

The Intellectual Duke

George Douglas Campbell,
8th Duke of Argyll, 1823-1900

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has been composed by myself and that the work is entirely my own. The work contained within this thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Kirsteen M. Mulhern

ABSTRACT

The lives of many nineteenth century political figures have recently been examined in some depth by a variety of authors. Almost every prominent politician who lived during the reign of Queen Victoria has been the subject of at least one modern biographical study. George Douglas Campbell, the 8th Duke of Argyll (1823-1900), however, has been almost completely neglected by historians and has most often been portrayed, when he is mentioned at all, as a figure of minor importance in the Victorian political arena. No biography of him has ever been attempted and the result has been that his image throughout the hundred years since his death has remained largely unchanged from that which the man himself presented in his own fascinating, accomplished, but heavily biased autobiography. This has created a false impression of the duke and in no way reflects his status during his own lifetime. One of the main aims of the present study is to correct this anomaly and to investigate the actions and motivations of this man who is so often mentioned but so rarely understood.

Argyll was a member of every Liberal cabinet from the time of Lord Aberdeen's coalition in the 1850s until his resignation from Gladstone's second cabinet in 1881. His life spanned almost the entire reign of Queen Victoria and he held an extremely high reputation as an orator, both within the House of Lords and on public platforms. However, he was more than just a politician. He was one of the largest landowners in the country and ran his vast Scottish estates in accordance with his own ideological vision for their future. In addition he was a respected author on a variety of subjects. He was a poet, an amateur scientist and a philosopher and developed his own particular set of ideas and beliefs. Although many of these aspects of his life have been completely ignored by modern historians, they are essential features to consider when trying to understand Argyll the politician. This study will examine all of these factors and attempt to synthesise them to create a fuller account of the man, his life and his works. In so doing, it is hoped that this truly 'intellectual duke' will emerge from the relative obscurity in which he has remained since his death in 1900 and take his place once more beside the famous colleagues and opponents with whom he stood during his lifetime.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Biography has ever been to me the most attractive of all branches of literature. If the life we read be the life of one whose sphere of experience or activity has been wholly different from our own, so much the better. It must give us some new knowledge, and it will probably awaken some new sympathies. If it be the life of one who lived in a great epoch, and was an agent in, or even only a witness of, great events, there is no such insight into history as that which we may thus acquire.¹

Biographers have been aiding the insight of their readers through their treatment of the lives of great men (and women) since the earliest days of literature. In so doing they have tapped into and indeed encouraged the fascination which human beings hold for uncovering and exploring details of the lives of their fellow mortals. The Victorian generation, perhaps more than any other, embraced this form of literature wholeheartedly and, in the years immediately after the death of any prominent figure, it could be safely expected that a biography of that notable personage would appear. John Morley's *Life of William Ewart Gladstone* is just one example of the typical literary treatment which a prominent politician could expect to receive after their death.² Other biographers mostly followed a similar route and during the latter half of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries, numerous biographies, editions of diaries and general volumes of correspondence appeared.³ Their format was usually similar: a chronological account, written by a close friend or family member, with in-depth (and sometimes indiscriminate) use made of private letters and diary entries. However, these biographies were not designed to truly give an 'insight into history', but rather appeared as monuments to and celebrations of the lives of

¹ George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, (London, 1906), Vol. 1, 1.

² J. Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, 3 vols., (London, 1904).

³ There are too many biographies of notable Victorian statesmen to list here and indeed such a list would not prove useful, however, notable examples of the typical format can be found in, Gathorne A.E. Hardy, (ed.), *Gathorne Hardy, First Earl of Cranbrook: a memoir with extracts from his diary and correspondence*, 2 vols., (London, 1910); Lord Newton, *Lord Lansdowne: a biography*, (London, 1929); Lady G. Cecil, *The Life of Robert Marquess of Salisbury*, 4 vols., (London, 1921-31); A.G. Gardiner, *The Life of Sir William Harcourt*, 2 vols., (London, 1923).

those whose presence would be, in the opinion of the author at least, greatly missed on the world stage. Even if the reader was not certain of the chosen character's import at the beginning of the account, it was virtually assured that, by the time they had finished reading it, the weight of evidence presented and the impression left by complete concentration upon one character at the centre of affairs would have convinced them of the prominence of the subject. This was the format for a biography of the recently departed figure and it is this, too often, that remains as the major (and in some cases, sole) source to which historians and commentators may turn for information and analysis of that person's life.

Many more modern accounts of the lives of great Victorians have followed a similar pattern, although there have been a number of notable exceptions. Among these, it is worth mentioning R.F. Foster's largely successful attempt to cast Lord Randolph Churchill as 'a character in a political novel', E. F. Biagini's short and extremely cleverly structured account of Gladstone and, of course, Colin Matthew's monumental study of the same man.⁴ As Foster has pointed out, 'the effort is not often made to relate English politicians to the ideas of their times' and further that, 'it is too seldom taken into account how far back the stereotypes of late Victorian politicians date, and how carefully manufactured they were at the time.'⁵ Although these comments were made with regard to Lord Randolph Churchill, they apply with equal, if not greater, value to the subject of this work – George Douglas Campbell, the 8th Duke of Argyll.

Argyll is relatively unusual among leading politicians of his generation in that he has been almost completely ignored by historians since his death.⁶ No biography of him has ever been attempted and the result has been that his image throughout the hundred years since his death had remained largely unchanged from that which the man himself presented in his own fascinating, accomplished, but heavily biased autobiography. Argyll appears infrequently even in more general works on nineteenth century politics and is best known perhaps to those with an interest in the Scottish land question who come across him as 'the arch-opponent' of land reform in the

⁴ R.F. Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill: A Political Life*, (Oxford, 1981); E.F. Biagini, *Gladstone*, (New York, 1999); H.C.G. Matthew, *Gladstone 1809-1898*, (Oxford, 1997).

⁵ Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, 1-2.

⁶ There are, of course, a number of other prominent statesmen who have also been somewhat neglected. Perhaps the most obvious are men like Goschen and Harcourt who have received scant attention since their deaths.

Scottish Highlands.⁷ The reasons for the neglect from which the duke has suffered are difficult to ascertain precisely but it seems possible that Argyll's rather isolated political position at the end of his life coupled with his consistent advocacy of a number of extremely unfashionable causes had made him an unattractive proposition for subsequent biographers. Argyll was on the losing side in debates upon matters as diverse as evolutionary theory, political economy and, of course, the rights of landowners and their tenants.⁸ His relative lack of political impact during the final fifteen years of his life has left the impression that Argyll was a political non-entity and his contributions to other fields have often been dismissed as the work of an occasionally able, but misguided, amateur.⁹ Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, Argyll was a man whose individual character, beliefs and motivations have made it difficult to define him accurately or place him comfortably within one of the categories of Victorian statesmen. Descriptions of Argyll in other works vary from 'Whig', 'Liberal Whig', 'Peelite', 'Whig-Peelite', and in some instances, 'Tory' depending on which account of the nineteenth century the reader chooses to examine.¹⁰ As this thesis will show, the duke did indeed fit into many if not all of these categories at different stages of his life with regard to a variety of issues. In a similar vein, the influence of Argyll's religious belief on his views on the world differ in significant ways from those of many of his contemporaries and make him difficult to categorise firmly under any of the usual 'labels'.¹¹ It may be suggested that this difficulty in accurately 'labelling' the duke has contributed to the neglect from which he has suffered at the hands of modern commentators: neglect which has left this statesman as at best a misunderstood, and at worst a completely ignored, figure.

⁷ J. Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community* (Edinburgh, 1976), 161. It was indeed in this context that I first encountered the duke of Argyll.

⁸ Argyll's interest in a number of these (and other) controversial issues will be developed throughout this thesis as will his changing political status and perceptions of his importance during his life.

⁹ In addition to his 'day jobs' as a politician and landowner, Argyll was an author, an artist, a scientist, and a poet, to name but a few of his outside interests. These aspects of his life, however, have been almost completely neglected – even more so than his political career.

¹⁰ J.B. Conacher, *The Aberdeen Coalition, 1852-1855: A study in mid-nineteenth-century party politics* (Cambridge, 1968) 21-2; J.P. Parry, *Democracy and Religion: Gladstone and the Liberal Party, 1867-1875* (Cambridge, 1986) 75; M. Partridge, *Gladstone* (London, 2003) 80.

¹¹ This difficulty was recognised by Boyd Hilton in his, *The Age of Atonement: The influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795-1865*, (Oxford, 1988), 363-65. Hilton briefly discusses Argyll's adherence to the ideas of Thomas Chalmers and this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

The fact that Argyll's was, in the words of Matthew, 'the best autobiography by a Victorian cabinet minister', cannot excuse the reluctance by biographers to tackle the life of this man.¹² Indeed, it is worth emphasising at the outset that the qualities of the duke's *Autobiography and Memoirs* have perhaps been somewhat overstated and their position as the sole published source of information about his life is certainly not ideal. This is especially true of the second half of the 'autobiography' which was not penned by the duke, but by his third wife, Ina McNeill. It is vital to point out that the third duchess was not the best qualified individual to complete the duke's memoirs. She had only been his wife for the final five years of his life and, although she had full access to the duke's private papers, her treatment of some aspects of the duke's life shows her own ignorance of certain matters. In particular, information on the duke's immediate family is noticeable by its absence throughout the second half of the work. Three of the duke's children predeceased their father, but no mention is made of this in the 'autobiography'. Additionally, Argyll's first, and influential, wife Elizabeth Leveson-Gower is seldom mentioned in the parts of the book which his third wife edited. The third Duchess seems to have suffered an extremely strained relationship with the duke's children and was described in a recent work (which was endorsed by the then Duke of Argyll) as being 'very strange when she married the Duke.'¹³ Her state of mind certainly does appear to have been questionable. After the duke died in 1900, she is reported to have refused to allow his body to be moved for many weeks, despite the rather hot weather – a decision which must have made visiting Inveraray Castle at the time a somewhat uncomfortable experience! Her occupancy of property on the Argyll estates was also a matter of contention with the family after the duke's death.¹⁴ As such, it can easily be imagined that she was not perhaps the best placed, nor the most objective person to complete the duke's memoirs.¹⁵

¹² H.C.G. Matthew, 'Campbell, George Douglas, eighth duke of Argyll in the peerage of Scotland, and first duke of Argyll in the peerage of the United Kingdom (1823-1900)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

¹³ A. Campbell of Airds, *A History of Clan Campbell, Volume Three, From the Restoration to the Present Day*, (Edinburgh, 2004), 298.

¹⁴ Campbell, *A History of Clan Campbell, Volume Three*, 298.

¹⁵ It would be reasonable to assume that the third duchess was left to complete the *Autobiography and Memoirs* because she had been helping the duke with its content from an early date. The duke only began seriously working on his memoirs in the late 1890s and had married Ina McNeill in 1895. It is unfortunate, however, that one of his children was not given the task of completing the book– the most obvious candidates would have been his eldest son, John Marquis of Lorne (the 9th Duke of Argyll) or perhaps his daughter Lady Frances Balfour who undertook biographies of other notable nineteenth

The deficiencies of the ‘autobiography’ become increasingly apparent the deeper one delves into the duke’s life. The section of the work which was penned by the duke himself is, of course, open to all of the obvious criticisms of any autobiography and any intelligent reader can easily take these into account. Obvious lapses in memory, unintentional or otherwise, along with instances of bias can be fairly easily ascertained. However, even more caution is required when examining the post-1857 section of the memoirs which was pasted together by the duchess after Argyll’s death in 1900. The duchess claimed that, ‘in taking up the broken thread of the narrative, the design has been to continue the history of his life, as far as possible, in the duke’s own words, giving his thoughts and opinions through the medium of letters to friends, and quotations from his speeches and writings.’¹⁶ However, the duchess was by no means entirely scrupulous in her use of these sources and one fairly innocent example may give an impression of her style. She records a letter from her late husband to his old friend Lord Dufferin and quotes Argyll as saying that when they met again Dufferin would find him, ‘old and lame.’ However, the original letter reads, ‘you shall see me old *and fat* and lame!’¹⁷ That the duchess chose to preserve the duke’s dignity in this matter may seem simply an amusing expression of vanity, but it is representative of deeper flaws in the duchess’s ‘editing’ process: flaws which make the ‘autobiography and memoirs’ a highly questionable source.¹⁸ This thesis will help to further demonstrate some of the deficiencies of this source as well as providing additional information which will help to fill the gaps in the accounts given in both the duke’s own memoirs and modern commentators’ works.

Lack of interest from modern historians has largely been responsible for Argyll’s decline in status and has seen him relegated to footnotes in the majority of accounts of

century figures. See, Lady F. Balfour, *Lady Victoria Campbell : a memoir*. (London, 1911); Lady F. Balfour, *Life and letters of the Reverend James MacGregor, D.D., minister of St. Cuthbert's parish* (London, 1912); Lady F. Balfour, *Dr. Elsie Inglis* (London, 1918); Lady F. Balfour, *The life of George, fourth earl of Aberdeen. 2 vols.* (London, 1923); Lady F. Balfour, *A memoir of Lord Balfour of Burleigh, K.T.* (London, 1925); Lady F. Balfour, *Ne obliviscaris : dinna forget. 2 vols.* (London, 1930).

¹⁶ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, vi.

¹⁷ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. II, 462; P[ublic] R[ecord] O[ffice] N[orthern] I[reland], D1071/H/B/C/95, Argyll to Dufferin, 19 Feb. 1889.

¹⁸ There are many more serious omissions made by the duchess in her ‘editing’ process and I have highlighted some of these in my thesis. In my use of the *Autobiography and Memoirs* I have endeavoured to find supplementary evidence wherever possible to substantiate any controversial material that is presented in the *Autobiography* – particularly for the post 1857 period.

Victorian politics.¹⁹ This has created a false impression of the duke as a figure of minor importance and does not reflect his status during his own lifetime. The 8th duke of Argyll was a member of every Liberal cabinet from the time of Lord Aberdeen's coalition in the 1850s until his resignation from Gladstone's second cabinet in 1881. His life spanned almost the entire reign of Queen Victoria and he held an extremely high reputation as an orator, both within the House of Lords and on public platforms. Another of Gladstone's many biographers, Phillip Magnus, described the duke's hold over the people of Scotland 'and the Scottish academic world as a result of his impressive character and eloquence.'²⁰ Argyll's contemporary prominence was high and his speeches were reported in *The Times* as frequently as his actions were lampooned by *Punch*. At his death, in 1900, *The Times* devoted considerable space to his obituary and emphasised the 'indomitable independence of his character', reminding its readers that,

Whatever may be thought of his views or of his methods, none can deny that he was a man. Men are so scarce at the present day, and eloquent simulacra so exceedingly numerous, that the disappearance of the Duke of Argyll from among us must be regarded as a national loss.²¹

The following day, the same newspaper reported that the reaction to the duke's death from overseas was equally notable,

The best American papers abound in eulogies on the Duke of Argyll, whose early and steadfast friendship for America was never forgotten. Here, as in England, the Duke's high character, courage, perfect independence, noble oratory, and statesmanship are respected. The *Tribune* thinks him one of the greatest figures in English public life. The *New York Times* ranks him among the scholars and thinkers of the Victorian age.²²

¹⁹ It remains difficult to find more than half a dozen references to Argyll in any of the modern accounts published thus far. H.C.G. Matthew gives him more prominence than most in his studies of Gladstone, but, for the most part, the duke is simply ignored.

²⁰ P. Magnus, *Gladstone: A Biography*, (London, 1954), 260.

²¹ *The Times*, 25 Apr. 1900, 9.

²² *The Times*, 26 Apr. 1900, 5.

His current image as a ‘nobody’ is extremely misleading and would certainly have astonished his contemporaries. He was, without a doubt, one of the most vocal and respected parliamentary debaters of his day as well as being a published poet, author, philosopher and scientist. There was virtually no area of the human experience to which Argyll did not contribute, in writing or in speech, during the nineteenth century – and these contributions received considerable attention, both of a positive and a negative nature.

The purpose of this thesis is to bridge the gap which has come to exist between how Argyll is now perceived and the reality of his importance during the nineteenth century. The duke was a man who was mentioned as a possible party leader (although this is seldom dealt with in the historiography) and he was involved in some of the greatest decisions taken by nineteenth century Liberal governments, although his role has never been fully explored. Additionally, he wrote widely upon scientific issues and involved himself in some of the great religious and scientific debates of the nineteenth century. In another context, Argyll has become one of the most widely quoted defenders of the Scottish (and Irish) landowning class during the 1880s, but again no effort has ever been made to look beyond his statements and discover anything about his true ideology and motivations. In order to correct the anomaly that has seen the duke so often mentioned in passing yet so frequently misunderstood, this thesis has become more than and, at the same time, less than a biography. This is due, in part at least, to the unfortunate difficulty in gaining access to the Argyll estate and private papers. While a source of great frustration, this also presented a great opportunity. It steered the research away from a narrow study of the duke through the papers that he and his family had chosen to keep, and resulted in a broader, and hopefully, more fruitful approach than would otherwise have proved possible. The examination of the duke’s correspondence at the archives of his contemporaries throughout the United Kingdom has been an invaluable part of this study and has opened up new and unexpected paths of research.²³

²³ As with almost every piece of research, this thesis has changed in emphasis as the research has progressed. It had been originally anticipated that the majority of this thesis would concern Argyll’s actions as a landowner but, as research progressed it led me to concentrate more upon politics and give a much greater coverage of other concerns such as the evolutionary debate and religion.

In examining the duke's correspondence in this manner, it has proved possible to delve further into his life than a study of his private papers in isolation may have permitted. It has also been possible to discover more fully how his fellow correspondents actually regarded the duke in their letters to other people. This approach has, however, been time consuming and has necessitated some prioritising of the available papers for study. At the top of the list were, of course, the Gladstone papers in the British Library which have proved to be a rich vein of personal and political information for the duke's life. Alongside these, the two collections of papers in the National Library of Scotland, the Campbell Papers and Argyll Correspondence, were invaluable in giving an insight into Argyll's more private thoughts, as expressed to his son, and the influence of his parents and older relations. It should be emphasised, however, that while incredibly useful the collection of letters from Argyll to his son Lorne does seem to have been deliberately edited before being deposited in the National Library of Scotland.²⁴ Letters from several key periods of his life are conspicuous by their absence from this collection – most notably from the period surrounding his resignation from cabinet and also from around the time of his first wife's death and his marriage to his second wife. It is unknown whether the letters were destroyed or removed by Lorne at the time or whether they were removed later before being deposited. Whichever is the case, their absence does affect the usefulness of this otherwise helpful source.

Many other collections of letters to other correspondents have formed a key part of this research and have been studied in some depth. In prioritising these collections, it has been my aim to give equal attention to political and non-political correspondence and thus the papers of the noted scholar Max Muller at Oxford, the more geological Lyell and Geikie papers at Edinburgh, and the Forbes papers at St. Andrews have received attention alongside those of Argyll's more politically minded colleagues. The study of these and other (sometimes obscure) collections of private papers was undertaken in order to get as broad a view of Argyll's life as was possible and to avoid total concentration upon political correspondence in what is not a totally political study. In including these collections, however, it has proved necessary to exclude some others which could still potentially hold some items of interest. Time

²⁴ National Library of Scotland, Argyll Correspondence, Acc. 9209

constraints have necessitated the exclusion from this study of the correspondence of a few prominent figures whose letters were often difficult to trace, access or whose correspondence has been detailed elsewhere. Good examples are the collections of prominent Conservative politicians like Disraeli and Salisbury which have not been examined in great detail for differing reasons. In the case of Disraeli it can be anticipated that, given the low opinion in which Argyll held him, the small amount of correspondence which exists between the two men would not be greatly illuminating. Salisbury, on the other hand, certainly did correspond with Argyll especially during the late 1870s and early 1880s. The decision not to examine these letters first hand was driven by the fact that the content of many of these letters are presented elsewhere – not only in biographies of Salisbury himself but also in Argyll’s own letters to other people.²⁵ In all cases, the inclusion of some sources at the expense of others has not been taken lightly and every attempt has been made to assess their potential value before making a decision.

In addition to necessitating an unconventional approach to gathering Argyll’s correspondence, the unavailability of the duke’s private papers has led to a more in-depth, and long overdue, study of the duke’s published works and speeches. This has been invaluable as the duke was an author who poured himself into his writing. His books, essays, articles and speeches are often intensely personal and illustrative of much more than the duke’s opinions on the subject matter in hand. His intense love of his country, his pride in his heritage and his obsession with nature permeate his works and give a glimpse of a man perhaps born too high for his own comfort. It was certainly a feeling of obligation to his class and position rather than a desire to be a statesman that forced Argyll to take his place in ‘Pandemonium’ as he often called parliament. He was never happier than when he could escape London and retreat to his Highland home among his books and among the wonders of nature which he watched from the windows of Inveraray Castle. However, his determination to succeed in the political world was firm and he threw himself with energy and enthusiasm into his role – enthusiasm which often led to confrontation, and

²⁵ This is especially true of the most interesting letters between Argyll and Salisbury which were penned during the 1880s at the time of discussions over parliamentary reform and redistribution. Argyll routinely (and fairly faithfully) reported the contents of his letters to and from Salisbury to his other correspondents – most notably to Gladstone and Carnarvon – as shall be discussed in Chapter Five. Other letters between the two men have been presented in other biographies and in Argyll’s own autobiography.

occasionally humiliation, at the hands of older, more experienced or better informed adversaries.

The duke of Argyll was in many ways an intensely private man but he and his family were also the object of much public interest. His position in parliament and as a landowner, coupled with his outspoken response to questions of the day, made him newsworthy and he featured in the local and national newspapers on a regular basis. Argyll appeared frequently in the pages of *The Times* as well as the *Scotsman* and *Glasgow Herald* and use has been made of all of these sources, however, it is the Scottish local newspapers which have proved most useful in sketching his career – especially with regard to his duties as a landowner. Although a variety of Scottish titles have been examined, it is the *Oban Times*, the biggest Lorne/Argyllshire newspaper of the day, that has proved to be the most illuminating and which has been used most frequently in this thesis.²⁶

The duke's public life was dominated by his role as a politician; consequently politics are the principle theme of this thesis. However, it would be a mistake to cast Argyll as 'a character in a political novel' or attempt a purely political biography of such a multi-faceted character and so this thesis must, as a result, deviate from some of the established norms. Without access to private diaries or notebooks, it would be unwise to attempt to sketch the duke's personal or family life in any great depth and, although useful information can be found in the few collections of family letters which exist outside of Inveraray, this thesis does not really attempt to deal with 'Argyll the family man'. What is being attempted here is a study of 'Argyll the intellectual politician and landowner' and thus some of the hallmarks of a traditional biography are absent. In their place, there is more concentration upon the motivations which drove the duke to make his decisions and upon the responses which these decisions elicited from his contemporaries.

²⁶ The changing stance of the *Oban Times* during the 1880s from a moderate and rather 'Whiggish' newspaper to a more radical supporter of the crofters' movement has been documented elsewhere, see, R.M.W. Cowan, *The Newspaper in Scotland: a study of its first expansion*, (Glasgow, 1946); A.G. Newby, "'Shoulder to Shoulder'?: Scottish and Irish Land Reformers in the Highlands of Scotland, 1878-1894", PhD thesis, (University of Edinburgh, 2001), 10-12.

Although following a loosely chronological outline overall, most chapters deal with a discrete topic with which the duke engaged during his lifetime. It is hoped that by taking this approach, the workings of this polymath's mind will come across more clearly than if a purely chronological biographical approach was taken. It is also hoped that each chapter may be read independently of the others so that the thesis may prove useful to those whose interest in Argyll is confined to one particular topic. Ultimately, this thesis is perhaps not so much a biography of the eighth duke of Argyll as it is a case study in intellectual history. In the following pages, the duke stands at centre stage as the events of the nineteenth century world pass before him and it is his response to these events which forms the core of this work. The duke's own autobiography dealt, with varying degrees of accuracy, with the 'who, where and when' of his life, it is the purpose of this study to fill in the gaps and inaccuracies of his own account of his life and to deal more with the 'how and why' of his actions. In so doing, it is hoped that a more complete picture of this figure will emerge and that his image may be, in some small way, retrieved from the obscurity into which it has lapsed.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PURSUIT OF POWER

There is nobody among the Scotch aristocracy to whom the Argyll family need cede the influence which must belong to us, so long as we exert it with a faithful regard to the public duty. To decline attempting to take the position which belongs to us, would be a source of just reproach.¹

This piece of fatherly advice was given by George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll to his eldest son in 1864.² It was designed to motivate John, Marquis of Lorne to follow in his father's footsteps and involve himself in the governing of the state, but the views expressed here by Argyll are as illustrative of the father's life as they are of his ambitions for his son.³ The 8th duke had worked to put the name of Argyll back onto the political stage after an absence of more than 150 years and was anxious, when thoughts of his own mortality touched him, that his hard work should not be undone by the action (or inaction) of his progeny. Argyll's attempts to reassert his family's importance had not gone unnoticed, although some commentators were not overly sympathetic to his methods. Among his most vehement critics was the *Glasgow Sentinel*, which, as Helen Milne Finnie has pointed out, was scarcely charitable towards Argyll's motivations.⁴ Indeed, in an extensive front page commentary on the duke's role in the anti-slavery campaign of the 1860s, the *Sentinel* hinted that Argyll had 'contrived to force himself into public notice' in a direct attempt to redress the lack of influence which his most recent ancestors had held.⁵

¹ N[ational] L[ibrary of] S[cotland], Acc.9209/1, George Douglas Campbell, 8th duke of Argyll to John, Marquis of Lorne, 30 Mar. 1864.

² There are some variations on the 8th duke's full name. In some cases his mother's maiden name, Glassell, is included in his list of forenames. However, I have found no official record in which the name Glassell is present and so have chosen to use the form, George Douglas Campbell, 8th duke of Argyll.

³ For reasons of clarity, I have chosen to refer to George Douglas Campbell as 'the duke' or simply as 'Argyll' in most cases throughout this thesis. He held the title Marquis of Lorne between 1839 and 1847 and when discussing this period in his life, he will be referred to as 'Lorne' in order to avoid any confusion with his father, the 7th duke. In this chapter when, discussing the early years of his life (before he became 'Lorne'), he will be referred to as George. When other earlier or later dukes are being referred to their identity will be made clear.

⁴ H.M. Finnie, 'Scottish Attitudes towards American Reconstruction, 1865-1877', University of Edinburgh PhD thesis, 1975, Vol. 3, 250-1. The duke's attitudes towards and actions in support of the anti-slavery cause will be explored in more detail in Chapter Five.

⁵ *Glasgow Sentinel*, 10 Jun. 1865, 1.

The editor of the *Sentinel* was certainly not among the duke's greatest admirers, but the comments he made may have contained an amount of truth.⁶ The Argyll family had certainly fallen from prominence since the heady days of the second and third dukes.⁷ As statesmen of primary importance, these men had brought the house of Argyll to public attention and had acted at the very centre of the political stage, but the Argyll family's pedigree of course preceded the period of parliamentary politics by many centuries. The 8th duke was certainly aware of the value of his predecessors' fame and made use of this throughout his life. History, and in particular the history of Scotland, was one of Argyll's abiding interests. Among his numerous publications were a number of tracts on the subject and among these was *Scotland as it was and as it is*, which dealt specifically with the history of his native land and which gave him the ideal opportunity to promote the history of his own family.⁸

Argyll's genuine pride in the early history of his family was obvious from this and other publications. In the initial chapter of *Scotland as it was and as it is*, anxious to establish his credentials as a descendant of an ancient, noble and patriotic family, Argyll chose a suitably heroic figure with which to associate his family. This figure was Robert Bruce, and the duke made much of his progenitors' roles in the successes of this popular patriotic hero. He recorded the Campbells as being, 'among the earliest of his [Bruce's] followers, and among the most constant' and emphasised that

⁶ The *Glasgow Sentinel* was a popular working class newspaper whose readership was centred in the West of Scotland. Although initially supportive of the North in the American Civil War, the newspaper became, under the influence of new owner James Watt, strongly supportive of the Confederate cause from the end of 1861. This line was supported by Alexander Campbell who became editor of the *Sentinel* in 1863. For more detail on the history of the *Sentinel* see, W.H. Fraser, "A Newspaper for its generation": The Glasgow Sentinel, 1850-1877', *Journal of the Scottish Labour History Society*, 4 (1971), 18-31.

⁷ The careers of Argyll's ancestors have been examined by a number of different authors with differing levels of detail and finesse, see for example, R. Campbell, *The life of the most illustrious Prince John, Duke of Argyll and Greenwich* (London, 1745); E. Cregeen, 'The changing role of the house of Argyll in the Scottish Highlands', 5-23, and J. Simpson, 'Who steered the gravy train?', 47-72, both in, N.T. Phillipson and R. Mitchison (eds.), *Scotland in the Age of Improvement* (Edinburgh, 1970); N. Grant, *The Campbells of Argyll* (London, 1975); I.G. Lindsay and M. Cosh, *Inveraray and the Dukes of Argyll* (Edinburgh, 1973); A.J. Murdoch, *The People Above: Politics and Administration in Mid-Eighteenth Century Scotland*, (Edinburgh, 1980); H. Tayler, 'John, Duke of Argyll and Greenwich', *Scottish Historical Review*, 26 (1947), 64-74.

⁸ George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, *Scotland as it was and as it is* (Edinburgh, 1887). Argyll was to make use of his interpretation of Scottish history in a number of his publications which ranged from relatively uncontroversial works such as *Iona*, (London, 1870) to his *Crofts and Farms in the Hebrides: Being an account of the management of an island estate for 130 years*, (Edinburgh, 1883) which made extensive use of Argyll estate records dating back over one hundred years to justify the duke's ideas on land reform.

his lineage were a 'purely Celtic family...a family of Scoto-Irish origin – that is to say, belonging to that Celtic colony from Ireland which founded the Dalriadic Kingdom, and to whom the name of Scots originally and exclusively belonged.'⁹

Thus Argyll ensured that his reader was made fully aware that their author was a member of one of the most ancient and most powerful families in the nation, and he made it abundantly clear that his forefathers were 'the purest Celts' not 'the descendants and representatives of western and northern island Clans who had collected under Norseman Chieftains.'¹⁰ Argyll's use of the Campbell genealogy here is extremely interesting. By making this racial distinction between the Campbells and other West Highland families, he was emphasising the difference which he perceived as existing between himself as a member of a 'purely Celtic' family and the contemporary people who lived on many of his family's estates – whose pure Celtic values had been diluted by an infusion of Norse blood. Of course, using somewhat ambiguous genealogical evidence to improve a family's reputation was not an unusual thing to do.¹¹ The origin myths of the Campbell family had repeatedly changed over time as the family tried better to integrate itself with the wider political context at different times in history and the 8th duke was anxious in his publications to portray his family as one of the ancient founders of modern Scotland. This, however, is a very different origin from that which is usually attached to the Campbells. Although their own family genealogies are difficult to interpret with any real degree of certainty, it seems possible that the family was in fact of ancient British origin, possibly originating from the old Kingdom of Strathclyde, and not part of the 'Dalriadic Scots' movement from Ireland.¹² The use of origin myths for political effect had been evident for centuries, certainly since at least the fifteenth century when the Campbells had sought to ingratiate themselves with the most powerful families in the British Isles by inventing a fictitious Norman ancestor 'Malcolm

⁹ Argyll, *Scotland as it was and as it is*, 34.

¹⁰ Argyll, *Scotland as it was and as it is*, 34.

¹¹ Many families, especially during the Medieval period, made attempts to glorify their family pedigree, for some discussion of other Highlanders' family pedigrees see, M. MacGregor, 'The Genealogical Histories of Gaelic Scotland', in A. Fox and D.R. Woolf (eds.), *The spoken word: oral culture in Britain, 1500-1850*, (Manchester, 2002), 196-239.

¹² W.D.H. Sellar, 'The Earliest Campbells - Norman, Briton or Gael?' *Scottish Studies*, 18 (1973), 109-25; W. Gillies, 'The "British" genealogy of the Campbells', *Celtica*, 23 (1999), 82-95.

o'duibhne...of Beauchamps (that is to say Campus Bellus)¹³ thus giving the name Campbell a Norman connection in addition to the Gaelic one.¹⁴ The 8th duke of Argyll was thus certainly not the first Campbell to try to use the family's pedigree to advance his own agenda.

The duke's account of his family's prominent role in the Wars of Independence is vitally important in this regard as it demonstrates the way in which he wished his ancestors (and through them himself) to be portrayed. In a theme which is evident in many of his writings on the subject, Argyll emphasised the fact that he was the latest member in a lineage which had always been patriotic and stalwart in the defence of Scotland. For Argyll, both his role and his position in society were directly inherited from his earliest ancestors and he was keen to establish that his family had pre-eminence, as ancient and enduring representatives of the Scottish nation, over other Scottish notables. He described his family as leaders 'of the Confederacy which acted for the crown' throughout the entire period between the accession of Robert the Bruce to the Scottish throne and the 17th Century, and cannot resist pointing out the difference between the Campbells and other Highland clans – most notably the Macdonalds – during this period.¹⁵ Argyll emphasised the Campbell family's consistent patriotism and adherence to the lawful 'cause of Scotland' by contrasting their actions with those of the 'less patriotic' and more wayward Norse-Celts of the Western Islands.¹⁶ Similarly, Argyll did not neglect to show how progressive his ancestors had always been. On his favourite topic, 'the land', he was adamant that his ancestors were instrumental in introducing more modern, feudal practices to the wild Highlanders. Much of *Scotland as it was and as it is* is concerned with this premise and the duke's heavy emphasis on his ancestors' 'loyal' and 'progressive' tactics, set

¹³ Anon. 'Ane accompt of the genealogie of the Campbells', Highland Papers, 2, Scottish History Soc., 2nd ser., 12, J.R.N. Macphail (ed.), (Edinburgh, 1916), 79.

¹⁴ The name 'Campbell' was certainly a Gaelic one which replaced the earlier family name of O'Duibhne. The 'Campus Bellus' theory is a clear invention, but one which seemed to carry much weight – the spelling of the family name seems to have been altered sometime in the latter half of the fifteenth century to accommodate this theory – thus Cambel (from 'crooked mouth' in Gaelic) becomes Campbell in honour of the supposed Norman ancestor. For a more in-depth discussion of these issues and for more evidence of the veracity of the 'British' pedigree see, Sellar, 'The Earliest Campbells - Norman, Briton or Gael?'; MacGregor, 'The Genealogical Histories of Gaelic Scotland'; S. Boardman, 'Pillars of the community: Campbell lordship and architectural patronage in the fifteenth century' in R. Oram and G. Stell (eds), *Lordship and architecture in medieval and renaissance Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2005)

¹⁵ Argyll, *Scotland as it was and as it is*, 217.

¹⁶ Argyll, *Scotland as it was and as it is*, 139-43.

against those of the other 'barbaric' clans, illustrate clearly his own anxieties about the situation in 1887 when *Scotland as it was and as it is* was written. The book is largely a reaction to the attacks of land reformers on the aristocratic rights and privileges of the duke's class and Argyll's emphasis on his family's illustrious past and important historical role was a vital part of his defence of contemporary landowners.¹⁷

The duke's attempts to promote his family's historical role were not restricted to their secular actions. The role that the Campbells played in furthering the cause of the Protestant religion and succession in Scotland was a source of pride for the 8th duke, however, it also presented a problem for him. Of the executions of two of his notable ancestors, the Marquis of Argyll (d.1661) and the 9th Earl (d.1685), he had little to say other than, 'both were judicial murders of the worst type characteristic of the Stewarts.'¹⁸ He contented himself with a brief summary of this period – emphasising the Campbells' role in resisting tyranny, but did not dwell upon the issue: civil disobedience, even in a just cause, did not seem to fit comfortably into the image with which he wished to be associated.

In contrast, something with which Argyll did wish to associate himself, was the career of his illustrious ancestor, John, 2nd Duke of Argyll (1680-1743). Argyll's admiration for the 2nd duke is evident throughout his writings and one example should be sufficient to illustrate his regard for this man. Within the first few pages of his autobiography, Argyll had already characterised duke John as, 'a man whose military reputation was second only to that of Marlborough. He was a powerful speaker in

¹⁷ The 'land question' came to play a key role in Argyll's life and his actions as a landowner and his attempts to counter the claims of land reformers are explored in greater detail in Chapters Three and Eight.

¹⁸ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 3; for background on the lives of these two men, see Cowan, E. J., 'The political ideas of a covenanting leader: Archibald Campbell, marquis of Argyll 1607–1661', in R.A. Mason (ed.), *Scots and Britons: Scottish political thought and the union of 1603*, (Cambridge, 1994), 241–61; J.E.A. Dawson, *The politics of religion in the age of Mary: Queen of Scots: the Earl of Argyll and the struggle for Britain and Ireland*, (Cambridge, 2002); J. Willcock, *The great marquess: life and times of Archibald, 8th earl, and 1st (and only) marquess of Argyll (1607–1661)*, (Edinburgh, 1903); J. Willcock, *A Scots earl in covenanting times: being life and times of Archibald, 9th earl of Argyll (1629–1685)*, (Edinburgh, 1907).

parliament, took an active and efficient part in securing the Protestant succession, and was celebrated by [Alexander] Pope in one of his splendid couplets.¹⁹

Elsewhere, the 2nd duke has been portrayed with noticeably less admiration. He has been characterised as ‘ambitious, arrogant and erratic, showy as a military commander and as a politician’ and his contemporary, George Lockhart of Carnwath, commented that ‘all his natural Endowments were sullied with too much Impetuosity. Passion, and Positiveness, and his Sense rather lay in a sudden Flash of Wit, than a solid Conception and Reflexion.’²⁰ For Argyll, however, such assessments would not have mattered. In his opinion duke John’s military and political achievements were matched (if not surpassed) by his actions as a landowner. This was the part of his ancestor’s life that the 8th duke was most interested in and his admiration for the 2nd duke’s ‘modern’ methods is clear to see. He identified duke John as the pioneer of the improving movement in Scottish agriculture and devoted much space in his memoirs to describing his ancestor’s plan, ‘of dealing with a condition of barbarous ignorance and waste’ on his estates. He described the plan as ‘in the best sense of the word, radical – that is to say, it went to the root of the causes which had led to such a state of things.’²¹ Argyll also applauded the 2nd duke’s choice of advisors, with special recognition going to the role of Duncan Forbes of Culloden (1685-1747) who, in the words of a modern commentator, succeeded in, ‘skilfully driving a wedge between the tacksmen and their dependents...raising the rents substantially and letting most of the farms either to the previous sub-tacksmen, who were gentlemen farmers, or to joint tenants.’²² This revolution of the management of the Argyll estates was something with which the 8th duke was immensely satisfied, calling the reforms ‘all-important’.²³ Despite this admiration, Argyll’s carefully worded account of the life of the 2nd duke does contain some censure of his actions. He gently chastised his

¹⁹ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 4; Alexander Pope had written, ‘Argyll, the State’s whole thunder born to wield, And shake alike the Senate and the Field.’

²⁰ Lindsay and Cosh, *Inveraray and the Dukes of Argyll*, 3; G. Lockhart, *Memorials concerning the affairs of Scotland, from Queen Anne’s accession to the throne, to the commencement of the Union of the two Kingdoms of Scotland and England, in May, 1707*, (London, 1714), 132.

²¹ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 23.

²² E. Cregeen, ‘The changing role of the house of Argyll in the Scottish Highlands’, II; see also, E. Cregeen, ‘The tacksmen and their successors : a study of tenurial reorganisation in Mull, Morvern and Tiree in the early 18th century’, *Scottish Studies* 13, (1969), 93-144; E. Cregeen (ed.), ‘Argyll estate instructions : Mull, Morvern, Tiree, 1771-1805’, *Scottish History Society*, 4th ser., 1, (Edinburgh, 1964).

²³ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 21.

ancestor for his lack of ambition for the future of the family as a whole, saying that when Forbes of Culloden made his recommendations for the estate in 1737,

Duke John saw the seriousness and difficulty of the task. He wrote to his friend Culloden thanking him for his report and for his advice, confessing that it was a scheme of management which might well engage all the interest of a man younger than himself, and of one who had an heir of his own to follow him...Duke John ought to have remembered that, though he had no son of his own to profit by his exertions, his next heirs were, after all, of his own blood and lineage.²⁴

For the 8th duke, the honour and future prosperity of the family were seen as the key concerns. His predecessor's lack of foresight and his initial reluctance to work for the greater good of the house of Argyll marred his otherwise favourable perception of the man. But the 2nd duke's many accomplishments doubtless outweighed this failing in Argyll's eyes, indeed duke John's failings were probably useful to his descendant who was setting himself up to be the saviour of the family: by learning the lessons of the past, the 8th duke must have thought that he would be able to become the perfect duke and redeem his family's fortunes.

