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MEN'S ASSOCIATION FOR PROMOTING THE INTERESTS OF THE  
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.]

## GENERAL STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

THE controversy which is at present going on in regard to National Establishments of Religion, is one of very great importance, and not undeserving of all the attention which it has of late received. It is important, because it involves the discussion of great principles, the grounds and reasons of which are to be sought and found in the Sacred Scriptures, in an examination of human nature, and of political philosophy, and in the history of the Christian Church in all ages; and because its practical results, according as it may be determined in the one way or the other, must not only decide for or against the continuance of a National Establishment of Religion in these lands, but must likewise materially affect the whole conduct of public men, and the regulation of all public affairs. The controversy is not altogether free from difficulty, because, although it can be satisfactorily shewn that a National Establishment of Religion is founded upon clear grounds of Scripture, reason, and experience, it is admitted that something may be said against it which wears the aspect of plausibility, and is apt to influence the minds of those who do not give much attention to the subject,—who are not very able to understand it,—or who are led by their prejudices and prepossessions, to view it chiefly on one side. Indeed, there probably never was a controversy in which a greater amount of inconclusive reasoning, of misrepresentation, and mis-statement, was put forth, than is to be found in the writings and speeches of those who have come forward as the enemies of Religious Establishments; and there is reason to apprehend, that these reasonings might be adopted as satisfactory, and these misrepresentations and mis-statements might be received as correct, unless they were contradicted and exposed. The friends of the Established Church of Scotland have perfect confidence in the goodness of their cause, and also in the intelligence and good sense of their countrymen; and are firmly persuaded that if due pains are taken to circulate

among the mass of society, sound information in regard to the true principles of National Establishments in general,—the constitution and history of the Church of Scotland,—and the advantages that have been derived, and may yet more largely be expected, from her parochial and endowed system, the cause of truth and of right principle will prevail,—that the Church of Scotland will continue to enjoy more fully than ever the approbation and affection of the community, and that much may even be done to bring the regulation of our National affairs under the controlling influence of the Word of God.

The foundation of a defence of National Establishments of Religion, must be laid in scriptural views of the rights and obligations of the civil magistrate, *i. e.*, of him or them, who, by the constitution of the country, are entitled to make National laws, and to dispose of National wealth.

It can be easily proved from Scripture, that it is the imperative duty of every human being, in whatever situation he may be placed, or whatever opportunities he may enjoy, to aim at the promotion of God's glory, and the advancement of Christ's cause, and to employ for the accomplishment of these objects, every lawful mean in his power; and that, on entering upon any new situation or office, it is incumbent upon every man to look around him and consider what facilities or advantages his new situation may afford, for accomplishing the great objects which he is bound at all times, and by every lawful means, to aim at. This principle, of course, applies to a man becoming, either by hereditary succession, or by popular appointment, a legislator, invested with some controul over National laws, and National property. The moment he becomes a legislator, he is bound to look around him, and consider what he can do now which he could not do before, for promoting the glory of God, and the cause of Christ; and nothing can excuse him for not doing more now than formerly, except a thorough conviction, and a full proof, that his new situation does not afford him any lawful facilities for more extensively promoting these great objects. There is nothing in the situation of a legislator or civil ruler, to exempt him from this obligation, which binds all intelligent creatures; and in the general statements of God's Word, concerning the office and duties of civil rulers, and in the approbation expressed there of the conduct of kings and

princes, who have employed their civil power and authority for promoting the interests of true religion, there is much that tends to shew not only that civil rulers are not exempted from this general obligation, but, that it applies to them with peculiar certainty and force.

Those, then, who are constitutionally invested with the power of making National laws, and disposing of National wealth, are bound to do all they can for promoting the glory of God, the cause of Christ, and the welfare of the community.

If they are persuaded that these great objects would be promoted by making God's word, in so far as it applies, the supreme directory of National laws and National measures, and by devoting a certain portion of the National wealth to the instruction of the great body of the people in the doctrines and duties of true religion, then, they are not only warranted, but imperatively called upon, in conscience, to use these means; and if the means be really fitted to effect the end, then all men must approve of their conduct in using them.

