the kingdom should be "religiously brought up". This principle was restated in 1861 in Article 8 of the regulations issued with the Revised Code – regulations which were actually noted in the commission's own report:

According to these rules all schools are excluded from sharing in the grant which are unconnected with some religious denomination, or in which, besides secular instruction, the Scriptures are not daily read from the authorised version.⁶⁸

The committee maintained that by removing the *ad vitam aut culpam* condition of appointment the schoolmaster would no longer have any security of tenure nor would he enjoy the social prestige which went with this kind of appointment. Any teacher would hold office at the discretion of the person or persons who appointed him or her, and so the most able people would be less likely to apply. As for the proposals to leave the managing of schools in the hands of those appointed by the ratepayers Cook pointed out that the commission had discovered that in many places "ratepayers could not be persuaded to take any interest in parochial matters at all" and that there had been considerable support for ministers continuing to sit on the board in the commission's own findings.⁶⁹ In fact Sellar and Maxwell had concluded that the existing heritors' boards with parish ministers as *ex officio* members and with the addition of representatives of the local ratepayers should form the local school board.⁷⁰ Discussing the superintendence of parochial schools they had commented:

There is something civilising in the mere fact of the general meeting of parents, children, teachers, ministers, and heritors, all interested in the same subject. It would perhaps, therefore, be a pity that it should be discontinued.⁷¹

Nevertheless, as Cook informed the Assembly, this was exactly what the Bill proposed to do.⁷²

In correspondence with Patrick Cumin, the secretary to the Royal Commission, the convener of the Education Committee took the Assistant Commissioners to task for assuming that an examination of the schools in Glasgow "would supply sufficient

⁶⁸ *ACR, Second Report*, lxxxvii.

⁶⁹ *ACR, Report on the State of Education in the Country Districts*, 91.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 176-177.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁷² *Remarks*, 1867, 19.

data for dealing with the case, not only of that City, but of the other large manufacturing Towns throughout the country".⁷³ The committee claimed that the figures published showing the lack of school accommodation in Glasgow were not only inaccurate but gave a wrong impression of the educational needs in the large towns of Scotland. It was wrong to assume that the proportion of children on the school-roll in the large burghs of Scotland would generally be the same as that in Glasgow.⁷⁴ This view is supported by R. D. Anderson's assessment – "there is reason to believe that Glasgow was not typical, and that the commission exaggerated the number of unschooled children".⁷⁵

Cook ended his report to the 1868 Assembly on a more constructive note by offering suggestions for dealing with the present educational deficiency. These included the setting up of a Scottish Board of Education under the Privy Council which would be based in Edinburgh and which would put pressure on heritors to provide new schools. Where heritors refused to co-operate, this Board would have powers to raise the necessary funding by assessing all occupants and proprietors in the parish, who would then share in the management of the schools. In rural areas where local rating could not meet the costs the denominational system could be extended with the Churches receiving further government grants.⁷⁶

The Established Church at large fully supported the stance taken up by the Education Committee. Some presbyteries sent up their own comments to the Assembly. Paisley Presbytery maintained that the Revised Code lowered standards and was unworkable in Scotland, that there should be a compulsory tax to pay for the erection and maintenance of new schools and that any Board of Education for Scotland should be based in Scotland with at least one teacher on its membership.⁷⁷ The Presbytery of Deer believed that there was now a need for education to be made compulsory.⁷⁸ One schoolmaster published a short but scathing critique of the Argyll Commission's Report and the Bill which had accompanied it, echoing the sentiments of many in the Church. For him the Revised Code demanded only "a miserable modicum of reading, writing, and arithmetic ... in reality no education at all ... that education which influences and moulds the mind only begins where the Code ends". A believer in clerical involvement at least as far as the 1861 Act allowed, he had this

⁷³ *ACR, Second Report*, xlv.

⁷⁴ *Special Report of the Education Committee*, 1868, Appendix C, 15-18.

⁷⁵ Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People*, 62.

⁷⁶ *Remarks*, 1868, 48-52.

⁷⁷ NAS CH2, Paisley Presbytery, April 1868.

⁷⁸ NAS CH2, Presbytery of Deer, *Overture Anent Education*, May 1868.

to say on the removal of the *ad vitam aut culpam* condition and the powers of the new school committees:

No doubt the Scotch Commissioners affect to believe that short engagements, local management, and local munificence, would raise up a crop of teachers fully equal to those now in the field. In other words, a month's "notice to quit", an illiterate board of control, and the generosity of trades-unionists or rustic clowns, are conditions as desirable in the eyes of teachers as permanence, independence, and a fair amount of fixed remuneration. Perhaps so, but we very much doubt it. ... Farewell, then, to peace and harmony, educational progress, and Christian charity. Every scholastic event, from the election of a teacher to the repair of a crazy form or desk, would be the signal for marshalling the sectarian forces for parochial war.⁷⁹

The reaction of the Established Church to the Argyll Commission was summed up in the closing words of the 1867 *Special Report* which called on the General Assembly to oppose a Bill that offered no security for religious instruction, discouraged all voluntary effort and offered no help to teachers. On the other hand it stated that part of the solution to the educational problems of Scotland lay in the setting up of a Scottish Board of Education "sitting for the purposes of administering a Scotch Parliamentary Grant, with large powers of inquiry and adapting its administration to the peculiarities of the country".⁸⁰

Parochial Schools (Scotland) Bill 1869

The commission's Bill was never progressed further. It suffered a fate common to much Scottish Parliamentary business, namely having to give way to the pressure of other business – in this case Parliamentary Reform, the Schools Inquiry Commission (The Taunton Report) and the debate on the disestablishment of the Irish Church. Early in February 1869, however, the Duke of Argyll, described by Anderson as "a Liberal who was an Established Churchman ... well placed to engineer a compromise",⁸¹ took up the matter again counting, no doubt, on the large number of Scottish Liberal MPs who had been returned to parliament at the first election after the Reform Act and who were likely to favour a non-denominational system of national education. His Parochial Schools Bill was introduced into the House of

⁷⁹ *A Plea for the Parish Schools by a Parochial Schoolmaster* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1867), 8 and 23.

⁸⁰ *Special Report*, 1867, 25.

⁸¹ Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People*, 59.

Lords in February 1869 but it did not reach the Commons until July.⁸² Two factors impeded the progress of this Bill. There were fears that any changes to the Scottish situation might affect changes to the English system which were being discussed at this time and there was the government's anxiety to see its Irish Disestablishment Act safely on the statute book. With regard to the former there were two very active organisations in England which took up opposing positions, the National Education Union and the National Education League. The National Education Union which was the more conservative and nearer to the Established Church of Scotland's own position, denied that the educational deficiency was as great as some were suggesting. It believed in keeping denominational schools, in preserving religious instruction and in retaining the involvement of the clergy. At the Education Union Congress in 1869 the Earl of Harrowby made a speech which would have gone down very well in the General Assembly:

We have no faith in the statistics which have been placed before the public ... no doubt a deficiency does exist, but where does it most exist? It exists in some very small parishes ... it is limited, in regard to country parishes, to very few ... it exists also in a good number of large towns. That is the evil we have to remedy as to quantity. Do we not consider the religious education of the people as the highest element of quality? Do we consider that there could be any education at all to the child without at least a moral education? What will be your morals without religion?⁸³

In his opening speech to the Lords in February, 1869, Argyll explained that he proposed to deal with the great defects in Scottish education – deficiencies in cities and in rural areas, defective school buildings and the removal of bad teachers. The Bill was in many respects almost identical to the Argyll Commission's Draft Bill but Argyll did introduce a number of important amendments. There was still to be a Scottish Board of Education but now its membership was reduced from fifteen to nine and there was an attempt to ensure that Board members would have a better grasp of the educational scene and be less dominated by the government. Gone were the Lord Provosts of the cities and the four government nominated members were reduced to two, one of whom was to be appointed chairman.⁸⁴ This Board would also

⁸² The Bill was presented in the Lords by Argyll under his title as Lord Sundridge (Lords Papers, 1868-9, vol. VI). In Hansard's reports of the proceedings of the House of Commons he is referred to as the Duke of Argyll.

⁸³ *Report of the Educational Congress of the National Education Union, 1869, 2-4 and 11.*

⁸⁴ Lords Papers, 1868-9, vol. VI, *Parochial Schools (Scotland) Bill, Section 2*. Hansard reported this as "two with a paid chairman ...nominated by the Crown", thus creating confusion as to the number appointed. (Hansard, 3rd Series, vol. 194, 288.)

have included a representative of the EIS so that for the first time the voice of the teaching profession would be heard at this level. One later amendment revived the conviction that in appointing teachers not only should their academic qualifications be taken into account but also their "skill in the theory and practice of teaching".⁸⁵ Argyll also proposed that the power to dismiss teachers should belong to the national Board and not to the local school committees. He also wanted to amend the Revised Code by extending its provisions to include "payment by results" in the higher branches of education.⁸⁶

One change which was to prove unacceptable to the Lords was Argyll's proposal that where new schools were set up in the rural parishes, only one third of the membership of the local school committees should be elected by heritors and landowners and that the other two-thirds should be elected by the ratepayers.

At the end of March 1869 a special meeting of the Commission of the Established Church General Assembly was called to consider Argyll's Bill. The Commission decided that it was not much different from the Argyll Commission's Bill of 1867 and agreed to oppose it on the same grounds.⁸⁷ There were a number of commissioners, however, who would have been happy to support the Bill generally had some security for religious instruction been offered and when the *Special Report* was presented to the Assembly in May a minority asked the Assembly to "express their preference for a National over a Denominational system of Education [and] approve the Bill in so far as it approximates to a National system".⁸⁸ As we shall see this support for the move towards a national scheme was also to be found in the presbyteries of the Church.

Within the presbyteries and synods of the Church of Scotland there was a surprising amount of support for what the Duke of Argyll's Bill was attempting to achieve. In March 1869 Perth Presbytery agreed by twelve votes to ten that, "the Presbytery while approving of the Bill on the whole, desiderate most strongly some security for religious teaching...",⁸⁹ while in the Presbyteries of Edinburgh and Paisley almost half of those attending voted for a general approval of the Bill's provisions.⁹⁰ When the Presbytery of Linlithgow came to vote for or against approving of the Bill it came down to the Moderator's casting vote (he voted for

⁸⁵ *A Bill with Amendments made by the Commons* (32 & 33 Vict.), 10 August.

⁸⁶ Hansard, 3rd Series, vol. 194, 294.

⁸⁷ *ACGA*, 1868, 68.

⁸⁸ *AGA*, 1869, 56.

⁸⁹ *NAS CH2*, Perth Presbytery, March 1869.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, Edinburgh Presbytery, March 1869. Paisley Presbytery, May 1869.

petitioning against the Bill),⁹¹ although here, as in so many other presbyteries, it was agreed that there were insufficient safeguards for the continuation of religious education and for the teaching of the Bible and the Shorter Catechism. A number of presbyteries were also concerned that the minimum salary for schoolmasters had not been set at £50.⁹²

Two of the largest synods in the country took up opposing stances. The Synod of Perth and Stirling approved of the object of the Bill and of its provisions to extend education in Scotland, but agreed, by thirteen votes to five, to "petition against it unless provision is made for the religious character of the teachers and for the godly upbringing of the children".⁹³ The Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, on the other hand, came out strongly against the Bill, claiming that it subverted the present management of parish schools, that it was contrary to the recommendations of the Argyll Commission and that it would be utterly impossible to provide for education in the large towns and populous country parishes at a rate of three pence in the pound.⁹⁴ A meeting of ministers, elders and members of the Church of Scotland held in Glasgow in March 1869 took a more sympathetic view of Argyll's Bill than a similar meeting had taken the previous year. It agreed with general object of the Bill and approved of the setting up of a Board of Education for Scotland and of new national schools but it parted company with Argyll when it came to converting parish and denominational schools into national schools and considered that to discourage voluntary efforts and relieve heritors of the need to make the statutory provisions would throw an unnecessary financial burden on ratepayers.⁹⁵ Two days after this meeting Dr. Norman Macleod reminded the Presbytery of Glasgow:

In defending the Denominational system, we are not defending a system peculiar to the Church of Scotland. It is a system the benefits of which Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Free Churchmen, and Established Churchmen, all share.⁹⁶

⁹¹ Ibid., Linlithgow Presbytery, April 1869.