These illustrious predecessors were all, of course, far removed in time from the 8th duke, but his impressions of them are vitally important in building up a picture of his motivations and ideals. Far closer to him, chronologically at least, was his grandfather, the 5th Duke of Argyll (1723-1806). The situations of grandfather and grandson bore an interesting similarity in that both grew up as younger sons with little expectation of ever becoming duke. Alongside this stood both men's fascination with the management of their land.²⁵ These similarities were enough to lead the 8th duke to feel some affinity with the grandfather whom he never met, but despite this he was keen to point out his grandfather's failings, particularly with regard to his estate management policies. John, 5th duke, was an agricultural improver, but his methods

²⁴ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 23.

²⁵ Argyll recognised, however, that his grandfather had been less than active in the realm of politics and thus not the ideal 'leader of the family' that he should have been, Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 27; A. MacKillop, *'More fruitful than the soil': army, empire and the Scottish Highlands, 1715-1815*, (East Linton 2000), 174-5, 197, 223.

did not impress his grandson. During his period as duke, the population of the estate had increased at an alarming rate as the 5th duke was one of a number of Scottish landowners who were much animated by the possible hazards of a shrinking rural population,

He therefore threw himself with energy into every scheme, however, artificial, for devising home employment for the people. They were all failures...Every little farm was overloaded with families which tried in vain to make a living out of the immemorial usages of a barbarous age – usages which were incompatible with the first principles of a successful agriculture.²⁶

The 5th duke subdivided farms in order to keep tenants on his land and, although these subdivisions were usually of a fair size, they encouraged population growth which led to the (alleged) over-population with which his grandson was forced to contend in the nineteenth century. The 5th duke had also supported measures to stem emigration, such as the Passenger Vessels Act of 1803 which had limited the numbers which could be carried on ships and thus raised the costs of emigration.²⁷ He had also supported government attempts to keep people on the land – schemes which his grandson would later call, ‘bounties upon anything that could be thought of as bribes and baits to induce the swarming multitudes not to swarm, and not to establish new hives.’²⁸

However, such concerns about estate management were, at this stage, well in the future. With the death of the 5th duke, the young George Douglas Campbell’s uncle had become 6th Duke of Argyll (1768-1839) and, when George himself was born on 30th April 1823, he entered the world, not as the heir to an ancient Scottish dukedom,

²⁶ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 26.

²⁷ For more on emigration from Scotland and Britain and the political response see, J.M. Bumsted, *The People's Clearance: Highland Emigration to British North America, 1770-1815*, (Edinburgh, 1982); M.W. Flinn, ‘Malthus, emigration and potatoes in the Scottish north-west 1770-1870’ in, L.M. Cullen, and T.C. Smout, (eds.), *Comparative aspects of Scottish and Irish economic and social history, 1600-1900*, (Edinburgh, 1977), 47-64; M. Gray, *Scots on the move: Scots migrants, 1750-1914*, (Glasgow, 1990); Johnson, H., *British Emigration Policy, 1815-1830*, (Oxford, 1972); M.E. Vance, ‘The Politics of Emigration: Scotland and assisted emigration to upper Canada, 1815-26’, in T.M. Devine (ed.), *Scottish Emigration and Scottish Society*, (Edinburgh, 1992), 37-60.

²⁸ Argyll, *Crofts and Farms in the Hebrides*, 16-17; for further discussion of results of the 5th Duke’s policies see below, Chapter Three.

but as the second son of the 6th duke's brother, and was raised in accordance with his father's relatively modest income, on the estate of Ardencaple, on the Firth of Clyde. George's own father, John, the future 7th Duke (1777-1847), had been something of a disappointment to the family. Unable to settle into undergraduate life at Oxford, John had eventually persuaded his father that the army would be a more suitable career and had served in Ireland, being involved in the suppression of the rebellion in 1798.²⁹ He had doubtless redeemed himself somewhat in his father's eyes by being elected as Tory Member of Parliament for Argyllshire the following year, but he was not a leading figure in government. In addition to this, Argyll's father's life was marred at an early stage by what his son termed as 'the greatest misfortune which can befall a man', an unhappy marriage.³⁰ His first wife, Miss Campbell of Fairfield, was an ill-chosen bride and the union was so unhappy that he left the country soon after the marriage to tour Europe and escape from his new wife.³¹ Returning home in 1803, he remained in London until the death of an uncle, Lord Frederick Campbell (d. 1815), provided him with a Scottish home once more, the aforementioned estate of Ardencaple.

So it was here that, after the death of his first wife in 1818, the future 7th duke made his home and his new life. He remarried in 1820 and this time chose a far more suitable bride – Miss Joan Glassell who was of Lowland stock and had been orphaned at an early age, leaving her heiress to a small estate at Longniddry.³² The marriage

²⁹ The future 7th duke had, according to his son, found Oxford life unbearable and had made himself somewhat unpopular with his tutors, not least perhaps because of his habit of practicing target shooting on the flower pots in Christ Church quadrangle! Argyll later recorded in his memoirs that his father rarely spoke of the events he had witnessed in Ireland during 1798, however, they seem to have left both father and son with a horror of 'nationalist' sentiments which the 8th duke later expressed in his *Irish Nationalism: An Appeal to History*, (London, 1893).

³⁰ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 33.

³¹ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 33-45. The future 7th duke travelled, along with a friend and companion, Dr. Robertson, through France and to Geneva where they made the acquaintance of the famous Madame de Staël. Being forced to flee from Geneva under threat of arrest, Lord John had made a daring escape. According to his son he had dressed as a lady's maid and thus made good his escape from the continent. It is perhaps possible that Lord John provided some of the inspiration for the character of Lord Nevil in Madame de Staël's famous novel *Corinne*, however, further research by one more qualified in the field of literature than this author would be necessary to prove or disprove this hypothesis.

³² Argyll had little knowledge of his mother. Late in his life he tried to piece together the circumstances of his father and mother's meeting and courtship. He concluded that his mother and father must have met at Rosneath through their mutual friends the Smiths of Jordanhill. He placed their first meeting in around 1815 or 1816, which must have been somewhat inconvenient as his father's first wife did not die until 1818. Joan was removed from the country by the Smiths and accompanied them to the continent, possibly to avoid a scandal, however, the two lovers continued to

seems to have been a happy one and quickly resulted in four children. George Douglas Campbell was the second son, his elder brother John had been born in 1821 and two daughters were later born. Emma Campbell was the first of these and enjoyed a long life, eventually marrying her brother's friend Sir John McNeill (1795-1883), but the birth of the other baby girl was difficult and initially child and then mother became seriously ill. The baby died first, not long after her birth in 1827, and her mother followed the next year. George was just five years old and the event had a profound effect upon him. For the young second son, his mother's illness and death had taught him much about his position in the world. While his mother had been ill, George had been sent away from home, while his elder brother had been allowed to remain at his mother's side. Looking back on the events many years later, the 8th duke did not see this as parental sensitivity for his tender years, but as a distinction being made between himself and the eldest son. This distinction was magnified by the final gifts that the boys' dying mother gave to them, 'two copies of the Bible...one of which – mine – was in a single volume, the other – my brother's – in two volumes. The difference attracted my attention, and remains, accordingly, in vivid memory.'³³

What the young boy was feeling were the realities of his family's situation. His elder brother was not just the eldest son, but was also the potential heir to the dukedom. He was an extremely important youth and was to be treated very differently to his younger siblings. The reason for his prominence was that the current duke, George, 6th duke, had no legitimate heirs and if this situation remained unchanged, his death would lead to the title falling to his brother, or his brother's eldest son. Thus the young John Campbell was being groomed to be a duke and his uncle's lifestyle led to high hopes that the title would soon come to this side of the family. The 6th duke has been portrayed as 'a dandy, a rake and a spendthrift familiar of the Prince of Wales, whose only interest in his inheritance was to discover how much money could be squeezed from it to feed his pleasures and pay his debts'.³⁴ The duke's indulgences had doubtless diminished his potential lifespan and thus the elder John Campbell was well aware that it was likely that he or his son would one day take his brother's place.

correspond and were eventually married. Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 52-54; NLS, Acc. 8508/8/12; Glasgow City Archives, TD1/494, Argyll to Sabina Smith, 23 Mar. 1897.

³³ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 60.

³⁴ P. Gaskell, *Morvern Transformed: A Highland Parish in the Nineteenth Century*. (Cambridge, 1968), 23.

Accordingly, every attention was paid to the elder brother. Both boys were of delicate health, suffering from what was termed, 'sudden attacks of illness from some affection of the liver', but it was the elder brother whose medical condition was the most serious.³⁵ Accordingly, their father took the boys periodically to England to consult a Dr. Jephson whose fame had attracted much attention. The doctor was unable to give much more than advice on these occasions, but the boys' father's fears were somewhat allayed by these visits. However, the young John Campbell's 'attacks' continued with some regularity and his father refused to send him away to school, fearing for his health. Thus John remained with his brother at home in Scotland under a succession of private tutors.³⁶ Eventually, in April 1837, his illness took a turn for the worse and he died suddenly. George remembered the day well and recounted it later in his autobiography. He had been out shooting when called home and had returned to find his brother already dead.³⁷ The loss of first his mother and then his only brother must have had a dramatic impact upon the young man, and it was at this point that his interest in religion was first truly awakened. His brother's death, from the same condition that he himself suffered, had brought his own sense of mortality home to him and he began to study theology in earnest – hoping no doubt to prepare himself for the possibility of his own demise. He began to look for signs from his maker and found one almost immediately. In his memoirs, the 8th duke recalled that the day after his brother's death, he had seen a white dove sitting outside his schoolroom window. He asserted that he had taken its appearance as 'a real response to that yearning for greater light which in the face of death and sorrow is often so distracting and oppressive.'³⁸ This would not be the duke's only encounter with the supposedly supernatural – he would later be present at various meetings indulging his interest in the Victorian craze for mesmerism, thought reading and other associated phenomena – but this first encounter remained vividly in his memory for the rest of his life, and doubtless sowed the seeds of enquiry in his mind which would later bear fruit in so many of his later publications. While his brother's death was doubtless traumatic, the young George did not seem to suffer in any prolonged way

³⁵ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 97.

³⁶ For discussion of these tutors and the impact they had upon Argyll, see below, Chapter Four.

³⁷ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 105-8.

³⁸ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 106; This incident and Argyll's interest in the 'supernatural' is further discussed in Chapter Seven.

from it. The two boys had never been especially close, and his jealousy of his elder brother's elevated status no doubt played a significant part in his quick recovery from the trauma. Additionally, John's death led to a positive change in his circumstances – George was now heir presumptive to the dukedom.

He did not have long to wait. The years of excess took their toll on the 6th duke only two years later and George's father, who was himself not in the best of health, became 7th duke of Argyll on the 24th October 1839. His young son became Marquis of Lorne, and the 7th duke, probably fearful of sending his only remaining son away from home, engaged a prominent English tutor, the future Dean of Chester, J.S. Howson (1816-1885) for him.³⁹ It would be one of the enduring regrets of Argyll's life that he never received public school education, and particularly that he never had the opportunity of forming, early in life, that network of contacts that formal education so often provided. Indeed, the new Marquis of Lorne was a singularly solitary figure for most of his youth. His father had only a few close friends and was rarely in society so that they had few visitors by Victorian standards. But his father's elevation to the peerage opened a new world of possibilities and young Lorne now toured the family's estates along with his father and visited London when his father took up his seat in the House of Lords. Argyll's fascination with parliament began here, and during 1840, 1841 and 1842 he was in almost constant attendance, albeit as an observer, at the debates in the House of Lords and, more often in the place where he felt most of the real work was done, the House of Commons.

During his observations of these debates, Lorne decided on his own path in life. He would enter the House of Commons as member for Argyllshire and work to recover the fame of the Argyll family by becoming one of the foremost political figures in the country. It was not an unusual route for a peer's son to choose, but Lorne was somewhat uncommon in his fervour for the plan. His consistent attendance at parliament during the early 1840s must be seen as part of this determination to succeed. He had had no experience of public education and, although well read, was thoroughly unsuited for public life, but Lorne was precocious and in no doubt about his own potential as a parliamentarian. During his three years in London, he absorbed

³⁹ E. Venables, 'Howson, John Saul (1816-1885)', rev. Joanna Hawke, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

as much as possible about life and procedures in both Houses of Parliament. but his attention was focussed upon his immediate aim – the House of Commons.

There was, of course, an obvious problem for Lorne – he would not come of age until 1844 and thus would have to bide his time until then – but this simply gave him more time to train himself for public life. The Argyllshire seat would certainly not present a problem for the young Marquis to win and he felt safe in his assumption that he would be able to stand for it as soon as he turned twenty-one. However, as it transpired his ambitions were to be thwarted.

When the 6th duke of Argyll had died, the county seat had been held by Walter Campbell of Islay (1798–1855), a Whig, who resigned his position immediately. The new 7th duke put up in his place Mr Campbell of Monzie, a Conservative who took the same view as the duke on the looming Scottish Church question. Both men were active in attempting to prevent the coming Disruption of the Church of Scotland and pressed for a compromise measure.⁴⁰ However, Monzie's appointment did not sit well with the county lairds. He was seen as a radical by many and was soon forced to resign his seat. This was in 1843 and the young Marquis of Lorne was still one year too young to take his place. A replacement was found in the popular Duncan MacNeill of Colonsay, who would serve the constituency and the country with distinction until 1867.⁴¹ Lorne's opportunity was thus taken from him and this seems to have caused some resentment. In his autobiography, the 8th duke claimed that Monzie offered to postpone his resignation until 1844 in order to allow the young Marquis to take his place, and he recalled that,

This put me in rather a difficult position, because no one knew better than I did the dissatisfaction of the constituency with their member. After mature deliberation, I felt that I could not, on grounds affecting myself only, take the responsibility of saddling a great constituency with a distrusted member for a whole year at a very important political time.⁴²

⁴⁰ The 7th and 8th duke's attitudes to the Church question will be discussed in more depth in Chapter Four.

⁴¹ G.F. Millar, 'McNeill, Duncan, Baron Colonsay and Oronsay (1793-1874)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

⁴² Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 268.

Thus the 8th duke later claimed that he declined Monzie's offer. However, it seems that this was something of an elaboration on his part. It seems likely that the decision on whether Monzie should stay or go was not made by Lorne at all, but was in all likelihood taken by Monzie himself in conjunction with Lorne's father. This decision, far from being approved of by Lorne, seems to have been a bitter disappointment to him. He wrote to his sister, Emma Campbell, from the continent in measured but noticeably resentful tone,

I suppose he [the 7th duke] could not do anything else but propose MacNeill the Lord Advocate as member for the county. At the same time it is a great pity Monzie did not stay until I was of age – as it will be said that the Duke has deserted the cause of the church in putting in a man who is I believe of the moderate party. But this cannot be helped.⁴³

Lorne's concern for the church question was genuine, but in this case it was doubtless overshadowed by his own personal disappointment. Whatever happened behind the scenes regarding Monzie's departure, Lorne's correspondence with his sister makes it clear that he did not play the deciding role in the chain of events that he later claimed. Now his seat in the Commons had been taken by another man, and unless something unforeseen happened to the able and popular MacNeill, Lorne's dreams of representing his county would have to remain just that.

Other matters were coming to the fore, however, and doubtless at least one of these softened Lorne's disappointment. In 1842, Lorne had met the formidable Duchess of Sutherland (1806-1868) and her family and 'speedily fell under the influence of the irresistible attraction she exercised over so many'.⁴⁴ He also fell for something else – namely the duchess's eldest daughter, Elizabeth Leveson-Gower (1824-1878). Their courtship was interrupted by Lorne's decision to take two lengthy European tours, but on his return from the continent, the pair were married on the 30th of July 1844 at

⁴³ NLS, Acc. 8508/13, Argyll to Emma Campbell, 15 Jun. 1843.

⁴⁴ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. 1, 185.

Trentham.⁴⁵ It was a marvellous match for the ambitious young Marquis. The wealth of the Sutherland family far outshone the Argylls' rather precarious finances, and the marriage was socially profitable as well. The reserved Lorne was now thrust into the sort of society that had been so conspicuously absent in his youth and which would be essential for his future parliamentary ambitions. The match, however, was not merely one of convenience. The genuine affection between the pair is obvious from the early days of their acquaintance and letters between the pair throughout their marriage bear witness to their love. In a touching letter, penned after almost twenty years of marriage, husband would write to wife, 'my own darling, how my heart jumps at the thought of hugging you again'⁴⁶ and the following year, he would write to his eldest son, John (1845-1914) that, 'I could not have done what I have done – if it had not been for your mama – who...is worth the whole twelve of us put together.'⁴⁷ Elizabeth brought more than her charms to the marriage. Her family provided her with some £20,000 which her new husband was able to put to good use almost immediately, paying off some of the family's huge debts.⁴⁸ The marriage was a fruitful one and would eventually result in twelve children reaching adulthood.⁴⁹ These children would become a valuable asset in the Victorian marriage market, but their father often had problems directing his children's affections in an appropriate direction.

The duke's later correspondence reveals the problems which he faced regarding the marriages of his own children. In his letters to his eldest son John in particular, Argyll complained frequently of the imprudence of his children. Argyll's own first marriage seems to have been a genuinely happy one, founded on solid foundations of affection and respect and, importantly for Argyll, based upon a union of two families

⁴⁵ Lorne had been advised by his doctors to winter on the continent. His tours took in much of France, Italy, Switzerland, Greece and Spain and he was accompanied by his tutor, Howson, and a medical doctor, W.F. Cumming. The two tours are described in great detail in Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 188-222, 238-62.

⁴⁶ NLS, Acc.9209/1, Argyll to Elizabeth, Duchess of Argyll, 24 May 1863.

⁴⁷ NLS, Acc.9209/1, Argyll to John, Marquis of Lorne, 30 Mar. 1864.

⁴⁸ Although the 7th duke had attempted to repay some of the debts which his extravagant brother had accumulated, the family were still experiencing financial problems throughout the 1840s and 1850s. When the 8th duke took over the family's affairs in 1847, their debts still stood at over £230,000. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

⁴⁹ The couple had five sons and seven daughters. John was the eldest and later became the 9th Duke of Argyll. The other sons were, Archibald, Walter, George and Colin and the daughters Edith, Elizabeth, Evelyn, Victoria, Frances, Mary and Constance. See Appendix II for the Argyll family tree.

of similar social standing.⁵⁰ Their eldest son, John, Marquis of Lorne's marriage in 1871 to Princess Louise (1848-1939), the daughter of Queen Victoria, was a source of great pride for Argyll, and the match made in 1868 between his eldest daughter Edith and the future 7th Duke of Northumberland (1846-1918) was viewed similarly. However, some of his other children did not, in Argyll's view, choose so appropriately. His second daughter, Elizabeth, chose to engage herself to Edward Harrison Clough Taylor (d.1921), the son of a Justice of the Peace from Yorkshire and a man for whom Argyll had little respect. He told John, 'so far as I know there is no prospect of his having a farthing. I tell her that this is folly – as it will close every other chance'⁵¹ and he forbade the match. His daughter, however, seems to have paid little attention to this and Argyll reported to John some two years later that, 'The Taylor business is a bore. He and Lizzy seem to consider themselves engaged despite all warnings...altogether it is very tiresome and trying...Lizzy is perfectly miserable and is very often in bed.'⁵² The marriage did in fact eventually proceed, as did other matches which Argyll regarded as highly inappropriate: between his daughter Evelyn and James Baillie Haddington (1850-1921), the son of an Admiral in the Royal Navy, in 1886; between his son, Archibald, and Argyll's own ward, Janey Sevilla (d.1923) the daughter of the late James Henry Callendar of Ardkinglass, in 1869; and between another son, Colin, and Gertrude (1857-1911), the daughter of Edward Maghlin Blood, in 1881.⁵³ Argyll's concerns about this last marriage in particular proved to be well founded as it lasted only three years and resulted in a very public divorce case, which would cost the family some £15,000 and provoked a sensational scandal.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Argyll would eventually marry three times, firstly to Elizabeth in 1844, and after her death in 1878 to the widow Amelia Claughton in 1881. Amelia was the daughter of the Bishop of St. Albans and former wife of Col. Anson. After his second wife's death in 1894 he married his long time friend Ina McNeill, daughter of Archibald McNeill of Colonsay, in 1895. It was Ina, the third duchess, who edited and completed Argyll's memoirs after his death and her influence on the published memoirs is discussed in the introduction to this thesis.

⁵¹ NLS, Acc.9209/1, Argyll to Lorne, 1 Aug. 1879.

⁵² NLS, Acc.9209/1, Argyll to Lorne, 6 Aug. 1881.

⁵³ NLS, Acc.9209/1, Argyll to Lorne, 8 Jun. 1881; NLS, Acc.9209/1, Argyll to Lorne, 6 Apr. 1881. Janey Sevilla was a noted free spirit, patron of the arts and friend of James McNeill Whistler and Oscar Wilde and she posed for a number of portraits by Whistler.

⁵⁴ The divorce case was sensational and was reported in most newspapers. As well of claims of adultery on the part of both parties (Colin claimed his wife had had four lovers including the future Duke of Marlborough) it was also asserted that Colin had passed on a 'painful medical condition' to his wife. The duke had been furious that he had not been permitted by the judge to give evidence in support of his son at the trial, see, B[ritish] L[ibrary], Add. MS 44106, Gladstone Papers, Argyll to Gladstone, 23 Dec. 1886. There was understandably a great deal of public interest in the case and it was fully reported during 1886 in newspapers, see especially, *The Times*, 12 Aug. 1886, 3; *The Times*, 27 Nov. 1886, 10.

It is clear that Argyll was extremely anxious for his children to marry well and to link themselves only to people of good standing (and, no doubt, good fortune), however, he seems to have eventually given way to the desires of all of his children rather than expressly forbid matches. Even the above mentioned marriage between Elizabeth and Edward Harrison Clough Taylor, which Argyll had strongly opposed, did take place. There is certainly no mention of any of his children being punished or excluded from the family circle as a result of their marriages. He stood by his son Colin in his embarrassing divorce case and supported his son Archibald even though he repeatedly ran up large debts, and seems to have drunk heavily.⁵⁵ Although Argyll wanted good matches for his children, he must have remembered the ‘great misfortune’ which his father had suffered in his unhappy marriage and it seems likely that he was unwilling to push his children into similarly unhappy circumstances.

But such concerns were, in the 1840s, well in the future for the newly wed couple. In the early years of marriage, the Marquis of Lorne and his new wife lived busy lives, dividing their time between their own new home of Rosneath on the Firth of Clyde and the Sutherland family homes in England and Scotland. The estate of Rosneath had been gifted to Lorne and his new bride by his father and it was there, in peace and tranquillity, that he found the time to write and to think in between social engagements. These quiet times, however, were few and far between. As a youth, Lorne had interested himself in nature and, as already stated, had had little contact with anyone outside his small family circle. The Sutherlands, however, knew everyone and Elizabeth, being especially close to her charismatic mother, was the ideal person to introduce her new husband to the wider world. Among her immediate family were Charles Stuart 12th Lord Blantyre (1818-1900), Hugh Lupus Grosvenor the future Duke of Westminster (1825-1899), Lord Morpeth (1802-1864), Lord Granville (1815-1891), and Lord Francis Egerton (1790-1871).⁵⁶ The family’s acquaintances stretched across the world and, though the Sutherlands were of a Whig persuasion themselves, included some of the most notable politicians of all parties.

⁵⁵ NLS, Acc.9209/1, Argyll to Lorne, 22 Feb. 1880; NLS, Acc.9209/1, Argyll to Lorne, 21 Jun. 1881; NLS, Acc.9209/1, Argyll to Lorne, 29 Dec. 1882.

⁵⁶ Lord Morpeth later became the 7th Earl of Carlisle; Lord Francis Egerton later became 1st Earl of Ellesmere.

There could scarcely have been a better family for the ambitious young Marquis to have joined.

The contacts he made through Elizabeth in many ways made up for his own early lack of friends and certainly helped to shape his political future. Although, the 6th duke of Argyll had been a staunch Whig, Lorne's father had despised the party, largely though distaste over the reform bill of 1832 and, perhaps more importantly, through an intense hatred of Earl Grey (1764-1845).⁵⁷ This hatred manifested itself prominently outside the Houses of Parliament as well as within it, as the 8th duke later recorded in his memoirs,

My father had erected a high flagstaff on top of a new tower which had been built in connection with an addition to the castle [Ardencaple]. On this flagstaff he used always to hoist a large Union Jack whenever Lord Grey's Government received any check, so that very often the country people round, who saw the well-known flag before they knew the cause, used to say, 'Hech, sirs! What's come over the Whigs noo?'⁵⁸

This prejudice had doubtless influenced Lorne and his own feelings were similarly hostile to the Whig party. His experiences while attending both Houses of Parliament had confirmed his early conceptions and, as he watched the debates over the Corn Laws grow more heated and complex, his admiration for Sir Robert Peel (1788-1850) grew as his distaste for the Whigs increased. He was in danger, in these early years, of going down exactly the same path as his father; however, the contacts he made in Elizabeth's immediate family saved him from becoming as implacably opposed to the Whig party as his father had been. His new wife's uncles included Lord Morpeth, who took care to introduce the impressionable young Marquis to Lord John Russell (1792-1878) whose charms and intelligence did much to soften Lorne's antipathy towards the Whig party. Lorne had long been less than impressed by Russell and regarded the latter's sudden conversion to Free Trade in 1845 as evidence of the worst

⁵⁷ Argyll later recorded that his father's dislike of Earl Grey was a direct result of that man's opposition to Pitt whom the 7th Duke had greatly admired. He also suspected Grey's 'Jacobin tendencies' and had told his son of how Grey had arrived in the House of Commons ostentatiously wearing colourful clothing while that rest of the House were in mourning for Louis XVIII. Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 67.

⁵⁸ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 67.

kind of political opportunism.⁵⁹ However, closer acquaintance softened his opinions and despite their differences, Lorne and Russell formed, from this time onwards, a personal friendship that, although not one of the greatest intimacy, did endure through the troubled times to come and remained relatively unscathed until Russell's death.⁶⁰

These early political associations were to prove vitally important to Lorne, and were to be put to use sooner than he had perhaps expected. In April 1847, at the tender age of twenty-four, Lorne succeeded to the dukedom upon the death of his father. It was not wholly unexpected – the 7th duke had been ill for some time and Lorne had effectively been managing the family estates since at least 1846 – however, the loss of a second parent was a huge blow to him and he took what comfort he could from his mother-in-law who now became, he later recalled, ‘in the fullest sense...like a mother’.⁶¹ Succeeding to the title at this time was something of a baptism of fire for the new 8th duke, who had to battle with numerous estate problems – most noticeably with the consequences of the potato famine which was raging across his estates.⁶² In addition to this, the duke and duchess of Argyll had to find time to entertain the Queen at their new home, Inveraray Castle, and Argyll himself had to prepare to take his seat in the House of Lords.

At the opening of the 1848 session, the duke took his place with the other peers in the upper house. A career in the House of Commons had passed him by, but Argyll was anxious to make his mark in the public arena and was extremely conscious that his actions early on would have ramifications for the rest of his career. Even his choice of seating position had to be carefully thought through and he quickly learned that every action had its repercussions. On his first day in the House, Argyll chose a seat close to Lord Stanley (later 14th Earl of Derby, 1789-1869), in fact he sat immediately

⁵⁹ Lorne had been, as has already been stated, paying close attention to matters in parliament during the 1840s and later recorded his early distaste for Russell and his satisfaction when that man was unable to form a government in 1845, Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 273-4.

⁶⁰ Argyll and Russell corresponded widely on franchise reform, foreign affairs and education during the 1850s and 1860s. Despite the political troubles of the later 1850s and 1860s the two men remained good friends and visited each other's homes on a number of occasions. Their relationship seems to have been friendly and good humoured on a personal level and Argyll sent Russell a copy of his *Reign of Law* in 1866 with the expectation that, ‘you will read it whenever you wish to give yourself a headache! For this the whole Medical Faculty could not devise a better prescription than Scotch “Metafeesics”!’, The National Archive. P[ublic] R[ecords] O[ffice], PRO 30/22/16D, Argyll to Russell, 31 Aug 1866.

⁶¹ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 264.

⁶² For further discussion of estate matters see below, Chapter Three.

behind him, in order (as he later claimed) to be at the centre of the debating action. However, Argyll had not anticipated the reaction that this choice would create. He recalled later that ‘the cordiality of his [Stanley’s] reception when he saw me convinced me that he put an interpretation upon my doing this which I by no means intended’.⁶³ Anxious not to be seen by anyone as a potential new recruit to the protectionist Conservatives, Argyll drew off and sat for a time on the cross benches. However, these seats did not satisfy him either and, convinced that it would be impossible to speak from this rather insignificant location, he moved once more to take a place beside the Earl of Aberdeen (1784-1860) on the ‘Duke’s bench’ to the left of the throne.

In Aberdeen, the young duke had found an interesting and inspiring companion. The close connection that quickly formed between these two men was surprising as Argyll had blamed Aberdeen, perhaps more than any other man, for the government’s earlier inaction at the time of the Disruption of the Church of Scotland. He had seen Aberdeen as the man best placed to avert the crisis and had been bitterly disappointed that the Earl had failed to enact a suitable compromise measure.⁶⁴ However, as had happened with Sir John Russell, closer acquaintance softened the young duke’s views and he came to regard Lord Aberdeen as a friend and political mentor. He later recorded that Aberdeen possessed ‘an indefinable charm...which stole upon me, gradually at first, but which took entire possession of me at last...I became strongly attached to him, and I was gratified to find that he liked me.’⁶⁵

Despite eventually settling in such a comfortable position, Argyll’s round of musical chairs had deeper ramifications than he could have possibly expected. His avowed aim, as he later recalled in his memoirs, was to keep away from any of the major political groupings in the House. He was most sympathetic to the position of the Free Trade Conservatives but he saw that in those tumultuous political times, he would do

⁶³ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 301. In his memoirs Argyll recorded that he, ‘had a great respect and admiration for Lord Derby and, rather for the sake of being sufficiently near to hear him well, I took my first seat immediately behind him’. As is clear from the context however, it was not the 13th Earl of Derby that Argyll refers to here, but his son, then Lord Stanley, who would become Lord Derby three years later on his father’s death in 1851.

⁶⁴ The Disruption of the Church of Scotland and Argyll’s role in the controversy will be dealt with in greater detail in Chapter Four.

⁶⁵ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 302.

best to remain as more of an independent than a potential member of the major parties – at least until the parties in question had settled into some sort of order.⁶⁶ However, his somewhat naïve choice to sit close to Stanley and then to reject that man's overtures and move to the other side of the House can hardly have promoted harmony between the Conservative leader and the new member of the Lords. The young duke and Derby (as Stanley became in 1851) would have a troubled future and debates between the two were noticeable for their ferocity. Although Argyll was generally able to weather Derby's attacks, he must at some points have cursed the ill fortune that had led him to make so prominent an enemy at so early a stage in his career.⁶⁷

These problems were in the future, however, and in the early days of his career Argyll was content to watch and wait, biding his time to make the perfect opening speech. He had chosen the perfect seat, was observing his new mentor, Lord Aberdeen, extremely carefully and was waiting to make his mark on the Lords. However, Argyll's impatience to be heard seems to have overcome his good judgement. Despite advice from his relation, Lord Dalhousie (1812-1860), that he should not speak on any subject initially unless he was extremely confident in his views, Argyll chose the Jewish Disabilities Bill to make his maiden speech.⁶⁸ It was a surprising choice. Argyll had never declared any real interest in the subject before and certainly did not initially hold strong views on the matter. Indeed, he was unsure how to vote and could see both sides of the argument for and against the exemption of Jews from part of the parliamentary oath. His speech was short and lucid enough, but certainly did not create a sensation. His argument was simple,

⁶⁶ Argyll discussed his worries about the state of the political parties with his mentor, Lord Aberdeen, in many letters. Of particular note is one from 1852 where he expressed his lack of optimism about the future of the political parties as they stood. BL, Add.43199, f.29-34, Argyll to Aberdeen, 27 Feb. 1852.

⁶⁷ Argyll and Derby would clash often in the House, notable violent exchanges can be seen in, *Hansard*, P[arliamentary] D[ebates], 3rd Series, vol. 125, col. 1333, 18 Apr. 1853; PD, 3rd Series, vol. 138, col. 630, 15 May 1855; PD, 3rd Series, vol. 142, cols. 516-528, 22 May 1856.

⁶⁸ Argyll had delivered a speech at a banquet thrown in Dalhousie's honour in 1847, just before he left to take up his role as Governor General of India. Argyll later recorded that his speech had been well received and that Dalhousie termed it 'a great success' but had given him the following advice, 'Don't be in a hurry to speak when you go to the House, and don't speak too often. But when any question comes up which you feel you really understand, and on which you feel you have something really to say, step out into the debate and join in it, and then by the time I come back from India I'll find you high enough', Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 300. For greater background on the controversy surrounding Jewish disabilities see, R. Woodall, 'The Jewish Relief Act of 1858', *History Today*, 25 (1975), 410-17; U.R.Q. Henriques, 'The Jewish Emancipation Controversy in Nineteenth Century Britain', *Past and Present*, 40 (1968), 126-46.

if there was no other objection against the Bill than that the Jews were foreigners in such a degree as to be incapable of representing the people of this country, he saw no reason why the legislature should interpose to prevent constituencies from judging for themselves in respect to this.⁶⁹

This was hardly revolutionary material. It was certainly a liberal stance on the issue, but it certainly was not the type of opening salvo that would attract much attention in the wider world. However, it was not an altogether pointless move on Argyll's part. As J.B. Conacher has demonstrated, the Peelites as a group generally opposed moves towards the admission of Jews, however, there were notable exceptions to this. Among the twenty-nine Free Trade Conservatives who supported the bill in the Commons were Sir Robert Peel himself along with W.E. Gladstone, and Sir James Graham. In addition, Argyll's support for the admission of Jews was made despite Aberdeen's initial opposition to the measure.⁷⁰ With this in mind, Argyll's stance on the issue can perhaps be seen as a conscious effort to express his own independence as a speaker. Although Argyll often later classified himself at this stage as a Peelite, and certainly supported their stance on Free Trade, he had never served under Peel, and did not have any close personal connections with the most prominent Peelites during his first years in Parliament. He had early on made an enemy of Derby and was unlikely to find a comfortable home within that man's party and was thus somewhat disconnected from the unsettled political structures in Parliament. Indeed, writing to Aberdeen at this time, Argyll expressed his feeling that, 'a third party may be required in the times which are at hand to preserve a balance which [could] not otherwise be maintained'. This third party should be made up, as the duke saw it, of the moderately minded men of ability who at present formed part of the 'Derbyite', 'Peelite' and Whig groupings and would work actively to ensure that conservative policy would guide 'that progress which is inevitable, in a safe direction'.⁷¹ The duke was acutely conscious of his political ambitions and his actions during the late

⁶⁹ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 98, col. 1356, 25 May 1848.

⁷⁰ J. B. Conacher, 'Peel and the Peelites, 1846-1850', *English Historical Review*, 73 (1958), 431-52; J. B. Conacher, *The Peelites and the Party System, 1846-1852*, (Newton Abbot, 1972), 222-9; K. T. Hoppen, *The Mid Victorian Generation, 1846-1886*, (Oxford, 1998), 139, 448; PD, 3rd Series, vol. 96, cols. 536-539, 11 Feb 1848; PD, 3rd Series, vol. 98, cols. 1407-1408, 25 Mar 1848.

⁷¹ BL, Add. 43199, Argyll to Aberdeen, undated. It is likely that this forms the end of a letter in the same manuscript collection which was written on 27 Feb 1852 (f.29).

1840s and early 1850s seem to have been geared to ensuring that he would be perceived as one of those ‘active conservatives’ whose acceptance and support for liberal ideas was tempered by an equal measure of conservatism that would help to guide the country safely through the changes which were certain to come. By supporting the cause of the Jews in Parliament he was essentially advertising these liberal ideas and was also trying to mark himself as a man of the future.

Argyll would build on his ‘liberalism’ in later debates on Parliamentary Oaths and on University Tests, and would eventually cultivate an image as ‘the radical duke’. He made it clear on numerous occasions in parliament that he was of the opinion that the religious test for University professors was damaging – ‘it had the effect of excluding most eminent men from the chairs of the Universities; it did no good.’⁷² He also consistently attacked Parliamentary Oaths, arguing as late as 1882 (with regard to the controversy raised by the Bradlaugh case) that it would be fairer and more effective, ‘to ask men to give whatever promise you like under whatever form is most binding upon their conscience. That is all the power you have, and I think it is all the power you have a right to ask.’⁷³

In taking this liberal attitude towards reform of religious oaths, Argyll was undoubtedly following his own conscience as well as raising his public profile. However, the duke’s open-minded policy on the issue placed him on the same side of the debating fence as some of his most prominent future opponents. Among these men perhaps no-one was to incur more of the duke’s wrath in the future than his most hated opponent from the other house, Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881). It is worth emphasising that, while Argyll’s relations with many opposition politicians were often strained, few men were subject to the intense hatred with which the duke came to regard this man. The duke’s opinions of Disraeli had been formed at an early age when, as a young man, he had observed the debates in the House of Commons in 1846. He recorded later that he vividly recalled watching Sir Robert Peel’s struggles to abolish the Corn Laws and that he remembered with equal clarity how ‘the young

⁷² PD, 3rd Series, vol. 123, col. 780, 30 Nov 1852.

⁷³ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 271, col. 1367, 4 Jul. 1882. The Bradlaugh case and the reactions of contemporary politicians to it is discussed in W.L. Arnstein, ‘The Bradlaugh Case: A Reappraisal’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 18 (1957), 254-69; W.L. Arnstein, ‘Gladstone and the Bradlaugh Case’, *Victorian Studies*, 5 (1962), 303-30; R.E. Quinault, ‘The Fourth Party and the Conservative Opposition to Bradlaugh’, *English Historical Review*, 91 (1976), 315-40.

and fantastic adventurer, Benjamin Disraeli,' had made 'those personal assaults on the great Minister [Peel] which assisted to bring him into prominence. I confess I hated them and the man who made them.'⁷⁴ And later in his memoirs, Argyll could not resist pouring more scorn upon Disraeli, devoting some four pages to him and saying that he,

had no opinions of his own. He had no traditions with which to break. He was free to play with prejudices in which he did not share, and to express passions which were not his own, except in so far as they were tinged with personal resentment,

and he went on to compare Disraeli's rise to political prominence as being akin to 'a subaltern in a great battle where every single superior officer was killed or wounded.'⁷⁵ This distaste for Disraeli must also have influenced Argyll's early relations with the Protectionist Conservatives whose effective leader in the Commons Disraeli would become by 1848. The two men would never become closely acquainted and Argyll's dislike of Disraeli never seems to have abated. Even after Disraeli's death in 1881, Argyll could only bring himself grudgingly to say, 'I dare say he was personally likeable in many ways'.⁷⁶ Argyll was not, of course, alone in finding Disraeli less than appealing. J.B. Conacher has highlighted the difference between those Free Trade Conservatives who felt that a reconciliation with their Protectionist colleagues was desirable and possible, and those 'true' Peelites whose attachment to Peel, free trade and fiscal reform made such a step unthinkable.⁷⁷ Unhappiness with the prospect of being led by Derby, Bentinck and Disraeli (whose violent attacks upon Sir Robert Peel proved difficult to forget) undoubtedly played a part in their determination to avoid reconciliation and both personal feeling and political sympathy led Argyll to be increasingly drawn towards that group of Peelites who remained loyal to their former leader.

Thus despite his aim of remaining independent, Argyll found himself becoming more closely connected the able group of men who formed the core of the Peelite's

⁷⁴ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 275.

⁷⁵ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 278-81.

⁷⁶ NLS, Acc.9209/1, Argyll to Lorne, 21 Apr 1881.

⁷⁷ Conacher, *The Peelites and the Party System*, 16-21.

strength. As the 1850s dawned, the duke began to expand his range of political connections and developed friendships with men of potential influence, including one whose career became of increasing importance in Argyll's own rise through the ranks – William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898).⁷⁸ During the 1850s Gladstone and Argyll found themselves increasingly thrown together as the small group of former Peelites grew smaller and more close-knit and they would form a friendship that would last for the rest of their lives. This friendship was to be cemented by the time the two men spent together as members of the cabinet under the leadership of Lord Aberdeen.