The civil power ought not to make use of force, or of any thing like persecution, for the accomplishment of these objects, because, from the principles of human nature, and the results of experience, it is abundantly evident, that force and persecution have no tendency whatever to promote the ends which are to be aimed at. The great question is as to the tendency of the means to effect the end; for it can scarcely be denied in the abstract, that if by the possession of civil power, means are procured, fitted to promote the glory of God, the cause of Christ, and the welfare of the community, these means ought to be employed for the promoting of these ends. Now, the means which those invested with civil power ought to use, because none else can use them, and because they are fitted as means to promote the great ends that have been referred to, are regulating National laws and measures by God's word, as far as it applies,—making provision for the observance of the outward rest of the Sabbath,—and devoting a portion of National wealth to the erection of schools and churches, and the support of teachers and ministers. Many of the enemies of Religious Establishments admit that some of these means are fitted, as means, to promote the great objects which all men are bound to aim at, and that it is the duty of civil authorities to use

them. They make this admission with regard to the subordinating of National measures and laws to the precepts of the Bible,—the making provision for the observance of the outward rest of the Sabbath by National laws, and for the education of the people at the National expense; although such an admission is not very consistent with the principles which they lay down, and try to establish, as to civil rulers having nothing to do with religion, when they wish to show the impropriety of devoting a portion of the National wealth to the promotion of religion, *i. e.*, to the support of churches and ministers. It is not easy to see the grounds of the distinction which they affect to discover between the application of public money to education, and its application to religion, at least in so far as the right and duty of the state to do it is concerned. Religion is surely as important an object as education, in its bearing upon the interests of the community, and one, therefore, the promotion of which, it is equally the duty of all men, according to their means and opportunities, to aim at. It cannot be denied that money is fitted, or has a tendency, and may be employed as a mean to promote the interests of religion. This position is confirmed by constant experience, and by the practice of every denomination of professing Christians, whether enjoying the protection and endowment of the state or not. It is fully confirmed by the practice of the enemies of Establishments, who, when they wish to form any enterprise for the promotion of the interests of religion, commonly commence by trying to raise money, and are generally very importunate in urging men to contribute; well knowing that unless money be raised, they have little prospect, humanly speaking, of doing much for the promotion of the Kingdom of Christ, and that, at least, the putting large funds at their disposal, will afford them opportunities of employing the appointed means for promoting the spiritual welfare of men to an extent that would otherwise have been impracticable. The frequent complaints of Dissenters, that they are prevented from carrying into effect their benevolent plans for the spiritual welfare of men, by the want of money, afford abundant evidence of their conviction of the natural fitness, or tendency, of money, as a mean to be employed for promoting the interests of religion, while, at the same time, they furnish no satisfactory evidence of the efficacy and productiveness of the Voluntary principle. The admission of the natural fitness of money as a mean to be

employed in promoting the interests of religion, not only gives a warrant to, but renders it the duty of, those who are constitutionally invested with the controul of National wealth, to apply a portion of it in that way, and for that end. It has not been alleged that the fitness of money, as a mean to be employed in promoting the interests of religion, depends upon the motives of those who contribute it; at least, it is not known that the enemies of Establishments make any very strict enquiry into the motives of those who take seats in their meeting-houses, or who contribute at their charity sermons, before they receive their money. And even if the motives were to be taken into account, it is not easy to see why those who are invested with the controul of National wealth, may not be influenced as generally by good motives, as the miscellaneous crowd that may have assembled to hear a Dissenting minister preach, and to contribute to the object which he may have advocated.

It seems strange that men should deny the warrantableness and obligation of a mode of acting which can be so fully vindicated, viz., The devotion by those who have the controul of National wealth, the disposal of the property of the Nation, of a certain portion of that wealth, to the promotion of the interests of religion; while, of course, they may take every precaution which wisdom and experience can dictate, and which the object aimed at, and the rights and prerogatives of the Christian Church, through whose instrumentality alone it can be accomplished, admit of, that the money so devoted shall really be made available for promoting the object intended.