⁹² Ibid., Dalkeith Presbytery, April 1869.

⁹³ Ibid., Synod of Perth and Stirling, April, 1869.

⁹⁴ Ibid., Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, April 1869.

⁹⁵ *Report On the Education Bill by A Committee In Glasgow Of Ministers And Members Of The Church Of Scotland*, March 1869.

⁹⁶ *Report of Proceedings of the Presbytery of Glasgow on the subject of Education in Scotland*, March 1868, and *on the Parochial schools (Scotland) Bill*, March, 1869 (Glasgow: Thomas Murray & Son, 1868.)

In organisations not directly connected with the Church there was some support for the Education Committee's stand-point. The General Council of the University of Glasgow resolved that the existing schools should be respected and their position carefully conserved, that the proposed legislation should be mainly supplemental and that "care should be taken that the 'use and wont' of religious teaching in Scotland be not endangered".⁹⁷ The Coal and Iron Masters in the West of Scotland petitioned the Lords against the Bill. They wanted the schools erected and maintained by them to remain as they were. They claimed these works' schools had been successful, that they had been founded for the purpose of giving Religious Education and that this had always been harmoniously carried out and that much would be lost by converting them into new national schools.⁹⁸ It would appear that the Educational Institute in opposing the Bill had much in common with the Established Church. From 1868 to 1869 *The Museum* published several articles by members of the EIS all critical of the Bill's treatment of schoolmasters and supporting the retention of religious instruction in the curriculum. Typical was the attitude of a speaker addressing the Cupar Branch who claimed:

When we find schoolmasters and policemen increase in an equal ratio, we cannot say much for the piety of the people. ... A new lord is to be created for us – a general board – armed with unlimited scope for its amusement in suspending and withdrawing teachers' certificates. ... We cannot, therefore, view with anything but alarm the efforts that are being made by some parties to alter the constitution of the schools [parochial schools], and to impair their efficiency, if not to endanger their existence, by separating religion from secular instruction.⁹⁹

In the end Argyll's intention to introduce into Scotland changes that would have preserved much of the existing parochial system were thwarted by his fellow peers. The Earl of Airlie pointed to the improvement in the three Rs since the introduction of the Revised Code and asked, "Were they going then to throw the weight of the Government in the scale in favour of the higher branches as against reading, writing, and arithmetic?"¹⁰⁰ The Earl of Denbigh, speaking on behalf of the Roman Catholics

⁹⁷ *University of Glasgow, Meeting of the General Council*, 28 April 1869, 2.

⁹⁸ NAS AD56, 47/3, "Parochial Schools (Scotland) – Petition of Coal and Iron Masters in the West of Scotland". This petition was presented in the Lords by the Duke of Marlborough in April, 1869. Hansard, 3rd Series, vol. 195, 567.

⁹⁹ *The Museum and English Journal of Education*, vol. IV, 1867, 415 & 416: "The Recommendations and Draft Bill – A Speech delivered by Mr Borrowman, of Auchtermuchty, at the Cupar Branch of the Educational Institute". It is to be expected that an English journal, opposing possible changes to the English education system, would print material supportive of the status quo in Scotland.

¹⁰⁰ Hansard 3rd Series, vol. 194, 1767.

in Scotland, argued that the Bill, "was drawn up by Presbyterians for the benefit of Presbyterians, for assuredly both the Episcopalian and Catholics will alike suffer under it."¹⁰¹ He eventually attempted to introduce a new clause to the effect that:

Nothing in this Act contained shall apply to the education of Roman Catholic or Episcopalian children in Scotland, but the same shall be conducted as heretofore notwithstanding the passing of this Act; nor shall any school assessment be imposed under this Act upon any lands or heritages of which the proprietors are Roman Catholics or Episcopalians.¹⁰²

As a result the Lords amended the Bill to permit all denominational schools to claim parliamentary grants without having to become Adopted schools.

The Duke of Marlborough objected to the reduced influence of heritors in electing the school committees. The Duke of Richmond and Gordon (always in sympathy with the Established Church of Scotland and in 1885 to become the first Secretary for Scotland) claimed that the way school committees were to be appointed would lead to "endless squabbles and dissensions on a subject, which of all others was one on which there ought to be no quarrels and no squabbles – the religious education of the people". He believed that the state of education in Scotland was by no means unsatisfactory and that the Bill struck directly at the old parochial system of education in Scotland, which, in combination with the voluntary system, had hitherto worked so advantageously.¹⁰³ The Archbishop of Canterbury, defending the denominational system, maintained that England would not accept a conscience clause since that might turn denominational schools into national schools.¹⁰⁴ Disraeli made a late intervention in the debate and argued that "anything connected with Scotch education is not merely a Scotch question, but one of national interest, and one on which the House ought to be fully acquainted with the proposals of the Government, and the motives which influence them."¹⁰⁵ To this the Lord Advocate replied caustically that he welcomed the interest of such a distinguished member but "should have been glad if that interest had been developed a little earlier in the Session".¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 1769.

¹⁰² Lords' Papers, 1868-9 vol. VI.

¹⁰³ Hansard, 3rd Series, vol. 196, 430.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., vol. 196, 457.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., vol. 198, 1377.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 1379.

By the summer of 1869 the Education Committee had moved to a position where it accepted schools being financed through local assessment where there was no other way of providing the necessary funding, and management by local school committees elected by properly qualified ratepayers. It even accepted the imposition of the conscience clause recognising that in practice this had always been allowed for in Church of Scotland schools. Indeed, the committee were able to claim that the Bill as a whole had their approval "in all save two respects – viz., the proposals for 'converting' Parochial Schools into 'New National' Schools, and the absence of provision for Religious Instruction".¹⁰⁷ For the first time we find the proposal that religious instruction should be legislated for according to "use and wont", a phrase which would become significant in the 1872 Education Bill:

The Committee respectfully urge on the attention of members of Parliament the importance of inserting as a preamble to the conscience clause the words "*in every New National School religious instruction shall be given in conformity with the use and wont of the Parochial Schools of Scotland*".¹⁰⁸ [my italics]

The committee believed that it was now time to unite with the Free Church in urging the government to acknowledge the importance of religious instruction in schools.¹⁰⁹ It recognised, however, that it was unlikely to succeed in achieving its objectives through amendments to Argyll's Bill and consoled itself with the thought that, whereas in England there were fears that changes in the Scottish system might lead to unwanted changes to the English education system, Scotland might actually benefit from what was being proposed in England:

Looking to the provisions of the English Bill, there is now more probability of a moderate and satisfactory measure being obtained for Scotland than there was a year ago.¹¹⁰

If this is what Cook hoped for he was to be disappointed. J. D. Myers has commented:

The bill of 1869 [Parochial Schools] can be seen as the last distinctively Scottish educational reform measure of the period. It was, in its conception and general outline, more similar to the bill of 1854, for example, than either was to the bills of 1871 and 1872 which were significantly less Scottish in spirit and

¹⁰⁷ *Special Report by the Education Committee*, 1870, Appendix A, 10. (This Appendix is dated July, 1869.)

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Special Report by the Education Committee*, 1870, 5.

approach. Lord Advocate George Young, had a considerably different attitude to the task from James Moncreiff and was less sympathetically attuned to the distinctive national characteristic of the Scottish tradition.¹¹¹

Argyll's Bill had to be abandoned by the Lords due to lack of time, a rather unsatisfactory conclusion to an important debate. All things considered, with some readjustment this Bill might well have found acceptance in the Commons and in Scotland. However, as Donald Withrington observed, "in the end the bill was killed by the Tories in the House of Lords who never liked it in the first place [and] were in no mood to deal sympathetically with any bill, about which they had doubts, emanating from a Liberal government".¹¹² The Bill's rejection by the Lords, however, was more than just an expression of party political animosity. Moves to change the English system were already afoot and those who opposed change were concerned about the effect any success in introducing changes to Scotland might have on English opinion.¹¹³

Education Bills, 1871

It might have been expected that with the failure of Argyll's Bill another attempt to reform Scottish education would soon have followed. In fact it was not until February 1871 that fresh efforts were made to introduce a national system to Scotland. Among the reasons for this eighteen-month delay was the change in the Lord Advocate's post, George Young taking over from James Moncreiff in October 1869. Another, and probably more important reason, was the time and attention taken up with the debate on the English Elementary Education Bill which was introduced into the Commons in February 1870 by W. E. Forster, Vice-President of the Committee of Council (now designated as the Education Department). This Bill provided for school boards to be set up and new schools established only in areas where a shortage had been identified. On the issue of religious instruction it adopted a compromise position. It introduced the right of withdrawal on grounds of conscience in all elementary schools, including those run by the Churches, and it laid down that in schools supported from local rates no catechism or religious confession distinctive to any particular denomination could be taught. Voluntary schools were

¹¹¹ J. D. Myers, "Scottish Nationalism and the Antecedents of the 1872 Education Act", *Scottish Educational Studies* vol. 4, May 1972, 86.

¹¹² D. J. Withrington, "Towards a National System", 117.

¹¹³ Forster presented his *Elementary Education Bill* to the House of Commons early in 1870.

still to receive parliamentary grants. Forster's Act was probably more popular with the Established Church in Scotland than it was with the Church of England. The Church of Scotland had insisted that new schools managed by local committees should only be set up where there was a deficiency and, while wanting to retain the catechism as part of religious instruction in parish schools, it might have settled for the English compromise.

[The General Assembly] .. would express their general satisfaction with the Bill now before Parliament ... inasmuch as it proposes to recognise all good elementary schools already in existence, leaving them under their present management, and to give an ample opportunity for the supply of new schools by voluntary effort, wherever additional schools are declared to be necessary, before schools are erected by Local School Boards.¹¹⁴

The Church of England and the National Education Union, however, were unhappy with the arrangements made for religious instruction. The Bishop of Peterborough maintained that to exclude religious teaching from national rate paid schools was not to assume an attitude of neutrality towards religion, but an attitude of hostility.¹¹⁵

Although no new legislation affecting Scottish schools was introduced until 1871 national education was still a live issue and agitation for change found expression in many quarters over these months with the place of religious instruction remaining the most disputed topic. Even before the close of 1869, Edinburgh City Council were calling on the Government to bring forward legislation to provide a non-sectarian and non-denominational system with a General Board of Education in Scotland elected by public bodies. There was to be an end to denominational grants and a clause making education compulsory.¹¹⁶ The magistrates of Leith suggested that MPs for the counties and burghs of Scotland should represent the electorate on any Board of Education,¹¹⁷ while Musselburgh Town Council agreed that while the Bible should be retained in the schools, "the reading of it shall be requested by the Local School Committee, and a conscience clause operated".¹¹⁸ A public meeting held in Glasgow to discuss the place of the Bible in schools resolved, "that in any legislation on behalf of primary education, there ought to be no provisions excluding, or tending

¹¹⁴ AGA, 1870, 64.

¹¹⁵ *National Education Union, A Speech by W. C. Magee, Bishop of Peterborough, 1870* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, no date.)

¹¹⁶ NAS AD56, 47/3, "Resolutions adopted by the Lord Provost, Magistrates and Council of Edinburgh", 14 December, 1869.

¹¹⁷ NAS AD56, 47/3, "Petition of the Magistrates and Council of Leith", 1869.