This was still to come, however, and the young duke of Argyll was still anxious to make his mark upon his fellow peers. In this he enjoyed somewhat mixed results. As the now somewhat antagonistic Lord Stanley recorded in 1850, his style was not to everyone's liking,

The Duke of Argyll brought on the case of one Mr Ryland, a colonial officer, alleged to have been improperly removed from his situation. The Duke is twenty-seven, the youngest peer who takes part in public affairs: he has some talent, more confidence, a diminutive figure, an affected style of dress, with long red hair loose over his shoulders, and a deep sonorous voice, capable of great rhetorical power. There is nothing to prevent this young man rising to a very high position except his too visible arrogance and conceit. He spoke very well, with logical force not inferior to his fluency. His style reminded me of Gladstone. When he sat down, Brougham, who during his speech had been noisy in applause, clapped him on the back with a 'well crowed, little Highland cock!', which the Duke did not appear to like.⁷⁹

Despite critiques like this, the young duke was about to find out just how quickly his own star was rising. He later recorded that as Lord John Russell struggled to keep his government from falling apart over the question of Reform in 1851, he approached

⁷⁸ Gladstone and Argyll's relationship was formed initially through the pages of the *Quarterly Review*. Gladstone had reviewed Argyll's *Presbytery Examined: An Essay, Critical and Historical, on the Ecclesiastical History of Scotland since the Reformation* and the two men began corresponding on the topic of religion soon afterwards. See Chapter Six for more on the two men's friendship.

⁷⁹ J. Vincent, (ed.), *Derby, Disraeli and the Conservative Party: Journals and Memoirs of Edward Henry Stanley 1849-1869*, (Hassocks, 1978), 17-8.

the twenty-eight year old Argyll with a proposition.⁸⁰ He apparently petitioned the duke, through his wife's uncle, Lord Carlisle, with an offer of a position – not within the Cabinet, but practically at the door of the cabinet, as Argyll termed it. Before the offer could even be put in writing, Argyll had made up his mind to refuse, and sent Russell a courteous, but firm, pre-emptive reply.⁸¹ This exchange seems straightforward enough, however, on closer examination of the available evidence some inconsistencies emerge. From Russell's own papers it appears that Argyll had indeed written to Russell in response to an offer of office and had told him that, 'I feel that it is not wise in a young man just entering into public life to pledge himself so early in his course', but this letter was penned in January 1848 and not in 1851 as Argyll later recalled.⁸² It is perhaps possible that another offer was made to the young duke in 1851 but as no evidence of such an offer exists in the papers of John Russell it may be reasonably safely concluded that Argyll simply mistook the date when writing his memoirs.⁸³ Despite the confusion over the date of the offer, it is certain that the offer itself was made and although Argyll was certainly not alone in being approached by Russell, it was a great compliment for the young politician to be thought of for office so early in his career. However, he was determined that he would not board the sinking ship of Russell's administration and that he would be better to take his chances with a future leader instead. In the mean time, Argyll had plenty to occupy his mind, he was elected as Chancellor of the University of St. Andrews and spent his time studying geology whenever parliament was not in session. Biding his time

⁸⁰ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 341-2; Russell's administration is summed up succinctly in Hoppen, *The Mid Victorian Generation, 1846-1886*, 141-7; for more detail see also J. Prest, *Lord John Russell*, (London, 1971); Conacher, *The Peelites and the Party System, 1846-1852*; J. Hogan, 'Protectionists and Peelites : the Conservative Party in the House of Lords 1846 to 1852', *Parliaments, Estates & Representation*, 11 (1991), 163-80; W.D. Jones and A.B. Erickson, *The Peelites, 1846-57*, (Columbus, 1972).

⁸¹ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 341-2.

⁸² PRO, PRO 30/22/7A, Argyll to Russell, 24 Jan. 1848. Argyll's refusal to join with Russell at this early time was doubtless motivated, as he claimed, by his determination to remain independent until he could determine how the political situation would settle down, but it may also have been at least partly motivated by some resentment that Russell had not supported Argyll's father's claims over the Great Seal of Scotland some two years previously (Russell had advised that the Queen return the Seal to the Earl of Stair), PRO, PRO 30/22/5B, Russell to 7th Duke of Argyll, 10 Aug 1846. Russell may well have been interested in approaching Argyll in 1851 or early 1852 and had indeed been encouraged by Lord Lansdowne to offer him a cabinet position, but it seems likely that in the event he decided against this, perhaps heeding Lansdowne's warning that, despite his attractions, Argyll 'would probably prove somewhat unmanageable', Lord Lansdowne to Russell, 2 Jan 1852, as quoted in G.P. Gooch (ed.), *The Later Correspondence of Lord John Russell: 1840-1878*, (London, 1925), 94.

⁸³ This may seem an insignificant point at first glance, but it serves to highlight the inconsistencies that run through the duke's autobiography – inconsistencies which are more fully discussed in the introduction to this thesis.

proved to be a worthwhile tactic as, before he was thirty, Argyll would receive another offer of office – this time of cabinet office – from his old friend Lord Aberdeen. Accepting, with alacrity the position of Lord Privy Seal, Argyll now found himself one of six men who could be classed as Peelites who were included in that Cabinet. United with old and new friends like Russell and Granville and, of course, Aberdeen and Gladstone, Argyll was now firmly established upon the ladder of power. At such a tender age the future looked bright and the 8th duke of Argyll must have felt as though he was truly embarking on a journey to recapture the glory of his forefathers. His political career was just beginning and it had begun well. With maturity and experience it seemed that his prospects could only improve and that he could aspire to high office, perhaps even the highest office in the land.

CHAPTER THREE

THE LAW OF THE LAND

At the age of just twenty-four, the young Marquis of Lorne had become the 8th Duke of Argyll. His plans for political prominence were of primary importance in his own mind, but before steps could be taken in that direction the new duke had been forced to deal with a more immediately pressing matter – the impending subsistence crisis that was threatening the western Highlands of Scotland. The Argyll family's lands included the island of Tiree and the Ross of Mull as well as vast tracts of land around Inveraray, substantial holdings on the Kintyre peninsula and a few scattered possessions across Lorne and Dumbartonshire.¹ The substantial East Lothian estates of Argyll's mother, Joan Glassell, had already been sold to the Earl of Wemyss and March in 1847 in order to keep the family afloat financially and the duke later declared that he had been determined to preserve as much of the Argyll family's traditional lands as was possible, whatever the financial cost.² Additionally, Argyll's marriage to Elizabeth Leveson-Gower had provided him with an additional £20,000 which had immediately been ploughed into repaying some of his family's extensive debts.³

The family's precarious financial position in the nineteenth century stood in stark contrast to their successes in the past. The Campbell family had risen to prominence in Scotland during the 14th century and their prestige and possessions had grown at an extremely rapid pace from the time of the wars of independence until they had become by the 17th century the single most powerful magnates in the west of Scotland. Having assumed the position of the 'King's men' in that region, they had been able to take over large swathes of land from their rivals – most notably that of the MacLeans, MacDougalls and, of course, the MacDonalds. In addition to this, the family had pursued a policy of making extremely advantageous marriages and were

¹ See Appendix III, for full details of the Argyll family's lands.

² Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 293.

³ See above, Chapter Two.

thus able to consolidate their hold on many marginal areas as well as adding lands to their extensive existing collection.⁴

Their territories were vast and their influence in Scottish affairs was to become equally impressive, culminating most notably perhaps in the contributions of the 2nd duke, John Campbell (1680-1743) and his brother the 3rd duke, Archibald Campbell (1682-1761) at the time of the 1707 Union between Scotland and England and in the period following this momentous event.⁵ However, by the time the 8th duke took up his hereditary position, the family's fortunes had somewhat waned. The policy of subdivision on the Argyll estates which the 5th duke, John Campbell (1723-1806) had undertaken had left serious problems with which later generations had to contend. The 8th duke was conscious of his grandfather's motivations for keeping people on the land (a common theme in the early 19th century), but he was also extremely critical of these measures as we have already seen.⁶

After the 5th duke's death in 1806, the family had suffered the misfortune of having at its head one of the most notorious spendthrifts of his day, in the person of the 6th duke, George Campbell (1768-1839). He was the uncle of the future 8th duke and his nephew's vehement dislike for the man and his conduct came across vividly in the account he gave in his memoirs. The 8th duke described his uncle's life thus,

in early life he fell into companionship with the society which surrounded the Prince of Wales, and from sheer carelessness, idleness, and want of purpose in life, did nothing but dilapidate his great inheritance...I have no

⁴ R.A. Dodgshon, *From Chiefs to Landlords: Social and Economic Change in the Western Highlands and Islands, c 1493-1820*, (Edinburgh, 1998), 34-8; E.J. Cowan, 'Clanship, Kinship and the Campbell acquisition of Islay', *Scottish Historical Review*, (1979), 132-57; S. Boardman, 'The Tale of Leper John and the Campbell Acquisition of Lorn', in E.J. Cowan and R.A. Macdonald (eds.), *Alba: Celtic Scotland in the Middle Ages*, (East Linton, 2000), 219-47; I.D. Whyte, *Scotland before the Industrial Revolution: An Economic and Social History c1050-c1750*, (London, 1995), 264-70.

⁵ The careers of these two men are followed in a number of works, see particularly, Lindsay and Cosh, *Inveraray and the Dukes of Argyll*, 3-10; R. Campbell, *The life of the most illustrious Prince John, Duke of Argyll and Greenwich*, (London, 1745); Simpson, 'Who steered the gravy train?'

⁶ See above, Chapter Two.

associations with him except the experience I have had of the injury he did to the family estates.⁷

This ‘injury’ was indeed a serious one and led to the family having to retrench immediately. The 6th duke had been an absentee landlord, spending most of his life in London, running up more and more excessive debts. Lindsay and Cosh report that the 6th duke ‘ran up debts which even by present day standards were on a staggering scale, and the impressive Argyll rent-rolls suffered from the strain’ and further that ‘during these disastrous years the total assets raised to pay the Duke’s debts were estimated at half a million.’⁸ Much of the estate, including the family seat of Inveraray, was put into trust and some areas even had to be sold to pay off these extravagant debts – among them the island of Coll. On the succession of the 7th duke, John Campbell (1777-1847), however, estate policy had been radically altered and both economy and personal management of the Argyll lands were reintroduced. A large part of the future 8th duke’s formative years had been spent travelling with his father as they toured the remaining family lands in North Argyll, Kintyre, Mull and Tiree. The lands that were in Argyll hands were still vast and provided a substantial income – by the 1850s these lands were providing a rental of around £28,000 per annum and covered an extensive area.⁹

Despite this relatively large rental income and despite the efforts made by the 7th duke to manage the estates more effectively, the family were unable to escape from their heavy burden of debt, even though it had been noticeably reduced during Argyll’s father’s short time in charge of the family’s lands. By 1847 the family’s debts still stood at some £232,000 and Argyll and his father had more or less exhausted any means of raising large sums of cash to further reduce this amount.¹⁰ The 8th duke may have hoped that, in time and with some reorganisation of his lands, he would be able to clear the family’s debts without selling any further possessions, but his grand plans were to be challenged almost before they had begun.

⁷ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 28; the 6th duke’s indulgences are also described in Gaskell, *Morvern Transformed*, 23; see also his obituary in *The Scotsman*, 26 Oct. 1839, 4, for comment on his connections to the Royal Family.

⁸ Lindsay and Cosh, *Inveraray and the Dukes of Argyll*, 280; 312.

⁹ N[ational] A[rchives] of S[cotland], VR89/1, Valuations Rolls for Argyll, 1855-56.

¹⁰ NLS, Acc. 9209/1, Argyll to Lorne, 30 Mar. 1864.

It was perhaps one of the 8th duke's greatest misfortunes that his succession to the title would come at one of the most difficult times in the history of the western isles – the time of the potato famine. The aforementioned islands of Mull and Tiree were among those areas which were worst hit by this calamity and the Argyll family were therefore to be directly and seriously affected by the crisis. Although the 7th duke did not die until 1847 his health had been delicate for some considerable time before his demise and his son had in fact been managing the Argyll estates in his place since at least early 1846.¹¹ Thus the future 8th duke was firmly in place at the head of estate affairs when the famine broke out and was in a position to deal personally with the famine as events unfolded. The crisis would cost the estate dearly financially, as shall be seen, however, it also presented the ambitious young duke with a unique opportunity – the chance to take drastic action in order to reshape his estates.

The new duke was certainly not an absentee landlord. As has been mentioned, he had already travelled around most of the family's estates with his father in the early 1840s and he made his home in Scotland at the family seat of Inveraray. He had formed opinions about most of the family's lands (and tenants) at a fairly early age and in particular he professed a great affection for the island of Tiree as well as great hopes for its future prosperity. Many years after the famine he would write that,

I fully expect that 'far on in summers which I shall not see' the island of Tiree will be a great resort of health. Its strong yet soft sea-air – its comparative dryness – its fragrant turf, full of wild thyme and clover – its miles of pure white sandy bays, equally pleasant for riding, driving, or walking, or for sea-bathing – and last, not least, its unrivalled expanses for the game of golf – all combine to render it most attractive and wholesome in the summer months. My own tastes would lead me to add as a special recommendation its wealth of sky ringing with the song of skylarks, which are extraordinarily abundant.¹²

¹¹ It is unclear exactly when the 7th duke's health had reached this stage of deterioration. He was sixty-two years old and in ill health when he became duke. His son later recalled that by 1846 he had been called upon to 'deal with the difficulty as well as I could', Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 285; this is also mentioned in another publication when Argyll states that he was in control from the first months of the famine: Argyll, *Crofts and Farms in the Hebrides*, 20.

¹² Argyll to Lord Napier, 1883, as quoted in, H. Macdougall and Rev. H. Cameron, *Handbook to the islands of Coll and Tiree*, (Glasgow, 1937), 1.

Unfortunately for the tenants on the Argyll estates, fulfilling plans like these would not require large numbers of crofters and cottars: indeed their presence would have spoiled the overall effect of a tranquil health resort! However, it was never Argyll's plan to create any such resort on the island. As the above quotation shows, the scheme was more of a whimsical pipe dream than a firm plan of action; nevertheless, he certainly did have plans for his island properties – and these plans would prove to be no less unpopular with many residents than the creation of a health spa would have done. Before going on to look at these plans in detail it is essential to understand how the duke of Argyll formed his opinions on estate management. Some clues to this can be found in the period leading up to and encompassing the potato famine of the 1840s.

In the 1830s two expert witnesses had reported that 'there can be no question that this is a population much too extensive for these islands [Coll and Tiree] in their present state of productiveness.'¹³ These two men were A. Fullarton and C.R. Baird, members of the Glasgow Statistical Society who had carried out an investigation into what they termed as the 'evils' which were affecting the people of the Highlands. They had also noted that the people were then in such a desperate condition that they were beginning to see emigration as a possible alternative to their sufferings. The problems that were being faced on Tiree were in many ways a direct result of previous estate policy which had seen subdivision actually encouraged for a time under the 5th Duke, followed by a period of almost total neglect by his successor. The consequences of these policies have been well demonstrated by T.M. Devine who has been able to calculate the changes in population on the island by use of Census records as well as some of the Argyll estate papers.¹⁴

¹³ A. Fullarton and C.R. Baird, *Remarks on the evils at present affecting the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*. (Glasgow, 1838), 34.

¹⁴ T.M. Devine, *The Great Highland Famine: Hunger, Emigration and the Scottish Highlands in the Nineteenth Century*. (Edinburgh, 1988), 227-44.

Table 1: Tiree Population

Tiree Population, c.1750-1841

<i>Year</i>	<i>Population</i>
c1750	1509
1776	1997
1787	2306
1802	2776
1808	3200
1841	4961

Source: Devine, *The Great Highland Famine*, 228; Census

The rapid expansion of the population is obvious from the above figures. The population had in fact tripled in less than one hundred years – an astonishing increase for such a small island. It must be made clear, however, that this tremendous growth was not solely due to reckless estate policy on the part of the 8th duke's predecessors. Indeed, the policy of the 5th duke was well-meaning and need not necessarily have been catastrophic for the future of the estate. Unfortunately, the estate's huge population was to be faced with the disastrous downturn in the kelp industry following the end of the Napoleonic wars. This left hundreds of people without the means of securing even a marginal income and dramatically injured the lives of almost all the small tenants on the estates.¹⁵ What had happened during the time of the 5th duke was that tenants – particularly on Tiree – had been able to make relatively large profits from kelp and had barely needed to cultivate any land at all. Of course, when the slump hit this industry, tenants quickly found that their small patches of land could no longer support them and, in some cases, that they could not even afford to pay the rent on these meagre holdings.¹⁶

The 8th duke would later discuss this at some length in a letter written to the chairman of the Crofters' Commission, Lord Napier, and published in pamphlet form in 1883.¹⁷ In this letter, Argyll expressed his own views on the policies pursued by the 5th and 6th dukes and his opinions are well worth quoting in some detail in order to give a clear picture of the ideological underpinning of Argyll's own philosophy of landownership.

¹⁵ For discussion of this issue see, M. Gray, 'The kelp industry in the highlands and islands', *Economic History Review*, 4 (1951), 197-209.

¹⁶ Gray, 'The kelp industry in the highlands and islands', 208-9.

¹⁷ Argyll, *Crofts and Farms in the Hebrides*.

With regard to the practice of allowing tenants to derive so much profit from the kelp industry, he stated that,

The establishment of higher standards of living must come by exertion, and by thrift,- not by gratuitous benefits which dispense with both...this unnatural lowering of rent, by allowing a wholly extraneous produce to stand in lieu of it,- [produced]...only poverty and indigence. It removed every check upon the law under which population tends to press upon the limits of subsistence.¹⁸

This flouting of such 'natural laws' was anathema to Argyll who would, in later life, spend considerable time and effort arguing for the obvious truth, as he saw it, of these laws. These arguments formed the basis of his 1867 publication *The Reign of Law* and were further developed in his later work *The Unity of Nature*.¹⁹ For Argyll, the law of population growth was one of these natural laws that should never be tampered with. In his mind, Malthus had been correct when he had emphasised the pressure which population increase put on resources and this had been one of the reasons for man's original dispersal across the globe and was a vital law to be observed assiduously in the nineteenth century.²⁰ Argyll developed this theme in *The Unity of Nature*,

The secret [to man's dispersal] lies in that great law which Malthus was the first to observe and to establish – the law, namely, that population is always pressing on the limits of subsistence. There is a constant tendency to multiplication beyond those limits. And, among the many consequences of this tendency, the necessity of dispersion stands first and foremost.²¹

¹⁸ Argyll, *Crofts and Farms in the Hebrides*, 13.

¹⁹ George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, *The Reign of Law*, (London, 1867); George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, *The Unity of Nature*, (1884).

²⁰ Argyll's adherence to Malthus and his opposition to the theories of Ricardo and J.S. Mill (among others) formed part of his later attempts to restore the 'shattered science' of political economy. This is explored in greater depth in Chapter Eight.

²¹ Argyll, *The Unity of Nature*, 249.

Thus, the population growth on Tiree was not necessarily a catastrophic event for the people of the island. It was the policy pursued by the government and the landowners alongside this growth which had, in Argyll's eyes, led to the disaster of the 1840s. Population growth was healthy – it demonstrated that a locality had useful resources and that people were able to profitably exploit them, however, the retention of excess population in that one locality could only lead to problems. The duke examined the history of the islands and saw only outdated notions on the part of landowners who, instead of making efforts to regulate the numbers of tenants on their land, had clung to the old idea that more people equated to greater status and wealth. Argyll was scathing of the actions of these proprietors and strongly deprecated their reluctance to allow 'surplus' population to emigrate.²² He criticised their attempts to stem the flow of emigrants, ridiculing their appointment of a committee which, in his own words, was established, 'to consider the wonderful phenomenon of the emigration of a half-starving people. They spoke of it not only with sorrow, but with positive bitterness, and suggested every kind of theoretical scheme, by which it might be discouraged and prevented.'²³

The Committee to which Argyll referred was set up by the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland and was indeed genuinely concerned by the prospect of mass emigration, however, Argyll remained unimpressed by their arguments against emigration saying that,

One simple explanation – one great natural analogy – would have spared the Committee all their sorrow. A great Hive was swarming. Chiefs and Landowners, Field Marshals, Poets and Philosophers, were standing around the 'skep' gaping, staring, wondering, and scolding, at the naughty instinct of the bees.²⁴

It is clear that Argyll sincerely wished that the 'bees' had been allowed to fly, in order to leave the 'hive' less congested and more able to support its remaining inhabitants with ease. However, Argyll's idea of a successful estate was not to be achieved by

²² P[arliamentary] P[apers], 1847, LIII: *Correspondence relating to the measures adopted for the relief of distress in Ireland and Scotland*, Lorne to Sir George Grey, 25 Jul. 1846.

²³ Argyll, *Scotland as it was and as it is*, 342.

²⁴ Argyll, *Scotland as it was and as it is*, 344.

simply removing a random selection of waste population, but required something much more selective. Indeed it is clear that from the very beginning his estate policy was directed at a grander scheme – weeding out the ‘less industrious’ tenants and ensuring that only the ‘fittest’ would survive on his lands.

In his *Crofts and Farms in the Hebrides*, Argyll made it clear that he was a benevolent and considerate landlord, especially during the crisis that enveloped the west of Scotland in the 1840s. During the worst of the famine he claimed to have spent at least £16,000 on Tiree and the Ross of Mull alone – much of this being obtained from drainage loans.²⁵ Argyll records the way the money was spent thus,

A large sum was spent in providing meal for the people, and another large sum in assisting as many as were willing to emigrate to Canada...in the course of four years it exceeded a thousand souls. The whole of this was a purely voluntary emigration, for a great portion of which I paid the whole cost myself, whilst assisting in the expenses of the remainder.²⁶

Devine has already shown from his study of the Argyll estate papers that this ‘voluntary emigration’ was somewhat less voluntary than the 8th duke wished people to believe.²⁷ The duke had stated in May 1851 that, ‘I wish to send out those whom we would be obliged to feed if they stayed at home - to get rid of that class is the object’²⁸ and Argyll’s chamberlain was instructed to ensure the complete removal of cottars and of those crofters paying an annual rent of under £10. In 1851, of 860 applications for emigration only 490 of the poorest people (all small crofters and cottars) were accepted.²⁹ Argyll was determined to keep to his plan of sending away all of those tenants who he considered ‘unworthy’ while retaining those who he believed had prospects. Devine also presented evidence to suggest that Argyll’s claims that no evictions were carried out are not to be believed either and has shown that there were 174 summonses issued in the years 1846-54. Thus Argyll’s

²⁵ Argyll, *Crofts and Farms in the Hebrides*, 21.

²⁶ Argyll, *Crofts and Farms in the Hebrides*, 20.

²⁷ Devine, *The Great Highland Famine*, 232-5.

²⁸ George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, May 1851, as quoted in, C. Riddell, *Tireragan. A Township on the Ross of Mull: A Study in Local History*, (Fionnphort, 1996), 1.

²⁹ A[rgyll] E[state] P[apers], bundle 1558, 5 May 1851; bundle 1805, 17 May 1851, as cited in, Devine, *The Great Highland Famine*, 234.

declaration that only those in arrears were removed must be regarded with some suspicion.³⁰ Devine highlighted the ‘goodly number’ of summonses for removal issued by the duke’s chamberlain, John Campbell, in 1848 for, among other things, ‘thieving...extreme laziness and bad conduct’.³¹ Taking this into account, it is possible to strongly contradict Argyll’s picture of events. While it is certainly true that many tenants did get into serious financial difficulty during the famine period and many of the summonses were certainly issued to those in arrears, it is also clear that the rental paid to the proprietor never dropped below 79% of the total amount due during the whole of the famine period (and in most years it was far above this).³² Thus it is safe to say that the duke’s later claims that all of the summonses issued were solely for arrears were at best wishful thinking and at worst a fabrication designed to safeguard his reputation.

Even with regard to those evictions which did occur due to the insolvency of the tenants the estate was not as blameless as the duke of Argyll would later assert. It is worth emphasising that, in the 1840s and 1850s, there was no mechanism in place to prevent rack-renting on Highland estates. Although it is difficult without access to the estate papers to ascertain definitively whether Argyll employed such a tactic, numerous other commentators have found evidence that rents were not decreased during the hard time of the famine, but were actually increased. Devine found, in the estate papers, instances of the small tenants of Tiree having their rents increased in 1848.³³ E. Mairi MacArthur found that the rents on another of the duke’s properties, the island of Iona, were raised by 50% across the board in 1847, and in 1883 the Napier Commission would be told time and again by unhappy crofters and cottars of these rent increases during the famine period.³⁴ Thus while the 8th duke may have been able to say with some honesty that he had removed significant numbers of people because of rent arrears, what he routinely neglected to mention in his defence

³⁰ Devine, *The Great Highland Famine*, 235. The author recognises that summonses would not always lead to eventual removal, however they are valid evidence as they show how coercion was being employed on the Argyll estates. In some instances, Argyll would issue summonses as warnings to particular tenants. In one letter to his son he explains that issuing a summons had resulted in a tenant getting, ‘such a fright that they may be tried again.’ NLS, Acc 9209/1, Argyll to Lorne, 23 Apr. 1867

³¹ AEP, bundle 1522, 1 Apr. 1848, as cited in, Devine, *The Great Highland Famine*, 235.

³² Devine, *The Great Highland Famine*, 232.

³³ Devine, *The Great Highland Famine*, 275. Devine’s evidence comes from AEP, Bundle 1522.

³⁴ E.M. MacArthur, *Iona: the living memory of a Crofting Community, 1750-1914*, (Edinburgh, 1990), 85-6. The evidence given to the Napier Commission will be examined later in Chapter Eight.

of his policies was that these arrears were caused not by the indolence of the tenants. but by rental increases at a time of great hardship.

As a result of the estate's policy to rid the island of excess population the number of inhabitants on Tiree had fallen to 3204 by 1861.³⁵ This loss of over 1600 people (some 35% of the pre-famine population) in twenty years was dramatic and had undoubtedly reshaped the structure of the island. However, the changes on Tiree do not represent the full extent of Argyll estate policy and on the island of Mull events were to follow a similar course. An examination of the population of the island as a whole shows that, like Tiree, Mull was badly hit by the famine and that the policies of the estate management quickly resulted in a similar decrease in the number of tenants. Carol Riddell has produced detailed population figures in her article *Tireragan, A Township on the Ross of Mull: A Study in Local History* for both that particular township (a part of the Argyll estate) and for Mull as a whole.

Table 2: Mull Population

Mull Population, c1750-1901

<i>Year</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Population</i>
c1750	5044	1861	7331
1791	8016	1871	6441
1811	9383	1881	5624
1831	10538	1891	5076
1841	10064	1901	4712
1851	8639		

Source: Riddell, *Tireragan*, 3. Riddell had access to the Argyll Estate Papers and the information for these figures came from bundle 1548; Census

As is obvious from the table above, the population of Mull had undergone a similar process of change as that of Tiree. A relative population explosion in the first half of the nineteenth century was followed by a marked decline at the time of the famine. In addition, these figures show what happened after the famine and demonstrate vividly that, as we shall see, after the famine the estate did not halt in its efforts to reduce the population of the island.

³⁵ Devine, *The Great Highland Famine*, 237.

While it is true that Argyll was committed to assisting tenants from his island estates to emigrate, those in charge of government measures to help famine victims were not initially convinced that the Argyll family were willing or able to do enough for their tenants. This concern was expressed by the Assistant Secretary to the Treasury, Charles Trevelyan, in a letter to the senior Government Relief Officer, the unfortunately named Edward Pine-Coffin, in December of 1846, warning that, ‘in Tiree, Coll, Islay and the Ross of Mull, the Proprietors are doing what they can, although the circumstances of these districts will require constant watching.’³⁶ At this stage, the 7th duke was still nominally in control of the estate and its policy, however, as mentioned above, in reality his weak health meant that most of the duties had for some time been placed in the hands of his son, then Marquis of Lorne. It was thus the future 8th duke who undertook the task of overseeing estate management and of corresponding with the various agencies to co-ordinate relief measures. With this in mind we can safely conclude that estate policy in 1846 was influenced more by the agenda of the future 8th duke than it was by his ailing father whose attitude towards his tenants was somewhat more sympathetic and paternalistic than his son’s would prove to be. Indeed, despite telling the Select Committee on emigration that, ‘my object is to get the farms divided into large proportions and have proper tenants on them, and the rest to be provided for by emigration or induced to go to the low country’, the 7th duke had also commented that, ‘these people wish to remain, they are undoubtedly attached to that island [Tiree], and I cannot think of removing them; they are my fencible men, and I love them.’³⁷

This feudal and rather paternalistic desire to see men remain on their estates was, of course, a common theme across some parts of the Highlands and Islands in the eighteenth and, indeed, the early nineteenth centuries. Although significant clearances had occurred in other parts of Scotland, the Argyll estates had never seen any attempts at reducing the population on any great scale – as the figures discussed above clearly show. The removal of the tacksman class during the eighteenth century

³⁶ NAS, AD 58/81, Charles Trevelyan to Edward Pine-Coffin (EPC), 28 Dec. 1846.

³⁷ PP, 1841, VI, *Report from the Select Committee appointed to enquire into the condition of the Population of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, and into the practicability of affording the People relief by means of Emigration*, 71. The use of the term ‘fencible men’ is noteworthy and highlights the particular problems that some landed proprietors had in reconciling themselves to their new roles as businessmen in contrast to their traditional paternalistic involvement with their tenants.

had been followed by encouragement of subdivision among tenants and had thus resulted in population growth rather than decline and the 7th duke's seemingly contradictory comments demonstrate the mixed feelings with which many landlords regarded their estates; contradicting some of the popular portrayals of landowners as uncaring monsters.³⁸ It was certainly a dilemma for some members of the old aristocratic Scottish families, like the 7th duke: whether they were to continue to be clan chiefs or whether their future would be best secured by economic viability of lands rather than number of tenants. In short, whether to be chiefs or landlords – something that the 7th duke seems to have had serious problems resolving.³⁹

However, at the dawn of the famine, with the young Marquis of Lorne in charge, new ideas about economics and estate management came more fully to the fore. One recent author has labelled the future 8th duke's management of the Argyll estates as 'agriculturally sound, and his concern for his tenants genuine.'⁴⁰ This ringing endorsement is somewhat spoiled by the fact that the author then goes on to credit the 8th duke with some of the undoubtedly paternalistic policies of his grandfather, the 5th duke.⁴¹ Thus, despite some support from later commentators like Mathieson and despite the duke's own later propaganda, it seems clear that from the mid-1840s onwards estate policy was going to be administered in a new and somewhat more ruthless manner. It would be wildly inaccurate to claim that the future 8th duke was oblivious to and unconcerned about the suffering of his tenants, but it would be fair to say that he did not have the same emotional attachment to them that his own father had demonstrated.⁴² Despite their different temperaments and ideas, both men certainly cared for the future of their tenants and it is undeniable that the future 8th duke was quick to recognise the potential catastrophe that was facing the Argyll estate. Indeed in September of 1846 a concerned Lorne was already writing

³⁸ See particularly Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community*.

³⁹ This theme is explored in various notable works, see for example, Dodgshon, *From Chiefs to Landlords*; Devine, *The Great Highland Famine*, Chapter 4 especially; E. Richards, *The Highland Clearances: People, Landlords and Rural Turmoil*, (Edinburgh, 2000), Chapter 19 especially – Richards' work includes an extremely useful bibliography where more references to this theme can be found.

⁴⁰ R. Mathieson, *The Survival of the Unfittest: The Highland Clearances and the end of Isolation*, (Edinburgh, 2000), 55.

⁴¹ Mathieson, *The Survival of the Unfittest*, 56. Mathieson correctly quotes from the 8th duke's *Crofts and Farms in the Hebrides*, but then appears to erroneously attribute comments from the Old Statistical Account [1791-97] to the management policies of the 8th duke [1823-1900].

⁴² Norman Macleod later recalled that, when hearing of the sufferings of tenants on Tiree during famine conditions in 1836-7, the 7th duke had shed tears, PP, 1841, VI, 71.

desperately to James Loch, the agent of his father-in-law's estates, that the people on Mull and Tiree in particular were 'absolutely threatened with total famine.'⁴³ In December of the same year Lorne wrote again to Loch and deprecated the latter's insistence that the distribution of grain at less than market prices in the affected areas was dangerous. Lorne called this idea, 'a stretch of political economy which is indeed extreme.'⁴⁴ And on the same theme he wrote to Edward Pine Coffin late in 1846 that,

the usual politico economic objection [is] that it is a bad thing to interfere in the "ordinary channels of trade". But it is hardly necessary to observe to you that under the circumstances of our population in the Western Isles this year we must give up the hope - and have given up the hope - of being able to trust to "ordinary channels" or "ordinary" measures of any kind...before the spring months set in the government will be obliged to do something more.⁴⁵

It is interesting to note that the young Marquis had already, in the 1840s, begun to take an interest in political economy and it is even more important to recognise that this interest was expressed in circumstances which required him to disregard some of the principles to which he would later cling so doggedly. Lorne would later argue consistently that free market forces and free trade were the best way forward for any civilised society and his adherence to the ideals of free trade would shape his political career.⁴⁶ However, in contrast to James Loch, Lorne saw that the crisis that was enveloping the Highlands and Islands (and, of course Ireland) was so alarming that these 'ordinary' economic objections must be disregarded. However, his early attempts to persuade others of the logic of his argument were not wholly successful and he was to be disappointed with the government's response to his pleas. Conditions on the islands of Mull and Tiree remained grave. In January of 1847 the government did take some notice and, after sending a commissioner to the estate,

⁴³ S[tafford] C[ounty] R[ecord] O[ffice], Sutherland Collection, D593K, Marquis of Lorne to James Loch, 8 Sep. 1846, I am indebted to Annie Tindley for drawing my attention to these letters.

⁴⁴ SCRO, Sutherland Collection, D593K, Lorne to James Loch, 1 Dec. 1846. For more information on the Sutherland estate's response to the famine, see, E. Richards, *The Leviathan of Wealth: The Sutherland Fortune in the Industrial Revolution*, (London, 1973), 262-79.

⁴⁵ NAS, HD 7/26/102, Lorne to FPC, 24 Dec. 1846

⁴⁶ See Chapter Five and Chapter Eight; see also Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement*, passim, for his account of how the famine affected the social and economic leanings of other political thinkers.

Edward Pine Coffin wrote to the 7th duke that 'severe distress was prevailing on your Grace's property' in the Ross of Mull and he indicated that he hoped that the distress would be noted and a remedy applied quickly.⁴⁷ The duke's son had been anticipating something more substantial than advice from the government, but it became clear that more than this was not to be forthcoming on any large scale.⁴⁸ Over the next few months, the Marquis of Lorne and his advisors arranged to purchase corn and began to investigate other methods of combating the destitution. By the beginning of March there was a flurry of correspondence between Lorne and the government officials regarding shipments of corn and about the possibility of implementing what would become the Argyll estate's favoured policy – schemes to encourage emigration.

The issue of corn shipments seems to highlight one of the many problems which faced the government, the relief agencies and proprietors at the time - the problem of ensuring fast and efficient communication between the various groups. Lorne was writing to the government officials from at least the 10th March 1847 about the possibility of getting stores of grain, which he had purchased, from the mainland to the stricken islands, however, the government response was neither quick nor efficient. There was much disagreement about who held responsibility for arranging the shipment of corn to its various destinations and the necessary clarification of these issues took up vital time during which the islanders were suffering great deprivation. Even by the 18th of March, the situation had not been finalised and correspondence was still flying back and forth between Lorne and various officials.⁴⁹ More evidence of this confusion emerges in the correspondence between Lorne and Edward Pine Coffin in the following month when Lorne's queries about how best to employ the relief subscriptions he held went unanswered and Lorne was forced to repeat his enquiries - wasting at least a fortnight during which time these relief subscriptions were unavailable to those who so desperately needed them.⁵⁰

One point which Lorne and the government officials agreed upon was that when the

⁴⁷ NAS, HD 3/1/146, EPC to the 7th Duke of Argyll, 29 Jan. 1847.

⁴⁸ The Marquis of Lorne was not alone among Highland landowners in attempting to attract government aid before actually taking on the burden of relief more fully himself. See, Devine, *The Great Highland Famine*, 88-91.

⁴⁹ NAS, HD 7/26/389, Lorne to EPC, 10 Mar. 1847; HD 3/1/283, EPC to Lorne, 12 Mar. 1847; HD 7/26/423, Lorne to EPC, 13 Mar. 1847; HD 7/26/439, Lorne to EPC, 18 Mar. 1847.

⁵⁰ NAS, HD 7/26/523, Lorne to EPC, 3 Apr. 1847; HD 7/26/565, Lorne to EPC, 14 Apr. 1847.

grain supplies did eventually reach the stricken islanders, it was certainly not to be given out freely to the starving population.⁵¹ Despite his willingness to ‘bend the rules’ of political economy to a certain degree, the concept of eleemosynary aid was not one which found favour with Lorne and tenants were employed in works in exchange for food. Indeed, the duke’s chamberlain, John Campbell, reported that,

nothing but harshness and dread I find will do, they are so naturally slothful and indolent...I am doling out the meal in as small quantities as possible and only in cases of urgent necessity to keep soul and body together...I shall take barley in exchange for the meal from the crofters and labour at draining from the cottars.⁵²

This policy was supported by the young Marquis whose plan was based upon the premise that this harsh course of action would eventually benefit the tenants (and of course the estate), not just by preserving them from the degradation of accepting ‘handouts’ and the inevitable damage that this would cause to their characters (a common concern expressed during this period), but also by encouraging the people to think more carefully about their futures – particularly about the prospects of emigration.

Of course, it was not easy to persuade tenants, most of whose families had lived on the Argyll estates for generations, that emigration was the best solution. As has already been shown, the overall plan was to remove specific (usually poor) tenants. It was just these tenants, however, who typically proved very unwilling to leave. There were instances where the distress was so severe that tenants seemed willing to leave and in 1849 the duke’s chamberlain, John Campbell, had told him that some of the

⁵¹ The problems which officials like Edward Pine Coffin and Trevelyan had with reconciling *laissez-faire* principles to the crisis developing in the Highlands are examined in Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community*, 56-8 and Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement*. The government’s overall strategy is dealt with in, Devine, *The Great Highland Famine*, T.M. Devine, ‘Why the Highlands did not starve : Ireland and highland Scotland during the potato famine’, in S.J. Connolly, R.A. Houston and R.J. Morris (eds.), *Conflict, identity and economic development : Ireland and Scotland, 1600-1939*, (Preston, 1995), 77-88; M. Gray ‘The Highland Potato Famine of the 1840s’, *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 7 (1955), 357-68; C.W.J. Withers, ‘Destitution and migration : labour mobility and relief from famine in Highland Scotland, 1836-1850’, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 14 (1988), 128-50.

⁵² John Campbell, as quoted in, Macarthur, *Iona: the living memory of a crofting community*, 78.

cottars on his estate were 'ready to go in their hundreds if provided with the means.'⁵³ However, any slight improvement in conditions seemed to alter this urge and for most of the famine period it was continually lamented that the tenants simply would not move. In one later letter to Sir John McNeill, the 8th duke of Argyll (as Lorne had become in 1847) complained that,

I do not know the exact number who may be prevailed upon to go. But I do not expect to get 300 and may get much fewer – for they are a ticklish people to deal with: and at the very moment one wishes them to come forward they often hang back. But I shall go as far as I can [to] get the people to go.⁵⁴

Persuading unwilling tenants to leave was difficult enough, however, as another illuminating series of letters shows, it is apparent that the plans for emigration during the famine were no easier to arrange than the aforementioned corn shipments. Between May and June of 1847 there was another flurry of letters between the new 8th duke and the various commissioners and agencies involved in an attempt to arrange some form of transportation for estate tenants who had agreed to emigrate to Canada. Argyll had chartered a ship and needed to get his tenants from Tiree, Iona and Mull across to Greenock to meet this vessel, however, events did not proceed smoothly. Despite Argyll's plea that 'the steamer should be at Tyree quite as soon as you were kind enough to propose – in order to give them [the emigrants] some little time – they being a most dilatory people'⁵⁵ the arrangements were altered and even threatened with cancellation at one point.⁵⁶ Argyll's mounting frustration was clear in more than one of these letters and, although the emigration did eventually take place, it was evidently chaotic and many of the emigrants fell victim to cholera during the journey – doubtless deterring some of those who remained on the island from following a

⁵³ John Campbell to the duke of Argyll, 17 May 1851, as quoted in T.M. Devine, 'Landlordism and Highland Emigration', in T.M. Devine (ed.), *Scottish Emigration and Scottish Society*, (Edinburgh, 1992), 95-6.