The views commonly put forth by the enemies of Establishments, as to civil rulers having nothing to do with religion, would not only, if embraced by them, prevent them from doing what they might do for religion, in virtue of their controul over National wealth, but would necessarily tend to lead them to keep religious considerations in abeyance, when engaged in the discharge of their public duties,—a tendency at all times dangerous, but especially so in the present day, when a leaning towards infidel liberalism, and a desire to be freed from the restraints of Divine authority, are so generally manifested by men of influence. It was not a mere accidental conjunction that the chief advocate of Anti-Establishment views, in the House of Commons, should be one of the ten who opposed any distinct re-

cognition of the agency of Providence in the cholera. His conduct upon that memorable occasion was the natural result of Voluntary views, followed out in all their legitimate consequences. The man who scouted all recognition of the agency of Providence in a public act regarding the cholera, was well prepared for becoming, as he now is, the organ and patron of the Voluntaries, and those who have thoroughly imbibed the views of the enemies of Establishments, will, unless they be better than their principles, be well prepared for leaving their professed religious views behind them, when they enter the senate-house of the nation.

While it is thus clearly the duty of civil rulers to employ the controul which, by the constitution of the country they possess over the formation of National laws, and the disposal of National wealth, for the purpose of promoting the glory of God, the cause of Christ, and the best interests of the community, there is no reason whatever, why the Church should not encourage and co-operate with them in their efforts for effecting these ends, and receive and improve the protection and endowment which they are willing to bestow. There is nothing in God's word which, directly or by implication, forbids the Church to accept of the protection and endowment of the State,—to receive and enjoy a portion of the public funds of the nation. If, indeed, it could be proved that the Church, in accepting of the protection and endowment of the state, did necessarily neglect or violate any portion of the duty which she owes to Christ, this, of course, would shew it to be unwarrantable, but this never has been, and never can be proved, and for this obvious reason, that there is nothing to prevent a State from fully protecting religion, and providing abundantly for the support of churches and ministers, without attaching to it any condition whatever, or in any way interfering with the manner in which the Church may discharge her peculiar duties. That some churches, in accepting of endowments by the State, have submitted to improper terms or conditions imposed by civil authority, so as to have been deprived by their connection with the State of some prerogative which Christ bestowed,—rendered unfit for discharging some duty which he imposed, or accomplishing some object which he required his Church to aim at, is true, and this conduct is altogether incapable of defence, either on the part of the State imposing, or of the Church submitting to such terms. But it cannot be shewn that this



is necessarily involved in the connection between Church and State, and, therefore, every particular Church connected with the State must be examined separately, and be tried upon its own distinct footing. The Church ought to rejoice at seeing the State or civil authority disposed to do what it can, for promoting the cause of Christ and the interests of true religion, and should encourage it in every effort for giving Christianity a paramount influence over National laws and measures, for promoting the observance of the Sabbath, and the education of the people; and if those who have the disposal of the whole wealth of the Nation, and to whom, legally and constitutionally, the whole property of the Nation belongs, offer to devote a portion of that wealth to the erection of churches, and the support of ministers, the Church, seeing in this offer the prospect of being enabled to provide much more speedily and effectually than would otherwise have been practicable for the religious interests of the country, and especially, for having religious ordinances regularly administered to the poor of the community, is not only warranted, but bound to accept of it, if it be attended, as it certainly may be, with no improper conditions; because she will thereby not only not be prevented from discharging any duty which Christ has imposed upon her, but be enabled to accomplish more fully the great object which He has required her to aim at.

These are important truths, which can be established by satisfactory evidence, and vindicated from every solid objection, and they admit of full and direct application to the Church of Scotland. It can easily be proved that *that* Church, in accepting of an endowment from the State, has done nothing inconsistent with the obligations incumbent upon her as a Church of Christ. She is not prevented from proclaiming fully the whole doctrines which Christ revealed, for her standards were of her own framing, and were adopted by her before they received the sanction of civil authority. There is nothing contained in the laws of the land, or resulting from her connection with the State, to prevent her from exercising ecclesiastical discipline with all the rigour which the Word of God, or the standards of Presbyterian churches, require; and whatever defect may exist in this respect, is to be imputed solely to the Church herself, and may be removed by her whenever she chooses. She has given up no prerogative which Christ conferred upon his

Church. She has not rendered herself unfit for effecting any of the objects which he requires her to aim at, but, according to her extent, enjoys at least as great facilities, and as ample opportunities for promoting the conversion of sinners, and the edification of saints, as any branch of the visible Church whatever. God has been pleased, in former times, highly to favour the Church of Scotland, and to make her instrumental in doing much for promoting his glory in the salvation of sinners, and it is scarcely possible for any candid person to deny that, in the present day, there are plain and manifest tokens of his returning kindness and favour, and great reason to hope that he is about to answer more fully the prayers of many of his people, who, through her instrumentality, have been brought to the knowledge of the truth, and conducted to glory, by pouring out his Spirit upon her, and making her more extensively instrumental in promoting the great objects for which he has established and preserved her.