¹¹⁸ NAS AD56, 47/4, "Memorial of the Magistrates and Town Council of Musselburgh", February 1870.

to exclude, Bible instruction, but, on the contrary, every practical provision ought to be made, consistently with respect to the conscientious objections of parents and guardians, for Bible as well as secular education."¹¹⁹ In Edinburgh those seeking to improve conditions for the poor agreed that any Education Bill should extend the terms of the Factory Acts, making education compulsory for all children under fourteen and should legislate for the provision of industrial training schools.¹²⁰

Teachers continued to voice anxieties about the application of the Revised Code and in particular its effect on the teaching of more advanced subjects. One writer expressed concern that science subjects were neglected because of the expectations of the presbyteries and the universities – "the subjects with which clergymen are best acquainted are Greek and Latin [and] these are the principal subjects required by those who are to enter the University classes".¹²¹ The same writer argued that religion should be taught in Sunday Schools and that cramming pupils' heads with the Shorter Catechism and using the Bible as a text-book had little to do with moral education. Indeed, he claimed, "whisky and Catechism are the two greatest curses of Scotland".¹²²

One other issue which was beginning to emerge at this time in discussions about education was the possible reunion of the denominations. One parish minister contended that "the dissensions and rivalry among the various Churches ... have hindered the adoption of a system securing teaching for all."¹²³ In 1867 the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Established Church had called for the reunion of all Scottish Presbyterians and by 1870 there was widespread support for the abolition of patronage. That year the Presbytery of Dunkeld overtured the General Assembly, "to consider adopting such measures as may seem best fitted for accomplishing a Union between the Church of Scotland and those other Evangelical Churches which are separated from it, although substantially agreeing with it both in doctrine and government".¹²⁴ Similarly the Presbytery of Forfar asked the Assembly to enter into discussions with the other Presbyterian Churches in Scotland noting that:

¹¹⁹ *National Education, The Bible in the School, Authorised Report of the Public Meeting, Glasgow 25th April 1870*, 20.

¹²⁰ NAS AD56, 47/4, "Report of a sub-committee of the Society [or Association] for Improving the Condition of the Poor, Edinburgh", November 1870.

¹²¹ *Suggestions for the Administration of the Privy Council Grant for Education in Scotland with a New Plan For A National System by An Educationist* (Edinburgh: John Maclaren, 1870), 18.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 28-31.

¹²³ *The Churches and Education by a Parish Minister* (Glasgow: Thomas Murray and Son, 1870), 3.

¹²⁴ GAP, 1870, Presbytery of Dunkeld: *Union with Other Churches*.

the present state of separation between the Church of Scotland and the other Evangelical Churches in the country fosters throughout the land a spirit of sectarianism, brings reproach on religion, promotes infidelity, throws difficulties in the way of scriptural national education, and presents an obstacle to the success of the Gospel.¹²⁵

The significance of these calls for Church union for any future Education Bill was that both the Kirk and the Free Church might speak with one voice in favour of religious instruction in Scottish schools.¹²⁶

In February 1871 Lord Advocate Young presented in the Commons his Education (Scotland) Bill – a Bill "To extend and amend the provisions of the law of Scotland on the subject of education" in order that "the means of procuring efficient education ... may be furnished and made available to the whole people of Scotland." It was clear from the title of this Bill that it was going to be a radical departure from the attempts at reform made by Lord Moncreiff and the Duke of Argyll. All previous bills had been classified as "Parochial Schools" bills with the intent of improving the traditional parochial school system, but Young's aim was to start with a clean sheet and introduce completely new legislation.

The Bill provided for a committee of the Privy Council to be called the Scottish Education Department. Schools were to be called "parish schools" and "burgh schools" and infant and evening schools were to be established. Attendance at school was to be compulsory for all children between five and thirteen years of age. School boards would be elected in each parish and burgh by all owners or occupiers of lands or heritages of the annual value of not less than four pounds. These boards would be responsible for managing schools and appointing teachers, but the power to dismiss teachers lay with the Scottish Education Department whose decision would be final and not reviewable. Schools erected or maintained by voluntary contributions and Churches could transfer into the new system but this was not made compulsory. In answer to critics of the Revised Code it was stated that care should be taken "that the standard of education which now exists in parochial schools shall not be lowered".¹²⁷ No recommendation was made about the place of religious instruction on the

¹²⁵ Ibid., Presbytery of Forfar: *Union with Other Churches*. There was a similar overture from Kirkcaldy Presbtery.

¹²⁶ Free Church minister James Begg who had violently opposed the union of his Church with the United Presbyterians, and Norman MacLeod, who was a keen supporter of Church reunion, found common ground at the Glasgow meeting on the place of the Bible in the School referred to above.

¹²⁷ PP, *A Bill To extend and amend the provisions of the law of Scotland on the subject of education* Schedule C, lines 17-18.

curriculum but there would be no grant for religious instruction and a conscience clause allowed for the withdrawal of children from instruction in religious subjects and on any day set apart for religious observance.¹²⁸

From within the Established Church there was the usual flurry of resolutions opposing the bill. Dalkeith Presbytery spoke for many when it asserted:

The Presbytery will always hail with gratitude and be ready to give their countenance and support to any measure fitted to bring the means of an efficient education for their children within the reach of the whole population of Scotland ... [but] the Christian Religion is the only true and proper basis of all wholesome education ... no measures would be acceptable which did not distinctly recognise the Bible and require teaching of the Word of God in its schools.¹²⁹

Edinburgh Presbytery claimed that where ratepayers had to fund schooling they would only be interested in spending as little as they could and this in turn was bound to lower the standard of education. It was agreed that the clerk should contact the Free Church Presbytery of Edinburgh and the United Presbyterian Presbytery with a view to joint action against the bill.¹³⁰ On this issue Omond's comment is helpful:

The general complaint was that in the past the Privy Council had marched over the border, with its red tape and arbitrary methods, and encouraged, by grants out of public funds, the erection of sectarian schools instead of a national system; and it was felt by many that it would perhaps be the best thing for Scotland if there could be an union of all the Presbyterian Churches, with the Church and the school in every parish brought into the old intimate relations. This, it was thought, might save Scottish education from the interference of the Privy Council.¹³¹

In reports between February and June, 1871 the Education Committee continued to plead for the continuation of the old parochial system and for a secure place for religious instruction on the curriculum. Pointing to the arrangements come to under the Education Act in England, it again claimed that the deficiencies in Scotland were not as great as was asserted and that new education boards should only be set up where serious needs had been identified.¹³² The Commission of Assembly which met

¹²⁸ Here "religious observance" is introduced for the first time. Its inclusion here will be of significance for later legislation, particularly in the 20th century.

¹²⁹ Dalkeith Presbytery, March 1871.

¹³⁰ NAS CH2, Edinburgh Presbytery, February 1871.

¹³¹ Omond, *The Lord Advocates*, 277.

¹³² *Special Report by the Education Committee*, 1871, 75 and 80.

on 1 March 1871 drew up a petition giving the grounds for the Church's objection to the Bill. This was sent out to all parish ministers for members to sign and forward to the House of Commons.¹³³ At its meeting in May the General Assembly resolved by a large majority to oppose the bill unless religious instruction could be secured according to the "use and wont" of Scotland and the present constitution of parochial schools could be protected. It also argued for the "more ample recognition of the services and status of teachers" and for the superintendence of schools to be "by a Board intimately connected with, and having its head-quarters in Scotland".¹³⁴

Outside the Churches there was a mixed reaction to this new bill. As far as the management of schools was concerned there was opposition to Scottish education being controlled from London but there was a general acceptance of local school boards. Omond remarked that the creation of school boards was now more acceptable since most Scotsmen now believed that, "if the members of a congregation were competent to elect a minister, the ratepayers were no less competent to elect a schoolmaster."¹³⁵ In Glasgow a meeting of "Gentlemen of all denominations" was generally in agreement with the bill's proposals but advocated the establishment of a Scottish Central Board independent of the Privy Council.¹³⁶ Schoolmasters' Associations and Town Councils opposed the continuation of grants to denominational schools.¹³⁷ In a letter to the Lord Advocate in February 1871 the Duke of Argyll pursued this issue:

I am satisfied that the Scotch members and people will be adverse to an unlimited power of giving Denominational grants for the future. I do not think the power should be unlimited, so that purely proselytising schools could be set up anywhere with support from the public funds. If the people of Scotland are at all in the same mood as in England on this point, no Bill has a chance of success which places no restraint whatever on future denominationalism.¹³⁸

In June 1871, Young, having received notice of two hundred amendments to his bill,

¹³³ *Resolutions of Commission of Assembly*, 1 March, 1871.

¹³⁴ *AAGA*, 1871, 50.

¹³⁵ Omond, *The Lord Advocates*, 276-7.

¹³⁶ NAS AD56, 47/4, "Memorial Signed by about 400 influential citizens of Glasgow", February, 1871.

¹³⁷ See, for example, NAS AD56, 47/4, "Town Council of Aberdeen and Ross-shire Schoolmasters' Association", March 1871.

¹³⁸ NAS AD56, 47/4, "Letter to Lord Advocate from the Duke of Argyll".

decided to withdraw it; but by February 1872 he was back with another very similar one.¹³⁹

Lord Young's Bill 1872

In drafting his new Bill Young made some important changes and some notable amendments were made before the bill became law in August 1872. The government agreed that a Board of Education for Scotland would be set up for three years with a possible extension of another two years and would meet in Edinburgh. It would consist of five members appointed by the government. Sir James Elphinstone described this as a "temporary phantom board" which would still be controlled by the Board of Education in London.¹⁴⁰ The Bill emphasised that school boards should promote the teaching of secondary level subjects. There was provision for the continuation of certain denominational schools, parliamentary grants being given to schools which the Scotch Education Department deemed necessary to meet the religious beliefs of parents. As far as religious instruction was concerned, where a school board decided it should be provided, it was to be given either at the beginning or at the end of the day. By way of clarification the Lord Advocate said that "the object of the clause was that there should be a religious observance both at the commencement and at the end of the secular instruction".¹⁴¹

In February 1872 the Church's Education Committee issued a statement on the provisions of this new Bill.¹⁴² This took more or less the same line of argument as that developed for the 1871 Bill. The committee did make one concession in the hope of achieving a compromise with regard to the management of parish schools. It suggested that the constitution of the boards managing these schools, presently the heritors paying a rental of more than £100 and the parish minister, might be widened to include "representatives of all who contribute towards the school assessment". This time round Lord Young had a powerful Scottish ally in Dr. Thomas Guthrie:

I have all along advocated a National as opposed to a Denominational system; thinking that we have divisions more than enough in the Church without

¹³⁹ In 1854 Lord Kinnaird had introduced a Bill supporting the parochial school system and in February 1872 he brought a Parochial Schools Bill into the Lords. This received support from the Established Church but was dropped with the advent of Young's Bill.

¹⁴⁰ Hansard Third Series vol. 212, 303.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 212, 170.

¹⁴² *ECR*, May 1872, Appendix: *Education (Scotland) Bill. Statement by the Education Committee*, February, 1872.

exasperating their bitterness by introducing them into the School. ... I have always recommended a system much like that the Lord Advocate's Bill embodies. Can any man in his senses believe that the Bible-reading, Bible-loving people of Scotland will thrust the Word of God out of their schools? Lend your hearty support to a Bill which, conserving all that is good in our Parish schools, will carry the blessings of education into every mining district, dark lane of the city, and lone highland glen.¹⁴³

Guthrie's view was not held generally in the Free Church which like the Established Church held out for the statutory provision of religious instruction and there were some MPs who supported the stance taken up by these Churches and who did not think that the decision about the provision of religious instruction should be left to local school committees. It is to Edward S. Gordon, MP for the Universities of Glasgow and Aberdeen, that we are indebted for moving an addition to the Preamble which would eventually allow the Lord Advocate to propose a compromise.