⁵⁴ NLS, Acc 8508/43, Bundle 2. Argyll to Sir John McNeill, 24 Jun. 1852.

⁵⁵ NAS, HD/7/26/693, Argyll to EPC, 1 Jun. 1847. The steamer was in fact *The Mary Jane* which had been loaned for this purpose by another Scottish landowner, Sir James Matheson of Lewis.

⁵⁶ The problems with arranging the emigration scheme are detailed in the correspondence of the duke. Of particular interest are the following letters from Argyll to Edward Pine Coffin and his staff: NAS, HD/7/26/637, 29 May 1847; HD 7/26 691, 1 Jun. 1847; HD/7/26/687, 3 Jun. 1847; HD/7/26 673, 8 Jun. 1847.

similar course.⁵⁷ In addition to this, reports from those who arrived in Canada were not always favourable.⁵⁸ In fact, there would be no emigration programme in the following year and mass-emigration would only resume in 1849 when both tenants and proprietor had become even more desperate having experienced the deprivation caused by famine for almost three years.⁵⁹

Argyll would, over the course of the famine, assist some 2,337 emigrants from his estates, or around 23% of the total landlord assisted emigration during the famine period. Argyll's efforts in this regard were second only to those of Col. John Gordon of Cluny whose zealous tactics ensured him a place of dishonour in most accounts of the clearances.⁶⁰ Argyll's father-in-law, the duke of Sutherland, was another proprietor who was committed to emigration as the ultimate solution and he and Argyll were the first Highland landlords to ship out large numbers of their famine stricken population in 1847.⁶¹ The duke of Argyll assisted people to move in four waves of emigration, beginning with the 1847 emigration detailed above and continuing at two yearly intervals until 1853. The 1847 emigration scheme was by far the largest, seeing over 1000 tenants leaving Tiree and the Ross of Mull, but the subsequent two emigrations were also substantial with 627 people leaving in 1849 and 533 more departing in 1851.⁶²

These assisted emigrations, coupled with the other relief efforts, were costly and Argyll later stated that 'the whole rental of the estates affected was absorbed for more than five years, whilst a sum of £10,000 was borrowed from Peel's Parliamentary

⁵⁷ Riddell, *Tireragan*, 16.

⁵⁸ Tales of hardship in the New World must have reached the tenants on the Argyll estates. Many of the tenants who left Tiree in 1849 fell victim to cholera before reaching the New World, see Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community*, 84. Additionally, tenants who had been shipped to Ontario from Argyll's father-in-law's Sutherland estates were so poverty stricken when they reached their destination that public subscriptions had to be raised there for their benefit and recent emigrants who had reached Nova Scotia petitioned the Duke of Sutherland for aid in 1849, see Richards, *The Leviathan of Wealth*, 270.

⁵⁹ Eventually some 2294 tenants from Tiree and the Ross of Mull were assisted to emigrate during the famine years, however, as the population figures amply demonstrate many more left without assistance, probably moving to the mainland, see Devine, *The Great Highland Famine*, 233-6.

⁶⁰ Devine, 'Landlordism and Highland Emigration', 98; Richards, *The Highland Clearances*, 219-24; Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community*, 81-2; A.G. Newby, 'Emigration and Clearance from the Island of Barra, c1770-1858', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, 61 (2003), 116-48.

⁶¹ Richards, *The Leviathan of Wealth*, 267-70.

⁶² Devine, 'Landlordism and Highland Emigration', 95.

Loan Fund' in order to aid the tenants on the islands.⁶³ This was an enormous drain on resources and the duke admitted that he was tempted to sell the island of Tiree in order to lessen this strain, however, the account which he gave of this 'temptation' is markedly different to the events which Devine uncovered in his study of the island during this period. In his autobiography Argyll claimed that,

Soon after my succession to the family estates, a friend of mine, who was a great agricultural improver, and an excellent judge of the value of land, offered to buy the island of Tiree, at a price which would have represented an income of £1,400 a year...but I declined this transaction, influenced largely by my reluctance to diminish still further the family estates, and also by my liking for the island...I considered it my duty to continue my connection of ownership with the estate and people.⁶⁴

Devine, however, uncovered a series of revealing letters to James Loch of the Sutherland estate in December 1846. In these letters the then Marquis of Lorne indicated that he was extremely anxious to sell Tiree, saying that 'to us it is an unsatisfactory property from its great distance – and from having enough island property to manage' and that 'if we could find any monied man who was likely to behave well to the people, I would certainly be very glad to see it sold to him.'⁶⁵ There are thus some obvious discrepancies between the account which Argyll gave in his memoirs and his own feelings at the time as revealed in his private correspondence. Far from being spontaneously offered money from this 'friend' to sell Tiree, it appears that Argyll had actively tried to sell the island. Far from considering it his 'duty' to continue managing the said part of the estate, we may assume that something stopped the purchase from taking place – and that Argyll's scruples and sense of responsibility did not perhaps play as large a part in the course which events took as he would have people believe.⁶⁶

⁶³ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 286.

⁶⁴ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 293-4.

⁶⁵ NAS, Loch Muniments, GD 268/45, Marquis of Lorne to James Loch, 12 Dec. 1846 and 14 Dec 1846.

⁶⁶ Without access to the privately held Estate Papers it has not proven possible to identify this 'friend' or to find out any more of the details of the events surrounding this matter.

One thing which is clear from much of the correspondence between Lorne and Loch is that the young Marquis was anxious to encourage as many ‘surplus’ tenants to leave his island estates as was possible. More early evidence for this can be found in the aforementioned letter from the Marquis of Lorne to Edward Pine Coffin in December 1846. Lorne enquired whether or not Edward Pine Coffin had ‘observed any symptoms of a desire to emigrate among the people who are in distress’ and the Argyll family were certainly one of the first Scottish landed families who advocated emigration as a remedy to the ills afflicting the north west in the 1840s.⁶⁷

The policy of encouraging emigration would continue on the Argyll estates even after the crisis years of the famine had ended. As the population figures quoted earlier demonstrate, Mull’s population as a whole continued to follow a downward trend throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. However, this does not tell the whole story and even more revealing evidence for the scale of the change on the islands is to be found in the tenancy figures for the Argyll estates between the 1850s and the 1870s.

Table 3: Tenancies on the Argyll Estates, c1855-1875

	1855 number of tenants	1865 number of tenants	1875 number of tenants
North Argyll	39	81	80
Cowall	-	-	6
Kintyre	199	186	192
Lorne	5	5	21
Mull	151	128	122
Tiree	295	253	202
TOTAL	689	653	623

Source: NAS, VR89/1-10, Valuation Rolls for Argyll, 1855-56; 1864-65; 1875-76.

As the table above illustrates, the number of tenants on the estates on Mull and Tiree fell dramatically in the twenty years after the famine crisis was over. Even more importantly, the number of very small tenants (with land worth less than £10 per

⁶⁷ NAS, HD 7/26/102, Lorne to EPC, 24 Dec. 1846; Devine, *The Great Highland Famine*, 233; Richards, *The Leviathan of Wealth*, 267-70.

annum) was drastically reduced from ninety-nine to fifty-one on Mull and from 238 to only eighty-five on Tiree.⁶⁸

Another important feature of the Argyll estates during the period was their increasing prosperity. The total rental income of the Argyll estates in the mid-1850s had been £28,683; ten years later, after the reorganisation of these lands and a decrease in the number of holdings the estate rental stood at £35,909 and by 1876 the estate rental had further increased to some £49,447.⁶⁹ With higher rental income from his 'improved' island estates Argyll was able, from the mid-1860s onwards, to purchase additional lands. This is why the tenancy figures for North Argyll, Cowall, and Lorne all rose during the period. The figures do not represent subdivision of existing holdings, but acquisition of new territories and an increase in the number of larger crofting tenants.

Argyll's plans for improvement encompassed not only his island estates but also those on the mainland and a similar pattern of consolidation of small crofts was followed (although somewhat less dramatically) here as well. On the duke's estates of North Argyll, Kintyre and Lorne in 1855 there had been 243 tenants of whom fifty-five were crofters holding land worth less than £10 p.a.; by 1875 there were 299 tenants (including the new acquisitions in Cowal) but only thirty-seven of these were occupying very small holdings.⁷⁰ This was the result which Argyll had always hoped to accomplish and the increasing prosperity of the estate proved to him the wisdom of his earlier actions.

Although the mainland properties certainly changed during Argyll's period of control, it was on the island estates that the alterations were most noticeable.⁷¹ Tiree had been

⁶⁸ NAS, VR89/1-10, Valuation Rolls for Argyll, 1855-56; 1864-65; 1875-76.

⁶⁹ NAS, VR89/1-10, Valuation Rolls for Argyll, 1855-56; 1864-65; 1875-76.

⁷⁰ NAS, VR89/1-10, Valuation Rolls for Argyll, 1855-56; 1864-65; 1875-76.

⁷¹ One interesting aspect of Argyll's management of his mainland estates was his involvement in the dispute between proprietors and the Crown over their rights to the foreshore. Argyll was prominent in this controversy and during the 1860s fought against the Office of Woods and later the Board of Trade over his rights of ownership of the foreshore of his Rosneath estate. The affair did not attract a great deal of publicity and is not even mentioned in Argyll's memoirs, but is an example of the duke's belief that government should not interfere with the business of private proprietors. It would be government's increasing interference in these rights that would later prove the final straw for Argyll and would force his resignation from Gladstone's cabinet of 1881. The issue of Argyll's role in the dispute over the Scottish foreshores has been covered in great detail in, J. MacAskill, "A Silver

home to just under 5000 souls in 1841 and the island of Mull had housed about 10,000 inhabitants. By the 1860s the population of these two islands had dropped to around 3200 and just over 7000 respectively.⁷² This decrease in population had been caused not only by emigration to Canada and other overseas countries, but also by an undoubtedly substantial (and largely undocumented) amount of migration from the islands to mainland Scotland and England as a whole. With this smaller population, the duke of Argyll was finally able to carry out the plans for improvement which he had so long desired to implement. With control of subdivision, the population was kept down, and this control was extended in an extremely rigorous manner. The tenants had to agree to a list of rules and regulations which, if violated, would result in removal. The regulations issued by 'Factor Mòr', John Campbell to those on the Ross of Mull in the 1860s read as follows;

'Special Rules and Regulations as to the Removing of Crofters':

1. Indolent crofters who cultivate their lands in a careless, slovenly manner and do not adhere to the given rules as to cultivation.
2. Widows and Families of deceased crofters with a few exceptions when there is a young family with grown up sons of industrious habit.
3. Crofters who are quarrelsome and troublesome to their neighbours and of reputed bad character.
4. Crofters taking married sons and daughters into possession when the rent is under 20 pounds.
5. Crofters who keep idle grown up families about them and of no benefit to the property.
6. Crofters keeping dogs or infringing any of the regulations laid down for the management of the estates.
7. All crofters who do not pay up their rents at the stated periods of collection and not having sufficient stock on their land.⁷³

Fringe?" The Crown, private proprietors and the Scottish kelp shores and the Scottish foreshore generally c1800-c1940', PhD thesis, (University of Aberdeen, 2003), Chapter 5.

⁷² Riddell, *Tireragan*, 3; Devine, *The Great Highland Famine*, 228; Census.

⁷³ Riddell, *Tireragan*, 11. this information was taken from AEP, bundle 1527.

Many of these rules were extremely vague and left considerable opportunity for evictions to be carried out at the whim of the estate management. In particular, the regulation referring to crofters 'of reputed bad character' was certainly open to individual interpretation. Additionally, it is worth emphasising the draconian nature of these regulations, especially with regard to the removal of widows of crofters who would usually be, by virtue of their unfortunate situation, the most vulnerable members of the estate population. These regulations are representative of the continuing plans to rid the Argyll estates of their 'excess' population and show that it remained the policy of the estate management long after the crisis years of the famine to remove the least economically desirable tenants. With these strict rules being enforced, Argyll had the opportunity to make considerable changes to his island estates. Although he would later claim that no evictions were ever allowed except in cases of insolvency or non-payment of rent, it seems more than likely that tenants were evicted for not adhering to the above rules and for infringement of other regulations which the 8th duke and his factors set out.⁷⁴ One particular interest of the duke's was the temperance movement and he punished harshly those involved in the illicit production of whisky on Tiree – in 1850, nine notices of eviction were issued for this reason on the island.⁷⁵ Later evidence given by crofters to the Napier Commission lends some considerable support to accusations of harsh practices on the part of the estate and will be further discussed in Chapter Eight. However these evictions came about, it is irrefutable that they happened and that they left the way clear for the duke to carry out something of a revolution on the islands – particularly in the case of Tiree.

In order to pave the way for this revolution, certain changes had to be made. Although events in the 1870s and 1880s will be discussed in more depth in a later chapter, it is worth drawing attention at this point to one very significant element of Argyll's plans for estate management, as it relates so closely to the continuing depopulation of the estates during the 1860s.⁷⁶ Argyll had been in correspondence with Sir John McNeill on the subject of emigration since the early 1850s and the two men were of one mind on the issue. In 1863, McNeill told Argyll that,

⁷⁴ See above, 59.

⁷⁵ Devine, *The Great Highland Famine*, 235.

⁷⁶ See Chapter Eight.

there is reason to fear that so long as they are allowed to hope that aid will always be forthcoming at home they will cling to the soil of Tyree and year by year sinking lower in their character their enterprise and self reliance, become less and less capable of the efforts by which alone they can be extricated from their difficulties.

McNeill also lamented the fact that the Tiree crofters had probably already reached this level of degradation of character as few of them had sought any assistance to emigrate as they had done in the early 1850s.⁷⁷ These views directly echoed those which Argyll was expressing to many of his correspondents from the 1860s onwards and which found their way into a number of his publications, most notably perhaps in his, *Scotland as it was and as it is*, where he lamented the ‘tendency to revert to ancient habits’ and the ‘encouragements of a very ignorant sentiment’ which he observed among his tenants.⁷⁸ In 1864, in a private letter to McNeill, the 8th duke returned to this familiar topic as he complained about the problems of motivating tenants to emigrate. He said that,

I think that by steady resolution not to give any relief except in the shape of hard work, at low wages, we shall be able to create a desire for removal among the cottars and small crofting class and I am in some hopes that a factor who can't speak Gaelic will lend in the same direction.⁷⁹

Argyll was obviously still determined to ‘encourage’ as many people as possible to leave his island estates. To this end, his idea of securing a non-Gaelic speaker as factor is, at first glance perhaps, a rather perplexing notion on the duke’s part. It seems especially strange as he had, twelve years previously, indicated to Sir John that he wished he could attract ‘a Gaelic lecturer to instruct the people with comparative prospects of emigration to Australia and to Canada.’⁸⁰ Without access to the estate papers at Inveraray it has not proven possible to account fully for this discrepancy. however, it seems possible that Argyll may have been trying to break the lines of

⁷⁷ NLS, Acc 8508/43, bundle 7, Sir John McNeill to Argyll, 4 Jun. 1863.

⁷⁸ Argyll, *Scotland as it was and as it is*, 437.

⁷⁹ NLS, Acc 8508/43, bundle 2, Argyll to Sir John McNeill, 21 Mar. 1864, (underlining mine).

⁸⁰ NLS, Acc 8508/43, bundle 2, Argyll to Sir John McNeill, 24 Jun. 1852.

communication between certain of his tenants and the estate management. Unfortunately there is no firm indication of whether or not John Campbell, the contemporary 'Factor Mor', spoke Gaelic. What can be said about him with certainty is that he was more than willing to aid the duke in his policy of evicting those he termed as,

the Cottar tribe, who are the Locusts of the land ...[who]must remain, a dead weight upon His Grace's estate... With few exceptions they comprise the indolent, uncivilized and pauperism of the Estate and in my humble opinion, His Grace of Argyll never speculated money to such advantage as to get rid of them by all possible speed.⁸¹

In any event, John Campbell would remain as 'Factor Mor' until his death in 1872, and the letter to Sir John McNeill relates to the replacement of one of the duke's other employees. It seems most likely that Argyll is referring to another ground officer, Hector MacQuarrie, who left the duke's service in January of 1864 and was replaced by a young Perthshire man, John Geekie, who spoke no Gaelic at all. Under these circumstances the above letter to Sir John McNeill makes perfect sense. Argyll was making it clear to McNeill that he had specifically chosen Geekie at least partly because of his inability to communicate directly with some of the tenants – particularly perhaps those of the poorer class whose primary (if not only) language was Gaelic. It seems more than possible that this tactic had been deliberately employed in order to make the factor less easily accessible to his tenants and thus make it easier to impose harsh relief policies and to 'encourage' desperate tenants to emigrate.⁸²

The above exchanges prove that Argyll's efforts to reduce the population of his estates continued throughout the 1850s and 1860s. Further evidence for this policy can be found in another letter to Sir John McNeill, where the duke stated that.

⁸¹ AEP, bundle 1522, as quoted in, Riddell, *Tireragan*, 12.

⁸² As an interesting postscript it should be noted that, sadly for Argyll, his decision to import a non-Gaelic speaker seems to have backfired badly. It seems that the rather isolated Geekie took to drink and was quickly removed from the duke's employ as he accepted bribes of alcohol from the tenants! Obviously the language barrier did not prove so insurmountable as the duke had hoped! NLS, Acc 8508/44, bundle 6, Argyll to Sir John McNeill, 8 Jun. 1866; NLS, Acc 8508.44, bundle 6, Argyll to Sir John McNeill, 9 Aug. 1867.

I have no doubt that if I could get 2000 people off at once, or even in a couple of years, it would be an economy in the end to send them at my own expense to Canada. But so far as I have yet heard there is nothing like this number who are willing to go.

In the same letter he strongly advocated removing the very poor class of crofters, cottars and fishermen 'who must be removed if the tenure of land is to be improved'. His greatest problem was that few people wanted to leave which left the duke in a difficult position, 'of course I could turn them out. But this is a painful and in my position not a very desirable course if it can be avoided.'⁸³ This reluctance to simply turn out tenants was doubtless motivated by concern for the duke's public image, however, for Argyll it was not merely a question of image. The duke protested until the end of his life that his actions were those of a prudent and caring landlord, who had been motivated not by greed or self interest, but by an honest wish to see greater prosperity on his estates – on the part of his tenants as much as for himself.⁸⁴ Forcing people off his land was not desirable to the 8th duke – he wanted to persuade people to go without actually removing them forcibly from their homes. Of course, persuasion can take many forms and an examination of the list of 'Warnings for Evictions (1850)', which Carol Riddell presented in her study of Tireragan reveals that the estate had many diverse reasons for 'legitimately' evicting tenants. These included, of course, non-payment of rent, but also covered such infringements as 'Poaching Salmon', 'Being Destitute', 'Not being a native of the Ross', 'Retailing Whisky', 'Stealing Turnips', 'Keeping a cow and paying no rent', and 'Fighting and disorderly conduct'.⁸⁵ Argyll himself later admitted his hope that, 'as the pressure is more and more felt, this willingness [to emigrate] may be found.'⁸⁶

The 8th duke was determined to rid his estates of those tenants who did not fit in with his plan for the future. Despite his later protestations, it is abundantly clear that his methods were not always benign and, if later evidence to the Napier Commission is to

⁸³ NLS, Acc 8508/44, bundle 6, letter from Argyll to Sir John McNeill, 1 May 1863.

⁸⁴ Argyll's justification for his actions during this period were expressed in a large number of his publications and will be discussed below, Chapters Seven and Eight.

⁸⁵ AEP, bundle 1804, as quoted in, Riddell, *Tireragan*, 10.

⁸⁶ NLS, Acc 8508/44, bundle 6, Argyll to Sir John McNeill, 1 May 1863.

be believed, his actions resulted in significant hardship and trauma. It is clearly evident from all of the available evidence that the duke's actions from 1847 onwards were directed towards his ultimate goal of clearing as many 'surplus' people from his estates as he possibly could and, by the mid-1860s he had succeeded in increasing his prosperity so far as to be able to actually buy some additional lands to add to the Argyll estates. The duke was attempting to renew his family's fortunes and importance after the disastrous years under the 6th duke and his determination to create an economically viable system must be acknowledged as having borne some fruit. By the 1870s, the 8th duke had largely succeeded (on paper at least) in creating what Devine has described as a 'middle-tenantry'.⁸⁷ His estates were no longer home to hordes of small crofters and cottars who eked out an existence on farms hardly large enough to support them. Now Mull, Tiree and the rest of the Argyll estates were populated by tenants who generally occupied a more substantial acreage of land and could thus be expected to pay a higher rent. In many cases this was true, however, rising rent levels and decreasing numbers of tenants does not tell the whole story. Later accusations of rack-renting on the Argyll estates and the continual rise in the numbers of cottars living on the islands would return to haunt the duke later in his life and will be discussed further below in Chapter Eight. Despite this, Argyll himself regarded his management of the estates in the 1840s and 1850s as a success, and his own belief in the ultimate worth of his actions never deserted him. In the 1880s, he would make many attempts to justify his actions to a hostile audience and it is perhaps worth quoting from one of these attempts here. Writing of his attempts to improve his estates, the duke claimed that,

I had an insuperable objection to taking any sudden step in that direction such as might be harsh towards the people. I thought it my duty to remember that the improvidence of their fathers had been at least seconded, left unchecked, by any active measures, or by the enforcement of any rules of my own predecessors who had been in possession of the estate. I regarded myself, therefore, as representing those who had some

⁸⁷ Devine, *The Great Highland Famine*, 240.

share in the responsibility, although that responsibility was one of omission and not of commission.⁸⁸

The famine conditions of the 1840s and 1850s had undoubtedly been a terrible calamity and had cost the estate dearly in financial terms, but out of the famine had emerged a new plan for the future of the Argyll lands. Modernisation had been Argyll's underlying intention from the very day he took control of his estates and this was vigorously pursued. On Tiree, Mull and in the Kintyre peninsula the number of tenants had been drastically reduced and the size of holdings had grown. On Mull, the population had decreased markedly from over 10,000 in the 1840s to less than 5000 by 1881. On Tiree, as we have seen, the number of holdings had been reduced by almost half in the years between 1847 and 1875 and this pattern of change had been applied across the Argyll estates. However, despite portrayals of Argyll to the contrary, the duke himself always claimed that his aim was not to entirely abolish the crofting system from his estates but simply to modernise and improve it. He stated his feelings on the matter in his *Crofts and Farms in the Hebrides* when he claimed that, 'I am opposed to the system of very small crofts, as I am equally opposed to the system of farms enormously large'.⁸⁹ Despite these claims and Argyll's spirited defence of his estate management policies, his tenants did not always appreciate either his ideology or the manner in which he went about implementing it. Indeed, as we shall see in a later chapter, the troubled times of the famine years would return to haunt the duke some thirty years later when his carefully crafted model of estate management and his methods would be examined, criticised and in some cases demonised by the Napier Commission and other contemporary commentators. Argyll had weathered the storm of the famine period and his estates had emerged, in his eyes at least, as stronger and more viable concerns. The wisdom of his actions, however, would later be put to the test and Argyll the landowner would, during the 1880s, be forced to defend his decisions vigorously in the face of mounting attacks directed against him and his class.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Argyll, *Crofts and Farms in the Hebrides*, 23

⁸⁹ Argyll, *Crofts and Farms in the Hebrides*, 71

⁹⁰ see Chapter Eight.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROBLEMS OF FAITH

Argyll's early actions, both as a politician and a landowner, had been heavily influenced by his personal beliefs and the vision that he had for the future of his life and his estates. The influence of ideas and beliefs on the actions of individuals – especially in the context of the nineteenth century political world – has been explored in some depth in recent years by a number of historians and biographers. J.P. Parry and Boyd Hilton have both developed this thesis in their studies of the part which religion played in the dynamics of the Liberal party in the 1860s and 1870s, and on the influence of evangelicalism in the early nineteenth century respectively.¹ A study of the life and career of the 8th Duke of Argyll provides ample opportunity for such an approach to be applied and there is much to be gained from a close examination of how religion and religious controversies affected the choices that Argyll would make in his political career. In order to understand Argyll, it is essential to understand his views on religion and to chart his reactions to various 'religious questions' throughout his career. This understanding will illuminate Argyll's whole career and is also, as shall be seen, an invaluable aid to explaining why the duke – formerly a great friend of Gladstone – had, by the 1880s, lost the ability and the inclination to exert any influence on his colleague and was powerless to prevent their party from moving down a path which Argyll could not follow.²

Although, as seen in the previous chapters, Argyll had expended much effort during his formative years readying himself for his dual roles as a politician and landowner, his ambitions in these fields had not prevented him from engaging with other matters. His coming of age coincided with one of the most notable religious controversies of the nineteenth century. The young Marquis of Lorne (as Argyll was until 1847) had grown to maturity during the 1830s and 1840s and had witnessed the growing struggles within the Established Church of Scotland between the Moderates and Evangelicals within the General Assembly. The Disruption in which these struggles

¹ J.P. Parry, *Democracy and Religion: Gladstone and the Liberal Party, 1867-1875*, (Cambridge, 1986); B. Hilton, *The Age of Atonement*; see also, Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill*; Matthew, *Gladstone, 1809-1898*.

² Argyll and Gladstone's relationship will be explored in more detail in Chapter Six.

culminated would draw Lorne public attention for the first time and would inspire him to pen his first publication.³ However, these struggles were not the first signs of discord within the Church to which Lorne had been exposed. His boyhood home in the parish of Row in Dumbartonshire had been the focus of a theological controversy following the appointment of an intellectual young minister named John McLeod Campbell. This man's metaphysical theories on Christian doctrine had been widely denounced and he was deposed by the General Assembly in 1831.⁴ When writing some sixty-five years later on the subject of his own Christian beliefs, the 8th duke of Argyll recalled the effects that this controversy had had upon his young mind and claimed that the 'reforming energies' and 'fine spiritual light which even a child could appreciate in the...gentle and thoughtful countenance' of the Rev. McLeod had impressed him greatly – even at the tender age of seven.⁵

Despite these later claims of early interest in theology, it seems that Argyll had little substantial early religious education. With the death of his mother in 1829, he had lost the parent who was most likely to impart some religious teaching and his father, the future 7th Duke of Argyll, was apparently 'not a theologian'.⁶ During Argyll's formative years he had, as we saw in Chapter Two, received a somewhat atypical aristocratic upbringing. Having never been sent away to school, the future 8th duke had been privately educated by a long list of tutors who were, in his own words, 'all of them young men prepared, or preparing themselves, for the ministry of the Established Church of Scotland', but, 'not one of them ever exercised upon me any influence which I can now trace.'⁷ In addition to their lack of influence, these tutors seem to have been less than stringent in their insistence upon giving intensive religious instruction to their young charge. Argyll later recalled that, 'in the matter of catechisms I was mercifully dealt with' and that 'plain Bible reading, and the ordinary collections of sacred poetry, together with the usual Sunday services in the church,

³ anon. (Marquis of Lorne), *A Letter to the peers from a peer's son on the duty and necessity of immediate legislative interposition of behalf of the Church of Scotland as determined by considerations of constitutional law*, (Edinburgh, 1842).

⁴ J. Macintyre, 'John McLeod Campbell, heretic and saint', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, 14 (1962), 49-66; J.B. Torrance, 'The contribution of McLeod Campbell to Scottish theology', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 26 (1973), 295-311.

⁵ George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, *The Philosophy of Belief: or Law in Christian Theology*, (Edinburgh, 1896), viii-xi.

⁶ Argyll, *The Philosophy of Belief*, vii.

⁷ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 82-3.

were the whole of my earliest education in theology.’⁸ When his father succeeded to the dukedom in 1839, however, it was decided to place the young Marquis of Lorne’s education in the hands of an English tutor and to associate him with ‘ideas and associations of a different order’ from the wholly Presbyterian influences to which he had formerly been exposed.⁹ The man selected to fulfil this role was J.S. Howson, an Anglican churchman who eventually became Dean of Chester and would ultimately become better known in later life for his theological publications.¹⁰ Through the influence of Howson, Lorne became familiar with the Anglican Church in addition to Presbyterianism and, although never wavering in his adherence to his native Presbyterian Church, the introduction to the doctrinal differences in the two systems of Protestant worship were of great interest to the young Marquis and inspired him to examine the history and role of his own Church. These examinations would eventually lead to his publication in 1848 of a tract, ambitiously entitled, *Presbytery Examined: an essay, critical and historical, on the ecclesiastical history of Scotland since the reformation*, which would arouse some considerable, and not universally positive, interest from a number of commentators.¹¹ However, before such matters came to concern Argyll there was another more pressing controversy with which to deal: the Disruption of the Church of Scotland.

The Disruption was a key event in the history of nineteenth century Scotland and it was of notable personal importance to the then Marquis of Lorne. His fifth daughter, Lady Frances Balfour, later declared that her father had ‘left it on record that the controversy [surrounding his role in the disruption] made him retire for the rest of his life from the Church courts and their politics, as far as was possible.’¹² Had this indeed been the case, there would be little of value to discuss. Nevertheless, whatever Argyll may have intended, he was consistently drawn towards religious questions throughout his career and was frequently to be reminded of his own role in that early

⁸ Argyll, *The Philosophy of Belief*, vii.

⁹ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 125.

¹⁰ John Saul Howson, (1816-1885) published widely on ecclesiastical matters but was perhaps best known for his collaborative effort with W.J. Conybeare, *The Life and Epistles of St Paul*. (London, 1850). Howson was an influential friend and companion to the young Marquis and accompanied him on his two trips to the continent in 1842-43 and 1843-44.

¹¹ Two responses to *Presbytery Examined* are examined below, 79-81; 83-4.

¹² Balfour, *Lady Victoria Campbell: a memoir*. (London, 1911), 42.

schism which resulted in the formation of the Free Church. Indeed as late as 1886, the editor of the *Oban Times* would remind his readers that,

Forty four years ago Argyll proved a false support to the noble hearted Thomas Chalmers. Four years ago he deserted the Prime Minister because the latter laid a sorting hand on his Grace's fetiche [sic], the land. He is now in the wilderness, and can only return to political life as a Tory.¹³

By this time, the 8th duke of Argyll had come to be regarded by many as reactionary, conservative and obstructive to even moderate ideas of reform. He had not always been perceived as such. In the 1850s and 1860s, the young duke had been considered one of the rising men of his day and was expected to achieve high office.¹⁴ Argyll had also, as we shall later see, been called 'the radical duke' an indication of his tendency early in his career to support causes – causes in which his contemporaries had perhaps not expected a member of the aristocracy to become involved.¹⁵ His outspoken support for the North in the American Civil War is usually cited as the best example of these 'radical' tendencies but, as his critic in the *Oban Times* hints, there was an earlier instance of this 'radicalism' in connection with the Scottish Church question in the 1840s.

As the history of the Ten Years Conflict and the subsequent Disruption are well known and covered in some detail in a number of other works, it is unnecessary to give a commentary of the key events which took place in the 1830s and 1840s.¹⁶ What is vital to note, however, is that the Marquis of Lorne's interest in the matter was excited, in part at least, because his father was at the forefront of the attempt to reconcile the two sides involved. The 7th Duke had not been a particularly active parliamentarian and even his son would later rather unhappily note that he 'had not a

¹³ *Oban Times*, 29 May 1886, 2.

¹⁴ T. Archer, *Gladstone and his contemporaries: Seventy years of social and political progress*, (London, 1898) vol. IV, 212.

¹⁵ *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. XXII, supplement, 386. This 'radicalism' will be explored further in Chapter Five.

¹⁶ Particularly noteworthy are the studies by, S.J. Brown, *Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth in Scotland*, (Oxford, 1982); S.J. Brown and M. Fry (eds.), *Scotland in the Age of the Disruption*, (Edinburgh, 1993); F. Lyall, *Of Presbyters and Kings: Church and State in the Law of Scotland*, (Aberdeen, 1980); G.D. Henderson, *Heritage: A Study of the Disruption*, (Edinburgh, 1943).

political mind', but on his succession to the dukedom in 1839, he had come into contact with the Evangelical members of the General Assembly and, having developed some sympathy with their cause, he endeavoured to bring some sort of settlement bill to the House of Lords.¹⁷ Despite being one of the largest holders of patronage in Scotland, the 7th duke was convinced of both the justice of evangelical demands for spiritual independence of the Church and of the immediate necessity of mediation between the two sides in the dispute. He thus attempted to frame a bill which would represent a more suitable compromise than that proposed in 1841 by the Earl of Aberdeen and, initially, enjoyed some considerable success. His bill was carefully balanced giving to the whole male communicants of a parish the right of objection to a presentee, but retaining the right for the Presbytery to overrule these objections if they were judged to arise from improper motives.¹⁸ At the General Assembly of 1842, the 7th duke's bill was accepted by a majority of 185 as a suitable settlement of the question.

The young Marquis of Lorne endeavoured to do all he could to help his father to gather support for his bill and increase awareness of the issues at stake. He addressed to the Duke of Sutherland a long and detailed letter which outlined the case and begged for support, 'there can be, I should think, very little doubt that a very slight movement among the leading patrons of Scotland would decide the government and the legislature in favour of an alteration of the present law.'¹⁹ Sutherland, however, declined to support Lorne or his father as, he explained, he did not understand the case fully and felt unqualified to make a judgement as he was not a member of the Church of Scotland.²⁰ This response was an undoubted disappointment to Lorne, but was not entirely unexpected. Although Sutherland was, some nineteen months later, to become Lorne's father-in-law, the family was Episcopalian and had little interest in

¹⁷ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 64. These contacts included Thomas Chalmers with whom Lorne was also corresponding by 1842.

¹⁸ Opinion of the 7th duke's bill is still divided and it does not usually feature prominently in works on the disruption. Francis Lyall in his *Of Presbyters and Kings*, 172, omits the bill entirely as it was 'in no way legally effective'. S. J. Brown in *Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth in Scotland*, 323, mentions the bill as the final hope of any legislative solution (although he attributes it to the 8th duke of Argyll). G.I.T. Machin, *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain, 1832 to 1868*, (Oxford, 1977), 129-40, and G.I.T. Machin, 'The Disruption and British Politics', *Scottish Historical Review*, 51, (1972), 20-51, give slightly more detailed accounts of the bill which was later abortively taken up by the Argyllshire M.P. Campbell of Monzie.

¹⁹ NLS, Acc.8508/14, Marquis of Lorne to the Duke of Sutherland, 12 Nov. 1842.

²⁰ NLS, Acc.8508/14, Duke of Sutherland to the Marquis of Lorne, 13 Nov. 1842.

the sufferings of the Established Church of Scotland. Indeed the duke of Sutherland became extremely unpopular for his initial refusal to grant sites for Free Churches on his estates.²¹ Although he quickly relented, he was not the only Scottish proprietor who greeted the Free Church with hostility and the actions of these men prompted Lorne to write to the *Times* attacking all those proprietors who refused to grant such sites.²² In later years he would lament the fact that,

In this one matter of the Church, the effect of English academical education and of the faults and defects of the Presbyterian form of worship had so alienated a large portion of the Scottish aristocracy that they were as ignorant and as unsympathetic as the born John Bulls, in all matters respecting the constitution of the Established Church.²³

Undeterred, or perhaps spurred on by this ‘ignorance’, Lorne made a high profile attempt to draw more attention to, and encourage more understanding of, the issues at stake. His first major publication, *A Letter to the Peers from a Peer’s Son*, was an attempt to bring the issue of patronage and spiritual independence to the attention of those in positions of power. In this work, the nineteen year old Lorne presented a polished argument in support of the Church’s claims for spiritual independence and outlined the unconstitutional nature (as he saw it) of the law of patronage. It is notable that in this first publication, it is possible to detect clear indications of his particularly confrontational style of writing. He stated that, ‘There perhaps never was a controversy in which the ‘wrath of man’ has so vividly displayed its legitimate results, or one in which such an amount of empty declamation has passed current for solid argument’ and further that the term ‘Moderate’, ‘has every recommendation, except that of being descriptive.’²⁴

²¹ H. Miller, *Sutherland: as it was and is; or How a Country May be Ruined*, (Edinburgh, 1843), 11.

²² *The Times*, 16 Jun. 1846, 6; for more on the Duke of Sutherland’s change of heart regarding the Free Church see, W. Ewing (ed), *Annals of the Free Church of Scotland, 1843-1900*, (Edinburgh, 1914) vol. 2, 222.

²³ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 175-6. This is one of the few occasions where Argyll found an advantage in his own lack of ‘English academical education’ as it put him in a relatively unusual position as a member of the Scottish aristocracy whose religious affiliation was to the Scottish Established Church and not to that of Episcopalians or Anglicans.

²⁴ Lorne, *A Letter to the peers from a peer’s son*, 4-8.

The purpose of this interesting pamphlet was to absolve the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland from charges of rebellion and to show that the Evangelicals under Thomas Chalmers were actually only asking for what, constitutionally and morally, should already be theirs. Further, Lorne issued a stark warning to the members of the House of Lords that,

This is not the time when we can safely multiply the ranks of religious division and dissent. Above all, this is not the time when we can safely tamper with the great leading institutions of the country, and give strength to the numerous enemies who surround them; neither is it the time...that the established channels of religious instruction, may, with impunity, be interrupted or destroyed. But it is time, and full time too, that this unhappy conflict should be stopped, ere it assume in reality the character which Dr Chalmers has already – I trust prematurely – given it, of ‘a contest between the civil rights of certain individuals, upon the one hand, and the highest moral interests of the community, on the other’.²⁵

Lorne’s views were, in some respects at least, relatively conservative. His anxiety to prevent the dispute deteriorating any further, and particularly to tackle the question of civil rights versus moral interests was doubtless influenced by his personal feelings. He was not alone in fearing the possible ramifications of a collapse of the religious ties between the people and the state church and must also have been aware that discontent with the religious settlement was also beginning to spread to include a growing feeling of dissatisfaction with the Union in some sectors of the Scottish community. Michael Fry has demonstrated that this feeling was apparent, albeit in an embryonic form, during the 1840s and found an interesting manifestation of this from the Revd Thomas Brown’s *Annals of the Disruption*. Brown recounts how the Revd Walter Wood of Elie had addressed a meeting in Langholm in January 1843 at which, in Revd Wood’s own words,

I said, on the spur of the moment, that such injustice was enough to justify Scotland in demanding the repeal of the Union. With that, to my surprise,

²⁵ Lorne, *A Letter to the Peers from a Peer’s Son*, 100-1.

and somewhat to my consternation, the meeting rose as one man, waving hats and handkerchiefs and cheering again and again. No doubt the enthusiastic feelings of the people assisted our object, but I took care not to speak of repeal of the Union at our subsequent meetings.²⁶

Lorne was, as we shall later see, staunchly unionist to his core and any potential threat to the bonds which tied the United Kingdom was therefore something which he would have taken very seriously.²⁷ It is possible to suggest therefore that his and his father's efforts to mediate in the crisis may have been motivated, at least partially, by their concerns over a potential threat to the Parliamentary Union. Lorne's answer was to tackle the crisis by working within the framework of the constitution. What he suggested in his pamphlet was that certain Statutes should effectively have more weight than others. Thus the Act of Security, as a law 'which the united Parliament of Britain were in future to respect, and which, under the guardianship of a national treaty, and the Sovereign's oath, were in future to be preserved inviolate' should be regarded as of higher value than, for example, the eventual decision against the Veto Act in 1838, which he saw as a less impressive 'judicial' ruling based upon the illegal and unconstitutional restoration of patronage. Indeed the illegality of this measure was given some considerable space in Lorne's tract and he termed it as,

a violation of that treaty [1707], which provided that no alteration should be made in the 'discipline' or 'government' of the Church as it was then ordered...the act of 1711...was a direct and unjustifiable inroad upon that 'government' and 'discipline' of the Church, which, according to the provisions of the treaty of Union, were to be preserved inviolate without any alteration.²⁸

Lorne took further steps in his attempt to avert the coming Disruption. In addition to the publication of his case against the 'illegal' Veto Act, he also became involved in correspondence with the leading Evangelical, Thomas Chalmers. Despite declaring

²⁶ M. Fry, 'The Disruption and the Union', in Brown and Fry (eds.), *Scotland in the Age of the Disruption*, 42; T. Brown, (ed.), *Annals of the Disruption*, (Edinburgh, 1893), 69.

