WELSH, D.D., REV. DAVID.—This distinguished scholar and divine, whom a great national event made the mark of general attention, notwithstanding his recluse studious habits and unobtrusive disposition, was born at Braefoot, in the parish of Moffat, Dumfriesshire, on the 11th of December, 1793. His father, a substantial farmer and small landholder, had a family of twelve children, of whom David was the youngest. Being at an early period intended for the ministry, David, after receiving the earlier part of his education at the parish school of Moffat, went to Edinburgh, where he attended the high school for a year, and afterwards became a student at the university. Here his progress, though considerable, was silent and retired, so that at first he was little noticed among his ardent competitors in Latin and Greek; it was not words, but thoughts that chiefly captivated his attention, and therefore it was not until he had entered the classes of logic and philosophy that he began to attract the notice of his class-fellows. In the latter he was so fortunate as to have for his teacher Dr. Thomas Brown, the most acute and eloquent of metaphysicians of whom he became not only the pupil, but the friend, and finally the affectionate biographer. The ardent attachment of the young student to such a preceptor, the enthusiasm with which he received his instructions, and docility with which he placed himself under the guidance of such a mind, not only already evinced the intellectual bent of David Welsh, but predicted his future eminence, and this more especially, as he had already only entered his fifteenth year.

On joining the divinity hall, which he did in 1811, he brought to the study of theology all the reading and research of his former years; and although in substantial acquirements he was already considerably in advance of most young students of his early standing, they were accompanied with a shrinking bashfulness, that prevented his superiority from being generally recognized. It would be well for towardly young students in general, and especially those of our divinity halls, if they were equally sheltered from that injudicious admiration by which improvement is so often stopped short, and an overweening vanity implanted in its stead. At this period it was of more than usual importance that divinity students should study the great questions of church polity, in reference to their connection between the civil and ecclesiastical powers; for upon them, in their future
friend of his more advanced years. This congenial task he undertook not only from grateful affection, but in professor of moral philosophy in the university of Edinburgh, who had been the guide of his early studies, and ministerial duties, in which he was so zealous and successful, Mr. Welsh still continued to be a diligent student, Such was his course in the parish of Crossmichael, and such the effect of his labours. Independently, too, of his providence of God, occur to bring him into public notice.

It might be predicted of him, from the time of his appearance in public life—perhaps in his earliest days—that he was destined to hold a high place among his professional brethren; and that circumstances would, in the possible that, in the most retired retreat, the great vigour of his mind, and the worth of his character as a Christian man and a Christian pastor, could long be hid or confined within the precincts of his immediate locality.

friendship with him; and certainly I could fill pages in commendation of his talents—his acuteness of intellect—his grasp of mind—his unwearied zeal in the discharge of his professional duties—the strong hold he had of the affections of his own people—the admiration that his pulpit ministrations met with wherever he appeared in public—the esteem in which he was held by his brethren—and the universal respect that attached to him from the community at large... Notwithstanding all the innate modesty of our excellent friend, it was not appeared in public—the esteem in which he was held by his brethren—and the universal respect that attached to him from the community at large.