At the beginning of May 1872, Gordon, proposed that there should be a clause in the Bill which would secure religious education in schools. Gordon had considerable support in the Commons and had been responsible for bringing in the Scottish Reform Bill in 1868. A faithful Church member, he has been described as one who "was most anxious to effect a reconciliation with the heirs of Chalmers, for whom he had a profound admiration".¹⁴⁴ He reminded the House that in the past year there had been 903 petitions against the Bill praying for alterations with a view to securing the religious system which had hitherto prevailed in Scotland.¹⁴⁵ Reluctant to speak against the government and in support of an opposition motion, the Scottish Liberals said little during the debate and were accused of being unwilling to "defend the system of education which the Scotch people desired",¹⁴⁶ but in the end Gordon's amendment was carried by a majority of seven. His amendment was then taken up in the Lords by the Duke of Richmond who proposed inserting a clause in the Preamble stating that religious instruction, "as an essential part of education", should be given to all children whose parents did not decline it on religious grounds. Opposing him Argyll argued that religious teaching "would be continued in Scotland by local boards just as much as if it were a matter left in the hands of Presbyteries or

¹⁴³ T. Guthrie, *The Scotch Education Bill: Letter from Dr. Guthrie to my Fellow Countrymen* (Edinburgh: John Greig & Son, 1872), 1, 2 & 4.

¹⁴⁴ Omond, *The Lord Advocates*, 296.

¹⁴⁵ Hansard, Third Series, vol. 211, 288-9.

¹⁴⁶ *Scottish Education Bill Report of Parliamentary Debate on Mr Gordon's Resolution in Favour of "Instruction in the Holy Scriptures in the Public Schools", Adopted by House of Commons on Monday Evening, 6th May, 1872.* (Glasgow: Arch. K. Murray & Co, no date) 38.

Bishops",¹⁴⁷ but Richmond's amendment was carried in the Lords by a majority of twenty-one.¹⁴⁸ When the amended Bill went back to the Commons in July the Lord Advocate refused to accept the new insertion but proposed altering it to read:

Whereas it has been the custom in the public schools of Scotland to give instruction in religion to children whose parents did not object to the instruction so given, but with liberty to parents without forfeiting any of the other advantages ... to elect that their children should not receive such instruction, and it is expedient that the managers of public schools shall be at liberty to continue the said custom: Be it therefore enacted ...

Gordon reluctantly agreed to this version and it was passed at a poorly attended evening session by 113 votes to 5.¹⁴⁹ Important as this amendment to the Preamble was, it did not in the end achieve what Gordon had wanted. It left the matter still very open and it did not guarantee that religious instruction would be taught according to the "use and wont" of Scottish schools. Nevertheless, the fact that even the possibility of giving religious instruction had been legislated for, would remain of great importance for the Church of Scotland in the twentieth century.

During the progress of the 1872 Bill the Church continued to try and influence the debate. The terms of the bill were regularly discussed at committee and presbytery meetings. In anticipation of the bill Edinburgh Presbytery had agreed at its January meeting that "no educational measure for Scotland would be satisfactory which does not provide for the teaching of religion according to use and wont ... [and include] a clause which secures the proper training, remuneration and status of teachers."¹⁵⁰ At its February meeting it agreed to petition the government against the bill and urged kirk sessions and congregations to do likewise. In Linlithgow Presbytery a motion to support the bill provided it was amended so as to retain the Bible in all rate-aided schools and secured a minimum salary of not less than £50 for teachers, was only lost by two votes.¹⁵¹ Such support tended to be the exception, however, and at presbytery and synod level those opposed to the bill continued to express anxiety about the future of religious instruction, the status and remuneration of teachers and the control London might exert on any Scottish Board. Greenock Presbytery was concerned about the effect compulsory school attendance might have on the poorer

¹⁴⁷ Hansard, Third Series, vol. 212, 1034.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 212, 1037.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 213, 162.

¹⁵⁰ NAS CH2, Edinburgh Presbytery, January 1872.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Linlithgow Presbytery, March 1872.

sections of the community. There was some feeling that the denominational system should be discontinued completely and not reserved for Catholics and Episcopalians and both the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr and the Presbytery of Greenock discussed the possibility of excluding all "sectarian formulae" [presumably the Catechism and the Westminster Confession] from national schools replacing these with Bible reading, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments.¹⁵² Similarly, during the debate on Gordon's amendment, the formidable Independent Liberal for Edinburgh, Duncan McLaren declared that, "instruction may be given in the public schools on religious subjects from the Bible, but that no Catechism or formulary whatever shall be taught in any of the Government public schools."¹⁵³

Determined to keep up with developments the Commission of the General Assembly met twice prior to the Assembly in May. In November 1871 and again in March 1872 the commission restated the Church of Scotland's position with regard to religious instruction, the position of schoolmasters and the cost of the new system to the community. When the Assembly met in May it received the Report of the Education Committee and, in addition, Overtures from the Presbyteries of Glasgow, Paisley and Hamilton on "Religious Teaching in Inspected Schools" and declared emphatically "its adherence to the principle of this Church, that the virtuous education and godly upbringing of the youth is a matter of which the State ought to be most careful."¹⁵⁴ The debate on the Education Bill lasted till midnight and stimulated a wide-ranging discussion much of it expressing approval of the Bill "in so far as it makes provision for extending the means of education commensurate with the wants of the country".¹⁵⁵ By this time, of course, the Assembly had knowledge of Gordon's amendment with the possibility of instruction in the Bible having a place in the curriculum according to the traditional practice in Scottish schools and commissioners were able to express satisfaction with this achievement. To the end the Church maintained that the need of more schools was being exaggerated but now it contented itself with again pressing for the Bill to include those clauses of the English Education Act which provided that new school boards would only be set up where the educational needs of a community were not already being met. Had the government agreed to this the Established Church would have achieved its objective not only of retaining its own schools but also of ensuring the continuation of existing

¹⁵² NAS CH2, Greenock Presbytery, March 1872 and Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, April 1872.

¹⁵³ *Scottish Education Bill Report of Parliamentary Debate on Mr Gordon's Resolution*, 25.

¹⁵⁴ AAGA, 1872, 72-73.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 56-7.

parish schools with their traditional Church connection. The Church had always objected strongly to Scottish education being run from Whitehall, and such an arrangement would have limited the control of any Central Board to the new National schools. While it continued to press for this important amendment, it would be true to say that this Assembly came closer to accepting an Education Bill for Scotland than any previous Assembly. Young, however, was not prepared to make any more concessions and certainly not one like this which would have played into the hands of Disraeli and the Conservatives by perpetuating the power of the heritors and landed class in the old parochial boards, and the Bill was passed on 2 August.

The Education (Scotland) Act of 1872 remains one of the milestones in the history of Scottish school education. It completed the secularisation of school education which had been begun by the Act of 1861 by finally transferring the full control of schools from church to state. The historic role of the heritors was abolished with the management of schools becoming the responsibility of locally elected school boards in every parish and burgh. The Act introduced compulsory school attendance, but no fixed school age, and insisted that teachers should hold a certificate of competency awarded by a Scotch Education Department. Funding, for all except denominational schools, was to come from government grants, local rates and school fees. Schools not covered by the Act were some of the ancient burgh schools which offered pupils the higher branches of knowledge and not just the three Rs. These "higher class public schools" were left to be funded by town councils and from fees and would not be examined by government inspectors. Schools such as these might have helped to extend Secondary education in Scotland and it was one of the great defects of the 1872 Act that they were not included in the new system. Existing denominational schools would continue to receive government grants except for building purposes. New ones would receive grants only where they were shown necessary to meet a particular need which could not be met by the parish schools. For Roman Catholic and Episcopalian schools this meant instruction in doctrines particular to these Churches. However denominational schools such as Assembly and Society schools, taught by uncertificated masters would not be inspected and would not receive any government funding¹⁵⁶. Religious instruction in schools managed by school boards, was to be given at the beginning or the end of the school day to make it easier for

¹⁵⁶ Simon S. Laurie [secretary of the Education Committee], *Bearing of the Education Act of 1872 on the Schools of the Education Scheme, on Sessional Schools, and on Voluntary Schools generally* (Edinburgh, October 1872), 1 and 2.

parents to withdraw children as allowed by the conscience clause. A temporary Board of Education was set up in Edinburgh but the real power still lay with the Scotch Education Department in London.

That George Young succeeded where Moncreiff and Argyll had failed was partly due to Young's personality. He was not one to seek compromises. Describing his strength and determination, Omond noted that "his management of Scotland has been described as autocratic and masterful ... it was often said that he ruled Scottish members with a rod of iron".¹⁵⁷ Certainly the Conservatives, though showing signs of a recovery¹⁵⁸, had become more acquiescent, while the Liberal Prime Minister, William Gladstone, remained popular with the Scots.¹⁵⁹ The passing of such a revolutionary Act, however, had also a lot to do with the changing nature and relationships of the Presbyterian Churches in Scotland. The Free Church and the Established Church had been willing to sacrifice their schools in order to safeguard the position of religious instruction. According to D. J. Withrington:

The question for the Free and Established Churches had shifted from one of objecting to the possibility that a new state system might be used to support denominationalism to one of ensuring that some religion at least was going to be taught in school.¹⁶⁰

Altogether in the churches there was less acrimonious competition, less interest in denominational self-preservation and more interest in reunion. There were conversations between the Free Church and the United Presbyterians. The Kirk was willing to surrender patronage for good and there were indications that it was becoming more open to theological questioning and less thirled to the Westminster Confession:

What has been described as a "religious upheaval" took place among the lay office-bearers of the Church of Scotland who were finding enforced subscription of the confessional formula increasingly hard to bear.¹⁶¹

All these moves produced a climate of opinion which made the 1872 Act more acceptable to the churches.

The Educational Operations of the Established Church 1864-72

¹⁵⁷ Omond, *The Lord Advocates*, 280.

¹⁵⁸ Fry, *Patronage and Principle*, 89.

¹⁵⁹ Devine, *The Scottish Nation*, 282.

¹⁶⁰ D. J. Withrington, "Towards a National System", 120.

¹⁶¹ Cheyne, *The Transforming of the Kirk*, 69.

Church Funding

In the climate of uncertainty created by the Argyll Commission's inquiries and the subsequent Bills on Scottish education, the Established Church's Education Committee persevered in its efforts to extend and improve schooling throughout the country. It was determined to prove to the government that any gaps in the system could be met by extending the voluntary sector. It reckoned that existing agencies could easily supply the eighty or ninety schools needed. As we have seen, the Church argued that while there was a shortage of schools in some areas, in others there were too many.¹⁶² It is somewhat ironic that, in the years immediately prior to the transfer of responsibility for Church schools to local boards under the 1872 Act, the Education Committee's income from congregations showed greater annual increases than had been the case for many years. By 1870 the Church had sufficient funding to raise teachers' salaries, improve school buildings in the Highlands, and offer to build new schools wherever they were required.¹⁶³ Early that year the Education Committee had written to parish ministers inviting applications for the establishment of schools in rural districts where there was no educational provision. It hoped to demonstrate to its opponents that, if assisted by increased government grants, it had the financial resources to set up schools wherever a need existed. At the Assembly in May the committee reported that the result of the invitation had been "only three applications, and these, for the supply of teaching to small colonies of shepherds in remote parts of Highland glens"¹⁶⁴ – proving, at least to the committee's satisfaction, that the want of schools in rural Scotland had been greatly exaggerated.

Of course the committee did not hesitate to use the current Education Bills and the threat of new National schools to pressure congregations into supporting "the oldest of the Schemes of the Church".¹⁶⁵ In 1864 the committee was paying out £3,300 for the support of its 202 Assembly schools. By 1871 the number of Assembly schools had increased to 286.¹⁶⁶ The Church also took credit for managing over 120 Sewing

¹⁶² *ECR*, 1865, *General Remarks on the Presbyterian Returns*, x.

¹⁶³ *Special Report of the Education Committee*, 1870, Appendix C.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 1870, 5-6.