²⁷ Argyll's adherence to the preservation of the Union will be discussed in more detail below in Chapter Eight.

²⁸ Lorne, *A Letter to the Peers from a Peer's Son*, 79-86.

himself in sympathy with the Evangelical cause, Lorne advised Chalmers to restrain his supporters and adopt a more cautious approach. He perceived the determination of the Evangelicals as leading them to the adoption of a dangerous position and he urged Chalmers not to act in haste and to temper the statements and demands being made. Lorne was attempting to steer a middle course – to persuade the government to give a little more and to persuade the Evangelicals to ask for a little less. This was a position that he took in support of his father's bill, which had elicited such a hopeful response at the General Assembly of 1842. While Lorne agreed with Chalmers that the specific exercise of patronage was unconstitutional, he felt that it was not the point to press with the House of Lords and that, 'though the contest for the principle of non-intrusion was that which began the present confusion, it is well known that the question of jurisdiction has long since become, in the estimation of both parties, the more important of the two.'²⁹ His attempts to draw a distinction between 'the principle of non-intrusion' and 'the question of jurisdiction' however, seem somewhat confusing as one was intrinsically linked to the other. This confusion perhaps stemmed from Lorne's relative inexperience but his approach did have the aim of concentrating attention less upon the present (and peculiarly Scottish) symptom of the controversy (i.e. non-intrusion) and to interest politicians in the wider legal aspects of the case: forming his arguments on the basis of broad themes (i.e. jurisdiction) that were 'not altogether strange or unintelligible to the English ear'.³⁰ He warned Chalmers,

if you found it difficult to arrive at your point when it lay so near as a modification of the statute of Queen Anne, why increase the difficulty by removing it farther off, and fixing it so far away as the abolition of Lay Patronage altogether?³¹

Lorne and his father had hoped that a compromise could and would be reached, however, with the failure of the 7th duke's bill and the continuing inaction of

²⁹ Marquis of Lorne, *A letter to the Rev. Dr. Thomas Chalmers DD on the present position of Church affairs in Scotland and the causes which have led to it*, (Edinburgh, 1842), 37.

³⁰ Lorne, *A Letter to the Peers from a Peer's Son*, 18.

³¹ Lorne, *A letter to the Rev. Dr. Thomas Chalmers DD*, 39.

parliament as a whole, the crisis finally came to a head.³² Lorne's *Letter to the Peers from a Peer's Son* had been a strongly worded defence of the principles of spiritual independence and seemed to place him definitively as a supporter of the claims of the Evangelicals, however, when the Disruption took place he did not publicly join the Free Church of Scotland. This was seen by some contemporaries as a betrayal of his principles and caused considerable upset within his own family. Lorne's sister, and only surviving sibling, Lady Emma Campbell, had been a great supporter of the Free Church claims and had 'come out' with them at the Disruption. Lady Frances Balfour (his daughter) later observed that, 'it was a great disappointment to her [Emma Campbell] that...having sympathised and understood the case for the Free Church, [her brother] had withdrawn himself from the party when he saw that the schism was inevitable.'³³ However, a careful study of some of Lorne's correspondence reveals many indications as to what his true position and motivations actually were.

Lorne wrote privately to Chalmers a year after the Disruption about his own feelings regarding all those who had left the established Church,

No-one can be more entirely convinced of the violation of all constitutional right and legal principle which brought about their relinquishment of the Establishment, and I only regret that there should exist on this subject other opinions of a doctrinal or religious character in which I cannot feel the same agreement, and which prevent me feeling more at one with a Communion in which I must always feel the strongest interest.³⁴

It must be emphasised that Lorne had always felt a keen admiration for Chalmers. He remained, until the end of his life, a keen supporter of Chalmers' 'moral individualism' and enthusiastically supported his charitable endeavours which were the most palatable form of 'welfare' to him.³⁵ He would later describe Chalmers as

³² The passage of the 7th duke's bill and the parliamentary situation generally are covered in depth in, Machin, 'The Disruption and British Politics'.

³³ Balfour, *Lady Victoria Campbell*, 42.

³⁴ [N]ew [C]ollege [L]ibrary, Edinburgh, Chalmers Papers, CHA4.316.33, Marquis of Lorne to Thomas Chalmers, 21 Feb. 1845.

³⁵ Lorne's distaste for eleemosynary aid as seen in his his response to famine conditions on his lands (Chapter three) was inspired partly by his adherence to Chalmerian thinking on the subject of welfare.

being possessed of a 'masculine understanding and fervent eloquence',³⁶ and this admiration led him, during the 1840s, to temper his words slightly to his older (and, by now, ailing) correspondent. One of the main concerns which Lorne seems to have had about the supporters of the Free Church was that their language and actions seemed to him to be violent and uncompromising. He had earlier chastised Chalmers with regard to the, 'anti-patronage movement of the last assembly' and had, somewhat impudently, reminded him, 'you are quite well aware how strongly I felt the imprudence of that movement.'³⁷

It is tempting to see Lorne's attempts to persuade Chalmers to concentrate less on Patronage as simply the reaction of a member of the landed class. The Argyll family enjoyed considerable patronage within Scotland and Lorne's interest in downplaying the issue could be perceived as evidence of a self-interested attempt to preserve one of the major functions and perceived benefits of being a member of the Scottish landowning class. That this issue was alive to Lorne cannot be doubted, however, it must also be noted that in his own 'constitutional' plan, outlined in his *Letter to the Peers*, he had specifically denounced the restoration of Patronage as unlawful.³⁸ He was also, some thirty years later, at the forefront of the campaign to completely abolish patronage.³⁹ Lorne did recognise, however, that Patronage was an attractive privilege for some landowners and, despite his personal feelings about its 'unconstitutional' nature, he was pragmatic enough to see that its complete removal would have seriously worried many other landed aristocrats across Scotland. It seems that what Lorne was attempting to do in the 1840s was to encourage the amendment rather than the abolition of patronage. The solution he had outlined in his *Letter to the Peers* would have involved a complex and concerted attempt by both the Church and the State to find some common ground. Lorne had seen this as involving more movement from the government than from the Church, but he had wanted both sides to make moves towards a compromise.⁴⁰ That he was somewhat upset that his advice

For more discussion of this issue and the influence of Chalmers and other evangelicals see Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement*, passim.

³⁶ Argyll, *Autobiography and memoirs*, Vol. 1, 90.

³⁷ Lorne, *A letter to the Rev. Dr. Thomas Chalmers DD*, 38.

³⁸ Lorne, *A Letter to the Peers from a Peer's Son*, 86.

³⁹ See below, 93-5.

⁴⁰ Lorne, *A Letter to the Peers from a Peer's Son*, 43-5.

had not been taken by either side is further evident in later letters. To Chalmers again he wrote, late in 1842 that,

I have seen by the papers that your convocation is over – I am most anxious to know what was done there and the character of the resolutions come to...I trust you kept them to the constitutional – the more – I am convinced – the better for bringing home the nature of your cause to the understanding of those without.⁴¹

Here, again, Lorne was to be disappointed at the Evangelicals' continuing emphasis on the specific issue of Patronage. He was sure that they were damaging their case by attacking the system in this manner and was also undoubtedly antagonised by the fact that they were not making more use of his carefully developed argument about the unconstitutional aspects of the recent legislation passed by the Government. To his sister, Lorne was more open about his feelings towards the evangelicals, 'the speeches at the convocation are not pleasing to me – there is something offensive in the bold and sometimes thoughtless language in which they couch the expression of their principle of the spiritual independence of the church.'⁴² The choice of words here is extremely instructive: to Lorne, those who were to leave the Church had become 'them' (rather than 'us'). He had obviously made the decision, by early 1843, that he would not support any moves to split the Established Church of Scotland.

Lorne would outline his position more clearly later the same year when writing to an Established Church minister from his native county of Argyll. The letter would later appear in the *Glasgow Herald* and was written in response to a request from this minister that Lorne and his father should take positive action to prevent tenants of the estate from joining the Free Church. In answer to the request, Lorne stated that, 'the liberty which I demand for my own individual convictions, I cannot and wish not to deny to others' and declared that the Argyll estate tenants will be free to worship as they please.⁴³ However, the letter contained many other interesting statements which

⁴¹ NCL, Chalmers Papers, CHA4.302.5, Lorne to Chalmers, 27 Nov. 1842.

⁴² NLS, Acc.8508/13, Lorne to Emma Campbell, 3 Jan. 1843.

⁴³ Marquis of Lorne, *Church of Scotland: a letter from the Marquis of Lorne*, (Glasgow, 1843), 7.

help to build up a picture of how Lorne regarded the contemporary ecclesiastical situation.

Lorne laid the blame for the Disruption firmly at the door of the Tory government of Sir Robert Peel, and particular censure was applied to Lord Aberdeen whose actions were, 'tardy and apparently useless', but he also observed that while Chalmers' original case had represented a 'beautiful idea, and quite worthy of the mind which formed it', the way in which, 'the principles of spiritual independence have been pushed as a religious doctrine, have thrown a black shade indeed over so beautiful a picture, and have, I greatly fear, precluded the realisation of our hopes.'⁴⁴ The vehemence of the Evangelicals had repelled Lorne, but he claimed that, as far as he was concerned, he had neither left the Established Church nor had he remained within it as it now stood. He called for reconciliation and hoped that, 'after the excitement of this crisis has subsided, the wish may, in part at least, be realised', but declared in a melancholy manner that he was, 'in the unfortunate position of disagreeing with both parties.'⁴⁵

The 'unfortunate position' was perhaps somewhat less difficult to resolve than the Marquis of Lorne claimed and his decision not to join with the Free Church seems to have been heavily influenced by two pragmatic concerns. In 1843, he had just met his future bride, Elizabeth Leveson-Gower. Her father, the duke of Sutherland had already indicated that he was unwilling to take any part in the debate surrounding the Disruption as the family was a member of the Episcopalian Church of Scotland.⁴⁶ The duke and duchess of Sutherland's opinion of the Free Church was clearly an unfavourable one, not least because a number of the evangelical ministers who would join that church had long been vocal in their opposition to the Sutherlands' land reforms.⁴⁷ It is, therefore, highly likely that Lorne was unwilling to jeopardise his relationship with his future bride's family by associating himself too closely with the Free Church. He also had his future career to consider. In 1843 Lorne undoubtedly

⁴⁴ Lorne, *Church of Scotland*, 2; Argyll's early prejudice against the Earl of Aberdeen was also expressed in the duke's later autobiography where he claimed that he had, 'attributed to him more than to any other the catastrophe of the disruption of the Church of Scotland', Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 302.

⁴⁵ Lorne, *Church of Scotland*, 3.

⁴⁶ see above, 70-1.

⁴⁷ see, Brown, *The Social History of Religion in Scotland*, 126; Miller, *Sutherland: as it was and is*, 11.

had an eye on his future and it was, as we have earlier seen, one of his greatest wishes that he should stand for the county of Argyll in parliament once he reached his majority.⁴⁸ Argyllshire was not, however, one of the major centres of Free Church support – in 1843 only seventeen Argyllshire ministers had left the Established Church, leaving some thirty-five Established Church ministers in the area.⁴⁹ Thus, the Marquis of Lorne must have been aware that open support of the Free Church would not have gained him a great deal of support in his local area – indeed, it may have offended more people than it pleased. For the young and ambitious man that he was, these must have been serious considerations.

Despite this, his decision to remain within the Established Church seems to have caused problems for the future 8th duke. The *Oban Times* would not be the only critic of his position during and after the Disruption and although he would maintain a good and close relationship with Thomas Chalmers until the latter's death in 1847, the duke of Argyll (as Lorne became that year) would spend the next thirty years of his life being criticised by both sides – by the Established Church for his tolerant views towards the Free Church and by the Free Church for his lack of overt support for them. He came in for some particular criticism from the Established Church for attacking those Scottish proprietors who refused sites to the Free Church congregations.⁵⁰ From the other side, a Free Church minister from Perth, the Rev. Andrew Gray, wrote to Argyll in 1848, attacking some statements made in Argyll's recently published tract *Presbytery Examined: an essay, critical and historical, on the ecclesiastical history of Scotland since the reformation* in which he had heavily criticised the way that the Free Church was developing. Argyll had stated in his tract that,

The power exerted over the human mind, by religious parties, is one of strange power indeed...Whoever wishes to study its operation on a small scale, compressed in a narrow space, let him analyse the Catechism of the

⁴⁸ see above, Chapter Two.

⁴⁹ J. McCosh, *The Wheat and the Chaff Gathered into Bundles: a statistical contribution towards the history of the recent disruption of the Scottish ecclesiastical establishment*, (Perth, 1843), 60.

⁵⁰ For Lorne's attitude towards granting sites to the Free Church see his letter to the editor in *The Times*, 16 Jun. 1846, 6.

Free Church – full of the noblest, deepest truths of the Reformation – full also, of the narrowest, shallowest glosses of a provincial history.

Argyll further ridiculed what he saw as the Free Church's attempts to 'prove that every opinion different from its own, whether on matters of doctrine, or of government, or of mere ritual, is, in some way, a violation of the "headship of Christ".'⁵¹ This had, understandably, upset many members of the Free Church and Gray's letter was written to convey his anger that Argyll had, in Gray's eyes at least, significantly changed his opinions since the time of his *Letter to the Peers*, and chastising him for having 'expressed the opinion that the Free Church should be tolerated; but [created] the impression that the Free Church is a nuisance.'⁵²

Criticism of this nature seems to have hardened Argyll against the Free Church and he grew increasingly to distrust what it had become. In 1874, he gave his support to the Conservative Abolition of Patronage, but his actions were once again dismissed by the members of the Free Church. Alex Taylor Innes argued that, 'it is not the Free Church...but its old defender, the *vox clamantis* who called it into the howling desert, who has abandoned their dogmatic basis.'⁵³ In reply to allegations of this nature, Argyll stated that he was,

thankful to have been able to lend a helping hand in procuring all that was ever hoped for or desired in 1842. That in doing this, I should be denounced as a wrong doer by those who now profess to represent the majority of the Church in that year, I look upon as a deplorable example of that perversity which is characteristic of human nature, and especially of human nature in ecclesiastical concerns. There is only one word which describes it – that excellent Scotch word, *thrawn*.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Argyll, *Presbytery Examined*, 224-6.

⁵² *Correspondence between the Duke of Argyll and the Rev. Andrew Gray: Perth, in reference to His Grace's essay, entitled, 'Presbytery Examined'*, (Edinburgh, 1849), Gray to Argyll, 9Nov. 1848, 36; *ibid*, Gray to Argyll, 13 Dec. 1848, 9.

⁵³ A.T. Innes, *The Church of Scotland Crisis, 1843 and 1874 and the duke of Argyll*, (Edinburgh, 1874). Argyll was especially displeased by this attack as he had earlier admired and liked Taylor Innes and had recommended him for a paid position on the Scottish Education Board, BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44102, f.172-3, Argyll to Gladstone, 7 Aug. 1872.

⁵⁴ George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, *The Patronage Act of 1874: all that was asked in 1843: being a reply to Mr Taylor Innes*, (Edinburgh, 1874).

From comments such as these, it is possible to see that Argyll's patience with the Free Church (and especially with its current members) had largely run out. However, it is also clear from the above statement that Argyll's own views on Patronage and the causes of the Disruption had altered somewhat since the 1840s. In declaring that the abolition of Patronage was 'all that was ever hoped for or desired in 1842' Argyll directly contradicted his own earlier arguments that what was really the key issue at stake was the 'question of jurisdiction' of the Church in general.⁵⁵ The duke was trying to demonstrate that it was the Free Church who had altered their standpoint on the issue of Patronage, however, it is equally clear to see that Argyll himself had significantly moved away from his earlier belief that the relations between Church and State in general were the key issues at stake.

While Argyll tried to defend himself against attacks on his apparent change of position, his dislike for the Free Church and its members certainly increased. It is clear, however, that this dislike had been building up for some considerable time. Argyll had prior to the Disruption declared himself concerned at the 'bold and thoughtless language'⁵⁶ that some of the Free Church members employed and it seems likely that some of their early actions had prompted Argyll to look upon them in a hostile manner from a very early date. An example of this can be found in the actions of the Free Church with regard to the question of American slavery. In an interesting article, George Shepperson has discussed the background to and repercussions of the Free Church's search for sources of funding in the 1840s with particular reference to their acceptance of some £3000 from sympathetic individuals in the Southern states of the USA.⁵⁷ The perception amongst many contemporary commentators was that the Free Church, by accepting Southern money, were lending their implicit support to the institution of slavery. Campaigns were mounted against the Free Church with protestors demanding that they should 'Send Back the Money.'⁵⁸ Shepperson makes the point that protest against acceptance of the money was present within the ranks of the Free Church as well as without and claims that, 'the house of the Free Church was

⁵⁵ See above, 73-4.

⁵⁶ See above, 77.

⁵⁷ G. Shepperson, 'The Free Church and American Slavery', *Scottish Historical Review*, 30 (1951), 126-43.

⁵⁸ This was the 'short but compelling' slogan of the movement. For more discussion of the campaign see, Shepperson, 'The Free Church and American Slavery', 126-32.

divided against itself; even if it managed to stand, many thought that its foundations would be impaired and its strength reduced.’⁵⁹

As has been mentioned earlier, the 8th duke of Argyll would later emerge as a leading opponent of slavery and it seems possible to suggest that his dislike of the Free Church was augmented by their entanglement with the Southern American slaveholders. There are some problems with this suggestion however. Firstly, Argyll himself makes no mention of being aware of the controversy, let alone being in any way involved in it, and secondly, he implies in his autobiography that he had no involvement in the anti-slavery cause until about 1850. Despite this, it is possible to argue that the affair may have had an impact upon him.

Argyll was notably reticent about his anti-slavery activities in his published works. Unfortunately, he died before completing his autobiography which was left to his third wife to complete. The deficiencies in the autobiography have been highlighted elsewhere, however, it is worth emphasising one or two points here.⁶⁰ The third Duchess, Ina Macneill, had only been Argyll’s wife for the last five years of his life and, although she had full access to the duke’s private papers, her treatment of some aspects of the duke’s life shows her own ignorance of certain matters. It is very likely that the lack of detail regarding many aspects of the duke’s life (particularly those relating to his earlier wives and his children) can be attributed to the animosity between the third duchess and the duke’s family and these lacunae in detail are particularly apparent with regard to the subject of the duke and the first duchess’s roles in the anti-slavery movement.⁶¹ It seems reasonable to conclude that, had Argyll lived a little longer, he would have been able to provide a much more complete account of his activities in the late 1850s and 1860s than the one which is presented in his memoirs.

In the section of the Autobiography which Argyll did write himself, he detailed meeting with Charles Sumner in 1848-49. Their introduction was made through

⁵⁹ Shepperson, ‘The Free Church and American Slavery’, 130.

⁶⁰ The duke’s autobiography and memoirs and the problems with it as a reliable source are fully explored in the introduction to this thesis.

⁶¹ The Duke and Duchess’s role in the anti-slavery and particularly the Freedmen’s Aid movements are discussed in great detail in, H.M. Finnie, *Scottish Attitudes towards American Reconstruction, 1865-1877*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1975. See also below, Chapter Five.

Argyll's first wife and was the start of an 'intimate friendship'.⁶² He was also acquainted with various other abolitionists from an early date, including J.L. Motley and Henry Ward Beecher.⁶³ It seems inconceivable that Argyll would not have come into direct contact with those people who had protested against the Free Church's acceptance of 'slave money' so that, even if the controversy had not affected him greatly at the time, it would have later added to his feeling that the Free Church was not an institution with which he wished to associate himself.

It would not only be with the Free Church that Argyll would experience less than cordial relations. The duke's aforementioned tract, *Presbytery Examined*, had resulted in some considerable censure from members of the Free Church,⁶⁴ however, it also led to, what was for Argyll, an inexplicable conflict with the Episcopalian church in Scotland which is worthy of examination. The circumstances of the case were relatively straightforward. Argyll's keen support for and interest in the Presbyterian system had prompted him in 1848 to write an essay on the ecclesiastical history of Scotland. In this tract he had charted the history of religion in Scotland and had portrayed the Episcopalian Church in Scotland in a less than flattering light. Writing of the history of Episcopacy in Scotland, Argyll had said that it had been, 'a system destitute of every element of national life – hostile to the rights, to the institutions, to the opinions, and to the prejudices of the people.'⁶⁵ However, Argyll was keen to emphasise that this was not an attack upon the contemporary Episcopalian system, which he said was, 'thoroughly entitled to sincere respect' and he later made much of the fact that he had for some years received communion at Episcopalian Churches in both Scotland and England.⁶⁶ The publication of this essay would later bring Argyll into contact with his future friend and colleague, William E. Gladstone.⁶⁷ In the immediate aftermath of the publication of his essay, however, Argyll received a letter from the Right Rev. Walter John Trower, Bishop of Glasgow and Galloway, in which Trower informed Argyll that, 'your Grace received the holy

⁶² Sumner was chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee in the US Senate during and after the American Civil War and was a prominent supporter of the anti-slavery cause. The duke and duchess of Argyll corresponded frequently with Sumner, see H.G. Pearson, (ed.), 'Letters of the duke and duchess of Argyll to Charles Sumner', *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 47 (1914), 66-107.

⁶³ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 411.

⁶⁴ See above, 79-80.

⁶⁵ Argyll, *Presbytery Examined*, 234.

⁶⁶ Argyll, *Presbytery Examined*, 231.

⁶⁷ see below, 86-7.

communion last year at Paisley...I cannot sanction, under existing circumstances, a similar admission of your Grace to that holy communion' and stated that this was in direct response to Argyll's essay which, 'breathes throughout so bitter and contemptuous a spirit towards the church.'⁶⁸

Trower's effective excommunication of Argyll appears to have been an over-zealous reaction to the duke's essay; however, it certainly illustrates the Scottish religious situation in the 1840s. That Trower was willing to humiliate a member of the Scottish aristocracy – a member who had recently married into one of the most prominent Episcopalian families in Scotland – demonstrates clearly the bitterness of religious controversy.⁶⁹ For his part, Argyll appeared astonished that he had provoked such a reaction. Unable to understand how what he had written about the history of the Church could be taken as a criticism of the contemporary situation, Argyll responded immediately by launching an aggressive (and published) counter-attack, subjecting the Bishop to as much scorn as he could muster. In one letter he told his critic,

Did I imagine that the body to which you belong is the only one in Scotland entitled to administer the Ordinances of the Christian Church, this might be a serious penalty. But I generally communicate with another body, which to others I am apt to call the 'Church of Scotland', but which, I fear, you consider better described as the 'Form of Schism' established here. It is only on accidental occasions that I have sometimes communicated with the Episcopal Church in Scotland. I do not anticipate, therefore, any serious inconvenience from your spiritual censures.⁷⁰

He additionally chastised the Bishop, 'I am sure that you must be acting very wrongly when you select the communion table of a Christmas festival as the place and the

⁶⁸ *Correspondence between his grace the Duke of Argyll and the Right Rev. WJ Trower*, (Glasgow, 1849), Trower to Argyll, 12 Dec. 1848, 5.

⁶⁹ Argyll was not Trower's only victim. In 1858 Trower used his influence to ensure that the promising young theologian, William Bright (1824-1901) was removed from his position at Trinity College, Glenalmond on the grounds of his Tractarian opinions on the church settlement of Henry VIII, see A. Clark, 'Bright, William (1824-1901)', Rev. Myfanwy Lloyd, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004. For more on the Scottish Episcopalian Church see, R. Strong, *Episcopalianism in nineteenth-century Scotland: religious responses to a modernizing society*, (Oxford, 2002).

⁷⁰ *Correspondence between Argyll and Trower*, Argyll to Trower, 18 Dec. 1848, 6.

occasion for testifying your opinion of my “Essay on the Ecclesiastical History of Scotland”.⁷¹ As this contemptuous riposte demonstrates, even at the tender age of twenty-five Argyll was already exhibiting signs that he ‘craved for the rapture of the fight in speech and in writing’.⁷² He was not adverse to the use of sarcasm, irony and ridicule in order to make his points more powerfully: something which did not go unnoticed. It would be exchanges such as these which would earn for Argyll his reputation as a powerful debater and also contributed to the ridicule to which he himself was later subjected. His obituary in the *Times*, would later dramatically reflect his style and manner in debates,

There was something almost comically bellicose about his appearance in debate, the small figure with uplifted head, crowned with a crest of waving hair, rising, as some thought, like a plume in a Gaelic chief’s bonnet, and, as others saw it, like the comb of a fighting cock. It was this last comparison, probably, which suggested the nick-name of *Cocculus Indicus* bestowed upon the Duke.

Argyll is described in this same obituary as being ‘drawn towards Episcopalianism’⁷³; however, this does not ever seem to have been the case and his published and unpublished writings consistently show a strong attachment to the history and the doctrines of the Established Church of Scotland. This attachment was to prove instrumental in his initial introduction to W.E. Gladstone who would come to play such a prominent role in the rest of Argyll’s life. Their introduction was, however, inauspicious and occurred as a direct result of the publication of Argyll’s aforementioned article ‘Presbytery Examined’. Soon after the publication of this article Gladstone had undertaken to review it in the *Quarterly Review*. For a friendship that would last – on and off - for the rest of their lives, it was certainly not the most promising start. Argyll reported that Gladstone had somewhat ‘misunderstood’ some of his points, and indeed Gladstone’s review was extremely critical of many of the things Argyll was trying to say.⁷⁴ This ‘misunderstanding’ (as

⁷¹ *Correspondence between Argyll and Trower*, Argyll to Trower, 18 Dec. 1848, 8.

⁷² *The Times*, 25 Apr. 1900, 7.

⁷³ *The Times*, 25 Apr. 1900, 7.

⁷⁴ anon. [W.E. Gladstone], ‘The duke of Argyll on presbytery’, *Quarterly Review*, December, 1848, 78-105.

Argyll liked to call it) on Gladstone's part led to a flurry of letters between the two men during March of 1849.⁷⁵ Argyll was not a man to take criticism lying down and wrote personally to Gladstone to introduce himself and to elaborate on some of his points – trying to convince his reviewer of the correctness of his original argument.⁷⁶

Gladstone replied and was extremely (although perhaps typically) obtuse about the whole affair. He did not confirm or deny that he had written the anonymous review, but bizarrely he hinted that the editor may have taken some license in changing certain aspects of the review before publication – something that Argyll found extremely unlikely taking into account Gladstone's status and reputation.⁷⁷ It was a strange letter and it struck the young duke as particularly unsatisfactory. One explanation for Gladstone's odd response can perhaps be found in the title of Argyll's tract: this may well have antagonised Gladstone, reminding him of the outspoken 'critical and historical' attack which T. B. Macaulay had launched upon his *The State in its Relations with the Church*, some ten years previously.⁷⁸ Gladstone's review was, in Argyll's own words, 'highly complimentary to the literary merits' of the essay, however, it was also strongly worded against some of Argyll's key arguments.⁷⁹ Although Argyll had stated at the outset that he held no 'hostile feeling against Episcopacy in the abstract, or against the English Church in particular', Gladstone was certainly less than impressed by some of the duke's opinions. It appears, however, that after receiving Argyll's first letter, Gladstone may have regretted the vehemence of his original review and it is more than possible that his attempts to distance himself from parts of the review were motivated by a recognition that he had been over zealous in some of his comments. Despite this, one cannot ignore the major differences between the two men on questions of church and state. Argyll, although tenacious on most subjects, soon discovered that arguing with Gladstone about religion was always going to be an uphill battle; in fact, after their initial flurry of correspondence about his essay, he recorded in his memoirs that, 'on Church questions I never felt it worth while to talk with him. That was the one

⁷⁵ Of particular interest are, BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44098, f.5-7, Argyll to Gladstone, 8 Mar. 1849; f. 9-10, Gladstone to Argyll, 10 Mar. 1849; f. 11-12, Argyll to Gladstone, 15 Mar. 1849.

⁷⁶ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44098, f. 5-7, Argyll to Gladstone, 8 Mar. 1849.

⁷⁷ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 310-12.

⁷⁸ T.B. Macaulay, 'Gladstone on Church and State', *Quarterly Review*, 65 (1839). I am indebted to Owen Dudley Edwards for drawing my attention to this.

⁷⁹ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 311.

subject on which I always realized that there was a fundamental indelibility in his opinions.'⁸⁰

The duke himself, as he admitted, had an equally fundamental indelibility in his own opinions on the matter and, despite his later protestations, had certainly been less than generous towards the history of the Episcopalian Church in Scotland. However, it is fair to say that he was never as fervent a Presbyterian as Gladstone was an Episcopalian. As he pointed out in his memoirs, he was not certain that, 'our local ecclesiastical system [was] one of Divine and universal obligation' but he was sure that Gladstone held that view firmly about his own church.⁸¹ This initial exchange would represent the beginning of the two men's friendship, but it also marked the commencement of a series of serious disagreements between them over religious questions, disagreements which would continue for the rest of their lives.⁸²

Despite their differences on religion, by the 1860s Argyll had become one of Gladstone's closest associates and his early ambitions had been largely fulfilled. Although he had never fulfilled his desire to sit in the House of Commons, Argyll became a cabinet member and a prominent orator and statesman in his own right through his position in the House of Lords. However, the Liberal party was not, in the mid-to late 1860s, in a strong position. The party was fracturing and Gladstone's attempts to reunite it were to focus upon the question of Ireland, and specifically the Irish church issue.⁸³ During his spell in opposition, Gladstone was able to formulate his well-known resolutions on the Irish Church and pushed his Suspensory Bill and the Church Rates Bill through the Commons with an energy and efficiency that belied his position as an opposition minister.⁸⁴ Argyll proved to be one of his staunchest supporters. The General Election of 1868 showed the wisdom of Gladstone's

⁸⁰ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 311. Despite this, the two men did converse on occasion on the subject of religion as a study of their correspondence shows, however, they were both equally incapable of bending their views on the subject and generally concerned themselves with other topics. For more on Gladstone and Argyll's correspondence see Chapter Six.

⁸¹ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 311-2.

⁸² Argyll's relationship with the Liberal party and with Gladstone will be explored in greater depth in Chapter Six.

⁸³ Gladstone had initially intended to address the Irish land question, but the collapse of a bill on this subject seems to have persuaded him to turn the party's attention to religious matters instead, see, Hoppen, *The Mid Victorian Generation*, 219-21.

⁸⁴ Hoppen, *The Mid Victorian Generation*, 220; Matthew, *Gladstone*, 142; O. Anderson, 'Gladstone's Abolition of Compulsory Church Rates', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 25 (1974), 185-98.

decision as the Liberal Party swept to power and the question of the Irish Church was swiftly tackled. It was a relatively safe topic to choose as the claims of the Established Church in Ireland for survival were so weak as to be practically insignificant. The passage of the bill was relatively straightforward; however, the question of the redistribution of the Church's former revenue caused some problems for the party. Although the Whigs were broadly content to accept the disestablishment of the Irish Church, a number of them were less than happy with the plans for secular redistribution of the Church's former revenue. In the end, forty-nine Whig peers rebelled against Gladstone and asked instead for extra financial provision for all three Irish religious denominations. This would, as J.P. Parry explains, 'have the double advantage of fuelling the beneficial protestant flame, and of giving the Catholics a tangible stake in the maintenance of the Union, while releasing priests from enforced dependence on the voluntary contributions of the poor, ignorant and disaffected.'⁸⁵ Gladstone's dependence upon non-conformist support made the Whig peers' demands unacceptable and his unwillingness to sanction any further endowment for any of the religious groups caused considerable discontent within his party – discontent which would only grow as time progressed.⁸⁶

Argyll, however, was one of Gladstone's strongest supporters on this issue and he spoke out powerfully in defence of Gladstone's plans, telling the House of Lords that,

I avow my conviction that the movement in which we are now engaged is a movement in the right direction. It is a movement due to enlightened reason, and, better still, to awakened conscience. We desire to wipe out the foulest stain upon the name and fame of England – our policy to the Irish people. We wish to signify our adherence to the great principle that religious truth is not to be supported at the cost of political injustice... This House has been repeatedly advised to assent to the second reading of this measure, mainly because it is pressed on us by the convictions of the people. But I have a higher ambition for your Lordships' House; I desire

⁸⁵ J.P. Parry, 'Religion and the collapse of Gladstone's first government, 1870-74', *The Historical Journal*, 25, (1982), 78.

⁸⁶ P.M.H. Bell, *Disestablishment in Ireland and Wales*, (London, 1969); 110-212; Parry, 'Religion and the collapse of Gladstone's first government, 1870-74', 78; Parry, *Democracy and Religion*, 288; Machin, *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain*, 24.

to see this House share in the great honours of their time, and my firm conviction is that in the course of a few years the passing of this measure will be looked upon as one of the greatest triumphs of constitutional government.⁸⁷

Additionally, Argyll commented privately to Gladstone that he would be willing to overcome the difficulties he had with the secularisation of former Church revenues if he could be convinced that it was the only proper course,

events seem to be moving quickly in favour of total secularisation, though, I confess, I think this a violent course. Yet, if the Irish people do not care to keep tithes for something in the nature of what they regard as 'pious uses', I feel no objection to secularisation.⁸⁸

Despite this, however, Argyll did have certain reservations about the way in which Gladstone's mind was working on this issue. In 1867 he had warned Gladstone that state endowment of denominational education should be avoided, not least because it would seriously split the fragile Liberal party.⁸⁹ There is little reason to doubt, however, that Argyll was largely in agreement with Gladstone about the merits of disestablishment. It is important to note, however, that even at this early stage Argyll was cautioning Gladstone not to take steps of too radical a nature. It was not only the educational settlement that concerned the duke, who feared that too much reform would destabilise the party once again. He cautioned Gladstone not to move too fast and reminded him that, 'the whole idea of a Free Church is...specially feared and detested by a great section of the Liberal party.'⁹⁰ Despite these concerns, Argyll was able to support his leader and found himself able to forcefully defend his party's policy in the House of Lords.

This support was at least partially motivated by more selfish concerns than the duke would have liked to admit. Argyll shared with Gladstone an intense and almost blinding hatred of Disraeli. Indeed, he admitted later to Lord Shaftesbury's mother-

⁸⁷ PD, 3rd series, vol. 197, cols. 212-3, 18 Jun. 1869.

⁸⁸ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44100, f. 166, Argyll to Gladstone, 12 Oct. 1867.

⁸⁹ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44100, f. 182, Argyll to Gladstone, 24 Dec. 1867.

⁹⁰ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44100, f. 275, Argyll to Gladstone, 30 Nov. 1868.

in-law that the reason that the Irish church question had been suddenly espoused was because 'there really was no other way of getting Dizzy out of office.'⁹¹ This personal antipathy towards the Conservative leader made it virtually impossible for Argyll to withhold his support from Gladstone's measures. Although certain aspects of the question may have vexed him, he saw that by putting party interests first and by staying close to Gladstone his own status could only improve. In this assessment he was correct and it is vital to emphasise that the duke's support for Gladstone must have been an easy decision to make as he had, in 1868, been given the cabinet position which he had sought for most of his political career, at the India Office.⁹² Argyll must have perceived that it was essential to unite the Liberal party over the disestablishment question if his position as Secretary for India was to be secured. He must have further understood that his best hope for retaining this prestigious office was to remain close to the rising star of Gladstone. In this case the opinions of Argyll and Gladstone were united and any small difficulties which existed between them could largely be smoothed over; however, later policy choices by the Liberal party leader would force Argyll to reconsider his allegiance and would eventually lead to a situation where Argyll's principles would no longer allow him to keep quiet to secure his political position.⁹³

These problems would only surface later, however, and the duke found himself busy during the 1860s attending to another matter in which religious controversy played a large role. Since the 1850s, the duke had been deeply concerned with the question of Scottish education and had long lamented that the hostilities of the various religious groups in the country had prevented any satisfactory remedy for the perceived ills of the system. Argyll had, between 1864 and 1867, been the chairman of the Royal Commission on education in Scotland and had been forced to contend with the problems of finding a suitable compromise which would satisfy as many religious groups as possible as well as the advocates of secularisation. Although a bill was introduced based upon the Argyll Report in 1869, it took another three years for any

⁹¹ G.F.A. Best, *Shaftesbury*, (London, 1964), 61-2.

⁹² Argyll's political rise is discussed in Chapter Five and aspects of his time at the India Office are discussed in Chapters Five and Eight.

⁹³ This will be explored further in Chapter Six.

legislation to be passed.⁹⁴ Opposition to the bill had been expressed forcefully in the House of Lords by the Duke of Marlborough, among others, especially with regards to its treatment of denominational schools. In fact, as D.J. Withrington has pointed out, opposition to the bill was motivated as much by English fears that new measures adopted in Scotland could be in future extended to England as it was by any real concern for, or understanding of, the Scottish educational system.⁹⁵ The bill was so altered by both Houses of Parliament that it was practically unrecognisable by the time that it was finally defeated in the summer of 1869. The Liberal M.P. for Ayr Burghs, E.H.J. Crawford, commented succinctly on the progress of the bill, 'The Bill was first proposed as a national Bill; it came down from the House of Lords a denominational Bill; and now it was a mongrel mixture of national and denominational.'⁹⁶ Indeed, it seems likely that the defeat of the bill was a fortunate escape for Scotland as, had it been passed in this form, it would have fallen far short of fulfilling the aims and ambitions of the Argyll Commission. It would be 1872 before the government would again attempt to deal with the Scottish Education question, and Argyll was once more at the forefront of the debates. The problems which Argyll faced in pushing this bill through parliament were legion and his bitterness and resentment towards some of his colleagues and opponents are thinly veiled in his speech in the House of Lords in 1872,

Without in the least desiring to utter anything that might be regarded as a threat, he should regard further delay in the settlement of this question with considerable fear, lest it should result in the adoption of a purely secular system of education, a result to which he looked forward with much dread...even men for whom he had the highest respect showed a tendency to adopt a purely secular system of education. He regarded such a system as an impossible ideal, and such, he hoped, it would remain.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Although commonly known as the 'Argyll Report' the official title of the report (under which it was published) was, *Education Commission (Scotland): Second Report – Elementary Schools*, (Edinburgh, 1867).

⁹⁵ This is explored in some detail by D.J. Withrington, 'Towards a National System, 1867-72: the Last Years in the Struggle for a Scottish Education Act', *Scottish Educational Studies*, iv, (1972), 107-24, and D.J. Withrington, 'The making of the 1872 Act', *Times Educational Supplement, Scotland*, 18 Aug. 1972.

⁹⁶ Mr E.H.J. Crawford, as quoted in Withrington, 'Towards a National System', 117.

⁹⁷ PD, 3rd series, vol. 212, col.686, 5 Jul. 1872.

By the time the Bill was eventually passed he had spent over eight years working on it and he received little praise for his efforts.⁹⁸ Indeed, the eventual Scottish Education Act was radically different from the recommendations of the Argyll Commission in a number of key respects. The new Lord Advocate, George Young, had had a hand in the formulation of an earlier abortive Bill in 1871 and made some radical proposals, many of which reduced the powers of Landowners and Heritors over the school boards and over the education system in general. The Act, when it was finally passed, embraced these changes and represented a radical change from the proposals set out by the Argyll Commission five years previously. However, these changes must be seen in the light of the changing circumstances of the time. As Withrington has pointed out, by 1872 most of the religious groups in Scotland were more willing to agree to compromise in order to see the Bill passed. The Church of Scotland in particular was anxious to work with the government in order to avoid the fate of the Irish Church. They also hoped that their support would strengthen the chances of gaining support for their new policy of seeing Patronage abolished in the near future, something which Argyll too was obviously keen to see. The English education question had also, by this time, been settled and fears had been somewhat allayed in that quarter.⁹⁹ Thus the Scottish Education Act of 1872 was not an enactment of the recommendations which Argyll and his fellow commissioners had made, however, it seems that Argyll was willing to support it despite the extensive changes. This may seem surprising, however, Argyll was seriously concerned that, if attempt to pass a Scottish Education Bill failed again, then the advocates of secular education would gain more strength and that religious education would be removed from schools altogether. In an impassioned speech he told the House of Lords that,

the people of this country were determined, as far as they could, to have a religious education; and his objection to the secular system was that, in regard to a great mass of the people of Scotland, if they did not receive a religious instruction at those schools, it was certain that they would not receive it anywhere else.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ For a detailed description of the circumstances surrounding the eventual passage of the bill see, Withrington, 'Towards a National System'; R.D. Anderson, *Education and Opportunity in Victorian Scotland: Schools and Universities*, (Oxford, 1983), Chapter Four.