After having been nearly five years a licentiate, Mr. Welsh was ordained minister of the parish of Crossmichael, on the 22d of March, 1821. His presentation was highly honourable to the patron as well as himself; for while the latter was a Whig, the former was a Tory, and at this time political feeling was near its height; so that the young minister owed his promotion to that superiority of character which he had already acquired, and which the patron showed himself well fitted to appreciate. On entering upon the duties of a country minister, Mr. Welsh had two weighty obstacles to encounter, which would have marred the popularity of most persons thus circumstanced. The first arose from the state of his health, which was always delicate; so that the task of public speaking, so easy to the robust, was with him a work of labour, and often of pain. The other originated in the studious reflective habits he had already found so congenial to his nature, and which could ill brook the daily and hourly demands of common-place parochial business. But the physical obstacles and intellectual predilections were equally sacrificed upon that altar of duty at which he now ministered, and he soon became a most popular and useful preacher, as well as a laborious painstaking minister. On this head, his character is best attested by two of his distinguished co-presbyters, who were at one in their esteem of Mr. Welsh to the close of his life, although the Disruption, that afterwards ensued, rent them asunder in opinions of more vital importance. "I need not tell you," thus writes one of them to his biographer, "that Sir Alexander (Gordon of Greenlaw, the patron, who had presented Mr. Welsh, notwithstanding his political principles) had soon cause to rejoice that he had been guided by the wisdom that is profitable to direct, to do so. Dr. Welsh realized, in every respect, his most sanguine expectations, and was soon admitted by all parties to be the most superior, and efficient, and popular minister that was ever settled in that district of Scotland. I visited him more than once in the manse of Crossmichael; preached to his congregation, and mingled a good deal with his people; and never did I see a minister more beloved, or reigning more absolutely in the affections of his people." "From the time that he came to Galloway," the other thus writes of him, "I had the privilege of close intimacy and uninterrupted friendship with him; and certainly I could fill pages in commendation of his talents—his acuteness of intellect—his grasp of mind—his unwearied zeal in the discharge of his professional duties—the strong hold he had of the affections of his own people—the admiration that his pulpit ministrations met with wherever he appeared in public—the esteem in which he was held by his brethren—and the universal respect that attached to him from the community at large.... Notwithstanding all the innate modesty of our excellent friend, it was not possible that, in the most retired retreat, the great vigour of his mind, and the worth of his character as a Christian man and a Christian pastor, could long be hid or confined within the precincts of his immediate locality. It might be predicted of him, from the time of his appearance in public life—perhaps in his earliest days—that he was destined to hold a high place among his professional brethren; and that circumstances would, in the providence of God, occur to bring him into public notice."

Such was his course in the parish of Crossmichael, and such the effect of his labours. Independently, too, of his ministerial duties, in which he was so zealous and successful, Mr. Welsh still continued to be a diligent student, and one of his first, as well as the most distinguished of his literary labours, was his "Life of Dr. Thomas Brown," professor of moral philosophy in the university of Edinburgh, who had been the guide of his early studies, and friend of his more advanced years. This congenial task he undertook not only from grateful affection, but in
deficiencies in the past week, with corresponding resolutions of amendment in the succeeding week. And besides all this aptitude, he was selecting what was fittest from the mass, arranging it in the most effective form, and expressing it in that perspicuous attractive style which insured attention and stimulated inquiry. And besides all this aptitude, he was selecting what was fittest from the mass, arranging it in the most effective form, and expressing it in that perspicuous attractive style which insured attention and stimulated inquiry. And besides all this aptitude, he was selecting what was fittest from the mass, arranging it in the most effective form, and expressing it in that perspicuous attractive style which insured attention and stimulated inquiry. And besides all this aptitude, he was selecting what was fittest from the mass, arranging it in the most effective form, and expressing it in that perspicuous attractive style which insured attention and stimulated inquiry. And besides all this aptitude, he was selecting what was fittest from the mass, arranging it in the most effective form, and expressing it in that perspicuous attractive style which insured attention and stimulated inquiry.

And that period of transference was not long delayed. It was soon evident, from the superior talents of the minister of Crossmichael, from his love of mental improvement, and from the earnestness with which he prosecuted the work of intellectual acquirement, in a situation where so many minds relapse into mere literary ease and recreation, that he was fitted for a still more important situation than that which he now occupied. Accordingly, a vacancy having occurred in the church of St. David's, Glasgow, Mr. Welsh, whose reputation was already known, was invited by the town council of Glasgow to occupy the charge. He accepted the offer, and was inducted toward the close of 1827. In this new field he found full scope for his talents, and was quickly distinguished, not only as an eloquent and useful preacher, but as a most effective promoter of the interests of education, now become of paramount importance in such an over-crowded manufacturing city. Here also he found that cheering and strengthening intercourse of mind with kindred mind, which forms only an occasional episode in a country manse. He likewise married Miss Hamilton, sister of the Lord Provost, and to all appearance had reached that comfortable termination in which the rest of his days were to be spent in peace. But his health, which had been always delicate, and the weakness of his chest, made the task of preaching to large audiences, and the week-day duties of his office, so laborious and oppressive, that in a few years he would have sunk under them. Happily, however, his labours were not thus prematurely to terminate; and the offer of the chair of church history, in the university of Edinburgh, which he received from government in 1831, came to his relief. This was the boundary to which unconsciously all his past studies had been tending, while the weakly state of his constitution only hastened the crisis. It was more in accordance with his feeling of duty to accept such a charge, for which he had strength enough, than to break down in an office which was growing too much for him. And, even setting this aside, he felt that the great work of training up an efficient ministry was of still higher importance than the ministerial office itself. These inducements were obvious not only to himself, but to his attached congregation; and they freely acquiesced in the parting, although with much sorrow and regret. He therefore left Glasgow, in November, 1831, for his new sphere of action, and received the degree of doctor in divinity from the university, at his departure.