¹⁶⁵ *ECR*, 1865, 26.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 1871. The exact number of schools funded one way or another by the Church of Scotland is very difficult to calculate. It may include Assembly schools, SSPCK schools, Sessional and congregational schools, schools founded and endowed by Church members such as Public works and Heritors' schools and Sewing Schools. The numbers quoted in reports and by historians differ according to the categories included. The Reports of Presbyteries on Schools, December 1872, gives 1250 as the number of schools "which owe their existence to the voluntary exertions of ministers and members of the Church".

schools and for the education of 2,000 pupils who were attending Sabbath schools instead of week-day schools. In 1866 it reported that over the previous three years it had been able to meet all expenditure on female schools from private subscriptions and it was confidently expected that there would be further funds to expand this work.¹⁶⁷ By 1867 the funds were showing a healthy balance of some £10,000 hence the claim made to the Argyll Commission that the Church was in a position to extend its operations.¹⁶⁸ It is no wonder that the committee felt that "it would be a matter of regret if, by the ill-considered provisions of any legislative measure, they should be arrested, in the time of their highest prosperity".¹⁶⁹

Teachers and Curriculum

In all its protestations against changes to the educational system, the Church was most adamant that the salaries and status of teachers should be protected. It argued that the higher the minimum salary, the better would be the quality of the teachers. It believed that well trained and qualified teachers were necessary if the tradition of elementary education leading directly to higher education was to be continued and it sought to pursue this policy within its own schools. In 1867 the committee reported that over the last ten years the number of teachers in receipt of the Privy Council's Certificate of Merit had risen from 33% to 60% indicating an improvement both in the efficiency of the teachers and in the quality of school accommodation.¹⁷⁰ In the mid 1860s the committee had complained of how poor salaries and conditions had made it difficult to hold on to teachers who used Assembly schools as "stepping-stones to schools of a higher class such as the Parochial",¹⁷¹ but over the ten years from 1862 to 1872 the average salary of certificated male teachers in Assembly schools increased from £58 to about £70, for females it rose from £38 to £50. (Uncertificated teachers in 1871 received £37.) This increase brought Assembly school teachers up to about the same level as teachers in parish schools and may have helped to reduce the drain of teachers from Church schools to parish schools.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 1866, 14.

¹⁶⁸ *ECR*, 1867, 31.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1869, 22.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 1867, 6. Scotland has suggested that the standard of examination set for this certificate was so low as to make it almost impossible for any teacher to fail. (Scotland, *History*, vol 1, 235)

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁷² *Education Committee Reports*, 1862, 20, 1869, 7-8, 1871, 6, and 1872, 6. Government Statistics for 1870 gave the average salaries of Church of Scotland schoolmasters as over £104 but this must have included parochial schoolmasters. (*ECR*, 1871, 25.) According to James Scotland the average salary

Encouraged by government policy the Church continue to recruit female teachers and increase the number of female schools. Some of these were sewing mistresses but many were assistant teachers who took their share of the school curriculum. Often the female teacher was responsible for the infant department for a part of the day and for the industrial instruction of the senior girls at another time thus freeing up the schoolmaster to promote the more advanced classes in Latin and Mathematics.¹⁷³ The fear was that the time would come when the government might try to save money by the substitution of Mistresses for Masters in elementary schools.¹⁷⁴

In June 1864 the Committee of Council took the decision not to apply the Revised Code to Scottish schools pending the results of the Argyll Commission. Nevertheless, inspectors were directed to inspect schools and examine pupils according to the instructions of the Revised Code.¹⁷⁵ The initial results of these inspections showed that, compared to England, the grant-aided schools in Scotland were inferior in Writing and Arithmetic, but in neither country was the standard satisfactory. In Scotland: almost 11% failed the test in Reading, over 28% failed Writing, and over 33% failed in Arithmetic. By 1865-6 Scotland came out better than England and there was a considerable improvement in the results – the number failing in Reading was reduced to 5%, in Writing to 13%, and in Arithmetic to 21%.¹⁷⁶ According to the commissioners this was due to the stimulus of the Revised Code system of examination and even the Education Committee, noting the increase in instruction in the 3Rs, grudgingly admitted, "for this the country is indebted partly to the instruction given to students in our Training Colleges, but mainly to the Revised Code".¹⁷⁷ The committee, however, continued to maintain that this concentration on reading, writing, and arithmetic might be appropriate in England but was likely to have an adverse effect on the higher branches of education in Scotland:

The revised Code has tended, at least temporarily, to discourage attention to the higher branches of elementary instruction – geography, grammar, and history.

for parish teachers, not including fees etc., during the 1860's was between £44 and £50. (Scotland, *History* Vol. I, 196.)

¹⁷³ *ECR*, 1866, 12-13.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 1869, 11.

¹⁷⁵ See Chapter Four, 198.

¹⁷⁶ *ACR. Second Report*, ci.

¹⁷⁷ *ECR*, 1869, 12.

There are, however, signs of recovery; and those schools do best in the elementary subjects where the higher are not neglected.¹⁷⁸

Undaunted by those who had denigrated the value of their contributions, the presbyteries of the Established Church continued to visit schools of every description throughout the land and the Education Committee carefully collated their reports and presented them to the General Assembly. As well as indicating where it was necessary to take action as far Church schools were concerned, these reports when published provided the nation with an insight into the state of both parochial and non-parochial schools. The report to the 1869 Assembly, for example, revealed that in parochial schools, in spite of the influence of the Revised Code with its emphasis on elementary subjects, "the number learning Latin and Greek shows a tendency to increase rather than the reverse ... there is a marked increase also in the numbers learning French and German".¹⁷⁹ Assembly schools continued to concentrate on the elementary subjects but from time to time exceptions to the rule were noted especially in the rural areas. In Lochinver where only seven pupils out of forty-eight managed to put in more than 150 attendances in a year, ten were learning Latin,¹⁸⁰ while at Lochcarron Female School where only forty-one out of 128 attended 150 days or more, eleven of the girls were learning Latin and six mathematics.¹⁸¹

Teacher Training

Although not fully operational in schools, the Revised Code was applied to the funding arrangements for normal schools. Under the new scheme the Church's teacher training scheme was no longer subsidised through scholarships and capitation grants for teachers in training, instead the Church was paid only for the number of teachers who completed two years at college and two years teaching in an elementary school. Since not all who attended normal school ended up having completed two years in practice, the Church protested that it would always be out of pocket. The Education Committee claimed that this situation arose out of the Privy Council applying to Scotland regulations which had been drawn up to meet the case in England and asked the Council to set up a special sub-committee to administer a

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 1866, vii.

¹⁷⁹ *ECR*, 1869, 12.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 1867, 34-35.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 1870, 56-57.

Parliamentary Grant for Scotland and for a Scottish department to be instituted in Downing Street. So serious was the position that at its meeting in 1864 the General Assembly were informed that "the very existence of the Normal Schools is imperilled, and the question whether they shall be continued is one of immediate urgency".¹⁸² The General Assembly even went so far as to give powers to the Education Committee to close one or both of its normal schools if that became necessary.¹⁸³ When the Privy Council would not agree to any changes in the Revised Code regulations, the committee decided to cut its financial outlay by adopting the only course open to them – namely to reduce the number of students in training. The only concession made by the government was its agreement to include the normal schools in the Argyll Commission's inquiry.

The uncertainty created by all this meant that fewer came forward as pupil-teachers and there were fewer applicants for normal schools. In spite of this recruitment continued to equal the demand.¹⁸⁴ The cash-flow problem remained, however, and the committee appealed to ministers to help place new teachers as quickly as possible since government funding was not recoverable until they had served two years teaching in schools.

In December 1871 the Church's teacher training programme received yet another blow. It was informed by the Education Department in London that the religious instruction course would no longer be prescribed by the Privy Council for students in training colleges, thus jeopardising the already endangered place of religious instruction in schools. When presented with those Education Bills which threatened to remove religious instruction from the school curriculum, the committee had consistently argued that the Privy Council had made the provision of religious education in normal schools one of the conditions for funding.¹⁸⁵ Now this plank was being removed from under it. What was being proposed seemed to contradict all that had been agreed with the Privy Council under the existing Code. The justification given was that the change had had to be made for England in terms of its Education Act, and it was assumed that the same principle would be affirmed in the coming Education (Scotland) Act. When the committee protested the Committee of Council replied that "the principles affirmed by Parliament in the English Education Act, as to the payment of Privy Council grants on account of secular subjects only, were

¹⁸² Ibid., 1864, 16.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 30.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 1865, pp.vi-vii.

¹⁸⁵ AAGA, 1871, 70.

substantially, if not formally, Imperial in their reference, and not merely applicable to England". [my italics]¹⁸⁶ This high-handed approach did nothing to endear the Church to any new London-controlled Scottish Education Department which might be proposed. The committee's protests that there had been no consultation were in vain. They were advised by the Vice-President of the Council to accept the situation, "otherwise, from his knowledge of the present temper of Parliament with respect to Denominational education, the Church might imperil the maintenance of Training Colleges by Government grants on the present scale of payment".¹⁸⁷ Ultimately the Church made its own arrangements for keeping religious instruction on the normal school curriculum and the 1872 Act did not affect the training colleges which remained under Church control.

Conclusion

There is the tendency to regard the passing of 1872 Act as the result of a weak Church succumbing to the inevitable. Anderson described the Church as "now ready to compromise because its power to block change seemed to be crumbling".¹⁸⁸ Withrington believed that, "the Churches were aware of falling numbers and attendances and if religious instruction could be secured it might help with mission and evangelisation. Organised religion was coming more and more under the attack of secularists ...".¹⁸⁹ Drummond and Bulloch shared this view: – "Whatever was happening in the other Churches, the figures returned [by a church census in 1876] showed beyond doubt that all was far from well within the Church of Scotland."¹⁹⁰ These conclusions, however, ignore the kind of developments in theology, in evangelism and in social involvement which A. C. Cheyne described in his book *The Transforming of the Kirk*.¹⁹¹ Further, recent research by C. G. Brown now seems to indicate that levels of church attendance were not as bad as previous historians have claimed:

It seems clear to most specialists in the field that the levels of churchgoing revealed in the 1851 religious census were historically very high – in Scotland

¹⁸⁶ ECR, 1871, Appendix III, 51.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 67.

¹⁸⁹ D. J. Withrington, "How the Churches defended religion in the Education Act of 1872", *Times Educational Supplement, Scotland*, January 1972.

¹⁹⁰ Andrew L. Drummond & James Bulloch, *The Church in late Victorian Scotland 1874-1900* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1978), 167.

¹⁹¹ A. C. Cheyne, *The Transforming of the Kirk* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1983)

the figures were marginally higher [than in England] despite a markedly high number of non-returns from enumerators. ... Despite the problems with the data, it is possible to say with reasonable certainty that church membership per capita grew from the 1840s to reach a peak in England and Wales in 1904 and in Scotland in 1905.¹⁹²

The notion of a weak Church, moreover, takes no account of the increasing willingness to co-operate shown by the different denominations. The fact that reunion was being discussed and the Creeds and Confessions re-examined was a sign of strength and not weakness, of looking forward and not crumbling. In response to the Argyll Commission's assertion that the permanence of denominational schools was precarious,¹⁹³ it pointed out that,

the maintenance of them [the Assembly schools] does not press hard on the funds of the Church of Scotland or of the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, both of which are in a position largely to extend their operations, if necessary – the schools on the Educational Scheme of the Established Church have increased 15 per cent since the Commission began its sittings, and its funds are more than sufficient for the work it has to do.¹⁹⁴

It may have been rash of the Church to claim that, had parochial system been continued, it could have coped with the educational needs of the country. Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that in the early 1870s the financial position of the Education Committee was as strong as it had ever been.

The 1872 Act did not outlaw denominational schools. However, its legislation for rate-supported schools throughout the land, did make the Church of Scotland's schools more or less superfluous. The Church could not have expected its members to pay for the new schools through the rates and also contribute to Assembly schools. In a Memorandum issued by the Education Committee shortly after the passing of the Act, the Convener, John Cook, argued that the Church found itself in a difficult situation because from the start its schools had never been strictly denominational:

Many Voluntary Schools are properly called Denominational because ... [they] were founded for the purpose of giving a distinctive religious teaching ... the schools established by the Education Committee, on the other hand, and those founded by Kirk Sessions, landholders, proprietors of Public Works, and others

¹⁹² Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001) 161-163.

¹⁹³ *ACR, Second Report*, xxxviii.

¹⁹⁴ *Special Report*, 1867, 14.