⁹⁹ These issues are discussed with finesse by Withrington, in his 'Towards a National System', 121-2.

¹⁰⁰ PD, 3rd series, vol. 212, col.686, 5 Jul. 1872.

Thus, in this instance, Argyll was able to support his party and uphold his religious beliefs at one and the same time. He had to sacrifice some of his pride in abandoning many of the recommendations that his Commission had made: he had to consent to landowners' powers being restricted and to an Act which was less overtly supportive of religious education than he would have wanted, but these concessions were a price he was willing to pay in order to avert the possibility of complete secularisation.

The passage of the 1872 Act had been as much about religion for Argyll as it had been about education and, after an interval of only two years, another question of ecclesiastical importance would confront the Government: the abolition of patronage in the Church of Scotland. This was an issue which was of understandable importance to Argyll and it seems to have reawakened earlier issues of contention between Argyll and some of his Liberal colleagues, most particularly between Argyll and Gladstone. Indeed, it was in 1874 that some of the first definite signs of a change for the worse in their relationship emerge and there exists ample evidence of this change in their correspondence.¹⁰¹

Argyll had been trying, with little success, to urge the abolition of patronage upon his fellow cabinet members for some considerable time.¹⁰² This seems to have been largely due to the fact that Gladstone was intractably opposed to such a measure and refused to allow it to progress under his administration.¹⁰³ However, when the Conservatives revived the issue on coming to power in 1874 Argyll was able to give it his wholehearted support, calling it,

A Bill which has been conscientiously framed on the ancient principles of the Church of Scotland. It has been accepted by an overwhelming majority of the great representative body of the Church; and it is calculated, if carried, to do great good to Scotland.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ This will be returned to in Chapter Six.

¹⁰² Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, vol. II, 312; BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44102, f. 89. Argyll memorandum, 1871.

¹⁰³ Parry, *Democracy and Religion*, 418-20.

¹⁰⁴ PD, 3rd Series, vol.219, cols. 829-830, 2 Jun. 1874.

In making such a clear statement of support for the measure, however, Argyll was setting himself up against his oldest political ally, Gladstone, who had stated that it was his conviction that the passage of the bill, 'would lead to a movement for Disestablishment in Scotland more serious than any that had been known there, and one that would be likely to spread into England.'¹⁰⁵ During the passage of the bill Gladstone wrote to Argyll expressing his opinion that the Patronage Bill was a 'precipitate, unwise and daring measure' and he asked the duke to refrain from offering the Government support for this measure.¹⁰⁶

His thinly veiled threat did not impress Argyll who, in reply, berated his old friend for being prepared to turn his back on the sufferings of the Church of Scotland just as he had earlier done when a member of the government of 1843.¹⁰⁷ He also ridiculed the idea that an abolition of patronage in Scotland could result in calls for either a similar measure in England or for Disestablishment in Scotland.¹⁰⁸ The enmity between the two men continued to grow over the following weeks (although their correspondence continued) and, by the 6th of July, Argyll was again writing to Gladstone about the finer points of the bill. In response to Gladstone's (and other Whig-Liberals') opinion that ministers should be appointed by all the people in the parish and not just by those who were members of the Established Church, Argyll argued that,

It seems a strange idea that an essential feature of an Established Church should be that its enemies and opponents are to have the power of 'intruding' ministers on its congregations! This idea is purely 'Anglican', and seems to me altogether unreasonable in theory, as well as unfounded in historical fact...I hope to post this at Oban. I shall wait at Oban probably till I hear – as I hope to do – that you and your voluntary and other Radical allies have been well beaten!¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Gladstone to Lord Selbourne, (no date), as quoted in, Argyll, *Autobiography and memoirs*, Vol.II, 314.

¹⁰⁶ BL, Gladstone, Papers, Add. MS 44103, f.133-136, Gladstone to Argyll, 22 Jun. 1874.

¹⁰⁷ This seems somewhat harsh on Argyll's part. As Vice-President of the Board of Trade in 1841-43, Gladstone would have had neither the interest nor the influence to have had much of an impact on the decisions made by the government at the time of the Disruption.

¹⁰⁸ [C]ambridge [U]niversity [L]ibrary, Disraeli Papers, B/XX/Le/51a, Argyll to Duke of Richmond, 22 Jun. 1874.

¹⁰⁹ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44103, f.143-6, Argyll to Gladstone, 6 Jul. 1874.

The reference to ‘Anglican’ ideas is clearly a derogatory reference to Gladstone and Argyll’s closing sentence shows his own growing concern that his old friend was now so far in the hands of ‘Radicals’ that there was little hope of retrieving him and restoring their old amity. This concern was only to grow for Argyll as he saw what he perceived to be Gladstone’s unexpected and alarming moves towards support of the campaign to disestablish the Church of Scotland. Indeed, the duke was so alarmed that he wrote to Sir Roundell Palmer, telling him that members of the party should be, ‘free to take our own line, and I will not now consider myself under Gladstone’s leadership, especially in ecclesiastical affairs.’¹¹⁰

The issue of disestablishment again showed Gladstone, in the duke’s eyes, to be weak willed and easily swayed against his convictions. Although Gladstone had previously been opposed to such a measure and had declared in November 1885 that the question of disestablishment would not be tackled during the next two parliaments, it became increasingly obvious that the Liberal leader was not going to adhere to this promise.¹¹¹ Argyll was all too aware that disestablishment was likely to become a prominent issue and moved swiftly to go on the offensive in defence of his Church. Although he had been a strong supporter of Irish disestablishment, the two cases were very different. His earlier arguments in favour of Irish disestablishment had been largely ideological – that the Irish Church was in no way a National Church and that its presence offended the vast majority of the people of that country.¹¹² In contrast, the Church of Scotland, Argyll believed, was vital to the identity of the Scottish nation. In a speech at St. Andrews Hall in Glasgow he told fellow supporters that it was a church which,

has married civil with religious freedom. She has given to the world a sample of a Church, free as the winds and yet connected with the State, such as has never existed before, and will be a model for future time...we will not help to haul down this great flag of Scotland, we will not help to

¹¹⁰ Argyll to Sir Roundell Palmer (later, Lord Selbourne), (no date, probably December 1874), as quoted in, Argyll, *Autobiography and memoirs*, Vol. II, 320-1.

¹¹¹ J.G. Kellas, ‘The Liberal Party and the Scottish Church Disestablishment Crisis’, *English Historical Review*, 79 (1964), 38-41.

¹¹² see above, 87-9.

haul down this great national flag. We will, on the contrary, resist to the last.¹¹³

Despite this spirited defence of the Church of Scotland, there is some evidence of a change in his attitude during the 1880s from that which it had been some eighteen years previously. Then he had stated that, ‘no man can doubt that Free Churches are the future of the world...this system of Free Churches has also been adopted in the United States, and it has been shown to be, in my belief, a system not injurious to the interests of religion.’¹¹⁴ However, by the 1880s, Argyll was not willing to attempt this experiment with his national Church. Although Argyll had believed that the Church of Scotland was sufficiently strong to withstand changes in its role in the education system, he firmly believed that it would be damaged by disestablishment – despite the fact that he had advocated such a system as ‘the future of the world’ in previous debates. Importantly, he had told Gladstone in 1870 that he was not intractably opposed to disestablishment and that he actually believed it was a natural and inevitable step which would have to be taken. He wrote that,

I am not afraid of disestablishment – when it must come – either in Scotland or in England. On the contrary, I see many advantages which may possibly arise. But I do not think we ought to allow ourselves to drift or to be hustled into any precipitate dealing with issues of such magnitude...In such a case as this, I certainly would want to see whether Scotland generally wishes to disestablish - or to begin to do so. If it does, I shall make up my mind readily enough:- and shall be prepared to go farther - and farther, depend upon it, we must all go.¹¹⁵

Despite this, the duke refused to sanction disestablishment when it finally became a political issue. His reasons were legion: he did earnestly believe that the majority of the Scottish population were exercised against such a measure; however, perhaps of equal importance was the fact that his eldest son’s mother-in-law, who happened to be

¹¹³ Speech on the disestablishment question in Glasgow, 20 Oct. 1885; as quoted in Argyll, *Autobiography & Memoirs*, vol. II, 454.

¹¹⁴ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 188, col. 406, 24th June 1867.

¹¹⁵ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44101, f.245-50, Argyll to Gladstone, 24th May 1870.

monarch of the country, was strongly opposed to the measure.¹¹⁶ It is also vital to note that Argyll's response to the issue was one from a man who was no longer a member of the inner circle of the Liberal party. Argyll had left the cabinet in 1881 under difficult circumstances and had, by the middle of that decade, found himself in almost constant opposition to his former colleagues.¹¹⁷ His prominent position in the 1860s had made acceptance of plans for the Irish Church much easier. Now that he was in the political wilderness, the duke had little to lose and his rejection of disestablishment in a Scottish context must be seen in light of his new position. What concerned him most about the disestablishment question was that he believed it was being forced upon Gladstone by the 'radical' members of the Liberal party and that Gladstone was not doing enough to restrain these forces. Gladstone himself was patently cautious over the measure and avoided overtly supporting or repressing the issue, saying only that it would be considered if sufficient support in Scotland for disestablishment could be demonstrated.¹¹⁸ This, however, did not pacify the duke who claimed that Gladstone 'speaks only for himself and for the day after tomorrow. He is now a mere "opportunist", as every man must be who seeks no more than to lead for a short time so very motley a crew.'¹¹⁹ Argyll's fear was that the 'motley crew' were gaining excessive power within the Liberal party and he threw himself firmly behind the Conservatives in defending the Scottish Church. To his great relief, disestablishment was eventually dropped by the Liberals under Lord Rosebery during the 1890s and Argyll later went to his grave content that his church was safe from immediate attacks.

The duke of Argyll had lived through one of the most turbulent periods of church/state relations in Scotland. His ideals and conscience had been severely tested

¹¹⁶ The 1885 general election gives the best indication of how much interest there was across the country in the disestablishment question. The issue was prominent in the election campaign and impacted upon party organisation and the selection of candidates, see, Kellas, 'The Liberal Party and the Scottish Church Disestablishment Crisis', 31-46; A. Simon, 'Church Disestablishment as a Factor in the General Election of 1885', *The Historical Journal*, 18 (1975), 791-820; D. Savage, 'Scottish Politics, 1885-86', *Scottish Historical Review*, 40 (1961), 118-35; for Queen Victoria's opposition to disestablishment see, Kellas, 'The Liberal Party and the Scottish Church Disestablishment Crisis', 45-6.

¹¹⁷ For more on Argyll's resignation from the cabinet and his problems with his colleagues – especially Gladstone, see Chapter Six. See Chapter Eight for his continuing battles with the Liberal party over the land question and home rule.

¹¹⁸ Kellas, 'The Liberal Party and the Scottish Church Disestablishment Crisis', 33; Matthew, *Gladstone, 1809-1898*, 465-6.

¹¹⁹ Argyll to W. Bosworth Smith, 5 Nov. 1885, as quoted in Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. II, 454.

by the Ten Years' Conflict and the Disruption of 1843 and religious debates, despite his early intentions and later protestations, went on to occupy much of his time and energy. Argyll had found himself, throughout much of his life, in a somewhat incongruous position with regard to these religious questions. He had supported the ideals of the Evangelicals before the Disruption, but had felt unable to support their eventual break from the Established Church; he had professed himself in some sympathy with the new Free Church, but had become increasingly disillusioned with the path which they took; he had attempted to support his political party during the reform of the Irish Church in the 1860s, but had found himself siding with the Conservatives over the abolition of Patronage and Scottish disestablishment in the following decades. Religion had played a key part in Argyll's life and career and, by examining Argyll's reaction to the various religious questions he encountered, it is possible to learn much more than his opinions on questions of doctrine or constitutionality. For Argyll, these matters had served, at different times, to unite and to divide the duke from his political party. It is vitally important to recognise that, while he attempted to preserve the unity of his party throughout the 1860s and 1870s, the duke was becoming increasingly aware of the growing distance between his ideals and those of his colleagues. He had berated his colleagues, especially Gladstone and the Earl of Aberdeen, for not acting to avoid the Disruption and his experience within the Liberal party served only to convince him that the apathy of most English and even Scottish members of that party to Scottish ecclesiastical matters was seriously damaging to the interests of his country.¹²⁰ For such a committed unionist, Argyll exhibited a high degree of institutional nationalism and proved, again and again, keen to preserve the individuality of the Scottish religious and educational systems. That this was not necessarily unusual has been amply demonstrated by Graeme Morton in his *Unionist Nationalism*; however it is important to emphasise the passion with which Argyll regarded his native institutions and heritage. This passion is perhaps best illustrated by his comments in his *Scotland and it was and as it is* where Argyll characterised the progress which Scotland made after the Union of 1707 as being,

¹²⁰ Argyll was widely involved as a subscriber to various Scottish societies throughout his career. In the 1850s he appeared as a member of thirteen different societies in Edinburgh alone, see, G. Morton, *Unionist Nationalism: Governing Urban Scotland, 1830-1860*, (East Linton, 1999), 100.

not due to anything she derived from England in the way of Laws and Institutions...she rose to the immense prospects of this new horizon because of the Mind and Character which had been developed under the long discipline, and through the fiery trials, of her own stormy history.¹²¹

In order to understand Argyll's eventual departure from the Liberal party it is necessary to delve beyond the surface and to recognise that while his party's land policy, as we shall later see, came to play a dominant role in the duke's ideology and decision making process, his attachment to his colleagues within the party had already been severely tested over a prolonged period by what he saw as their lack of interest and lack of care for important matters which were unique to Scotland.¹²² With this in mind, it would seem that the editor of the *Oban Times* had not, indeed, been wholly inappropriate in linking Argyll's response to the Disruption with his later response to the land question when seeking to explain how the duke had come to be 'in the wilderness' by 1886.¹²³ The derogatory comment may have been designed to wound the target, but it certainly contained a germ of truth and points towards the continuing problems highlighted in this chapter that Argyll had with balancing his party loyalties and his personal beliefs: problems that were not confined, as we shall see in later chapters, to questions of religion.

¹²¹ Argyll, *Scotland and it was and as it is*, 483.

¹²² For further discussion of Argyll and the 'land question' see Chapter Eight.

¹²³ see above, 69.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PRAGMATIC RADICAL?

By the early 1850s, the Duke of Argyll had succeeded in positioning himself close to the centre of British politics. His earlier patience paid dividends and he would, by the end of 1852, secure a cabinet position at the heart of the Earl of Aberdeen's government.¹ His refusal to join the government of Lord John Russell the previous year had proved to be a wise decision and, when Lord Aberdeen offered the young duke the position of Lord Privy Seal in his cabinet, Argyll accepted with alacrity. The post of Lord Privy Seal was not perhaps one of great power and Argyll himself regarded it as 'an office usually held by elderly men whose active life was nearly over, or by men of great political influence, whose names alone were an appreciable strength to any Government.'² Argyll was neither of these things – he was young, he had relatively little experience of politics and he was still largely unknown to the general public. Despite this he had begun to build a political reputation. The round of musical chairs which he had played when he had first arrived at the House of Lords had helped to make him a powerful enemy in the person of Lord Derby, but his performance in debates since then had also won him some admirers.³ Additionally, his early speeches contributed to the formation of a particular image of him. His biographer in the *Dictionary of National Biography* identified Argyll as being perceived, in his early career at least, as 'the radical duke'.⁴ This was a distinctive and powerful image which would prove useful to the duke as he attempted to rise in the political world.

For a man later regarded as unwaveringly conservative, this is perhaps an unexpected beginning. However, the duke had recognised early in his parliamentary career that he would have to make an impact upon his fellow politicians quickly and effectively in order to ascend to prominence. He had not had the opportunity to build up

¹ For discussion of the early years of his political career see Chapter Two.

² Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 372. Despite his rather negative opinion of the office, it was not only this class of men who had recently filled it. The duke of Buccleuch had been appointed in 1842 to the position of Lord Privy Seal at the relatively early age of 36. Argyll was not the first (or the last) young Scottish nobleman who would begin his career in this office.

³ See above, Chapter Two.

⁴ G. Peel, 'George Douglas Campbell', *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. XXII, supplement, (London, 1901) 386.

extensive public connections through public school, university education or through time in the House of Commons. He was, effectively, an unknown figure and knew that he had to be seen, heard and remembered by his peers if he was to advance. Although Argyll's marriage to Elizabeth Leveson-Gower had given him access to some political connections, these were mainly to be found among the Whigs with whom the Sutherlands were close.⁵ Argyll would regret until the end of life that he had not been able to experience serving in the House of Commons where he was certain that he would have 'made many personal friends of my own age, and should have acquired a knowledge of men which nothing else can supply.'⁶ This lack of a wide circle of political acquaintances was keenly felt by the duke and probably pushed him into speaking in the House of Lords earlier than he had anticipated. When he chose to make his maiden speech, in May of 1848, it was on a subject which seemed, at first glance, a somewhat unpromising prospect. The removal of Jewish Disabilities, however, was a topic that had been carefully chosen by Argyll in order, as we saw in Chapter Two, to raise his profile in the House of Lords. It was also representative of his genuinely liberal views on such matters and Argyll would return to a similar theme almost immediately when, in the following year, parliament discussed the Affirmation Bill. This bill, which was designed to relieve those people who had religious scruples against swearing an oath on the Bible, met with the duke's sincere approval. In pressing for the second reading of this measure, he returned to the arguments he had earlier expressed with regard to Jewish Disabilities. He stated that,

it [the Affirmation Bill] was needed to give effect to the rights of individual conscience; for, until that great principle was conceded to the greatest possible extent, he held that the Government could not be said to have paid due respect to the rights of the individuals over whom it ruled.⁷

This line of thought was pursued vigorously by Argyll later in the same speech when he strongly denounced the existing situation, claiming that,

⁵ There were some notable exceptions to this – perhaps most obviously W.E. Gladstone with whom the Duchess of Sutherland enjoyed a particularly close relationship. For more detail on some of the early Whig connections that Argyll's marriage introduced him to see above, Chapter Two.

⁶ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 268.

⁷ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 106, col. 724, 22nd June 1849.

If men went like flocks of sheep in the matter of opinion – if they entertained scruples in consequence of or in obedience to the hereditary prejudices of the sect to which they belonged – if they entertained opinions because others had entertained them before them, or because others so believed around them – the law admitted their scruples; but when the same scruples were entertained by individual men, as the result of independent inquiry and independent conviction, they refused to allow them, and persecuted those who entertained them.⁸

These notions were most clearly summed up by the duke himself in 1851 when, again on the matter of Jewish Disabilities, he made a powerful speech in favour of reforming the current legislation. He proposed his own solution to the problems, saying that it was logical to,

fall back upon the...principle of keeping the civil and the spiritual wholly distinct...it might...be held to be neither just, nor right, nor reasonable, to demand that a man who was entitled in every other respect to sit in parliament, should be excluded simply and solely on the ground of his spiritual belief.⁹

This idea of separation of church and state was reminiscent of and strongly influenced by the arguments previously espoused by the duke at the time of the Disruption.¹⁰ Argyll's conception of this separation between church and state was certainly not Erastian and his separate spiritual world would have an equal standing with the civil realm and would thus be powerful enough to stand firm, even when Jews and dissenters were admitted to the government of the country. Indeed, in the case of Jews, Argyll was convinced that the established churches of Scotland and England would be in no way compromised – he had earlier argued that it would be extremely unreasonable,

⁸ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 106, col. 726, 22 Jun. 1849.

⁹ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 118, col. 901, 17 Jul. 1851.

¹⁰ See above, Chapter Four.

to anticipate from Jews one-tenth part of the hostility against our ecclesiastical institutions which was known to be entertained by Christian Dissenters? And if the fear of danger to those institutions, arising out of that hostility, had not prevented Parliament from freely admitting those Dissenters, he could not see that this fear was any adequate ground for the exclusion of the Jew.¹¹

These arguments seem to have been designed, at least partially, to distinguish Argyll from the bulk of the Peelites who usually voted against such measures, however they put the duke in the rather awkward position of disagreeing with his closest friend in the House of Lords, Lord Aberdeen.¹² Argyll had seen Aberdeen as ‘so “Liberal” as to be almost a Radical in home politics’, but this ‘liberalism’ did not apply to the admission of Jews to parliament which Aberdeen initially opposed.¹³ This would not be the only time that the two men would disagree on religious questions and indeed in 1851 their roles were reversed with Aberdeen taking the more liberal stance on the controversial and lengthily debated Ecclesiastical Titles Bill.¹⁴ Argyll made a violent attack on the Peelites (an attack for which he later felt it necessary to apologise) saying that he ‘rejoiced’ that the Peelites were not in government and were not powerful enough to seriously disrupt the passing of this Bill.¹⁵ The duke’s stance on this issue seems somewhat peculiar and it appears to have been an episode that he was not anxious to be reminded of – indeed he entirely omits any discussion of the controversy from his memoirs and does not mention his fiery speech in defence of Russell’s plans to halt ‘Papal Aggression’. Argyll seems to have been swept along by the tide of public and political hysteria that Walter Ralls describes following the ‘Papal Bull’ reinstating the Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales and his decision to support the government on the issue highlights the limits of the duke’s liberalism.¹⁶ Despite his firm belief that religion should not be a barrier to civil and political

¹¹ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 98, cols. 1356-1357, 25 May 1848.

¹² See above, Chapter Two; Conacher, *The Peelites and the Party System*, Appendix A.

¹³ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 364; Aberdeen indicated to Gladstone in 1852 that he was willing to drop his opposition to the removal of Jewish Disabilities, see, Conacher, *The Peelites and the Party System*, 100.

¹⁴ Conacher, *The Peelites and the Party System*, 76-80.

¹⁵ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 117, cols. 1069-1070, 3 Mar. 1851; BL, Aberdeen Papers, Add. MS 43199, f. 5-8, Argyll to Aberdeen, 22 Jul. 1851; E.R. Norman, *Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian England*, (Stanford, 1992).

¹⁶ W. Ralls, ‘The Papal Aggression of 1850: A study in Victorian Anti-Catholicism’, *Church History*, 43 (1974), 242-56.

service, Argyll was staunchly Protestant to his core and remained strongly opposed to the Roman Catholic Church throughout his life.¹⁷ He later told his fellow Lords when the Irish Church was being disestablished that he was, ‘I confess a Protestant among Protestants; I hate the whole ecclesiastical system of the Romish Church; I believe it to be dangerous to the faith and injurious to the liberties of mankind.’¹⁸ This prejudice against the Catholic faith did not prevent the duke from agreeing that the Established Church in Ireland was untenable but his hatred of Catholicism undoubtedly heavily influenced his decision to join with the government in 1851 in their over-zealous (and ultimately ineffective) attempts to curb the power of the Catholic Church.¹⁹

Argyll found himself, in the aftermath of the Ecclesiastical Titles affair, on relatively unsteady ground. He had gravitated towards the Peelites before this, not only because of his support for free trade but because of his perception of the quality of the men who had joined their ranks. The duke had seen an early opportunity to attach himself to likeminded people – people of power and potential influence. He later claimed that, ‘to a new party so constituted it seemed as if I belonged by nature. The tendency to eclecticism in my opinions, which arose out of early education and circumstances, was exactly reflected in this fresh political group, and I gave to it all my sympathy.’²⁰ However, he had offended many of the Peelite group by his stance on ‘Papal Aggression’ and, although his relationship with Aberdeen continued to be close, he was never included in any of the numerous meetings which the Peelite group held in the early 1850s. Indeed, Gladstone did not even consider the duke to be among the ‘friends’ of Sir Robert Peel with whom he felt that some sort of future co-operation on Peelite principles was possible.²¹ Thus in the troubled days of Lord Derby’s first Conservative government, Argyll took a back seat and played no part in the behind

¹⁷ Argyll’s stepmother, his father’s third wife, would later convert to Catholicism. Despite this he seems to have maintained a good relationship with her, although he certainly disapproved of her faith. Her conversion (and in fact most of the details about her) are entirely omitted from his *Autobiography and Memoirs*.

¹⁸ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 193, col. 191, 29 Jun. 1868.

¹⁹ For further discussion of Argyll’s support for the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland see Chapter Four.

²⁰ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 277.

²¹ Conacher, *The Peelites and the Party System*, 100-1; 199 n.30.

the scenes negotiations that kept other men like Gladstone and Aberdeen so busy.²² In his memoirs, the duke tried to play down the extent of his isolation and described his position as being by choice one of 'complete detachment and independence', however, he did make some efforts to consolidate his position and in October of 1852 paid a visit to Aberdeen at Haddo.²³ The two men's relationship was further enhanced by their discussions there and Argyll made a point of mentioning in his memoirs that the two men were sufficiently close for the duke to feel confident in leaving his proxy in Lord Aberdeen's hands when he left London in December of that year.²⁴ The efforts that Argyll had made to ingratiate himself with Aberdeen paid off later that month. When the Conservative government fell after Gladstone's masterful dismemberment of Disraeli's budget, Aberdeen offered the young duke the aforementioned office of Lord Privy Seal and Argyll was delighted to accept.²⁵

Argyll's appointment at the expense of many other more experienced men has caused commentators some problems. Conacher claims to be unable to give an 'entirely satisfactory explanation' for his inclusion in the coalition cabinet but suggests that the duke's position as a territorial magnate in Scotland and his connection to the Whigs (through his marriage) made him attractive as a suitable compromise Peelite/Whig cabinet member. Conacher also highlights the duke's potential as a powerful speaker and it is this fact that probably influenced Aberdeen more than anything else.²⁶ Despite Argyll's protestations of 'detachment' from the behind the scenes wranglings of 1852, he had made a great effort to convince Aberdeen that he was a man of the future and he had obviously succeeded in showing that he would be a great aid to Aberdeen's efforts in the House of Lords. In offering the young duke a post with no administrative burdens Lord Aberdeen was effectively giving Argyll a position which would enable him to turn his attention to any matter which came before the Lords. This was something which Aberdeen made clear to the duke when offering him the

²² Conacher, *The Peelites and the Party System*, 149-170; Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 368-70.

²³ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 364, Argyll recorded that they had agreed on a great many issues and that he had purposefully avoided discussion of Church matters with Aberdeen at this time as it was 'the one subject on which he and I had held such different opinions'.

²⁴ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 368.

²⁵ Matthew, *Gladstone 1809-1898*, 79; Hoppen, *The Mid Victorian Generation*, 149-151; Vincent (ed.), *Derby, Disraeli and the Conservative Party*, 89; Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 370-3; Benson, and Esher (eds.), *Letters of Queen Victoria*, (London, 1907), Vol. II, 510-12.

²⁶ J.B. Conacher, *The Aberdeen Coalition, 1852-1855: A study in mid-nineteenth-century party politics*. (Cambridge, 1968), 21-2.

position, he told him that, 'this would not impose any serious amount of official labour upon you, and would leave you free for the exercise of your ability in the House of Lords, of which we shall stand in much need.'²⁷

Thus Argyll was to be given the role of fighting the opposition in the Lords on as many issues as he desired. It had been a calculated gamble on Aberdeen's part as the office of Lord Privy Seal left the opportunity for either very much or very little active work by the incumbent. However, with Argyll, Aberdeen had made a very safe bet. The young duke relished his new role and quickly embarked upon a sustained campaign, speaking out on as many issues as he could. In 1850 Argyll had spoken just three times in the House, in 1853 he spoke on eighteen different subjects on matters as diverse as the government of India and Chimney sweepers' regulations. Among his varied speeches, however, his liberal attitudes continued to feature prominently. During his first year as Lord Privy Seal he argued strongly against the system of University Tests in Scotland, telling the House that,

no one could read the words of the test, without seeing that it was the intention of those who drew it up, that every professor should be a bona fide member of the established church...the present system was of that nature that a first rate man might very possibly be deterred from accepting the position of professor, and that circumstance could not tend to elevate the character of the Universities of Scotland.²⁸

After success in this endeavour, in the form of the Universities (Scotland) Act which removed the religious test from university posts, the duke followed this up the next year with similar pleas for the situation in England.²⁹ He took an active part in the debates which culminated in the University Tests Act of 1871 and would continue to urge for religious restrictions on public servants to be removed until the end of his

²⁷ BL, Aberdeen Papers, Add. MS 43199, f. 42, Aberdeen to Argyll, 25 Dec. 1852.

²⁸ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 129, col. 1717, 15 Aug. 1853.

²⁹ S. Wallace, "'The First Blast of the Trumpet': John Stuart Blackie and the Struggle against University Tests in Scotland, 1839-1853", *History of Universities*, 16, (2000), 155-8.

career, although by then such speeches were being largely ignored by a public and press who had become convinced of the duke's reactionary stance.³⁰

During the 1850s and 1860s, the duke made a conscious effort to lend his support to as many 'liberal' proposals as he could and his arguments with regard to many of these provide a picture of the consistency of his ideology. When Lord Winchilsea called for a committee on the Maynooth College grant in 1853, Argyll announced that he had received hundreds of letters from Scots urging him to oppose the renewal of the Maynooth College grant. However, the duke went on to state that he would not give his support to these petitioners. This was a very different kind of question from the earlier 'Papal Aggression' one to which the duke had made such a reactionary response.³¹ There was no inconsistency for Argyll in supporting the grant despite his antipathy towards Catholicism. The duke made it clear that the question for him was not really about the power of the Catholic Church, but about the rights of the majority of the Irish people. His personal prejudice against the Catholicism did not influence him here as it had done some two years previously. In this instance Argyll made his arguments on the grounds of justice and civil rights and attacked the Earl of Shaftesbury who had argued, 'that a Protestant state committed a great sin when it gave Protestant funds to support a religion founded on error' by claiming that the obvious answer was, 'that the funds were not Protestant funds; that the public money was derived in part from the Roman Catholic population, and the principles of equity and justice required that that section of the community should receive its due amongst others.'³² Argyll's arguments were designed to be logical and persuasive, but they were not simply made in this case to show the duke's 'radical' colours. The damage that the earlier Ecclesiastical Titles Bill had done in broadening the gap between many Whigs and Peelites had not gone unnoticed by the duke and, as a member of the new cabinet of Lord Aberdeen he was anxious to preserve the strength of the government. Aberdeen had proposed that a Royal Commission should be established on the matter and Argyll was more than happy to support this as it effectively removed the contentious issue from the parliamentary sphere for the rest of the

³⁰ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 134, col. 1364; PD, 3rd Series, vol. 203, col. 629, 21 Jul. 1870; PD, 3rd Series, vol. 206, col. 706, 12 May 1871; PD, 3rd Series, vol. 271, col. 1367, 4 Jul. 1882.

³¹ see above, 103-4.

³² PD, 3rd Series, vol. 125, col. 1331, 18 Apr. 1853.

session.³³ Another reason for supporting this course of action was that he saw the influence of the Maynooth question, in Scotland in particular, as producing worrying political results. He had earlier told his fellow peers that,

In many cases pledges had been actually extorted from candidates requiring them to vote against the continuance of the endowment. In other cases, some of the most important constituencies were unable to unite in the support of candidates in consequence of this question. He feared the result would be, in many cases, that inferior men would be chosen and superior men shut out. He saw with pain men trying to square their opinions with the prejudices of the people they addressed; and it was always a melancholy spectacle to see men so paltering with their convictions for party purposes.³⁴

The duke's underlying reasons for supporting the appointment of a Commission on the matter were thus twofold, and certainly not necessarily 'liberal'. He wanted to restrict the influence of parties on individual politicians' decisions which was one of his earliest and most consistent concerns, but he also in these debates displayed a deeper rooted fear that the ordinary people of the country were exerting too much influence upon the judgement of those who represented them. His fear was that the 'prejudices of the people' would swamp the judgement of politicians (who Argyll saw as naturally better informed and more able to make these decisions) and that this would lead to the ultimate chaos of democracy. Despite all of the duke's supposed 'radicalism', he was still a member of the elite and privileged class of rulers and the idea of the masses holding influence over the reins of power was, to him, a terrifying notion.

The Maynooth debates had highlighted the boundaries of Argyll's radicalism but during the course of them, another interesting feature emerged. The duke, as has already been stated, had had a troubled relationship with the Earl of Derby since his first day in the House of Lords. However, during one debate the true depth of this mutual antipathy came fully to the fore. Argyll attacked the Earl's position on the

³³ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 125, cols. 1291-1348, 18 Apr. 1853; Connacher, *The Aberdeen Coalition*, 105-7.

³⁴ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 121, col. 495, 11 May 1852.

Maynooth issue, and Derby delivered a powerful and humiliating rebuttal which is worth quoting in full. Derby, rose from his seat and loftily informed the House that,

my Lords, the noble Duke is a young man, and a Cabinet Minister, and perhaps on that account he will not take it amiss if I – as one more advanced in years, and whose experience as a Minister has been somewhat more enlarged than his – if I offer him a word of friendly counsel, and that is – let him not, as a Minister of the Crown, be so ready to make an unprovoked attack upon one whose sentiments upon the question in debate he is unable to judge, and especially upon one the nature of whose vote he is unable to determine. And, my Lords, having said this much, let me, in order to evince the perfect good humour with which I received the observations of the noble Duke, briefly illustrate my feelings by a story, which may not be unknown to your Lordships. Your Lordships may have heard of a certain powerful member of a class known in this country as ‘navvies’: he was a great, strong man, and not less in height than 6 feet 4 inches. Well, my Lords, it is related that this remarkable individual had the misfortune to marry a very little wife, who was in the habit of beating him a good deal: and when taxed for this by his boon companions, the poor man’s reply was, ‘Oh, let her alone; she amuses herself, and she does not hurt me.’³⁵

Public ridicule like this, coming from so great and influential a man as Lord Derby, must have been a great mortification to the young duke. His confidence was probably not helped by the fact that, as Derby’s comments suggest, the duke’s physical appearance was also open to ridicule. He was short in stature and slightly built – an effect of the ill-health from which he had suffered as a child (and would continue to be affected by as an adult). Even the author of his otherwise respectful obituary in *The Times* pointed out that his appearance was ‘comically bellicose’.³⁶ It may thus be suggested that awareness of the shortcomings of his physical appearance as well as an acute feeling of regret about his lack of early experience in society (at school or in the

³⁵ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 125, col. 1333, 18 Apr. 1853.

³⁶ *The Times*, 25 Apr. 1900, 7.

public/political world) prompted the duke to be more rather than less forceful in his parliamentary debating style.

Whether these feelings influenced him unduly may be debateable, however, it cannot be denied that he was a passionate, and occasionally overly zealous, speaker.³⁷ One of his earliest passions was for the removal of trade restrictions and J. W. Mason has described the duke as a 'confirmed free trader'.³⁸ Argyll was certainly no friend of protectionist arguments and claimed that he had early on decided that his natural place in politics was with those men who had supported Sir Robert Peel at the time of the abolition of the Corn Laws.³⁹ Despite this, as has been shown, Argyll had not had an especially close early relationship with the Peelites as a group and had certainly not always voted with them, however, his support for the doctrine of free trade cannot be questioned. His experiences as a landowner during the famine period of the 1840s had helped to crystallise the issue for him and he became convinced of the necessity of the measure.⁴⁰ However, even as he was beginning his parliamentary career, the duke showed that his attachment to this doctrine was not completely unshakeable. When, in 1848, the removal of duties on sugar was debated, the young duke emerged as one of the leading opponents of the measure. This may seem surprising given his previous statements and reputation; however, for Argyll the issue was not purely one of economic interest, but had additional important moral considerations attached to it.

These considerations, of course, related to the slave trade and Argyll's image as the 'radical duke' was certainly strengthened by the stance he took upon this issue. His interest in the anti-slavery cause was, in the 1840s, relatively recently acquired and had been largely prompted by his marriage in 1844 to Elizabeth Leveson-Gower of the Sutherland family. Elizabeth was intelligent, well-read and quickly came to hold a great deal of influence over her husband. Her redoubtable mother, the Duchess of Sutherland, had been interested in the abolition of slavery for some time and Elizabeth

³⁷ The duke was accused on occasion of speaking rashly and appears to have occasionally regretted some of his outbursts, this was apparent throughout his career but certainly becomes most noticeable in the last two decades of his life after his split with the Liberal Party.

³⁸ J.W. Mason, 'The Duke of Argyll and the Land Question in Late 19th century Britain', *Victorian Studies*, 21 (1978), 151.

³⁹ See above, Chapter Two; Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 277.

⁴⁰ For evidence of his conviction see, NAS, HD 7/26/102, Lorne to Edward Pine Coffin, 24 Dec. 1846; See above, Chapter Three.

had adopted her mother's passion as her own.⁴¹ In turn, the new Duchess of Argyll began to convert her husband to her way of thinking on the issue of slavery. This was new territory for the duke who had, as a young man, taken absolutely no interest in the question and had in fact been raised in an environment where slavery and the profits derived from it were a part of his everyday life. His father, the 7th Duke of Argyll, had been a quiet man and the few men of commerce that he had entertained were, in the 8th duke's own words, 'generally more or less connected with West Indian property.' More than this, the 7th duke 'had not personally a favourable opinion of the Negroes' and the result of these early influences was that Argyll himself was 'cold and indifferent on the subject...disposed to refine and distinguish between slavery and the slave trade, as involving different considerations, and to look upon slavery as no worse than the old feudal or military servitudes.'⁴² More than this, one of the 7th duke's friends had died in the West Indies under suspicious circumstances and it was generally believed that he had been poisoned by his own slaves.⁴³ Thus Argyll was not, from boyhood, predisposed to think favourably on calls for abolition of slavery, however, all of this changed with his marriage in 1844 and when the arguments over sugar duties resurfaced in 1848, Argyll found himself in a position to speak out on the issue. Rising to address the House of Lords in what was only his tenth contribution to a debate there, he told his fellow Lords that,

He was no protectionist; he rejoiced most sincerely that these restrictions had been removed; but for that, he feared to think what their position might have been. Another question, however, ought to enter into their consideration; he meant, the element of the slave trade.

He attempted to gain the moral high ground on the issue by dismissing the government's arguments that the measure had been designed to benefit the colonies. He asked the House,

⁴¹ Elizabeth Leveson-Gower was a powerful influence upon the duke and their marriage appears, from their correspondence, to have been a true partnership. Her input was often sought by the duke as he made political decisions and she also played a large role in helping with his publications. A study of Elizabeth and other women in her position is long overdue. For the Duchess of Sutherland see, K.D. Reynolds, 'Gower, Harriet Elizabeth Georgiana Leveson, duchess of Sutherland (1806-1868)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, 2004); K.D. Reynolds, *Aristocratic women and political society in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 1998)

⁴² Argyll, *Autobiography & Memoirs*, Vol. II, 54-5.

⁴³ Argyll, *Autobiography & Memoirs*, Vol. II, 54.

had it been any foregone opinion that the system of protection abstractly was bad for our colonies, that had led to the adoption of this system? Had it not been a desire to have our sugar cheaper at as little loss as we could to our own income? That had been the object of our policy; and after we had determined to get our sugar cheaper, we turned round and said, it will do you no harm; we will take our sugar from the slaveholders; we hope you can compete with them. He hoped they might. He could not agree with the noble Earl [Grey], when with a solemn face he addressed the West Indians, and said, you must labour for yourselves; we can afford no more protection. If they succeeded in maintaining their place in the world as sugar-producing colonies, they owed no thanks to us.⁴⁴

Thus, for Argyll, free trade was to be welcomed but not unreservedly. Where economic legislation was affected by moral issues, Argyll argued that a line had to be drawn and that other factors had to be taken into consideration. His assertion that the government were selfishly pursuing their own agenda to achieve greater economy at the expense of the thousands of slaves in the West Indies was one side of his argument, but he also backed this up with his powerful and emotional plea that the legislation was effectively discriminating against those producers who did not employ slave labour. Free trade was desirable, but the 8th duke argued that if the playing field was not level to begin with then all that it would achieve would be a victory for the slaveholders and defeat for those who employed free labour. In his mind, no doubt, was the thought that if 'free sugar' could not compete then it would cease to be produced and if 'slave sugar' was the only product available to the market then the abolition of slavery as an institution would become all the more difficult to achieve whatever the moral arguments behind it may be.