Every friend of his country should aim at the great object of having the whole body of the population brought under religious instruction, and ecclesiastical superintendance, and should never rest until this be accomplished. There is no scheme whatever, if we may judge from the known principles of human nature, and from the whole history of the world and the Church, that holds out even the most distant prospect of an approach being made towards the accomplishment of that object, except a more full and extensive application of the Parochial System, which is one of the distinguishing features of an Established Church. This is an object which Dissenters do not even profess to aim at by any plans which they have put in operation, and one which it is evident, that, humanly speaking, they never can effect. It can be accomplished only by dividing the whole country into a sufficient number of parishes, of a manageable extent, by providing adequate Church accommodation for each parish, and giving to each the services of a minister, whose support shall not depend upon seat-rents, or the voluntary contributions of his hearers, but who shall have a respectable maintenance, provided out of some independant source, and that chiefly in order to secure these two objects, *1st*, That no parish or district, however poor, shall be without a minister; and, *2dly*, That no individual in the parish, however poor, shall be prevented from attending

divine ordinances. It is only by such a scheme as this that anything effectual ever can or will be done, for reclaiming the great body of our countrymen, who are sunk in irreligion and immorality, and for preserving them in that state of outward decency of deportment, which regular attendance upon the public worship of God commonly produces or implies. It is true that the good effects which the Parochial and Endowed System is fitted to produce, have not hitherto been so fully exhibited, as might, perhaps, have been expected, but it will clearly appear, from an attentive consideration of the subject, that this has arisen wholly, not from any error or defect in the system itself, but from the fact that it has not been tried in sufficient fulness and extent. The truth is, that the proper Parochial System has never been fully and adequately tried in any of our large towns, and to this mainly are owing the ignorance and immorality that prevail. The friends of the Church are now most desirous that this system should be fairly tried,—confident that it will tend greatly to promote the welfare of the community, both in a temporal and spiritual point of view,—and that nothing else holds out even the most distant prospect of any thing effectual being done for reclaiming the vast mass of our countrymen who are perishing around us for lack of knowledge, and preparing them for becoming useful members of society, and making them meet for the inheritance of the saints.

The accomplishment of this object, or the doing any thing effectual towards its accomplishment, implies the preservation and extension of the Established Church of Scotland; and this, therefore, should now be most strenuously aimed at by all true friends of their country. What is needful to secure the preservation and extension of the Church, is, that sound views should be entertained by the great body of the community, in regard to the duty of civil rulers, the principles of a National Establishment, and the advantages of the Parochial System. These subjects are not so well understood as they ought to be; and the friends of the Church are called upon to exert themselves, in order to make them more generally understood and adopted, confident that the more thoroughly the subject is investigated, the more will the principles upon which a National Establishment of religion is founded, commend themselves to the understandings and hearts of those who reverence the Word of God, and love their country; and the

more universally will it be acknowledged that the system of manageable parishes, and permanent endowments, is the only one which holds out the prospect of doing any thing effectual for reclaiming the mass of our countrymen, who are sunk in ignorance and vice, and preserving them in the habit of regularly attending upon Divine ordinances, and outwardly observing the rules of morality.

“The Edinburgh Young Men’s Association for promoting the interests of the Church of Scotland,” has been instituted for the purpose of aiding in the accomplishment of these objects. The members entertain the general views, a short outline of which has been given in this Tract; they believe these views to be not only true, as founded upon Scripture, reason, and experience, but most important in their practical consequences, as bearing materially upon the regulation of public affairs, and the preservation of our National Church. They hold it most important, for the sake of truth, of religion, and morality, that these principles should be more generally understood and embraced; and they have accordingly associated themselves, for the purpose of diffusing over society at large, right views upon these subjects, with the earnest desire of preserving to the Church of Scotland all her privileges and endowments, and making her still better fitted to provide for the wants, and to call forth the affection of the great body of the community, and thus to promote more extensively, the interests of religion and morality; and they confidently hope, that in this work on which they have entered, they will receive the counsel, the countenance, and the contributions of the friends of the Church of Scotland,—of all those who think her founded upon Scriptural principles, and likely still to continue to be instrumental, in God’s hand, in promoting the best and highest interests of our country.