The office into which Dr. Welsh was now inducted, had hitherto, in Scotland, for more than a century, been one of the least distinguished of all our university professorships. This was by no means owing either to the inferior importance of church history as a subject of study, or to any innate dryness and want of interest that belongs to it; on the contrary, we know that it embraces subjects of the highest import, and exhibits the development of the human mind in its strongest and most intense aspects—and is consequently of a more stirring and interesting character in itself, than either the rise and fall of empires, or the record of triumphs and defeats. But Scotland had been so exclusively occupied with her Solemn League and Covenant, that she had found little time to attend to the history of other churches; and even when better days succeeded, those classical and antiquarian studies upon which ecclesiastical history so much depends, had fallen so miserably into abeyance, that the evil seemed to have become incurable. What, indeed, could a student make of the history of the church for at least twelve centuries, when his "small Latin and less Greek" could scarcely suffice to make out the name of a bygone heresy, or decipher the text in the original upon which the controversy was founded? In this state, any one or anything had sufficed as a stop-gap, to fill the vacuum of such a professorship—and it had been filled accordingly. But now a new order of things had succeeded. A more ardent literary spirit had commenced among our students, a wider field of inquiry had been opened, and they could no longer submit to doze over a course of lectures as dark as the dark ages, among which they lingered for months, or listen to a teacher who, perhaps, knew less about the matter than themselves. It will be seen, therefore, that nothing could have been more opportune than the appointment of Dr. Welsh. His clear and vigorous mind, his varied acquirements and extensive reading, had not only furnished him with the requisite stores of knowledge, but given him the power of selecting what was fittest from the mass, arranging it in the most effective form, and expressing it in that perspicuous attractive style which insured attention and stimulated inquiry. And besides all this aptitude, he was so profoundly impressed with the importance of his charge, that he resolved to give himself wholly to its duties; and with this view, he abstained from every engagement, either of literature or public business, that might in any way have allured him from his work. The devout conscientious spirit, too, in which all this was undertaken and carried on, will be manifest from the following memorandum found among his papers. After mentioning what he regarded as shortcomings in the duties of his professorship, and confessing them penitently before the Lord, he adds: "In His strength I now bind myself, during the present session,—"
announce it. This was the trying duty of Dr. Welsh, as moderator of the former Assembly; and to be performed therefore in readiness for the meditated disruption, and nothing remained but to seize the proper moment to such as still adhered to the protest of the former year—for the State had determined not to yield. All things were another year rolled on, and the General Assembly again met; but it could only meet for the final departure of the encroachments of the civil courts terminated. of foregoing all the benefits of an Establishment distinctly declared, unless these rights were recognized, and the spiritual rights of the church were announced, the assumptions of the civil courts abjured, and the resolution at the sittings of this Assembly; but the most important of all was the "claim, declaration, and protest," in which faithfulness and ability with which he discharged it, is matter of history. Many important measures were passed and this office, now so fraught with difficulty and deep responsibility, he undertook with fear and trembling. The he had arranged it."

At such a solemn period of assize, the high estimation in the decision to which the controversy had come in 1842; and upon that memorable year, the decision was to be foregone by the church, in behalf of those principles that were part and parcel of her very existence. Such was the hitherto attempted. Accordingly, in 1838, he accepted the office of vice-convener of the Colonial Committee, and in 1841, that of convener. This situation, when conscientiously filled, involved an amount of study about the spiritual wants of our colonies, of extensive correspondence, and delicate influential management, as had hitherto daunted the boldest, and made them pause perhaps too often; but in the case of Dr. Welsh, these difficult duties were entered and discharged with the same unflinching zeal which he had so successfully brought to his professorship. He also took a very active and influential share in an important controversy of the day, regarding the monopoly in printing the Bible, which had so long prevailed in Scotland, but was now felt to be an intolerable religious grievance; and on the monopoly being abrogated, and a board of control and revision established for the new editions of the Scriptures, Dr. Welsh was ultimately appointed by government to be secretary of the board. How he occupied this most trying and responsible charge is thus stated by his talented and distinguished biographer: "His fitness was acknowledged by all, and his performance even exceeded the expectations of the country. In the main matter of securing accuracy in the impressions of the Scriptures, complete success may truly be said to have been achieved, and chiefly through his care and knowledge; while the conciliatory manner in which the control exercised by the board was carried into effect, through him, guarded against all cause of discontent on the part of the trade, and soon did away with those jealousies which a little indiscretion might have called into such activity as to have greatly marred the usefulness of the measure. He brought the whole machinery into smooth and efficient working order, and handed it over to his successor in a state that required little more than the ordinary care of seeing that nothing should interfere with the system as he had arranged it."