Argyll would later become an outspoken supporter of the abolitionist cause and of the side of the North in the American Civil War.⁴⁵ However, before his interest in this cause could be further developed, the duke had to survive the political turmoil of the 1850s. This decade represented a troubled time in world politics and Argyll's

⁴⁴ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 101, cols. 582-583, 28 Aug. 1848.

⁴⁵ see below, 118-23.

comfortable cabinet position under his friend and mentor Lord Aberdeen was to be shattered by the Crimean War. No amount of clever speeches from the young duke could have saved the coalition cabinet from being brought down and Aberdeen being sacrificed in favour of Palmerston.⁴⁶ However, the war was also to bring about the first serious division between the remnants of the Peelites and would force Argyll to make one of the most difficult decisions of his early political career.

The origins and history of the Crimean War have been well documented and need little discussion here.⁴⁷ What is of note is how Argyll managed to chart the difficult waters between his fellow cabinet members' opinions and emerge with his reputation relatively unscathed. As one of Aberdeen's strongest supporters it would have been expected that the young duke would stand firmly with his premier and indeed, in the early days of 1854 Argyll formed part of Aberdeen's reliable 'peace party' which included many of his Peelite colleagues as well as the Whigs Lord Granville and Charles Wood. He had been staunchly opposed to the idea of riding to the aid of a nation which he regarded with undisguised horror, and had written privately to Gladstone in 1853 of his dread of taking the country to war in support of what he termed, 'a degree of theoretical 'independence' on the part of Turkey which is utterly at variance with notorious facts and possibilities,' and he berated colleagues, the press and the public at large for, 'talking as if Turkey in Europe were a nation!' suggesting that it would be more apt to describe them as 'a camp of barbarous soldiers utterly disorganised by a bastard civilisation.'⁴⁸

However, as events unfolded and the unity of the cabinet began to unravel, Argyll found himself in serious difficulties. Lord John Russell's resignation on the 23rd of

⁴⁶ The fate of Lord Aberdeen's government is perhaps best detailed in Conacher, *The Aberdeen Coalition*, which also has an excellent (if now somewhat dated) bibliography for the topic. See also the biography written by Argyll's daughter, Balfour, *The Life of George fourth earl of Aberdeen*; Sir A. Gordon, *The earl of Aberdeen*, (New York, 1893); M.E. Chamberlain, *Lord Palmerston*, (Cardiff, 1987); K. Martin, *The Triumph of Lord Palmerston: a study of public opinion in England before the Crimean War*, (London, 1963).

⁴⁷ There are a plethora of books and articles concerning politics and the Crimean War. A succinct and accessible account is given in Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*, 167-83, and a short bibliography for the topic can be found in this work. More in-depth studies are, O. Anderson, *A Liberal State at War: English Politics and Economics during the Crimean War*, (London, 1967); J.B. Conacher, *Britain and the Crimea, 1855-1856*, (London, 1987); J.R. Vincent, gives a very useful account of the political situation in his, 'The Parliamentary dimension of the Crimean War', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th Series, 31 (1981), 37-49.

⁴⁸ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44098, f.46-9. Argyll to Gladstone, 26th September 1853.

January 1855 was, of course, the final straw for the coalition.⁴⁹ Russell had long been singled out by Argyll as a damaging influence upon the cabinet and he had written privately to his wife regarding his disgust with his colleague's continuing attempts to push forward his own agenda and to pursue leadership of the cabinet at the expense of unity. In an undated letter (which must have been penned in late 1854 or early 1855) the duke told his wife that,

We had another most painful scene at yesterday's cabinet – the same individual the cause – standing alone everybody ashamed of him, insulting Gladstone grossly. He has gone wild...we are all disgusted more than we can say – Clarendon furious – Lansdowne looks perplexed – Newcastle hot and sulky – Graham pompous and offended – trying to drive on [in] a crisis. Aberdeen calm, dignified and gentlemanlike to perfection. Charles Wood in a dreadful bustle to pacify his chief! I don't think it can last. But how it is to end is not easy to be seen. Lord, I would go out alone at present! Palmerston is behaving well as far as we can judge. He seems to despise Johnny [Russell] – I am writing notes to urge the duty of forbearance – it would be a disgrace in the face of Europe to break up from personal jealousies at such a moment.⁵⁰

Argyll did indeed urge forbearance on his colleagues, writing to Graham in December of 1854 that Lord John's conduct was intolerable, but encouraging him to 'pass over these displays of temper and personal ambition with the contempt which they deserve'.⁵¹ He also later wrote to Gladstone on the very day of the vote that would bring down the cabinet, urging him to help preserve the government, although by this stage he was slightly less charitable towards Russell. He begged Gladstone, 'pray let us guard against the common impression that there has been any sort of division between Whig and Peelite. Lord John and he alone has been to blame.'⁵²

⁴⁹ Russell's resignation over J.A. Roebuck's motion for an inquiry into the war came only days before the Government's final defeat by a huge majority in the House of Commons.

⁵⁰ British Library, Mss Eur, I[ndia] O[ffice] R[ecords], Neg 4244, Misc. Correspondence, Argyll to Elizabeth Leveson Gower, no date [from related correspondence a date of December 1854 or early January 1855 at the latest seems most likely]. The letters in this collection seem to have been copied at a later date by the 10th Duke of Argyll before being deposited in the India Office Collection. It is unknown why some of the duke's personal correspondence from the 1850s has ended up here.

⁵¹ Argyll to Graham, 10 Dec. 1854, as quoted in Connacher, *The Aberdeen Coalition*, 501.

⁵² BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44098, f.74-7, Argyll to Gladstone, 29 Jan. 1855.

However, despite all of the duke's efforts, the cabinet did indeed break up and Argyll found himself in the difficult position of having to choose his path based on pragmatism without betraying personal loyalties. His choice was clear if not easy – he would stand with his former cabinet colleagues and not desert them. As various politicians scrabbled around in the aftermath of the fall of the government, trying to form a new government, Argyll, along with most of his former colleagues, fended off approaches from Lord John Russell to join with him and also refused to aid Palmerston in his initial attempts to rally some of the remnants of the Aberdeen coalition to his side.⁵³ In this choice, the duke was not only motivated by his reluctance to see Aberdeen further disgraced, but also by his feeling of obligation to those Peelite colleagues (and particularly to Gladstone) who were consistent in their refusal to join with Palmerston. However, Argyll quickly recovered from his dismay at the fall of his great mentor and began to see that his own future required some careful consideration. On the 5th of February 1855, he attended a meeting which included Gladstone, Graham, Herbert and Aberdeen and he joined with Lord Aberdeen in attempting to persuade his fellow Peelites to work with Palmerston.⁵⁴ Argyll was clearly keen to save his own career and wanted to throw in his lot with Palmerston, but he was also reluctant to break the ties with his Peelite colleagues and, after much soul searching decided to act with Gladstone and Graham and declined Palmerston's offer. However, events moved quickly and when, on the 6th of February, a pacified Gladstone reluctantly decided to join with Palmerston, Argyll leapt quickly to follow him.⁵⁵

The unity of the Peelites did not last and later that same month Gladstone, Herbert and Graham resigned rather than accept a committee of inquiry into the late government's conduct. Argyll too was seriously troubled by the prospect of the inquiry, but his pragmatism won through – he had to remain in cabinet and preserve the small power

⁵³ PRO, 30/22/12A, Argyll to Russell, 3 Feb. 1855; Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 523-31; Connacher, *Britain and the Crimea*, 5-8.

⁵⁴ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 526-7; Partridge, *Gladstone*, 80-1 – Partridge cites this meeting as occurring on 3rd February, however, the 5th seems a more likely date based upon Gladstone's own records, BL, Add. MS 44745, Memorandum: Peelite discussion on a juncture with Lord Palmerston, 5 Feb. 1855.

⁵⁵ Southampton University Library, MS 62, Argyll to Palmerston, 6 Feb. 1855.

for which he had strived.⁵⁶ He was also keen to establish himself as nobody's lapdog and later recalled (although possibly with some bias) that he had privately sneered at Herbert and was,

determined not to let myself be led, as I saw Sidney Herbert was, by the mere preponderating weight of a will stronger than his own. I saw the tendency in Gladstone's intellect – the tendency to assign overweening importance to lines of reasoning which, however true up to a certain point, had to be balanced more equably than he was disposed to allow against other arguments charged with a modifying force.⁵⁷

However, Argyll initially kept his feelings about Gladstone's 'tendencies' to himself and wrote a conciliatory letter to him, delicately putting his own view across,

I cannot say how unhappy it makes me to be separated from you in particular - and how serious a public calamity I consider your loss to be - you know that on the whole I think the balance of public good was against the course you have taken - else I should go with you.⁵⁸

In actual fact, the duke was more than a little annoyed with Gladstone's actions. He felt the betrayal (as he saw it) of those who had abandoned their colleagues after previously supporting the government's decisions most keenly and his correspondence with Gladstone over the next few months was dominated by subtle (and not so subtle) attempts to shame his friend into recognition of the error of his ways. In May of 1855 he wrote forthrightly to Gladstone telling him that, 'The weight however which I should naturally attach to your opinion, is on this question somewhat modified by the conviction I entertain that you have receded, and are receding, from the common ground on which we stood when members of the same government.'⁵⁹ The men's relationship suffered somewhat from their differences.

⁵⁶ Argyll tried to persuade Gladstone to reconsider and asked 'may not the Committee be the best safety valve for a very excited state of public feeling', but he had no success, see BL, Gladstone Papers, Add MS 44098, f.78-82, Argyll to Gladstone, 20 Feb. 1855.

⁵⁷ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 538.

⁵⁸ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44098, f.83-5, Argyll to Gladstone, 21 Feb. 1855.

⁵⁹ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44098, f.94-100, Argyll to Gladstone, 17 May 1855; letters on a similar theme continue for some time, see particularly, BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44098, f.112-5.

however, both attempted to keep their friendship alive, and Argyll in particular tried to make light of their differences on a number of occasions. At the end of one typically robust attack upon Gladstone he wrote,

But I must stop. I hope to be able to pay you a visit before this month closes; but you know I must take care not to have it said – if I am in any degree peaceful – ‘Oh, you come fresh from Hawarden’, for even on such a disputatious and contradictory Scot as I am, you are supposed to have the most dangerous influences!⁶⁰

Argyll did not succumb to any of Gladstone’s ‘peaceful’ notions and steadfastly supported the government throughout the war, losing no opportunity to justify his and the cabinet’s past and present actions.⁶¹ In so doing he managed to successfully weather the storm of the Crimean War and, by standing firmly with Palmerston and the rest of the government through the crisis, he emerged with his reputation intact.

If Argyll’s ‘radicalism’ had been smothered by a more self interested pragmatism during the Crimean War, then his actions during the rest of Palmerston’s government were soon to re-ignite his radical image. He had supported attempts to liberalise the divorce procedures of the country and had urged the Lords to adopt a scheme based more upon ‘Scotch Law’, which Argyll asserted should, ‘put the woman on the same equality as the man in respect to matters of divorce.’⁶² In this view, the duke went far further than the government were prepared to go and the eventual act was still heavily prejudiced against women.⁶³ His interests extended beyond the British Isles as well and from 1856, Argyll was increasingly active as a representative of the government’s ‘Indian policy’ in the House of Lords. He had told the house in July of that year that,

Argyll to Gladstone, 22 Aug. 1855; BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44098, f. 121-8, Argyll to Gladstone, 9 Oct. 1855.

⁶⁰ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44098, f. 135-42, Argyll to Gladstone, 1 Nov. 1855. More aspects of Argyll and Gladstone’s troubled relationship will be explored in Chapter Six.

⁶¹ Argyll defended the Aberdeen government’s actions both inside parliament and outside of it. See particularly, PD, 3rd Series, vol.132, col. 1303, 5 May 1854; PD, 3rd Series, vol. 137, cols. 1396-1400, 30 Mar. 1855; NLS, Acc 8508/43, Bundle 2, Argyll to Sir John MacNeill, 6 Jan. 1854; George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, ‘The Diplomatic History of the Eastern Question’, *Edinburgh Review*, (1854), 1-43; George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, ‘The Tauric Chersonese’, *Edinburgh Review*, (1855), 88-115.

⁶² PD, 3rd Series, vol. 145, col. 533, 19 May 1857; PD, 3rd series, vol. 147, col.2011, 24 Aug. 1857

⁶³ See M.L. Shanley, ‘“One must Ride Behind”: Married Women’s Rights and the Divorce Act of 1857’, *Victorian Studies*, 25, (1982), 355-76.

‘he never looked into the history of India without feeling some doubt as to the right by which we had taken possession of parts of that empire.’⁶⁴ More than this, he urged caution and restraint during the mutiny itself, asking his fellow peers not to,

abandon that confidence in its native army which we had so long entertained...he thought it quite possible that, considering that the question of caste had been touched upon, the insurrection might be the result of a momentary panic, and not of any organised conspiracy against the English government...their Lordships and the public ought not too hastily to abandon the opinion that, under a better system, and with greater precautions, it was possible to restore the Indian army to the state which had enabled it to reflect such glory on our arms.⁶⁵

That the duke finished off his speech with a forthright call to put down the insurrection quickly does not detract from the central message of tolerance that he was urging upon his fellow politicians. Argyll’s ‘liberal’ or even ‘radical’ ideas towards Indian reform would be tested again when, later in his life, he would become more closely connected with the administration of the country and particularly with its system of land tenure.⁶⁶

As the 1850s drew to a close, Argyll hoped for a more peaceful time that would allow his party to recover from the divisions of the last few years. Reunited with Gladstone, who had eventually consented to serve again under Palmerston in 1859, the duke tried to rebuild the friendship that had been partly severed by their differences over the Crimean War. However, the 1860s were to give the duke the perfect opportunity to demonstrate his ‘radicalism’ and it would again be a foreign issue, the American Civil War, that would separate Argyll from some of his closest friends and colleagues.

There were early signs of Argyll’s feelings about the conflict. He mentioned the prospect of war as an afterthought in a letter conveying Christmas greetings to

⁶⁴ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 143, col. 623, 11 Jul. 1856.

⁶⁵ PD, 3rd series, vol. 147, col.430, 27 Jul. 1857.

⁶⁶ Argyll’s actions as Secretary for India will be explored in more detail below in, Chapter Six and Chapter Eight.

Gladstone in 1860, however, he was by no means apathetic to the dispute.⁶⁷ His wife's interest in the abolitionist movement had converted the duke to the cause and, from the first days of the war, Argyll's position was clear – his full support was for the North. The stand that Argyll took on the Civil War is instructive on more than one level. The duke's support of the North was influenced by both political and moral considerations. The duke was a confirmed unionist and the Confederate challenge to the United States of America made the war, in Argyll's mind at least, a testing ground for the stability of incorporating unions across the world.⁶⁸ Morally, Argyll's support for the North was largely based upon his opposition to the institution of slavery and his correspondence from the period illustrates clearly his objections. In one of his many letters to Gladstone, he asked his friend, 'What does the South itself say? Over and over again the Southerners have declared the maintenance of slavery is the basis of their new Confederacy - in every form of...boast and of wicked rebellion against their own conscience this has been proclaimed,'⁶⁹ and in another of his fervent attempts to change his friend's mind he passionately stated,

it is clear that slavery is now in what we call the 'deid-throws' - and I regard this...as one of the most memorable events in the history of modern times, worth all the blood that has been, or may be shed, worth it - to the Whites even more than to the Blacks. You think me a fanatic on this subject, but I think I am in my sober senses.⁷⁰

Argyll was in no doubt that the North's actions against the slaveholding South were justified, and this opinion set him apart from many of his political colleagues. It is with regard to his hatred of the system of slavery and his consistent opposition to the Confederacy that the term 'the radical duke' can perhaps be most accurately applied to Argyll. He was indeed radical and relatively unusual among his colleagues in this stance and his adherence to the cause was pursued seemingly without thought to the potential damage it could do to his career. Even in the early stages of the conflict when the Confederacy were, to the surprise of some, holding their own against the

⁶⁷ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. 44098, f.349-54, Argyll to Gladstone, 25 Dec. 1860.

⁶⁸ Argyll's adherence to the unionist cause throughout his lifetime and his response to the challenge of the Confederacy to the American Union is discussed in Chapter Six.

⁶⁹ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44099, f.65-8, Argyll to Gladstone, 23 Aug. 1861.

⁷⁰ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44099, f.227-30, Argyll to Gladstone, 10 Sep. 1863.

might of the Union, Argyll was forthright and outspoken about the wickedness of the Southern cause. However, the duke was always aware that his career was in little danger from his 'radical' views and, just as he had done in the early days of his political life, he used the issue as a way of raising his profile and accentuating the differences between himself and other, more conservative, colleagues. Argyll's position in cabinet allowed him to judge the mood of these colleagues and he saw early on that there was little chance of the government of his country agreeing to intervene on either side or even to mediate in the crisis.⁷¹

Despite this, his confidence was occasionally shaken. The *Trent* affair in particular was a major difficulty for Argyll. This crisis, which developed over the removal of two Confederate agents from a British ship in international waters, presented serious problems for Argyll and the British government.⁷² Palmerston and the British public at large were outraged and Argyll poured out his despair to Gladstone, fearing that there was no way that Britain could allow this insult to go unpunished. He also wrote to his wife's most influential American friend Charles Sumner, who was from 1861 chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, begging the North to back down on the issue, but confessed his doubts about resolving the problem to Gladstone, saying that, 'I am very low as to the prospect – even – of peace. I am all against submitting to any clear breach of international law, such as I can hardly doubt this has been'⁷³ and a few days later he further despaired, 'but now if our demand is refused – are we to become virtually the allies of the scoundralism of the South? I don't see any escape – in the event of war.'⁷⁴

A compromise was eventually exacted and, to Argyll's immense relief, war was averted. However, the crisis had alarmed him and he continued to make efforts to discourage the government from intervening on the South's behalf –advocating

⁷¹ For more on Britain and the American Civil War see, E.D. Adams, *Great Britain and the American Civil War*, 2 Vols, (London, 1925); H. Jones, *Union In Peril: the Crisis over British Intervention in the Civil War*, (Chapel Hill, 1992); R.J.M Blackett, *Divided Hearts: Britain and the American Civil War*, (Baton Rouge, 2000); J.M. Hemon jr., 'British Sympathies in the American Civil War: a reconsideration', *The Journal of Southern History*, 33, 3, (Aug. 1967), 356-67; G.L. Bernstein, 'Special Relationship and Appeasement: Liberal Policy towards America in the age of Palmerston', *Historical Journal*, 41 (1998), 725-50.

⁷² For more on this see, N.B. Ferris, *The Trent Affair: A Diplomatic Crisis*, (Knoxville, 1977).

⁷³ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44098, f. 90, Argyll to Gladstone, 29 Nov. 1861.

⁷⁴ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44098, f. 93-5, Argyll to Gladstone, 7 Dec. 1861.

neutrality at every turn. He had been in close contact with Lord Russell (one of his few 'Northern' allies) since the beginning of the war and had written to him in September of 1861 that,

I hear horrible reports – which I don't believe – that you are contemplating as a not very distant prospect, the recognition of the Southern Confederacy...my own feeling is that we ought to put off as long as possible the ugly necessity – if indeed it ever becomes such.⁷⁵

Argyll was right to be concerned about Russell and the rest of the cabinet. In fact Russell was one of those who consistently pressed Palmerston throughout 1862 to step in and offer mediation between the belligerents.⁷⁶ Argyll's opposition to mediation was consistent and he wrote to Palmerston to caution against such a step. He told Palmerston that his friend Charles Sumner was hinting that President Lincoln would soon declare a definite anti-slavery policy on the part of the North and that intervention would be a great moral folly. He then followed this up with the more measured and pragmatic advice that,

so long as both parties are as determined as at first, and as extreme in their demands from each other, it would be folly, I think, to attempt any intervention. Besides all which, I am not sure that if we could secure this result tomorrow, it would be a desirable result that we should return to our dependence for cotton on the southern states. The present state of things is quite sure to elicit new sources of supply in more than one quarter of the world – and tho' temporary suffering, this will be a great gain.⁷⁷

The 8th Duke of Argyll did not, of course, single-handedly prevent Britain from entering the American Civil War, but his sustained campaign of support for the North and his sustained badgering of his political colleagues did have an impact. He was, in

⁷⁵ PRO 30/22/25, Argyll to Russell, 11 Sep. 1861, (original emphasis).

⁷⁶ However, when cabinet met to decide the question in November of 1862, Russell withdrew his support for mediation and left Gladstone as the only cabinet member strongly in favour of such action. An excellent account of Cabinet discussions and decisions can be found in, K.J. Brauer, 'British Mediation and the American Civil War: A Reconsideration', *Journal of Southern History*, 38 (1972), 49-64.

⁷⁷ Southampton University Library, MS 62, Argyll to Palmerston, 2 Sep. 1862.

the early 1860s, a respected member of the Cabinet and was seen as a man who could rise to a very high position, perhaps even the highest – at this stage in his life. his opinions did matter. Even if he could not change the minds of Gladstone or even Palmerston, who seems to have blown hot and cold throughout the war, his arguments were always received with at least the respect of those whom he addressed.

But, of course, in politics, things can change very quickly and the ‘radical duke’ soon found that his advice was not always going to be heeded. He was completely unable to prevent the newly built warship, the *Alabama*, being permitted to leave Britain to serve as a Confederate ship. He urged, again and again, that this would be regarded as an act of aggression against the North, but to no avail.⁷⁸ His arguments were discounted by his cabinet colleagues and his last ditch attempt to encourage her to be detained at British ports overseas was over-ruled by everyone except Foreign Secretary, Lord Russell. Argyll later recalled the scene in cabinet when Russell had attempted to bring up the plan to detain the *Alabama*. In a letter to his colleague he recounted that, ‘when you brought it before the Cabinet there was a perfect insurrection. Everybody but you and I were against the proposed step...and you gave it up.’⁷⁹ This failure to convince his colleagues obviously rankled with the duke, and he consistently maintained that the government had been in the wrong. He was still angry the following year when he lectured Gladstone,

I entirely deny that we depart from neutrality by a prohibition which happens to tell more against one side than another...it is not the business of neutrals, to keep up a balance between contending parties...the idea that we ought to allow the Confederates to have ironclads from England because they are too weak to have any of their own - is surely inconsistent with a just definition of neutrality.⁸⁰

And he wrote later to Palmerston, talking at length of the possible consequences of their folly,

⁷⁸ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44099, f.205-8, Argyll to Gladstone, 27 Apr. 1863; f.209, 2 May 1863; PRO 30 22/26, Argyll to Russell, 5 Sep. 1863.

⁷⁹ Argyll to Russell, 5 December 1872, as quoted in, Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. II, 201.

⁸⁰ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44099, f.243-50, Argyll to Gladstone, 3 Oct. 1863.

All I want is that when ‘Alabamas’ come to be fitted out against us, we may be able honestly to say that we had given no kind of sanction to the precedent which will be founded upon her...in our first war with any power, we shall see similar vessels fitted out against our commerce. We shall certainly remonstrate if this be done from Neutral Ports. We don’t know how soon this evil may arise. Surely it is wise to fortify our position beforehand by taking care that we shall be able to say – ‘we had nothing to do with the Alabama – we tried to detain her – she escaped by fraud: and we kept up our protest against her by forbidding her our ports.’... I ask ‘If we do not do this, what answer will England be able to make this year, or next year, when ‘Alabamas’ fitted out in Neutral Ports are destroying our commerce?’⁸¹

The question of the Alabama dragged on into the 1870s, but for Argyll it had been much more than a cabinet disagreement and its significance for him was much more concerning. He had seen that his influence was by no means as great as he had previously imagined. The fact that he believed he had been right was little consolation when he became aware that he did not have the connections or the ability to carry other members of his Party with him. If the Civil War gave the duke the opportunity to display his supposedly ‘radical’ tendencies it also gave him a real indication of his own power (or more accurately, lack of power) within the cabinet. In addition to this his stance on slavery had undoubtedly raised his public profile, but it had also exposed him to the scorn of those who did not believe his abolitionist tendencies were altogether genuine. In her work on Scotland and American Reconstruction, Dr. Finnie has detailed one of the attacks that was made upon the duke by the editor of the *Glasgow Sentinel* who portrayed Argyll as ‘a rather ambitious young man’ who chose to support certain causes (i.e. the anti-slavery movement) in order to receive ‘a little temporary popularity’.⁸²

⁸¹ Southampton University Library, MS 62, Argyll to Palmerston, 7 Mar. 1864.

⁸² *Glasgow Sentinel*, ‘The Macallum More on Slavery’, 10 Jun. 1865, 1; Finnie, ‘Scottish Attitudes towards American Reconstruction, 1865-1877’, Vol. III, 250-2. Finnie deals extensively with Argyll and his wife’s support for the later ‘Freedmen’s Aid Campaigns’ in Scotland and Britain as a whole and has gathered a wealth of information about this aspect of his life in her thesis.

Argyll was undoubtedly a man who was seeking to further his position as a statesman, however, despite the claims of the *Glasgow Sentinel* it seems clear that his support for the anti-slavery movement and his opposition to the principle of secession were indeed genuine. For the duke, the 1850s and 1860s had proved to be a trying time, dominated by the two great conflicts in the Crimea and in America. In both cases Argyll had had to juggle with questions of morality and practicality and he would continue to face the same dilemmas when dealing with vital home issues.

Perhaps the most prominent of these issues was that of Parliamentary reform. Argyll had long been interested in the question of reform and had been in close correspondence with its committed champion Lord Russell since the early 1850s. However, Argyll's 'radicalism' did not extend as far on this subject as it did on some others. During the 1850s he contented himself with counselling Russell against making sweeping demands, telling him in 1853 that, 'in every railway carriage I overhear people speaking of the coming reform as exciting only alarm' and arguing with him for some small increase in representation for Scotland.⁸³ Although Argyll was generally less than enthusiastic about large scale parliamentary reform, he did see that something was necessary and was anxious that he and his colleagues should be the ones to deliver it. The duke recognised early on that the question would be a contentious one and repeatedly advised his colleagues that they had to form some sort of clearly defined policy. He first urged Palmerston in 1857 to agree to formulate a strategy.⁸⁴ After the fall of the government, the duke then turned to his old mentor Lord Aberdeen and warned him that, 'if Dizzy has his way I doubt not he will try something of the most claptrap kind: and infinite evil may be done by a "conservative government" proposing what others will have to bid up to if not beyond'⁸⁵

Argyll's fears would later prove to be well founded. Although reform moved slowly, it was becoming increasingly a question of when rather than if. When the question arose again in the 1860s, Argyll supported the government's plan of 'admitting to the exercise of the franchise that class of artisans who are by no means a lawless or

⁸³ PRO 30/22/11B, Argyll to Russell, 18 Dec. 1853; PRO 30/22/11C, Argyll to Russell, 2 Jan. 1854; PRO 30/22/11C, Argyll to Russell, 4 Jan. 1854.

⁸⁴ Southampton University Library, MS 62, Argyll to Palmerston, 10 Apr. 1857.

⁸⁵ BL, Aberdeen Papers, Add. MS 43199, f.127-30, Argyll to Aberdeen, 31 Aug. 1858. (original emphasis).

reckless body of men', but at the same time he expressed his fears about taking reform any further, saying,

I should view with the greatest possible alarm and dismay the institution of universal suffrage, especially if accompanied by the ballot. I believe they are two great instruments of modern despotism, most hostile to the liberties of mankind. I see them used all over Europe, sometimes to cajole, sometimes to terrify, the poorest and most uninstructed of men into a surrender not merely of their own liberties, but the liberties of others who are more enlightened and more independent than themselves.⁸⁶

Within a few years, Argyll's worst fears had been confirmed and the Conservatives had introduced a comparatively radical measure of reform which Argyll saw as a cynical measure to curry favour with the population.⁸⁷ At the same time, clear indications began to surface of Argyll's discontent with the way the Liberal party was operating. Although he and Gladstone were still close allies, Argyll began to criticise the way in which some of his fellow party members voted and to suspect their motives for doing so. After Gladstone's humiliation in the Commons when his amendment to the Conservative bill was defeated when forty-five members of his own party paired or voted against it, Argyll wrote at once to his friend, wishing to 'say how much I feel for you in the desertion of so many who ought to have behaved better. I really believe that cowardice about a dissolution was more at the bottom of it than anything else – coupled with some cowardice about being supposed to vote against "Household Suffrage".'⁸⁸

However, despite his hatred of Household Suffrage, which he claimed would see the vote given to those living in any 'garret or cellar, with a whole family pigging together...the lowest of the population', Argyll's pragmatism prompted him to

⁸⁶ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 157, col. 1939, 19 Apr. 1860.

⁸⁷ Argyll was certainly not alone in this view. For more discussion of the Second Reform Act see. M. Cowling, *1867: Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution*, (Cambridge, 1967); E.J. Evans, *Parliamentary Reform, c1770-1918*, (Harlow, 2000), 44-61; J. Lawrence, *Speaking for the People: Party, language and popular politics in England, 1867-1914*, (Cambridge, 1998); F.B. Smith, *The Making of the Second Reform Bill*, (Cambridge, 1966); J.K. Walton, *The Second Reform Act*, (Lancaster, 1983).

⁸⁸ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44100, f.150-1 Argyll to Gladstone, 23 Apr. 1867; Matthew, *Gladstone 1809-1898*, 141-2.

counsel Gladstone that, ‘I fear that any effort on your part now to get rid of ‘Household Suffrage’ would again divide and proclaim the division of the Liberal party.’⁸⁹ Thus it is clear to see that, in this instance, Argyll had to abandon his own principled objections to reform in order to keep the Liberal party functioning as a cohesive unit. Evidence of this would also be seen in the following year when Argyll would again warn Gladstone, this time with reference to the Scottish Reform Bill, not to put any pressure on the frail structure of the Liberal Party,

I therefore must beseech you to have this matter again carefully considered. My own view is decidedly that during this coming session no attempt should be made to test party fidelity. But even if it be determined to apply such a test, surely it would be unwise to select for the purpose a vote on which Scottish members would have to choose between party fidelity and running the risk of losing for Scotland additional representation.⁹⁰

The question of parliamentary reform was certainly not one in which the duke was distinguished by any ‘radical’ tendencies. If anything, his overwhelming pragmatism comes across most strongly during these debates. By the time the next great reform bill came to be discussed in parliament in 1884/5, Argyll would be free of the constraints of party allegiance, but he would be as practical as ever and recognised the support which the bill had in the country. He was instrumental in easing the passage of the bill through parliament – acting as an intermediary and peacemaker between Gladstone in the Commons and Salisbury in the Lords – and averting a potential crisis which could have seen the future of the House of Lords called into question.⁹¹ Argyll advised his fellow Lords, ‘that if it [the Bill] is rejected the action of this House will

⁸⁹ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44100, f.150-1, Argyll to Gladstone, 23 Apr. 1867; BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44100, f.152-3, Argyll to Gladstone, 27 Apr. 1867.

⁹⁰ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44100, f.192-9, Argyll to Gladstone, 30 Jan. 1868.

⁹¹ See BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44105, f.174-9, Argyll to Gladstone, 18 Jul. 1884, where Argyll gives his opinions to Gladstone after a meeting with Salisbury, letters of a similar nature continue over the next few weeks, f.183-5, f.187-90; see also, BL, Carnarvon Papers, Add. 60832, f.43-6, Argyll to Carnarvon, 26 Oct. 1884; f.73-6, 3 Nov. 1884, where Argyll discusses the negotiations; for an overview see, A. Jones, *The politics of reform, 1884*, (Cambridge, 1972); Andrew Roberts mentions Argyll’s attempts to broker a compromise in his, *Salisbury: Victorian Titan*, (London, 1999), 300; the duchess of Argyll, however, attempted to make rather more of Argyll’s role in this matter, see Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. II, 384-9; see also Matthew, *Gladstone*, 430-4, which details the negotiations between the two parties, although Argyll’s input is not noted.

be liable to be misunderstood and misrepresented out of doors, I appeal earnestly to every independent member of this House to support the second reading of this Bill.⁹² Thus, by the 1880s, Argyll found himself in the position of once again supporting the extension of the franchise, against all of his earlier principles and probably his better judgement, but while his earlier decision in the 1860s had been founded on the preservation of the Liberal Party, by the 1880s he had to take this step to preserve the authority of the House of Lords. His purported 'cross bench/independent' mind was thus perhaps more subject to the influences of public opinion and party politics than he would ever have been willing to admit.⁹³

The label of 'the radical duke' which was applied to the duke by George Peel in his entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* was in many ways an appropriate one. In the early years of his career the duke's actions must have made him appear extremely unusual. The young son of a staunchly Tory father, married to a member of a prominent Whig dynasty, who was an ardent supporter of Free Trade, the removal of religious restrictions, the abolition of the slave trade and of slavery itself must have seemed like a wholly new form of politician. However, although he undoubtedly did much to consciously promote this image during his early political life, it became increasingly more difficult to sustain as time progressed. As Argyll began to move higher in the political world, and crucially as his progress became more and more tied to the fortunes of the Liberal party, his 'radicalism' faded to be replaced by a more self-interested pragmatism. The Crimean War had seen him take the first steps in following his leader in taking the country to war against his principles and, as time progressed, the duke found himself making more and more decisions based not upon his own beliefs, but upon political expediency. It may be a familiar story, but it is a vital one and it reveals much about the process which saw Argyll change from being the 'radical duke' to being seen as one of the most conservative figures in parliament.

⁹² PD, 3rd Series, vol. 290, col. 134, 7 Jul. 1884.

⁹³ Argyll consistently maintained that he was, at heart, an independent and not an adherent of party politics, however his actions may have been perceived; PD, 3rd Series, vol. 290, col. 135, 7 Jul. 1884

CHAPTER SIX

PRIVATE FRIENDSHIP AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS

Argyll had, during the 1850s and 1860s, consistently attempted to enhance his own career prospects by maintaining a careful balance between his own strong moral beliefs and more self-interested pragmatism. By the mid 1860s he found himself close to the centre of the Liberal party and was a trusted friend and colleague of the man who would come to dominate 19th century Liberalism – William Ewart Gladstone. However, although the duke appeared to be steadily advancing in prominence throughout the 1860s, problems with the path that the Liberals under Gladstone were taking would soon come to the fore. It would become impossible for him, by the beginning of the 1880s, to remain within the party that he had been a part of since its infancy. While earlier chapters have already detailed some of the political, religious and moral issues with which the duke had to deal during his lifetime, it is of value to synthesise these aspects of his life into a coherent account. In so doing, it will be possible to bring together many of the themes that concerned the duke and to study how his political and personal decisions impacted upon his life and career. By examining the duke's personal correspondence with Gladstone and other contemporary politicians, it is hoped that a clearer picture will emerge of the man, his ideology and his politics. In this way, it will be possible to examine more closely the issues which excited and troubled Argyll during his political career and also to account more fully for his resignation from the Liberal party in 1881. By taking this broad approach the beginnings of the problems between Argyll and Gladstone, and the Liberal party in general, will be highlighted at their earliest stage. By identifying and examining these problems, it will be possible to give a clearer account of why the duke eventually took the position he did in 1881 and demonstrate why he was finally driven to break the allegiance to his party and to his old friend Gladstone.

Argyll's personal relationship with Gladstone pre-dated their political association. As has been seen in earlier chapters, the two men had little political contact during the tumultuous times of the late 1840s and Argyll was largely excluded from the behind

the scenes negotiations that so occupied Gladstone and other Peelites.¹ However, the two men had had some correspondence during the 1840s, on the subject of religion – a topic that would continue to divide them to a greater or lesser degree for the rest of their lives.² After this initial correspondence, the relationship between Argyll and Gladstone stalled. Although the two men would meet occasionally over the next few years, it was not until late 1852 that they were placed in a position where their tentative acquaintance could develop into a friendship. When Lord Aberdeen formed his government, Gladstone became Chancellor of the Exchequer and Argyll was made Lord Privy Seal – this was a great rise to prominence for a man who was not yet thirty. From this date onwards, both men were to be linked by their party adherence and also, increasingly, by their personal friendship.

For his part, Argyll admired Gladstone's marvellous speeches, his clever ideas and his depth of knowledge: Gladstone's opinions are more difficult to gauge, although he certainly liked Argyll. His diary records many happy evenings spent with him and recounts some of the topics of conversation which the two men covered in their after dinner debates. There are some wonderful entries in the Gladstone diaries detailing the men's discussions – one such entry records, 'Conversation with Argyll on Future Punishment – we had a delightful evening'!³ One important factor which may have attracted Gladstone to the duke was that the two men's friendship was cemented during the 1850s which was undoubtedly one of the most difficult political times for Gladstone. Argyll's star, on the other hand was continuing to rise during this decade, despite the troubled times, and this may have made the young duke an important ally to Gladstone.

One of the reasons for Gladstone's troubles was of course the Crimean War and its aftermath. The war had seen both men battling with their consciences and judgement.⁴ Both were convinced of the necessity of facing up to Russian aggression,

¹ See Chapter Two.

² Argyll and Gladstone's initial introduction, formed when the latter penned a review of Argyll's *Presbytery Examined: an essay, critical and historical, on the ecclesiastical history of Scotland since the reformation* is detailed in Chapter Four.

³ H.C.G. Matthew, (ed.), *The Gladstone Diaries*, Vol. VI, (Oxford, 1978), 267.

⁴ Argyll's own feelings about the Crimean War are discussed in more depth above, Chapter Five. For more on Gladstone's unease see, Biagini, *Gladstone*, 35-8; Partridge, *Gladstone*, 77-86; H.C.G. Matthew, *Gladstone, 1809-1898*, (Oxford, 1997), 104-8; J.L. Hammond and M.R.D. Foot, *Gladstone and Liberalism*, (London, 1952), 65-80.

but both were equally dubious about the Ottoman Empire. Argyll had written privately to Gladstone in 1853 about his doubts over the moral and political justifications for supporting Turkey and these sentiments were doubtless comforting to Gladstone who was having his own problems reconciling himself to the war.⁵ Despite their fears, both men had supported the Prime Minister, Lord Aberdeen, in his policies to uphold their earlier treaty obligations and had kept their fears to themselves as much as they could. However, in the crisis of 1855 Argyll and Gladstone had been driven apart, politically at least, with Gladstone choosing to leave office rather than accept an enquiry into the government's handling of the war, while Argyll chose, after much soul searching, to stay and serve the new Prime Minister Palmerston.⁶

Argyll begged Gladstone, not to leave and urged him to preserve what little remained of the former Peelite political group's unity, but to no avail. Argyll reported later that this was 'the only occasion in my public life with Gladstone when he did for a moment show some considerable irritation.'⁷ This comment represents something of a memory lapse on Argyll's part as Gladstone would certainly be more than 'irritated' with him at various points in the future, but it is instructive as it illustrates the seriousness of this first split. Indeed, the two men remained 'irritated' with each other for some considerable time; Argyll wrote privately to Aberdeen some three years later that he wished, 'Gladstone would stop his pen a little – or write, when he must write, a little less acrimoniously and more fairly'⁸ and the previous flurry of letters between the two men was visibly reduced to a series of fairly heated exchanges over the rights and wrongs of their relative positions.⁹

During the late 1850s Argyll remained in office while Gladstone was left outside of the circle of power. Of course, the split would not last for long and they would be re-

⁵ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44098, f.46-9, Argyll to Gladstone, 26 Sep. 1853; Conacher, *The Aberdeen Coalition*, 195-214, details the cabinet discussions and the positions of various cabinet members on the issue of intervention. Argyll and Gladstone, along with Aberdeen Wood, Graham and Herbert, were part of the 'peace camp' while Russell, Palmerston, Lansdowne and Clarendon stood against them; Both Argyll and Gladstone became convinced, however, that action was necessary, see Matthew, *Gladstone 1809-1898*, 85-6; Argyll, 'The Diplomatic History of the Eastern Question', 1-43.

⁶ See Chapter Five.

⁷ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 537.

⁸ BL, Aberdeen Papers, Add. MS 43199, f.145-8, Argyll to Aberdeen, 25 Oct. 1858.