... were established, not because of any objection taken to the existing system, but because the educational wants of the country were inadequately supplied.¹⁹⁵

The only reason for keeping Church schools would have been to secure religious instruction. Simon Laurie had warned the Education Committee that if it appeared that school boards were threatening to withdraw religious instruction then there might have been a chance of retaining denominational schools:

But if the Local Boards acquire the confidence of the country, Denominational Schools cannot long survive, because of the decrease of the Church contributions which will then inevitably take place.¹⁹⁶

Within the next few years, however, it was apparent that the latter was indeed the case and the Church began to hand over the management of its schools to the local boards. These boards, as men like James Begg and Thomas Guthrie had predicted, proved willing to allow religious instruction its traditional place in the school curriculum as laid down in the Preamble to the 1872 Act. In 1878 a school inspector included this statement in his report:

The religious question engrosses men's minds no longer. For the present it is no more a rock of difficulty. ... The boards, with surprising uniformity of action, or rather inaction, practically left the subject in the position in which they found it. They settled it everywhere and in every case on its traditional basis. They simply stereotyped and enforced the hereditary *status quo*, or what is termed "use and wont."¹⁹⁷

The Established Church, we may conclude, continued to have considerable influence in school education until well into the twentieth century. Of the 5,662 members elected to the first boards formed after the passing of the Act, 1,450 were clergymen, among them 744 Established Church ministers.¹⁹⁸ Moreover, although the Church lost control of schools under the 1872 Act, teacher training colleges remained under its control until 1907.

¹⁹⁵ *Memorandum by the Education Committee of the Church of Scotland on the bearing of the Education Act of 1872 on Voluntary or Denominational Schools*, October 1872, 1-2.

¹⁹⁶ Laurie, *Bearing of the Education Act of 1872 on the Schools of the Education Scheme*, 2.

¹⁹⁷ This Report was quoted in a Scottish Education Department Memorandum, published in February 1943: *Memorandum with regard to the provision made for Religious Instruction in the Schools in Scotland*. (Cmd. 6426, Edinburgh: HMSO, 1943), 6.

¹⁹⁸ Belford, *Centenary Handbook*, 150.

Conclusion

When John Gordon, a former secretary to the Church of Scotland Education Committee, gave evidence before the Argyll Commission in November 1864, he described the object of the Church's education scheme as "to supply schools for elementary instruction in those parts of Scotland in which, from local causes, schools have been wanting; that is mainly in the Highlands".¹ In fulfilment of this objective the Church, in co-operation with the SSPCK (reckoned by the Argyll Commission to be maintaining 202 schools²) had set about tackling the problems of literacy in Gaelic-speaking areas and had set up schools in the remote glens of the Highlands and Islands and in the deprived communities of the industrial Lowlands. Between 1825 and 1871 the Church, with the help of congregational donations and individual endowments, established 286 Assembly schools, over 135 Sessional schools and numerous Public Works and Trust schools.³ In numbers alone, the Church had made an important contribution to Scottish school education.

Gordon's description of the Church of Scotland's objective, however, did not do justice to the wider programme in which the Church was involved. In establishing its new schools, the Church saw itself as supplementing an existing system of national education for which it had a statutory managerial responsibility. In a response to the Argyll Commission's Report, the Education Committee convener, John Cook, anxious to repudiate the commission's statement that a supplementary system had been "forced into existence partly by denominational rivalry",⁴ observed that more than half of the Assembly schools, 146, had been set up before the Disruption.⁵ In its published statistics the committee always included parochial schools as "Church of Scotland schools". In 1871, including 1,200 parochial schools, the Church claimed responsibility for a total of 2,430 schools throughout the country.⁶ In implementing its education programme in the nineteenth century, the Church saw itself as fulfilling

¹ *ACR, First Report*, 1.

² *ACR, Second Report*, xxxv.

³ The statistics are taken from the *Education Committee Report*, 1871.

⁴ *ACR, Second Report*, clxxiii.

⁵ *ECR, Remarks*, 1868, 42-43. Cook seems to have ignored the fact that denominational rivalry had existed long before the Disruption, provoked in particular as the United Secession Church (Voluntaries) grew in strength.

⁶ *ECR*, 1871, 21. According to the report this number takes account of "schools in connection with the General Assembly's Education Committee, the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, Public Works, Kirk-sessions, Trusts, Congregations, and individual heritors – numbering in all about 1200 institutions". (*Ibid.*, 23.)

an obligation that had been passed on to it by Knox and the Reformers. It regarded the parochial school system as part of a legacy handed down and believed that the Act of Union had confirmed it as the rightful heir. In its role as the protector of education the Church of Scotland was jealous of any rival and suspicious of any changes that it did not itself initiate. Whenever it felt its position threatened, either by political events, as at the time of the French Revolution, or by other denominations or by government legislation, it cited Parliamentary and General Assembly Acts to affirm its authority and endorse its claims.⁷ It was this belief that it had a legal mandate to control and extend school provision, as well as a concern for the social and spiritual well-being of the people of Scotland, that emboldened the Church's Education Committee to pursue its policy in the face of losses of both schools and teachers at the Disruption and when confronted by the onslaught of the Free Church's frenzied school building programme. In fact the Free Church, in its efforts to become the national church, established considerably more Church schools than the Church of Scotland in the 1850s. Thereafter, however, the number of Free Church schools declined whereas the Church of Scotland slowly but surely added to its stock.

The Church's education policy in the nineteenth century reflected its belief that it was preserving a tradition which, in the spirit of the First Book of Discipline, brought together a spiritual and a secular education and that this was accomplished through teachers being members of the Established Church:

Secular knowledge alone ... would offer to the children of your people but a questionable boon. Nothing truly valuable is gained by them unless their eternal salvation is gained.⁸

R. D. Anderson noted that in the parish schools "the teachers were expected to teach the Church's 'Shorter Catechism', but their main business was to teach reading and writing to all".⁹ The Church, accordingly, pursued a system which promoted the education of the whole person. Education offered preparation for life in this world and the next.

⁷ See for example AGA, 3 June 1799, the *Report concerning Vagrant Teachers and Sunday Schools*, and AGA, 4 June 1849, *The General Assembly's Protest, Declaration, and Testimony on the subject of National Education*, 31.

⁸ ECR, 1844, 23 and see also ECR, 1868, *Remarks on the Recommendations and Draft Bill of the Royal Commissioners on Education*, 5.

⁹ R. D. Anderson, *Education and Opportunity in Victorian Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), 3.

Certainly there were times when the importance of religious instruction seemed to dominate but it would be wrong to believe that the curriculum followed either in parish schools or in Assembly schools, was, to quote C. G. Brown, shaped primarily to prepare children "for a life of obedience in the kirk".¹⁰ Even the most basic education in the 3Rs offered by Assembly schools gave people a sense of worth and an opportunity to make the most of their lives. Indeed, we have quoted instances where the curriculum went well beyond that minimum. The Church did not regard its persistence in demanding a place for religious instruction in the school curriculum primarily as a means of exerting its authority. The Education Committee believed that knowledge of the Bible and instruction in the Shorter Catechism were necessary to the formation of the national character and for the good of the "Commonwealth". The more the Church saw the place of religious instruction threatened by some who agitated for a national system, the more it made this a key issue in the debate. R. D. Anderson has drawn attention to another benefit arising from the use of the Bible in schools:

since most children did not go beyond the three Rs to encounter any sort of poetry or literature, religious instruction could be seen as the only component with a cultural dimension, and the Bible was the only coherent literary text studied at school.¹¹

It is true that religious instruction was the area of the curriculum that presbyteries inspected and reported on most frequently. It is also true that many in the Church believed that teaching the Christian faith according to the beliefs of the Church of Scotland was necessary in order to counter both Roman Catholicism and Protestant Dissent. It is to be regretted, however, that the prominence given to religious instruction by the Church in its public statements and reports during the 1850s and 1860s, has diverted attention from its overall contribution to education in these decades. The Church has only itself to blame that by repeatedly harking back to its concerns for religion in schools, it encouraged a negative approach to its overall contribution. Lifting five words from an 1844 Assembly report James Scotland has succeeded in providing just such a distorted picture of the committee's work:

Their stated aims were to make these [Assembly schools] "essentially and effectively Bible-schools" and to complement the parish institutions.¹²

¹⁰ C. G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press: 1997), 74.

¹¹ Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People*, 149.

¹² Scotland, *History of Scottish Education*, vol.1, 242.

"Essentially Bible-schools" they certainly were not and indeed could not have been if they were intended to complement parochial schools. There is a danger that by focusing only on the Church's view of the importance of religious instruction, its ongoing work in the provision of secular education may be neglected. In fact it is to the Education Committee's credit that it set out to maintain the best traditions in Scottish education. In keeping with the First Book of Discipline's ideal the Church attempted to provide a system which was both democratic and meritocratic. Douglas Myers, comparing Scotland with England, wrote, "the English assumption was that the elementary school was exclusively for the poor, for the labouring classes, with a correspondingly restricted curriculum. Scottish parochial schools, however, drew from a wider social spectrum, offered a broader curriculum and even enabled talented students to go to university".¹³ In any assessment of the Education Committee's work it has to be acknowledged that it attempted to maintain and further this tradition of a broad curriculum available to scholars whatever their social background, both in its supervision of parochial schools and in its own Assembly schools. Indeed, it was to encourage those who up until then had had little chance of any education, that the committee pursued its policies in those areas which were either geographically or socially the most disadvantaged. The fact that, as Scotland went on to say, "by January 1828 libraries had been set up at fifty-four stations in the Highlands, each with fifty-six volumes in English and Gaelic", making books available to people who would otherwise have had no access to anything other than the Bible, may be evidence of a concern for education which was more than just the establishment of "Bible-schools."¹⁴ (J. Smith has noted that "the libraries consisted partly of books of a religious description, and partly of books of useful and entertaining knowledge, interesting histories, voyages and travels, biographies, sketches in civil and natural history."¹⁵) It has been shown that, right up until the passing of the 1872 Act the Church at local and national level endeavoured to extend

¹³ Douglas Myers, "Scottish Schoolmasters in the Nineteenth Century: Professionalism and Politics", in Humes and Paterson, eds., *Scottish Culture*, 81. See also R. D. Anderson, *Education and Opportunity*, 3-4 – "the underdevelopment of secondary education encouraged the most distinctive feature of Scottish education, the direct relationship between the parish schools and the universities. The parish schoolmaster taught the so-called 'university subjects' – Latin, mathematics, and perhaps Greek – and the universities came down to meet the parish schools by admitting boys at fifteen or even younger and by providing elementary instruction in the 'junior classes' which began the college course".

¹⁴ *ECR*, 1831, 7.

¹⁵ Smith, *Broken Links*, 26.

educational provision. The minutes of Old Monkland Kirk Session, for instance, record how in 1867, when the minister reported that the existing Adventure school at Bargeddie was in a bad state of repair, the kirk session agreed to raise subscriptions and set up a new school for 150 children.¹⁶

There were many indications of the Church's commitment to good secular education. This thesis has illustrated how the Church encouraged curricular development in both parochial and Assembly schools and went out of its way to adapt the provision in its own schools to a variety of needs. Early on the Education Committee developed two standards of achievement, one at an elementary level concentrating on the 3Rs and one with a wider, more advanced curriculum.¹⁷ In his evidence to the Argyll Commission, Simon Laurie, the Education Committee secretary, stated:

In all the Church of Scotland's schools, the Bible, the Mother's Catechism, the Shorter Catechism, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Geography, and Grammar are taught, I may say, universally; and History, Mensuration, Book-keeping, Geometry, Algebra, Latin, Greek, French, German, Music from notation, and Drawing, are taught partially.¹⁸

The Church opened its schools to all irrespective of social status and encouraged a policy of tolerance towards parents who objected to the type of religious instruction being taught. It insisted that teachers should be trained to the level most appropriate for the community in which they would be working, which is why it was believed that sometimes a short course at a training college was all that was necessary. At the same time it resisted the Revised Code's emphasis only on elementary education. In 1871 the Education Committee, reporting on the approximately one thousand parochial schools examined, noted that 4,048 scholars were learning Latin, 435 were learning Greek, 2,308 were learning French, 98 were learning German and 2,550 were studying mathematics. The committee concluded that "Scotland may still congratulate itself on having as yet escaped the evil effects of the Revised Code".¹⁹ In keeping with its democratic ideal the Church operated on the principle that all boys should have every opportunity to prepare themselves for future employment and for further education. To this end it tried continually to raise the qualifications of

¹⁶ NAS CH2, Old Monkland Kirk Session, March 1867.