During this interval, an under-current had been going on in the life of Dr. Welsh, that was soon to assume the entire predominance. We allude to those great church questions that had been agitated from year to year, and were now to end in the DISRUPTION. Upon these questions he had meditated deeply and conscientiously, and at every step had gone along with the evangelical party in the Church of Scotland, and at last had arrived with them at the conclusion, that further concession to the state was impossible; that all state advantages must be foregone by the church, in behalf of those principles that were part and parcel of her very existence. Such was the decision to which the controversy had come in 1842; and upon that memorable year, the decision was to be announced, and the church committed on the issue. At such a solemn period of assize, the high estimation in which Dr. Welsh was held was fully shown by his election to the office of moderator of the General Assembly; and this office, now so fraught with difficulty and deep responsibility, he undertook with fear and trembling. The faithfulness and ability with which he discharged it, is matter of history. Many important measures were passed at the sittings of this Assembly; but the most important of all was the "claim, declaration, and protest," in which the spiritual rights of the church were announced, the assumptions of the civil courts abjured, and the resolution of foregoing all the benefits of an Establishment distinctly declared, unless these rights were recognized, and the encroachments of the civil courts terminated.

Another year rolled on, and the General Assembly again met; but it could only meet for the final departure of such as still adhered to the protest of the former year—for the State had determined not to yield. All things were therefore in readiness for the meditated disruption, and nothing remained but to seize the proper moment to announce it. This was the trying duty of Dr. Welsh, as moderator of the former Assembly; and to be performed
who had never uttered a word or done a deed intended to give offence."

men concerned in that movement, the most moderate in counsel, and the most temperate in language—a man—
the Church of Scotland—a gentleman firm and determined in his line of action, but at the same time, of all the
commanded more private affection and more public regard than, perhaps, any other man who had recently
shortly after the event, that "within the last fortnight, a gentleman had been carried to his grave, who had
Such was the departure of one of whom it was stated by Lord Advocate Rutherford, in his place in Parliament,

he stretched out his arms, and instantly expired.

on the banks of the Clyde, but without finding relief, and on the 24th of April, 1845, his troubles were closed. A
make sickness so painful and death so sudden. And thus it was with Dr. Welsh. He had retired to Camis Eskin,

While he was labouring under the depression of that wasting disease which at no distant period brought him to
the grave. But calmly and with an unalterable step he went through the preliminary duties of that great movement;
and on Wednesday, the day previous to the opening of the Assembly, he signed the protest of his brethren, and
afterwards dined, according to established rule, with the commissioner, to whom he announced the purposes
of the morrow. On Thursday, he preached before the commissioner and a crowded auditory upon the text, "Let
every one be fully persuaded in his own mind;" and after this solemn note of preparation, he repaired with the
brilliant cortege and throng of divines to St. Andrew’s Church, and opened the Assembly with prayer. This duty
ended, the promised moment had come. While all were hushed with painful expectation, the pale sickness-worn
face of Dr. Welsh was for the last time turned to the commissioner’s throne, and in a voice that was soft and
slow, but firm and articulate, he thus announced the final purpose of his brethren: "According to the usual form
of procedure, this is the time for making up the roll; but, in consequence of certain proceedings affecting our
rights and privileges—proceedings which have been sanctioned by her Majesty’s government, and by the
legislature of the country; and more especially, in respect that there has been an infringement on the liberties of
our constitution, so that we could not now constitute this court without a violation of the terms of the union
between church and state in this land, as now authoritatively declared, I must protest against our proceeding
further. The reasons that have led me to this conclusion, are fully set forth in the document which I hold in my
hand, and which, with permission of the house, I shall now proceed to read." He then read the protest; and after
bowing to the throne, he left the chair of office, and proceeded to the door, followed by Dr. Chalmers, Dr.
Gordon, and the fathers of this momentous secession. Thus the departure commenced; a long array
succeeded; and the procession slowly wound its way to Tanfield, where a large hall had been hastily fitted up in
expectation of the emergency; and there, a new General Assembly was constituted, by the new—or shall we
say—by the old and long-forgotten, but now regenerated Church of Scotland.