The object aimed at in the present day by the enemies of Establishments, is one, which, if effected, must produce important and extensive changes, the full consequences of which it is not easy to foresee. Their success would at once withdraw a great amount of money and influence from the cause of Christ, without any thing like certainty of its being replaced from any other source, or compensated in any other way, and would interfere besides with some of the most important, beneficial, and well-established arrangements of civil society. The theological views on which the prosecution of this object professes to be founded, have been condemned

by the almost unanimous decision of the best men, and the greatest Divines, from the Reformation down to the present age, including equally the members of the Westminster Assembly, who framed the Standards of the Church of Scotland, and the founders of the Secession. The cause of the enemies of Establishments, has the strenuous support of most of the infidels and papists of the present day, and this, of itself, is a presumption against it. And, with regard to the best and ablest men who are opposed to Religious Establishments among the Dissenting ministers, it is not very difficult to see how, without impeaching the general excellence of their character, we may reasonably suppose their views upon the subject to have been warped or perverted by some of those adventitious influences, by which we are all more or less guided in the formation of our opinions, and to which their situation peculiarly exposes them. The question of Church Establishments must, indeed, be settled by a fair consideration of its own intrinsic merits, and not by such references as have just been made to authority and presumptions. But still these references may show men the folly of adopting the views of the enemies of Establishments, and of advocating the changes which they propose, without a most diligent and careful examination of the question, on both sides, and in all its bearings,—may lead those who have not formed a decided opinion upon it, to read, and think, and enquire a little more, before they come to a positive conclusion; and they may even induce some who have adopted Voluntary views but who have not yet taken a public part in active attempts to overthrow the Establishment, to reconsider the question, and go over again the grounds on which their opinions rest, before they allow themselves to take any part in that agitation for the overthrow of Establishments, which their enemies are now so desirous to excite.

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The EDINBURGH YOUNG MEN'S ASSOCIATION propose to publish a series of Tracts, partly original and partly selected, in which the views and principles which in this one have been merely stated, or rather alluded to, will be fully explained and illustrated, and vindicated from numerous misrepresentations, as well as from every important and plausible objection.

*RESOLUTIONS of "THE EDINBURGH YOUNG MEN'S ASSOCIATION FOR PROMOTING THE INTERESTS OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND," adopted at a Meeting held in Lady Glenorchy's Chapel, 9th July 1834.*

I. This Association shall be designated "THE EDINBURGH YOUNG MEN'S ASSOCIATION FOR PROMOTING THE INTERESTS OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND."

II. The chief object of this Association is to obtain and diffuse information regarding the true principles of the Church Establishment of Scotland, and the utility and excellence of her ancient Parochial System.

III. For the accomplishment of the above object, the Society will issue and distribute Tracts throughout the different parishes and suburbs of the city, amongst those persons particularly who have not the time or the means for reading (or procuring) larger works.

IV. The Society shall be governed by a Committee, twenty-four in number, exclusive of the President, three Vice-Presidents, Treasurer, and two Secretaries, who are added to that number, and who shall be chosen annually.

V. The Committee shall meet monthly, or oftener if necessary, five to form a quorum.

VI. The Association shall consist of persons who profess their adherence to the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures, as laid down in the Standards of the Church of Scotland, and who, in particular, hold it to be a duty which our civil rulers owe to God, and to the nation, to provide for the instruction of the people in the true religion, as contained in the Bible.

VII. There shall be Quarterly Meetings of the Society, to be fixed by the Committee, one of which shall be considered the Annual one, at which office-bearers for the ensuing year shall be elected, and a report of the Society's proceedings read. At all those meetings, suggestions for the promotion of the interests of the Church will be considered.

VIII. That this Society shall use their influence to promote the formation of similar institutions, in the towns and country parishes of Scotland, with whom they will keep up a correspondence.

IX. All meetings of the Society shall be opened and closed with prayer.

X. All persons agreeing to the foregoing Rules, and who shall contribute not less than One Shilling annually to the funds, shall be admitted Members of this Association.

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Subscriptions and Donations received by the members of Committee; also by the Treasurer, Mr ARCHIBALD BONAR, Royal Bank, and by the Secretaries, Mr JAMES BONAR, 15, York Place; Mr ANDREW BALFOUR, 11, Greenside Street.

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