¹⁷ See Chapter Two, 75-76.

¹⁸ *ACR, First Report*, 33.

¹⁹ *ECR*, 1871, 22.

teachers. A report made in 1870 on the Glasgow Training College noted that, in addition to the traditional subjects, students were receiving instruction in Inorganic Chemistry, Physiology, Botany and Astronomy.²⁰ In a survey conducted by the Argyll Commission on the professions and occupations of the fathers of 882 of the students in the Latin, Greek, and Mathematical classes in the Universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, and St Andrews, and of the Junior Latin and Greek classes in Aberdeen (Session 1866-67), it found that 31 percent of the students came from professional backgrounds (teachers, lawyers, ministers, engineers, army officers etc.), 18 percent came from agricultural backgrounds and 16 percent came from artisan and labouring backgrounds (builders, blacksmiths, joiners, masons, plumbers, etc.).²¹ R. D. Anderson has commented:

While the significance of the parish schools for educational opportunity may have been overestimated, their mere existence had the important effect of delaying the introduction of an entrance examination and keeping alive the junior classes, which in turn made it easy for men to enter the universities in adult life ... the survival of the parish schools meant the survival of the democratic myth.²²

The Education Committee, moreover, took advantage of government grants to extend its interest in vocational subjects – in female education, sewing schools, agricultural and industrial schools – which it regarded as necessary "for any permanent improvement in the condition of the people".²³ James Scotland has pointed out how many from working-class backgrounds were able to go on and further their education at the new Mechanics' Institutes and Evening Schools which were burgeoning at this time and which were offering a fairly comprehensive curriculum. Of one of these Scotland wrote:

In Glasgow the tradesmen ... engaged a lecturer of their own. In the first year classes were held in natural philosophy, chemistry, mathematics, mechanics and astronomy, and attended by over a thousand students.²⁴

In noting the desire of the Church of Scotland Education Committee to extend the curriculum and to improve the standards of teaching, it should be remembered that this was a committee willing to push through changes often in the face of

²⁰ *ECR*, 1870, 13.

²¹ *ACR*, *Third Report, Burgh and Middle-class Schools*, 237-242.

²² R. D. Anderson, *Education and Opportunity*, 158-9.

²³ *ECR*, 1851, 14. See Chapter Four, 189.

²⁴ Scotland, *History of Scottish Education*, vol.1, 303-5. See also Chapter Four, Appendix.

considerable opposition from the Church at large. Though not always happy with the conditions and regulations that came with government funding, the committee persuaded the Church that this was the way forward and that by accepting grants the educational work could be advanced without the Church's religious freedom being compromised. Indeed, by the 1860s there was a body of opinion within the Church in favour of a national scheme and had Argyll's Bill reflected more faithfully the findings and recommendations of the Royal Commission, the Church might well have been persuaded to accept it. Examples have been offered of those who believed that a solution lay in the different Presbyterian denominations working more closely together.²⁵ In its movement towards the acceptance of a national system of education, the Church was no doubt latterly influenced by the growing numbers in what has been described as the "Broad Church" group. This comprised university teachers and churchmen such as John Caird and John Tulloch, who took a more liberal and critical approach to the Bible and to the Westminster Confession and who may not have regarded the teaching of the Catechism and the orthodoxy of the schoolmasters as principles that had to be defended at all costs.

As part of its policy of promoting a high standard of education the Church early on saw the need for professional teacher training with its emphasis not only on academic ability but also on the necessary pedagogical skills. Its normal schools were among the first in the United Kingdom and led the way in providing instruction in "the art of teaching".²⁶ In spite of the financial struggle involved, in co-operation with the Committee of Council, the Church continued to extend and upgrade its training colleges, providing Scotland with well qualified teachers throughout the nineteenth century. As more parochial and Assembly teachers gained government Certificates of Merit, their chances of government salary augmentations improved. In this way at least the Church helped to improve the lot of schoolmasters. Perhaps this very positive account should be qualified by pointing out that not everyone judged teaching standards as favourably. William Stevenson, professor of Ecclesiastical History at Edinburgh University, told the Argyll Commission that at least a quarter of the teachers were "under the mark of what we would like to see for any schools in

²⁵ See chapter 4, 200 and chapter 5, 231-232.

²⁶ [James Pillans], "National Education in England and France", *Edinburgh Review*, vol. lviii (October 1833), 22, commented, "Besides the elementary and middle schools, there is a third institution thought necessary to carry on the business of primary instruction, which the Germans and French call Normal Schools. Though this is a term unintelligible to most of our countrymen, because nothing of its kind exists among us".

Scotland".²⁷ Devine, however, identified a clear improvement in Scottish education in the 1860s and concluded that "when compulsion took place in Scotland after the 1872 Act it was likely to result in consolidation and some improvement in an ongoing process rather than a radical reform leading to dramatic changes in educational performance."²⁸ That this should have been the case was in no small way due to the Church's teacher training colleges. Credit too must be given to the Church's continuing involvement in parochial schools where up until 1861 it was still supervising schools and examining teachers on their appointment and where, even after the 1861 Act, it could still take part in procedures where teachers were to be dismissed for teaching any doctrine that would have damaged the Church of Scotland or for behaving in a cruel or immoral manner.

It is true that the Church's disciplinary procedures with regard to teachers had long been challenged and its power in this respect was certainly curtailed by the Education Act of 1861. Evidence from reports on schools by its presbyteries suggested that the Church itself had even been known to turn a blind eye in cases where a schoolmaster was not a communicant member. Traditionally presbyteries had examined schoolmasters in the subjects they were expected to teach; however, as the curriculum expanded and as good teaching practice became more important, government inspectors were better qualified than ministers to assess proficiency. The Argyll Commission found presbytery reports unreliable and presbytery supervision inefficient. The Assistant Commissioners reported that:

The present management of the schools is left almost entirely in the hands of the minister. When he is an active man, interested in education, the management is efficient; but in cases where the minister is careless, and everything depends upon the Presbytery examinations, the management is not efficient. The annual complimentary visit of the Presbytery is of little practical value.²⁹

T. R. Bone noted that, prior to the introduction of government inspections, the annual examination by presbyteries "as a test of efficiency ... was woefully weak" although later "the example of the Government may have made the Church examiners more careful than they had formerly been".³⁰ We have already mentioned Kay-Shuttleworth's comments that "[Presbyteries] have no power to examine the

²⁷ *ACR, First Report*, 68.

²⁸ Devine, *The Scottish Nation*, 394.

²⁹ *ACR, Second Report*, xxxiv.

³⁰ Bone, *School Inspection in Scotland*, 12 and 44.

candidate as to his aptitude to teach ... when once appointed, he is practically irremovable".³¹

All this, however, should not detract from the fact that the Church was the pioneer of school inspection. We have seen that in the latter part of the eighteenth century presbyteries and kirk sessions had been rather lax in carrying out any systematic inspection of schools. The fear of subversive teaching in the years immediately following the beginning of the French Revolution forced the General Assembly to try to make it compulsory for presbyteries to visit schools and submit reports. The challenge to its authority from other denominations and from those who supported a non-denominational national system, made the Church even more anxious to retain its right to visit all schools throughout the land. It recognised that if there was to be any improvement in standards then there had to be some named person or persons to visit and some body like the General Assembly with an overview of the situation. In the early days of the Education Committee the convener took it upon himself to visit schools even in the most inaccessible places, believing in the importance of someone taking a personal interest. While presbyteries were often unable to meet the deficiencies they identified with financial aid, T. R. Bone believed that this annual examination must have had some good effects in that it would motivate the schoolmaster and the pupils and would remind the schoolmaster that others cared for his work.³² It doubtless also promoted high moral standards among teachers. A teacher was expected to be an example of moral rectitude and presbyterial supervision tended to concentrate on his behaviour, "with how loyal he was to his Church, his State, and his local community."³³ Moreover, the Church was quick to recognise that if standards were to improve Scottish education needed government funding even if this meant accepting the state inspection of schools that came with it. Laurie, secretary of the Education Committee, expressed the view to the Argyll Commissioners that all schools should be subject to government inspection.³⁴ The power of presbyteries may always have been challenged and the efficiency and effectiveness of their visits questionable, but the credit for establishing the principle of school inspection must lie with the Church.

Following the Disruption, many believed that an educational system based on the principle of the government supporting denominational schools contributed to

³¹ Kay-Shuttleworth, *Public Education*, 385.

³² Bone, *School Inspection in Scotland*, 12.

³³ Andrew Bain, *From Church to State* (Printed by Stevenson, Dundee, 1993), 11.

³⁴ *ACR, First Report*, 39.

sectarianism. This was certainly the view of those who believed that the parochial schools should no longer be under the control of the Established Church. At a public meeting held in Edinburgh, the National Education Association of Scotland claimed that "A system of sectarian education ... is fraught with social evils of the gravest kind".³⁵ The Chairman of the meeting pointed to Edinburgh High School as "an example of a national unsectarian school in full operation. The local board of patrons consists of men of all sects and parties, teachers belong to the Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Dissenting denominations...".³⁶ Those who argued for a non-denominational national system used "denominationalism" and "sectarianism" almost synonymously, "sect" being used in a pejorative sense implying bigotry and division. In 1869 the Edinburgh Town Council wrote to Gladstone's Liberal government asking it "to bring forward legislation to provide in Scotland an unsectarian and undenominational system".³⁷ A statement made by the United Presbyterian Church in 1849 claimed that up until that time Scotland had been free from "the evils of sectarian instruction". However, it continued, the existing restrictions on parochial schools and the government scheme of education which gave grants "to sects as sects, holds out to them a powerful inducement to increase the number of denominational, and consequently, sectarian schools".³⁸ Fry maintained that "the disputes after the Disruption exposed the depths of sectarian animosity to which the Scots could sink. The Kirk itself was largely to blame through its efforts to retain the privileges it had enjoyed while still a national institution".³⁹

The Church, as might have been expected, saw the situation differently. It did not regard denominationalism as implying sectarianism nor did it consider its control of parish schools as responsible for any animosity that might exist in the community. Edinburgh Presbytery probably spoke for the Church when in 1868 it asserted that "the schools designated denominational are not sectarian and religious distinctions in Scotland have a very limited or absolutely no effect in determining the attendance of children upon particular schools".⁴⁰ In his evidence to the Argyll Commission, the

³⁵ Anon., *Report etc.* (Report of a public meeting held on 9 April 1850 in Edinburgh with a view to forming an Association for the support and prosecution of a national system of education.) (Edinburgh: n.p. 1850?), 4.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁷ Anon., *Resolutions adopted by the Lord Provost, Magistrates and Council of Edinburgh 14 December, 1869.*

³⁸ *The Educational Journal of the Free Church of Scotland*, May 1849, 176.

³⁹ Michael Fry, *Patronage and Principle A Political History of Modern Scotland* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987), 62.

⁴⁰ NAS CH2, Edinburgh Presbytery, April 1868.