Amidst the many sacrifices that were made on this occasion by the ministers of the newly constituted Free
Church of Scotland—sacrifices which even their enemies will acknowledge were neither few nor trivial—those of
Dr. Welsh were of no ordinary importance. In attaining to the professorship of church history in the university of
Edinburgh, he had reached an office all but the highest to which a Scottish ecclesiastical could aspire. It was
besides so admirably suited to all his past acquirements, and now matured intellectual habits, that perhaps no
other could have been found over the whole range of Scotland so completely adapted to his likings. And yet,
this he knew from the beginning that he must forego, as soon as he abandoned the state patronage of the
Establishment. In addition to his chair, he held the office of Secretary to the Board for the publication of the
Bible, an office that yielded him a revenue of £500 per annum; but this comfortable independence, so rare
among the scanty endowments of our national church, must also be sacrificed as well as his professorship.
Both offices were quickly reclaimed by the state, as he had anticipated from the beginning. All this would have
been enough, and even more than enough, for a bold and brave man in the full strength of manhood, and still
eager for enterprise: but in the case of Dr. Welsh the fire of life was well nigh exhausted; a mortal disease was
silently and slowly, but securely drying up the fountain-head of his existence; and he had arrived at that state in
which every effort is weariness and pain, while tranquillity is prized as the greatest of blessings. And yet he
abandoned all, and braced himself anew for fresh action, so that the rest of his brief life was full of exertion and
bustle. The chief department that fell to his share was that of Education in connection with the Free Church; and
his valuable services in the erection of schools and the establishment of a college, will continue of themselves
to endear his memory to the scholars of future generations. Of this new college, which commenced its labours
immediately after the Disruption, for the training of an efficient ministry, Dr. Welsh was professor in ecclesiastical
history, while Dr. Chalmers held the office of principal. Dr. Welsh also became editor of the "North British
Review," and by his able management contributed to raise that periodical to the high literary standing which it
quickly obtained. In 1844 he also published his "Elements of Church History" in one volume, which was
intended to be the first of a series extending to six or seven volumes, that should carry down the history of the
church to the close of the sixteenth century. But his labours had already approached their close; and his inability
to continue his college prelections at the close of the year, was the last of many warnings which he had lately
received that his departure was at hand, and might probably be in a single moment. The disease under which
he laboured was one of those complaints of the heart, now so prevalent, but still so little understood, that often
make sickness so painful and death so sudden. And thus it was with Dr. Welsh. He had retired to Camis Eskin,
on the banks of the Clyde, but without finding relief, and on the 24th of April, 1845, his troubles were closed. A
passage of Scripture had been read to him, which he turned into a fervent prayer, and as soon as it was ended
he stretched out his arms, and instantly expired.

Such was the departure of one of whom it was stated by Lord Advocate Rutherford, in his place in Parliament,
shortly after the event, that "within the last fortnight, a gentleman had been carried to his grave, who had
commanded more private affection and more public regard than, perhaps, any other man who had recently
expired—a gentleman who had taken a high and prominent position in the great movement that had separated
the Church of Scotland—a gentleman firm and determined in his line of action, but at the same time, of all the
men concerned in that movement, the most moderate in counsel, and the most temperate in language—a man
who had never uttered a word or done a deed intended to give offence."
Ellen Shocks LGBT Community & Confirms She is Moving On

Many knew what Ellen's plan was, but no one expected it to leak like this...

Learn More

Sponsored by Freestyle Today

0 Comments  Electric Scotland

Login

Recommend  Share

Sort by Oldest

Start the discussion…

Be the first to comment.

Subscribe  Add Disqus to your site  Add Disqus  Privacy
If you own a computer you must try this game!
Throne: Free Online Game

Warning: Don't Use Probiotics Before You See This
PrebioThrive Supplement

Strategy Game Phenomenon of 2017
Vikings: Free Online Game

"White Oil" Discovery Could Make OPEC Obsolete
Oil & Energy Investor

Cable Companies Furious over This New Device
TV Frog

Single in Canmore? 5 Online Dating Sites that Actually Work
Top 10 Canadian Dating Sites

comments powered by Disqus