

**A DISCOURSE ON SCOTTISH  
CHURCH HISTORY  
FROM THE REFORMATION  
TO THE PRESENT TIME**

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A Discourse on Scottish Church History from the Reformation to the Present Time by Charles Wordsworth

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**CHARLES WORDSWORTH**

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A DISCOURSE  
ON  
SCOTTISH CHURCH HISTORY

"Non ita certandi cupidus quam propter amorem  
Quòd te imitari avelo."

—LUCRATI.

"Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."

A DISCOURSE  
ON  
SCOTTISH CHURCH HISTORY

FROM THE REFORMATION TO THE  
PRESENT TIME

WITH PREFATORY REMARKS ON THE B. GILES'S LECTURES,  
AND APPENDIX OF NOTES AND REFERENCES

BY  
CHARLES WORDSWORTH, D.C.L.  
BISHOP OF S. ANDREWS



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*The Discourse which follows the Prefatory Remarks on the S. Giles's Lectures, was delivered in S. Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh, on invitation of the Bishop, Dean, and Chapter : the First Part on Sunday evening, May 8 ; the Second Part on the following Sunday evening, May 15, 1881.*



## PREFATORY REMARKS

ON

### THE S. GILES'S LECTURES.

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It is well known that during the last six months, twelve Lectures upon Scottish Church History have been delivered fortnightly—first in Edinburgh, and afterwards in Glasgow—and subsequently published in succession, by twelve eminent clergymen of the Established Church. The undertaking, wise and judicious in itself, and for the most part executed in a corresponding manner, could not fail to excite very general interest.

Reading the Lectures, one after another, with the attention due alike to the character of the authors, and the importance of their subjects—

First, we see lucidly set before us what Scotland gained by its conversion from heathenism to Christianity (Lect. 1).

Next, we follow the graphic sketches which represent to us what our country further gained from the devoted lives, and divinely assisted labours, of S. Ninian, S. Columba, S. Kentigern, and of our saintly Queen Margaret (Lect. 2).

Next, we mark the transition from the independent Celtic to the medieval Romanising Church, with the in-

roduction and the upgrowth of the Parochial, Diocesan, and Monastic Systems (Lect. 3).

And then, as we approach the period of the Reformation, we appreciate and admire the contrast, vividly drawn, between the noble and upward course of the pioneers of the recovery of Gospel Light and Truth—especially Patrick Hamilton, Alexander Alesius, and George Wishart, and the perverse downward course of their opponents, the champions of Darkness and Error—the ill-fated Cardinal Beaton, the double-minded Earl of Arran, and the weak and dissolute King James V. (Lect. 4).

In these first four Lectures, it is scarcely necessary for me to say there is little or nothing which we Episcopalians should not have listened to with pleasure, or should have hesitated to welcome, had they been heard from any of our own pulpits; and though, when we reach the Reformation itself, it was not to be expected that this harmony of sentiment would continue to be maintained to the same extent, yet we thankfully observe that the points on which we become constrained to differ from the positions of the succeeding Lecturers, are still very few in comparison with those upon which we can cordially and unreservedly agree with them.

With this observation, we enter upon the fifth Lecture, which it is necessary to notice in more detail.

No one can be more ready than the present writer (as, indeed, I showed in a discourse preached and published more than twenty years ago on occasion of the Tercentenary in 1860) to pay to Knox the honour he deserved for his "supreme loyalty to the Word of God" (p. 151), his unswerving "vindication of the paramount authority of Holy Scripture" (p. 133). But when it is objected to our "landed gentry," that they "stand aloof from the Church of Knox" (p. 148), I must be permitted to reply that it is Presbyterians themselves who, at the present day, stand further aloof from the Church of Knox than Episcopalians do. I must venture to point out that, whereas Knox himself stood off further than was right, in some

respects, from the Primitive Church — partly, perhaps, through insufficient knowledge of its principles and usages, at a time when they had both been miserably obscured and corrupted for many centuries, but mainly, I believe, because he was driven to do so from the necessities of his position, as the foreign Protestants also were, through the same cause; whereas this was so, the Presbyterianism of the present day has fallen off still further from the Church of the early centuries, without any similar necessity, or sufficient excuse for so doing. Is not the service of Knox's Liturgy, "universally in use for about seventy years," more in accordance with the service of the Prayer-Book (which our Lecturer generously pronounces to be "the grandest devotional service ever furnished to any Church," p. 136) than the ordinary Presbyterian service as now performed? It is true, we are told that Knox "disapproved of what he termed 'the mingle-mangle' of the Anglican Liturgy." But though the English Prayer-Book, in its original form, when it began with the Lord's Prayer and ended with the third Collect, was somewhat liable to this description, from the large proportion of it made up of versicles and suffrages, and the short Litany, yet it ceased to be so when the more substantial parts of prayer and thanksgiving, which it now contains, were subsequently introduced. Again: I am unwilling, for various reasons, to lay stress upon the provisional appointment of "superintendents" who certainly do not now exist;<sup>1</sup> but, I may ask, is not Knox's Confession of Faith of 1560—which was practically accepted by us on both occasions when Episcopacy was restored—in more substantial harmony with the doctrine of our XXXIX. Articles, in the revision of which Knox himself assisted, than that of the Westminster Confession, by which it has been superseded? Again: where are

<sup>1</sup> "That Knox had not that abhorrence at Episcopacy, which soon after his days was unhappily introduced into Scotland, is very apparent." —Dr Cook's *Hist. of Reform.*, ii. 384. See also Burton's *Hist.*, v. 79. Knox's two sons were both episcopally ordained in England.