Free Church minister Thomas Guthrie, pointed out that "all Churches are sectarian. That is the natural tendency of all Churches ... as long as human nature is human nature, that will operate to a certain extent while the present system exists".⁴¹ Even James Taylor, education spokesman for the United Presbyterian Church, when asked by the Commission if, in his opinion, the denominational system had worked in a sectarian spirit said:

Not to the extent we might have feared, and that for various reasons ... they [the Scottish people] persist in sending their children to the best school, no matter what the denomination it belongs. I think that, in this respect, they are wiser than their leaders.⁴²

This was certainly borne out by the Argyll Commission's findings. There we find that of 33,251 pupils on the rolls of Church of Scotland schools, only 18,020 belonged to the Church of Scotland (54 percent) while over 33 percent belonged either to the Free Church or to the United Presbyterian Church. Similarly more than a fifth of pupils attending Free Church schools belonged to the Church of Scotland. While by the time of the Argyll Report (1867) 61 Catholic schools and 74 Episcopalian schools had been established, still almost 20 percent of all Catholic pupils and 18 percent of all Episcopalian pupils, went to Church of Scotland schools (including parochial schools).⁴³ The same statistics reveal that almost 39 percent of all pupils attending schools in Scotland attended parish schools or Church of Scotland schools, indicating that the people of Scotland still had confidence in the Church and its continued interest in parochial schools irrespective of its opinions on the proposed schemes for a national system of education.⁴⁴ Granted such statistics may also say something about the availability and proximity of schooling, nevertheless they do show that parents' desire to do the best for their children came before any sectarian feelings they may have had.

This thesis would argue that the Church of Scotland did not intentionally set out to create or perpetuate a system of school education which would cause sectarian strife and bitterness. Its motives must always be judged in the light of how it interpreted its statutory responsibilities. The Church believed that it must continue to appoint Church of Scotland schoolmasters to parochial schools partly to maintain its moral

⁴¹ *ACR, First Report*, 240.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 128.

⁴³ *ACR, Second Report*, Appendix, 24.

⁴⁴ *ACR, Second Report*, 24. Perhaps this conclusion would need to have been qualified had the Argyll commissioners not confined their visits to only one large town (Glasgow).

influence but also because it believed that this was the only way to secure presbyterian religious instruction. To repeat what was said earlier in respect of Assembly schools, these were not set up in a spirit of competition or for sectarian purposes. Moreover, the Education Committee, recognising the needs of the Roman Catholic population, conceded in 1868 that "some allowance should be made [by government legislation] for schools in which their own religious tenets might be inculcated".⁴⁵ The sectarianism identified by those who wished to change the educational system was not the result of the Established Church's stance but was perhaps the inevitable consequence of the growth of the different denominations that held opposing beliefs with regard to the provision of religious instruction. One parish schoolmaster writing in 1867 was of the opinion that sectarianism was a way of life in Scotland:

Does anyone believe that sectarian influences can be wholly excluded from educational affairs, in a country where ... every movement in a parish, from the formation of a public library or the assertion of a public right, to a boat-race or a holiday, is conducted more or less with reference to sectarian distinctions.⁴⁶

In recalling the importance of the Act of Union and the statutory responsibility conferred on it, the Church was also insisting that, while its critics might believe that by the 1850s it "no longer spoke for the nation, but was reduced to sectarian status",⁴⁷ it was still the national Church and that education had an important contribution to make to Scotland's nationhood. The importance of a spirit of nationalism in Scotland in the nineteenth century is still a matter of debate among historians. J. D. Myers believed that with the failure of Lord Melgund and then James Moncreiff to reform the education system during the first half of the 1850s, Scottish education was exposed to "another twenty years of denominational diversity from within and Anglicising influences from without".⁴⁸

The undermining of the education tradition was a further erosion of national culture that Scotland could ill afford ... the education controversy was an important manifestation and an integral part of the mid-century upsurge of Scottish nationalist feeling.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ John Cook, *Remarks on the Recommendations and Draft Bill of the Royal Commissioners on Education* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1868), 44.

⁴⁶ A Parochial Schoolmaster, *A Plea for The Parish Schools* (Edinburgh & London: William Blackwood), 1867.

⁴⁷ Drummond & Bulloch, *The Church in Victorian Scotland 1843-1874*, 113.

⁴⁸ Myers, "Scottish Nationalism and the Antecedents of the 1872 Education Act", 73.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

More recently T. M. Devine and Lindsay Paterson, while not being as emphatic as Myers, have noted the importance of a Scottish national sentiment in culture, if not in politics, at this time. Devine speaks of "a strong and coherent sense of national identity" existing within the union, and Paterson of "unionist nationalism".⁵⁰ In 1834 George Lewis, defending the Church of Scotland, had written, "our parochial churches and parochial schools are the only remains we can show the stranger of the ancient excellence of our country ... the only institutions round which linger Scottish feelings and attachments".⁵¹ After the Disruption, however, the Church of Scotland found itself in an awkward position on this issue of nationalism. It looked to the Act of Union to uphold its claim to be the Established Church, it depended on British government grants and very often it relied on the support of English Conservative MPs to defeat the education bills promoted by the Liberals which would have undermined its authority in the management and supervision of parochial schools. On the other hand, in its opposition to many of the changes that were being proposed by the Privy Council and education reformers – the introduction of pupil teachers, the funding arrangements for its education colleges, the Revised Code's emphasis on the three Rs and the centralisation of authority in an Education Board in London – the Church showed an awareness of the threat of assimilation to the English scheme. The debates in presbyteries and in the General Assembly over the acceptance of government inspection as a condition for receiving Privy Council funding and the agreement to take government augmentation for Assembly teachers' salaries even when those of parochial schoolmasters were held down because the government refused to recognise the heritors' financial support as "voluntary contributions", illustrated the Church's dilemma. The more dependent the Church became on government funding for its training colleges and Assembly schools, the weaker were its arguments for refusing to become part of a new national system in Scotland. Nevertheless, it held out in its belief that it was called to defend the statutory position that all "bearing office in any University Colledge or School within this Kingdom ... shall subscribe to the foresaid Confession of Faith [the Westminster Confession of Faith] as the Confession of their faith".⁵² If, as Devine has suggested, the action of those who subscribed to the Claim of Right in 1842-3 can be seen as an articulation of "the Scottish Kirk's historic spiritual independence [and] a statement of Scottish

⁵⁰ Devine, *The Scottish Nation*, 285-298 and Lindsay Paterson, *The Autonomy of Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 59-65.

⁵¹ George Lewis, "Scotland A Half-Educated Nation", 75.

⁵² *Act for securing the Protestant Religion and Presbyterian Church Government*, 1707.

religious principles, buttressed by both explicit and oblique references to the nation's Presbyterian heritage",⁵³ so too can the Established Church's determination to hold on to its supervision of the parochial schools. In 1845 the Poor Law Amendment Act had taken responsibility for poor relief out of the hands of the Church and placed it with a central board of supervision and organised it according to the practice in England. In the same year Scottish banking was remodelled on the English system and Scottish banks had to struggle to retain their own identity. In the light of such changes the Church's unwillingness to relinquish its hold on parochial schools in the 1850s and 1860s, must not be seen merely as a show of strength in the face of rival denominations. It was due also to its belief in its role as the preserver of an educational tradition that had shaped the fabric of Scottish life.

It must be acknowledged that the Church might have preserved much of its authority had it gone along with Moncreiff's proposals in 1854 and 1856.⁵⁴ It failed to accept that a system of local school boards answerable to regional boards or to a national board of education, was not very much different from its own Presbyterian system of church government and from the way Scotland as a whole was governed at that time:

Scottish social policy was governed by a system of supervisory boards that grew from the 1840's onwards – local and national committees of lawyers, other professionals, and aristocrats who were put in charge of administering all the subsequent social legislation that parliament produced in the nineteenth century. They ran the poor law, the rudimentary public health system, they managed prisons and industrial schools for young offenders ... the national and local boards which oversaw the poor law after 1845 provided such a successful model that it was repeatedly copied.⁵⁵

The Church's failure at this time to recognise what might have been to its advantage and to go along with changes which would have seemed in keeping with its own administrative and legal processes, can only be put down to its determination to oppose at all costs anything or anyone sympathetic to the Free Church.

⁵³ Devine, *The Scottish Nation*, 291.

⁵⁴ See Chapter Three Conclusion.

⁵⁵ Paterson, *The Autonomy of Modern Scotland*, 51-2. See also Anderson, "In providing parish schools Church and state were partners: churchmen saw it as their duty to provide for the intellectual as well as the spiritual welfare of the people, while from the secular point of view the parochial machinery was a convenient means of discharging a public obligation without resorting to a centralised bureaucracy", "Education and the State in Nineteenth Century Scotland", *Economic History Review*, Second Series, vol. 36, 1983, 519.

Michael Fry has described the Disruption as "the most important event in the whole of Scotland's nineteenth-century history". With the Disruption, he added, "the Kirk ceased to play a part in the country's life ... Scotland was rapidly provincialised ... [and] London necessarily became the centre of Scottish affairs".⁵⁶ The Church of Scotland, however, did not quite see it that way. Perhaps it underestimated the effect of the Disruption on its national status. At any rate it refused to give up its belief in itself. It sought to fend off London domination as much as it could and eventually, through the leadership of Norman MacLeod and others, recovered its influence and standing in Scottish society. It is ironic that George Young, an ardent believer in assimilation,⁵⁷ should be the one to succeed in passing an Act which preserved a separate identity for Scottish education.⁵⁸

This thesis began by noting the areas of concern with which the Education Committee would attempt to deal – the lack of schools, the salary and conditions of schoolmasters, the diligence of presbyteries and the securing of religious instruction in the school curriculum – and we have described how these issues were dealt with by the Church from 1825 to 1872. Some of these concerns, such as the salary and conditions of parochial schoolmasters, were the responsibility of the heritors and the Church could do little about them. We would maintain, however, that within the limitations of its powers and resources, the Education Committee's achievements were remarkable.

By the 1860s so many new schools had been erected that both the Church of Scotland and the Free Church agreed that the main problem was not the lack of schools. Rather, it was with issues with which only government legislation could deal – school attendance, deficient buildings, teachers' salaries. It should not be forgotten that the impetus and the vision for this building programme came originally from the Church's Education Committee.

At no little cost the Education Committee not only pioneered teacher training and supported the first model schools, but it also extended the curriculum in the colleges, thus helping to raise standards in schools. Encouraging the visitation of schools by presbyteries paved the way for the introduction of government inspectors.

⁵⁶ Michael Fry, *Patronage and Principle: A Political History of Modern Scotland* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987), 52-4.

⁵⁷ See Fry, *Patronage and Principle*, 84: "He [George Young] had while Solicitor General alarmed the country with his centralising enthusiasms. His aim was assimilation of Scots to English law and abolition of the Court of Session."

⁵⁸ See Withrington, "Towards a National System".

It has already been argued that in its support of an education system which emphasised both the secular and the religious responsibilities of schools, the Church saw itself as faithfully continuing a tradition established by the Scottish reformers. Where it succeeded, it did so by being prepared at times to stand by its beliefs and at other times, by being politic and being prepared to compromise when necessary. By accepting state aid and government inspection it helped to lay the foundations for a national state-supported system in Scotland.

The insistence by the Church on the importance of retaining in schools what was essentially a Presbyterian form of religious instruction was seen by those outside the Presbyterian fold as a stumbling-block to the reform of Scottish school education. In successive bills Moncreiff attempted various compromises which all foundered on this issue. It was impossible to please all the denominations. But need the Church's attitude be seen only in a negative light? This thesis has maintained that the Church at that time was seeking to preserve an essential element in Scottish identity. Here it is helpful to return to the memorandum from the Scottish Education Department already referred to at the close of Chapter Five:

The mass of the Scotch people are Presbyterians, and for these the national schools may be said to exist, just as the Roman Catholic and Episcopal schools respectively exist for these denominations. The public schools are to all intents and purposes denominational schools. Public and Presbyterian are practically interchangeable terms.⁵⁹

Moreover, the Church of Scotland, even although it had lost ground at the time of the Disruption, spoke for the majority of Presbyterian church members, 48 per cent of Presbyterians in 1860 increasing to 53 percent by the 1890s.⁶⁰ In refusing to climb down on this issue during the 1850s and 1860s the Church of Scotland ensured that an important part of Scottish education continued to reflect the character and outlook of a large section of the Scottish people and laid the foundation for the Church's working relationship with today's Scottish Executive.

⁵⁹ Scottish Education Department Memorandum (Cmd. 6426, Edinburgh: HMSO, 1943), 6.

⁶⁰ C. G. Brown, *The Social History of Religion in Scotland Since 1730* (London, Methuen, 1987), 65.

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