⁹ For examples of some of these debates see. BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44098, f.94-101, Argyll to Gladstone, 17 May 1855; f.112-5, 22 Aug. 1855; f.121-8, 9 Oct. 1855.

united in 1859, rather ironically under Palmerston who managed to persuade Gladstone to serve under him as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Argyll and Gladstone put their differences behind them and, to all intents and purposes, resumed their friendship from where they had left off in 1855. However, Argyll found it difficult to maintain a neutral position amidst the continuing problems between his prime minister and his friend. He attempted to mediate between Palmerston and Gladstone and tried to exert some influence to prevent Gladstone from resigning again in 1860 over Palmerston's plans for costly naval fortifications. Writing to Palmerston, Argyll tried to support his friend and colleague, telling his premier that, 'I think it not only due to Gladstone, but eminently due to ourselves, to continue in his hands the responsibility & difficulty which no one else can bear so well: and which I believe he is ready and willing to encounter'¹⁰ and Argyll further urged Palmerston to adopt a softer approach towards Gladstone who was being seriously troubled by some of the government's plans. Despite this, Palmerston proved unwilling to compromise and Argyll eventually chose to stand with him in forcing Gladstone to back down.¹¹ Argyll and Gladstone's relationship was severely tested on a number of levels during the 1850s and hopes that quieter and more convivial times were ahead seemed doomed by the advent of another foreign crisis: the American Civil War.

Argyll busied himself trying to enlist support for the North during the War.¹² Gladstone, on the other hand, held largely the opposite view, and their letters between 1860 and 1865 are largely concerned with this issue. Even in letters ostensibly about other important matters, both men usually found some time to launch an attack upon the other's ideas about the conflict. However, this time, there was little of the personal animosity which had existed during the trying times of the Crimean War. The two men held to their opposite views throughout the conflict, but without ever allowing their lively debate to become acrimonious. They had both learned a great deal about the other's personality and even the most strongly worded arguments seem to have caused little offence between them. Indeed, these letters are some of the most enlightening and entertaining ones in the Gladstone Papers, with both men being perfectly open, good humoured and candid. One reason for this is possibly that whilst

¹⁰ Southampton University Library, MS 62, Argyll to Palmerston, 4 Jun. 1860.

¹¹ Partridge, *Gladstone*, 94-5.

¹² Argyll's support of the North in this conflict and some of Gladstone's reactions to this have been explored in Chapter Five.

both men held strong opinions on the matter, they were never called upon to make concrete political decisions based upon their convictions. Although Gladstone occasionally advocated some form of international mediation, the reality was, of course, that Britain remained neutral.¹³ There was to be no repeat of the events of the 1850s when ideological and practical arguments had divided the two men's political allegiance and it seems, from the friendly tone of their correspondence, that neither man was prepared to jeopardise their relationship over an issue which, although of great interest, was not of immediate political importance at home. However, the responses of Gladstone and Argyll to the American Civil War do provide evidence of serious ideological differences between the two friends. Despite the undeniable strength of the duke's adherence to the anti-slavery cause, it is vital to recognise that there was one other key factor which motivated Argyll to support the North. He was occupied with a deeper and more pressing concern than his purely moral objections to slavery – the whole question of the future of binding political unions. With this in mind, he gathered his tenants at Inveraray and gave a speech on the issue which was widely reported and worth quoting in some detail. Using one of his much favoured analogies from nature, the duke compared the secession of the South to,

a curious animal in Loch Fyne which I have sometimes dredged up from the bottom of the sea, and which performs the most extraordinary, innocent and able acts of suicide and self destruction. It is a peculiar kind of star-fish which, when brought up from the bottom of the water, and when any attempt is made to take hold of it, immediately throws off all of its arms, its very centre breaks up, and nothing remains of one of the most beautiful forms in nature but a thousand wriggling fragments. Such, undoubtedly, would have been the fate of the American Union if its Government had admitted what is called the right of secession.¹⁴

¹³ See, BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44099, f.92-4, Gladstone to Argyll, 3 Aug. 1862. where Gladstone sounded Argyll out about the possibility of intervention or mediation; for more on Gladstone and mediation see, Partridge, *Gladstone*, 97-9; C. Collyer, 'Gladstone and the American Civil War', *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society*, 6 (1951), 583-94; see also above, Chapter Five.

¹⁴ 'The Duke of Argyll at Inveraray', *The Times*, 29 Oct. 1861, 9; this speech is also quoted in the duke's entry in the original *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. XXII, supplement, 386.

Within this speech lies a condemnation of the South which reveals the underlying reason for Argyll's vehemence on the issue. The question of states' rights was, of course, the key issue, at the beginning of the war in particular, and Argyll held strong views on the subject. His stance put him in direct conflict with some of his political allies – most noticeably perhaps with Gladstone. While Gladstone in 1862 was controversially declaring that Jefferson Davis and the Confederate leaders had 'made a nation', Argyll was denying their right to even attempt this.¹⁵ Here we begin to see the reason for the duke's vehemence on the subject of the war. Argyll was staunchly unionist to his core and was not willing to admit that a country or state had any right to secede from any binding union. Early in the war, Argyll made his views on this subject clear – his sympathies lay firmly with the North as the righteous force trying to defend the country – and his antipathy for the Southerners' claims is evident, as he told Gladstone, 'The doctrine of secession is simply the doctrine of anarchy. Its hand is against every government, and the hand of every government must be, and ought to be against it.'¹⁶

Argyll's belief in the sanctity of binding unions meant that there was really no other consistent course open to him other than to support the North. His own published works are full of his personal views on the sanctity of 'the Union' at home and abroad, and he was immensely proud of his own ancestors' actions as great statesmen at the time of the Union of 1707 as his autobiography clearly shows.¹⁷ During the 1850s Argyll had ridiculed attempts by the National Association for the Vindication of Scottish Rights to assert grievances and demand some form of home rule for Scotland. Argyll's stance was then, and continued to be for the rest of his life, that any problems within parts of the Union could never be solved by pulling that Union apart.¹⁸ This question of the Union would come back to haunt Argyll closer to home some twenty years later when arguments over Irish Home Rule forced him further and further away from his former friends, colleagues and party allegiance.¹⁹ His

¹⁵ J. Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, (London, 1903), Vol. II, 79.

¹⁶ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44099, Argyll to Gladstone, f. 133, 13 May 1861.

¹⁷ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. 1, 3-23. Argyll's admiration for the 2nd and 3rd Dukes and their actions at the time of the Union comes across clearly in his memoirs. See also, Argyll, *Scotland as it was and as it is*, Chapter VIII.

¹⁸ PD, 3rd Series, Vol. 132, Cols. 514-522, 6 Apr. 1854; For more on the demands of the NAVSR see, Morton, *Unionist Nationalism*, 133-54.

¹⁹ J.M. Hemon jr., 'The use of the American Civil War in the debate over Irish Home Rule', 1023-26.

outspoken support for the North in the 1860s can thus be recognised as the beginning of a struggle against the forces of disunion which would continue until the end of his life.²⁰

Argyll still had other problems to face, however, before the issue of Irish Home Rule would come to the centre of the stage and by the time the Civil War was over in 1865, his mind was becoming more focussed upon his own political position. He had served almost continually as Lord Privy Seal in Liberal Governments for some twelve years and was anxious to advance to a more weighty role.²¹ He saw his chance after Palmerston's death in 1865 and confessed to Gladstone that, 'if India were to come to the Lords I should feel myself at least in bad luck if it were given to de Grey.' He was intensely aware of his own lack of progress over the last few years and complained to his friend that, 'I took charge of all the government business on India in the Lords - years before de Grey was in government at all...I think if the office were given to de Grey the House would place its own construction on the fact.'²² To his wife, the duke was even more candid, he wrote to her of the scene in cabinet when the matter was discussed,

the Cabinet seemed all to agree that if Wood would agree to take War, it [de Grey becoming Indian Secretary] would be the best arrangement. Now what was I to do? Make a personal difficulty when others seemed all agreed? I felt I could not do this. Was I to be perfectly silent, and not even intimate that tho' willing to give way, it is a giving way on my part and is a sacrifice of a just expectation? Was I to let it be understood that I am content with a comfortable sinecure, and do not even contemplate ever having a department?²³

²⁰ For Argyll's outspoken defence of the union and his opposition to plans for Irish Home Rule see below, 147-54.

²¹ Argyll had briefly been Postmaster General in Palmerston's cabinet, but had more usually assumed the role of Lord Privy Seal. For a comprehensive list of his cabinet positions see Appendix I; De Grey (created Marquess of Ripon, 1871) was the son of former Prime Minister Viscount Goderich.

²² BL., Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44100, f.70-1, Argyll to Gladstone, 17 Nov. 1865.

²³ BL., Mss Eur, IOR, Neg 4244, Misc. Correspondence, Argyll to Duchess of Argyll, 18 Nov. 1865, (original emphases).

These feelings had prompted him to confer with Lord Granville about the matter and to write the aforementioned letter to Gladstone. However, he was less than satisfied with Gladstone's understanding of the matter and told Elizabeth that, 'the truth is that Gladstone hardly recollects what was done in the Lords and has the general impression that it is all child's play in that House...there is no doubt that I am now feeling the effect of being placed very early in an Office which is on the way to nothing.'²⁴ Argyll was worried about being sidelined and in the event he was right to be concerned. As the Russell government was formed, it became clear to Argyll that he was to remain in his 'comfortable sinecure' despite his high hopes of moving on from this light role. His anger turned on the new Prime Minister and he wrote a stiffly polite letter to his leader before pouring out his rage to Gladstone, telling his friend that, 'the whole thing makes me feel shunted - on a good and pleasant siding - but still shunted.'²⁵ Gladstone must have seen only too well the reversal in their fortunes: now it was Gladstone who was looked to as a potential leader and as one of the lynchpins of the party while Argyll was effectively being sidelined.

Argyll was slipping further from the power that he had once hoped to attain. As franchise reform became more prominent as a public issue, Argyll saw his chance to put himself back at the centre of the stage and took this opportunity to come out strongly in favour of reform. Along with Gladstone, Argyll was a relatively late convert to the reform movement and he was certainly not inclined to take steps of too radical a nature.²⁶ He welcomed Gladstone's proposals for a relatively conservative level of reform and spoke in support of his friend's proposals in an attempt to show, in his own words, 'that all the Peerage is not dragged reluctantly.'²⁷ He was desperate to show people that he was not a typical aristocratic reactionary, but his stance on this

²⁴ BL, Mss Eur, IOR, Neg 4244, Misc. Correspondence, Argyll to Duchess of Argyll, 18 Nov. 1865.

²⁵ PRO, 30/22/16A, Argyll to Russell, 1 Feb. 1866; BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44100, f.96-7, Argyll to Gladstone, 2 Feb. 1866.

²⁶ Gladstone's own 'conversion' to reform is difficult to explain precisely but one major factor which E.F. Biagini has identified was that Gladstone's increasing worries about the fiscal situation may have made him more inclined to support modest suffrage extension in order to admit more 'frugal' voters who would perhaps be more appreciative of Gladstone's fiscal caution than some of the aristocracy, E.F. Biagini, 'Popular Liberals, Gladstonian Finance and the Debate on Taxation, 1860-1874', in E.F. Biagini and A.J. Reid (eds.), *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics in Britain, 1850-1914*, (Cambridge, 1991), 134-62. Argyll's 'conversion' was certainly significant, see Chapter Five above, 124-6, for his views on the question of extension of the suffrage in the 1860s.

²⁷ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44100, f.100-1, Argyll to Gladstone, 29 Mar. 1866, (original emphasis).

issue was not solely motivated by self interest. He did have a genuine belief in moderate reform and indeed he urged Gladstone to go much further than the latter had originally planned, asking him to, ‘remember that we are very likely to be obliged to appeal to the Country; and with the Country a tolerably bold scheme is more likely to help us than a small one.’²⁸ Despite this belief, Argyll did not play a prominent role in the reform campaign: what speeches he did make on the issue generally got little prominence in the newspapers and it was other men who were credited as movers and shakers in the plans for reform.²⁹

Of course, as events transpired, it would not be the Liberals who would pass the reform bill, but the Conservatives under Derby and Disraeli.³⁰ Gladstone suffered humiliation in the Commons when his amendment to the Bill was defeated when forty-five members of his own party paired or voted against it. Argyll wrote at once to his friend, offering words of comfort and advice.³¹ He had seen consistently, during the 1860s, that his best hope for advancement was through offering his support to Gladstone. The duke must now also have seen that it was very unlikely that he would be able to compete with his old friend for leadership of their party, but he still had high hopes that, by staying close to Gladstone, he would reach a prominent position. He strongly supported his old friend through the debates on disestablishment of the Irish Church, and had put his own concerns about the meat and bones of the bill to the back of his mind.³² However, Argyll had noted with concern Gladstone’s gradual slide towards more ‘radical’ thinking and begged him not to go too far with regard to church reform, warning him that the Liberal party and the country generally were not ready for such moves outside of Ireland.³³ Argyll’s

²⁸ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44100, f.104-6, Argyll to Gladstone, 9 Apr. 1866.

²⁹ Argyll attended a meeting for parliamentary reform at the Liverpool Amphitheatre on the 6th April 1866 and heard Gladstone’s ‘magnificent speech’ there. He had also attended the banquet held before the meeting and had spoken in support of the planned reform bill there, Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. II, 230-1; Matthew, *Gladstone 1809-1898*, 134. Argyll never numbered among those who were popularly seen as pushing reform forwards, as Biagini has noted, the resolutions at meetings of the Reform Union and Reform League typically expressed their thanks to Gladstone, Russell, Bright and Mill ‘who had vindicated the moral character of “the people”’, E.F. Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform: Popular Liberalism in the age of Gladstone, 1860-1880*, (Cambridge, 1992), 260-1.

³⁰ Argyll’s support for parliamentary reform and his actions during the passage of the Act are discussed more fully in Chapter Five.

³¹ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44100, f.150-1, Argyll to Gladstone, 23 Apr. 1867, this letter is quoted in Chapter Five.

³² For details of Argyll’s response to the disestablishment of the Irish Church see Chapter Four.

³³ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44100, f.262, Argyll to Gladstone, 30 Nov. 1868; see above, Chapter Four.

worries on this issue were later to prove well founded but, for the moment, he decided to swallow his misgivings in order to support his party. The question had certainly vexed him, but he had been able to put party interests first and, by doing this, he was also advancing his own interests – staying close to Gladstone who, by 1868, was now in a position to reward him. When the latter took office as Prime Minister, his long-standing friendship with Argyll would finally pay dividends for the duke who would get the opportunity he had been waiting for – at the India Office.

The position as Secretary for India was a release for Argyll.³⁴ He had been trapped in the role of Lord Privy Seal for too long and the initial attractions of an office with no formal administrative duties had long since worn off. He longed to have a powerful and useful role in cabinet and, in 1868 it seemed that his hard work and his long standing support of Gladstone had finally paid off. However, the India Office did not turn out to be the job that he had been expecting. Argyll was able to make some use of his position to encourage the British government to exert coercive pressure on Zanzibar in order to suppress the slave trade, however, this success was by no means straightforward.³⁵ The difficulties which the duke faced in negotiating a settlement on the issue were increased by considerable apathy and distrust from many of his colleagues at home. In essence, what Argyll and other notable supporters wanted was for Britain to take over the burden of the subsidy paid by Zanzibar to Muscat and to use this ‘carrot’ to encourage Zanzibar to take steps to suppress the slave trade there.³⁶ However, plans to do this were consistently hampered at home and abroad. The Sultan of Zanzibar proved to be somewhat unwilling to negotiate, and certain officials at home and in India were also unsupportive of attempts to delve once more into the

³⁴ Aspects of Indian policy during Argyll’s time at the India Office have been covered in some detail by various authors, see especially, B. Cuddy and T. Mansell, ‘Engineers for India : the Royal Indian Engineering College at Cooper’s Hill’, *History of Education*, 23 (1994), 107-23; J.L. Duthie, ‘Pressure from within: the “forward” group in the India Office during Gladstone’s first ministry’, *Journal of Asian History*, 15 (1981), 36–72 ; S.N. Singh, *The secretary of state for India and his council* (Delhi, 1962); D. Williams, *The India Office, 1858–1869* (Hoshiarpur, 1983).

³⁵ Parry, *Democracy and Religion*, 277-80; Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. II, 277-80; R.J. Gavin, ‘The Bartle Frere Mission to Zanzibar, 1873’, *The Historical Journal*, 5 (1962), 122-48, this article contains a wealth of detail and good discussion of the background, both at home and abroad, to the eventual settlement.

³⁶ Badger, an Arabic scholar, Kaye, political secretary at the India Office, Bartle Frere, the ex-governor of Bombay and David Livingstone, the noted explorer, were all supporters of this plan.

slave trade question.³⁷ The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lowe, stood firmly against plans for the subsidy to be in any way funded by the public purse. Argyll wrote to Gladstone on Christmas day, hoping no doubt that the season of goodwill would persuade his friend to support him in his battle with Lowe, but the Prime Minister deigned not to enter the fray.³⁸ The negotiations over the solution to the situation were prolonged and difficult and it was not until late in 1872 that an agreement at home allowed the mission of Bartle Frere to depart for Zanzibar. However, despite the ultimate success of this mission in achieving the aims which Argyll had supported, the duke had learnt a salutary lesson. He had been put in direct conflict with fellow officials on the Indian Council, with fellow Cabinet members, with both of his Viceroy, and had been forced again to battle against Gladstone's apathy on slavery.³⁹ In fact, the duke had found that his position at the India Office was hampered by so much administration and negotiation that his freedom to enact grand plans was severely curtailed. The success of the Zanzibar settlement was largely due (despite the claims in Argyll's memoirs) to other men and Argyll's role had been at best a small one. He had pushed through the agreement with the Council, but the actual plan itself and the arguments Argyll had used came largely from Bartle Frere and Argyll's secretary, Kaye.⁴⁰ His role as Secretary for India had not given him the freedom or the power that he had initially hoped he would command.

Thus, despite his new position, Argyll was not an altogether happy man. Gladstone's new political interest in the land question began to increasingly concern the duke who saw worrying possibilities for the future. By 1869, Argyll was beginning to stretch out feelers to his colleagues over his doubts regarding Gladstone and his policies – in one letter to Lord Clarendon he tentatively stated, 'Gladstone writes much engrossed

³⁷ The Viceroy, Mayo, was among those who regarded the plan as less than a priority, Argyll had little success in changing his mind, C[ambridge] U[niversity] L[ibrary], Add. MS 7490, Argyll to Mayo, 5 Mar. 1869.

³⁸ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44102, f.81-2, Argyll to Gladstone, 25 Dec. 1871. Gladstone did take some action in 1872 to interest foreign powers in suppression of the slave trade, but his attempt was half-hearted to say the least, see Gavin, 'The Bartle Frere Mission to Zanzibar', 138.

³⁹ Northbrook (who succeeded Mayo as Viceroy in 1872) was no more convinced than his predecessor of the merits of the Zanzibar-Muscat plan, BL, MSS Eur, IOR, Neg 4238, Argyll to Northbrook, 12 Oct. 1872. Argyll was also seriously displeased that Gladstone had ignored his objections to Northbrook and had appointed him Viceroy against Argyll's wishes. The duke had strongly desired that his old friend and confidante Lord Dufferin should replace Mayo, BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44102, f.116-9, Argyll to Gladstone, 13 Feb. 1872.

⁴⁰ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. II, 277-280; Gavin, 'The Bartle Frere Mission to Zanzibar', 135-42.

about Irish land – which is right – but I am nervous about his fervours on this subject.’⁴¹ and he wrote to Gladstone himself repeatedly advising him against his plans for reform, and even threatening to resign, and give up the India Office post, in 1869.⁴²

Argyll’s worries about Gladstone’s pre-occupation with the land question proved to be well founded. The Land Act of 1870 caused particular problems for the duke and will be discussed in a later chapter, however, it is worth emphasising here that Argyll only agreed to accept the relatively moderate terms of this bill in order to preserve party unity and with the hopes that there would be no further attempts made to legislate on the matter.⁴³ Despite his acquiescence, the duke was seriously concerned about the way that his party and his leader were proceeding and he warned Gladstone, in his typically forthright manner, that the government were taking dangerously radical steps and that by giving in to demands for change they were setting a dangerous precedent.⁴⁴ He was also angry that his more prominent role at the India Office was not resulting in any notable elevation in his standing. Indeed, Argyll had the misfortune to be at the India Office when land was a major issue there and was forced to swallow his own misgivings and to largely ignore his better judgement with regard to land reform in the subcontinent.⁴⁵

Alongside his troubles in the India office Argyll was also in the unenviable position of having been in charge of the Royal Commission on Scottish Education during the 1860s and having to try to push through a bill based on its findings.⁴⁶ Although a bill was introduced based upon the findings of the Argyll Report in 1869, it took another three years for any legislation to be passed. The problems which Argyll faced in pushing this bill through parliament were legion and his bitterness and resentment

⁴¹ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MSS.Clar.dep.c.500, folder 3, Argyll to Clarendon, 3 Dec. 1869.

⁴² BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44101, f.73-4, Argyll to Gladstone, 13 Oct. 1869; f. 81-3, 26 Nov. 1869; f. 84-7, 27 Nov. 1869; f.123-8, 6 Dec. 1869; Argyll’s threat to resign was largely motivated by the serious illness of his wife, but he was also clearly unhappy with the way that his party was progressing, see, BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44101, f.129-30, Argyll to Gladstone, 9 Dec. 1869.

⁴³ This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Eight; see also, E.D. Steele, ‘Ireland and the Empire in the 1860s: Imperial precedents for Gladstone’s first Irish Land Act’, *Historical Journal*, 11 (1968), 64-83.

⁴⁴ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44101, f.90-5, Argyll to Gladstone, 29 Nov. 1869.

⁴⁵ Argyll was extremely concerned that by accepting the Punjab Tenancy Act and Rent and Revenue Acts the government was extending different and more radical rights to Indian citizens than to the citizens of the United Kingdom. These difficulties are explored further in Chapter Eight.

⁴⁶ See Chapter Four.

towards some of his colleagues and opponents grew with each passing year. By the time the bill was finally passed, Argyll would have spent eight years working on Scottish Education and he received precious little praise or recognition from any of his colleagues for all his efforts. His input went relatively unnoticed and even Gladstone seems to have taken little interest in the laborious work that Argyll had carried out.⁴⁷

Argyll and the Liberals would soon be out of office, but he was now a very different Argyll to the one who had entered it.⁴⁸ He had become embittered about his lack of influence – particularly over Gladstone who he felt was embracing radical views with alacrity. After the Liberals defeat in February of 1874, Argyll wrote to his closest personal friend, Lord Dufferin, that,

I have told Gladstone that for some time my tie of attachment to the Liberal Party has been almost only the personal one of attachment to him and that I am not prepared to follow that party in several of the directions it seems inclined to take. I will not support secular education. I will not support the extension to Britain of the Exceptional Legislation adopted for Ireland. In short I mean to be free.⁴⁹

The opportunity to grab this freedom, however, was not quick to appear. For six long years Argyll continued to struggle on within the Liberal party – trying desperately to exert some restraining control over Gladstone and the ‘radicals’ within the party. The former ‘radical duke’ had come to see himself as the last thing that stood between the Liberal party and a descent into the dangerous tides of popular radicalism. Still, Argyll and Gladstone were not yet at each other’s throats in the way that they would later be. Their former good humour remained evident through most of the early

⁴⁷ On Indian matters as well as on the question of Scottish education Gladstone proved largely uninterested in Argyll’s point of view. The duke raised questions on these subjects repeatedly with him, but rarely got a satisfactory response, see particularly Argyll’s letters: BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44099, f.79-82, Argyll to Gladstone, 21 Sep. 1861; BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44101, Argyll to Gladstone, 23 Aug. 1869; Argyll to Gladstone, 11 Mar. 1870; BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44102, f.55-60, Argyll to Gladstone, 16 Sep. 1871.

⁴⁸ Gladstone and the Liberal party were defeated at the elections of 1874 and left office in February.

⁴⁹ PRONI, D1071/H/B/C/95, Argyll to Dufferin, 17 Mar. 1874.

1870s and Argyll even managed to make light of some of their disagreements. In one letter, the duke told Gladstone that,

When I got your last letter I went for solace to the Duchess and said, “here's a letter from Gladstone saying that I write too antagonistically”... “Tell him, with my compliments, that he might know that by this time” – that was all the comfort I got from her Grace.⁵⁰

But such light-heartedness would not last much longer. Their relationship suffered a severe blow in the mid 1870s over the question of Scottish Church Patronage. The duke was violently chastised by Gladstone for his support of the Conservative bill to abolish Patronage, however, Argyll simply ignored his old friend and supported the bill despite Gladstone's objections.⁵¹ A wedge was now firmly in place between the two men and worse was to come. Argyll began to suspect that Gladstone was actually considering disestablishment of the Church of Scotland. Argyll was implacably against this and wrote to Sir Roundell Palmer, telling him that members of the party, ‘I will not now consider myself under Gladstone's leadership, especially in ecclesiastical affairs.’⁵² As the 1870s drew to a close, Argyll's unhappiness continued to grow. By the final years of that decade, he could no longer keep his countenance, and his letters to Gladstone took on a somewhat unpleasant edge. He began increasingly to question Gladstone's ability to lead the party and, by August 1879 was informing his leader that, ‘I confess I think leaders should lead - and not say “we shall steer according to the wind”’; he followed this up later, when he told Gladstone that, ‘The language of saying “I will go as my party goes” or “I will go as the people go” seems to me wholly unworthy of any man calling himself a man. Surely there are subjects on which it is our duty - not merely to follow opinion - but to do what we can to form it’.⁵³ Despite this, when the Liberals returned to power in 1880, Argyll expected high office under his friend, but was to be disappointed. He wrote to Lord Dufferin that he had not bothered to petition Gladstone for a position as

⁵⁰ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44102, f.66-9, Argyll to Gladstone, 27 Sep. 1871.

⁵¹ For more discussion of Argyll and church patronage, see above, Chapter Four.

⁵² Argyll to Sir Roundell Palmer (later, Lord Selbourne), (no date, probably December 1874), as quoted in, Argyll, *Autobiography and memoirs*, Vol. II, 320-1. A larger extract from this letter is also quoted above in Chapter Four.

⁵³ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44104, f.65-7, Argyll to Gladstone, 27 Aug. 1879; BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44104, f.71-3, Argyll to Gladstone, 7 Sep. 1878.

he expected his friend to be able to distinguish him from the, 'great many self-assertors to be dealt with'⁵⁴, but in the end, it was these 'self-assertors' who Gladstone gathered round him and Argyll was relegated once again to the nominal office of Lord Privy Seal. He was exactly where he had started some thirty years before and was certainly not happy. Despite this slight, or perhaps because of it, Argyll refused to moderate his tone towards his leader. In what was certainly a lightly veiled attack on Gladstone himself, Argyll wrote to him,

I hate (I can use no lighter word) the dispositions I see in the Cabinet to sacrifice reason and principle to 'political effect' - an element no doubt, which must have its weight, but which when it becomes predominant, must give an irresistible impulse to the worst elements in political conduct.⁵⁵

Argyll told Dufferin that he longed to be out of the cabinet, but remained within it because of his 'certainty that Gladstone may be driven to extremes'.⁵⁶ Despite the two men's strained relationship, Argyll still felt that he had some influence over him. This may seem a remarkable leap of imagination on Argyll's part, but he continued to believe that his persuasive powers would eventually work and that Gladstone's personal respect for him would prevent him from pushing radical measures, and particularly Irish Land legislation, too far.

Gladstone was certainly concerned by the duke's unhappiness within the party, but Argyll's status was no longer what it had been. The duke was now being seen publicly as an anomaly within the party – and was becoming an embarrassing maverick to those who he served with. His outbursts about land and radicalism, in the press and in public were putting a serious strain on party unity, and he continually refused to back down.⁵⁷ Determined not to bow to proposals on Irish Land, Argyll resigned in 1881, which must have been something of a relief to many of his

⁵⁴ PRONI, D1071/H/B/C/95, Argyll to Dufferin, n.d. Apr. 1880.

⁵⁵ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44105, f.19-20, Argyll to Gladstone, 31 Mar. 1881.

⁵⁶ PRONI, D1071/H/B/C/95, Argyll to Dufferin, n.d. Jul. 1880.

⁵⁷ Argyll's earlier published works had given hints of his discomfort, see particularly his, 'Agricultural Holdings Act of 1875', *Contemporary Review*, 27 (1876), 497-521; 'Morality in politics', *Contemporary Review*, 30 (1877), 319-33. After his resignation, he went on to publish more strident attacks which will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

colleagues. Argyll simply could not face the idea of having to support the ‘Three F’s’ – fair rent, fixity of tenure and free sale – he told his son, the Marquis of Lorne, of his disappointment in Gladstone and his fears for the future: ‘Gladstone who opposes the 3Fs has persuaded himself by some wonderful ingenuity that this bill is not the 3Fs...I shall be free to resist what can yet be resisted although I fear that Gladstone will carry anything he chooses.’⁵⁸

Argyll was determined to finally be free. However, his decision to break the political connection with his colleagues and with Gladstone in particular proved a painful one to make. Despite his disgust with the path that his party was taking, Argyll experienced genuine sorrow at the severance. He wrote to Gladstone telling him that,

I can assure you that I have not decided [to resign] without trying to face the other course. But I cannot do so consistently with a sense of personal honour. There is an essential difference between submitting to political necessity as an individual, and defending as a Minister what one thinks to be mischievous, unnecessary and even unjust.⁵⁹

He later wrote more emotionally that, ‘again and again I have tried to ride at this fence with my eyes shut. Again and again I find myself recoiling from it – as a fence which I cannot take with a good conscience.’⁶⁰ Gladstone did try to persuade him to stay, but must have known that this was pointless in the face of the duke’s complete opposition to the Bill, and in the end settled for trying to bully Argyll into staying until after the Easter recess – when the Bill would be announced. He pulled out all the stops to try to prevent Argyll from leaving before the Irish bill came to the floor, getting Lord Granville, among others, to exert considerable pressure on Argyll to

⁵⁸ NLS, Acc. 9209/1, Argyll to Marquis of Lorne, 6 Apr. 1881; Argyll had made his feelings on the Bill very clear to his cabinet colleagues in their earlier discussions, good examples of his protests can be found in, PRO CAB 37/4/75, Argyll Memorandum, 22 Nov. 1880; PRO CAB 37/4/82, Argyll Memorandum, 14 Dec. 1880.

⁵⁹ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44105, f.19-20, Argyll to Gladstone, 31 Mar. 1881.

⁶⁰ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44105, f.42-5, Argyll to Gladstone, 5 Apr. 1881. The equestrian theme here is unusual for Argyll who, although fond of metaphors from nature, drew these more often from the creatures of the sea and the sky than from animals of the land!

wait.⁶¹ The duke was determined to leave immediately and was anxious to publicly show that he was in no way associated with the Bill. He told Gladstone that he could not contemplate exposing himself ‘without one word of explanation to the misrepresentations of the radical press during the Easter recess.’⁶² Gladstone countered this by appealing to the duke’s party allegiance and urged him not to break ranks. He told Argyll that he was becoming paranoid about the press and pleaded with him, ‘is it so very much to ask? Is there a conspiracy to misrepresent you during the Easter recess?’⁶³ But his efforts to delay the duke’s resignation were to prove unsuccessful. Granville reported to Gladstone that it was useless to prevail upon their old friend as he had ‘a passion for resignation now’⁶⁴ and also suspected that he planned to resign early so that he could spend the Easter recess speaking and writing against the bill – launching a pre-emptive strike as it were. Despite strong words from both men (words which were tantamount to threats) Argyll refused to be associated in any way with the bill and left anyway – going on, as Granville had feared, to pour out his rage to the public in general.⁶⁵ Gladstone told Granville sadly that when he had formed the government he had ‘great misgivings about [Argyll] and by no means was eager to press him as I expected something of this kind but he was then in more sanguine humour’ and that he had now, ‘hedged himself within a circle of notions and is quite unapproachable.’⁶⁶ Both men agreed that Argyll’s notions of getting much support from other politicians were laughable.

They were largely correct and the duke’s inability to attract support left him in the cold. The early promise of his career had evaporated, and he even began flirting with

⁶¹ See the series of notes and letters between Gladstone and Argyll, BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44105, f.16-48, between 29 Mar. 1881 and 6 Apr. 1881, where Gladstone does his best to persuade Argyll to stay until after Easter.

⁶² BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44105, f.31, Argyll to Gladstone, 1 Apr. 1881.

⁶³ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44105, f.59, Gladstone to Argyll, 1 Apr. 1881.

⁶⁴ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44173, f.31, Granville to Gladstone, undated but likely to have been 1-3 Apr. 1881.

⁶⁵ Argyll poured forth a torrent of publications putting forward his views of the Government’s policy on land. See, for example, his ‘New Irish Land Bill’, *Nineteenth Century*, 9 (1881), 880-905; *Crofts and farms in the Hebrides; being an account of the management of an island estate for 130 years*, (Edinburgh, 1883) ‘A Corrected Picture of the Highlands’, *Nineteenth Century*, 16 (1884), 681-701; ‘Land reformers’, *Contemporary Review*, 48 (1885), 470-79; ‘Land tenure in Scotland’, *Edinburgh Review*, (1885); ‘Capital and the improvement of Land’, *Nineteenth Century*, 18 (1885), 1003-10; ‘A Moral Land Law’, *Fortnightly Review*, 41 (1887), 764-84. These will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Eight.

⁶⁶ PRO, PRO 30/29/124, Gladstone to Granville, 5 Apr. 1881.

the possibility of joining the Conservatives.⁶⁷ However, despite the huge rift between Gladstone and Argyll, their relationship did not come to an end with the duke's resignation. This is worthy of comment. Argyll was stubborn and intractable and could hold a grudge with very little provocation. Gladstone, as Matthew has pointed out, was of a similar disposition, and indeed he points out that the resignation of other men had resulted in them being cut off from the privilege of Gladstone's correspondence.⁶⁸ Perhaps Argyll's high position in society prompted Gladstone to be more diplomatic, but it seems more likely that the strength of their friendship was the key factor in the preservation of their relationship. There seems to have been genuine sorrow between the two men over their parting and Gladstone wrote a long letter to Argyll the day after the Irish Bill was introduced to parliament, ending it by saying, 'I write this note, alas, beside your chair in the Cabinet Room – now vacant. God bless you in all things.'⁶⁹ Argyll replied the same day that, 'a very close political as well as personal connection has subsisted between us for some 29 years. The best part of that connection can never be broken - but even a crack in it I have not been able to think of without emotion. I really had no choice.'⁷⁰ Their relationship, rather amazingly, continued in many ways much as before – arguments and debates over the issues of the day, trips to each other's homes and enjoyment of each other's company. Although they would never again serve together in cabinet, their friendship survived the events of 1881 relatively intact.

Of course, with personalities like Argyll and Gladstone, further tensions could be expected and their correspondence certainly dropped off significantly during 1882 and 1883. But they did continue to converse; indeed, Argyll's new freedom from connections with the cabinet was actually valuable to his old friend as he was one of the men able to mediate between Gladstone and the Conservatives under Salisbury over the franchise question in the mid 1880s.⁷¹ Despite this co-operation, neither man was above saying a few spiteful words behind the other's back – or indeed directly to

⁶⁷ Contemporary newspapers contained much speculation that Argyll would join the Conservative party, the *Oban Times* in particular reported a number of times that such an event was imminent, *Oban Times*, 17 Nov. 1883, 4; *Oban Times*, 22 Mar. 1884, 4.

⁶⁸ Matthew, *Gladstone*, 446.

⁶⁹ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44105, f.59, Gladstone to Argyll, 8 Apr. 1881.

⁷⁰ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44105, f.60-1, Argyll to Gladstone, 8 Apr. 1881.

⁷¹ This is discussed in Chapter Five.

each other! Argyll wrote to Gladstone in 1885 that he was tired of Gladstone's attitude towards him and to others who opposed the government line, warning him.

Now on politics you write in private, and you speak in public, as if all who differ from your party must be either rogues or fools...has it come to this that we can't disagree with wholly new doctrines advocated by illiberals, without being denounced by you?...must we deal in these assumptions of superior intellect and wisdom at this moment?⁷²

and he warned Gladstone against any further 'slithering' as he termed it, away from true Liberal ideology – warning him that control of the party was slipping out of his hands,

The outside world...assumes that you are Dictator in your own Cabinet...but your amiability to colleagues...has enabled men playing their own game and sitting loose to former codes of honour, to take out of your hands (to a great extent) the formation of opinion...Chamberlain and Dilke...have treated your authority with contempt...and yet when you speak – all your “digs”...are directed not against these men or their opinions – but against those who wish to keep some independence of the motley crew enlisted under nothing but your name!⁷³

Understandably Gladstone was not overly impressed by this patronising advice and no doubt concurred with Granville that, in his opinion, 'Argyll has become with age, what Bright calls an old fossil.'⁷⁴ Some considerable time afterwards Argyll wrote privately to Dufferin saying that, 'Gladstone has become intolerable from his lies and quibbles. It is impossible to feel the smallest respect for him.'⁷⁵

Harmony certainly did not reign between the two men during the 1880s and early 1890s. When the questions of disestablishment of the Church of Scotland and particularly of Irish Home Rule emerged they became the basis for more argument

⁷² BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44106, f.38-44, Argyll to Gladstone, 9 Dec. 1885.

⁷³ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44105, f.60-3, Argyll to Gladstone, 18 Dec. 1885.

⁷⁴ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44179, f.27, Granville to Gladstone, 1 May 1886.

⁷⁵ PRONI, D1071/H/B C/95, Argyll to Dufferin, 12 Jan. 1891.

between them, but despite the heat of their exchanges, the two men never became so exasperated with one another that they stopped writing.⁷⁶ Perhaps old age and ill-health was beginning to take its toll on both of them. Argyll was certainly failing by the early 1890s. He wrote to his old colleague after a long illness that, 'I am gaining strength slowly but steadily. If I were stronger I would be on the stump every day and all day against you! But I have to be content with my pen.'⁷⁷ This was no idle threat and the duke poured forth a stream of publications arguing against Gladstone and Liberal party policy in general.⁷⁸

The topic of many of these attacks during the latter half of the 1880s was the controversial subject of Irish Home Rule. Argyll and Gladstone had already argued over the importance of binding political unions twenty years previously and had had to agree to disagree on the issue.⁷⁹ When forced once again to confront the issue of the union during the 1880s the two men's circumstances were very different and their disagreements on the issue could not be settled so amicably. Argyll was still a member of the Liberal party (although not in cabinet) and Gladstone was, in late 1885, temporarily out of office. Gladstone's mind had turned towards the difficult subject of Home Rule for Ireland and he set about 'educating' his party, through historical as well as contemporary evidence.⁸⁰ Argyll's implacable opposition towards Home Rule under any circumstances prompted him to write to Gladstone in December of 1885, cautioning him against relying upon Burke's view of the historical situation and trying to emphasise the difference he perceived between Ireland and the other British colonies. Ireland was 'less fit for self government than the colonies

⁷⁶ Further discussion of Argyll's role in the campaign to avert disestablishment of the Church of Scotland can be found in Chapter Four.

⁷⁷ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44106, f.213-6, Argyll to Gladstone, 14 Nov. 1890.

⁷⁸ The duke was particularly busy with his pen during the last two decades of the century. Two of his most notable attacks upon Liberalism are seen in, George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, *The New British Constitution and its Master Builders*, (Edinburgh, 1888); George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, 'A Reply to our Appellant', *Contemporary Review*, 55 (1889), 1-23. Both of these will be discussed further below.

⁷⁹ See Chapter Five above, 119-22.

⁸⁰ Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*, 478-9; There are numerous sources for investigating Gladstone and Irish Home Rule. In addition to his biographies there are a number of other accessible accounts which all contain relevant information, see for example, D.A. Hamer, 'The Irish question and Liberal politics, 1886-94', *Historical Journal*, 12 (1969), 511-32; T.A. Jenkins, 'The Irish question and late Victorian politics', *Modern History Review*, 9 (1997), 6-9; I. Machin, 'An intractable problem? Gladstone and Irish Home Rule 1880-1886', *Journal of Liberal Democrat History*, 33 (2001), 16-9; A. O'Day, 'Gladstone and Irish nationalism: achievement and reputation', in D.W. Bebbington and R. Swift (eds.), *Gladstone centenary essays*. (Liverpool, 2000), 163-83; M. Roberts, 'Gladstone and the Irish question', *Journal of Liberal Democrat History*, 26 (2000), 3-10.

were' he claimed, and further warned his old friend that there was 'imminent danger to the colonies' if any sort of home rule legislation was passed for Ireland.⁸¹

The 1880s saw Argyll the unionist step forward and develop all of the arguments he had earlier used when defending the North in the American Civil War. This cause, perhaps even more than the land question, was the one which was closest to the duke's heart and was the one to which he would devote the rest of his life. His pride and belief in the constitution and his vehement ideological opposition to any steps towards disunion, made this question one of paramount importance to him. The Argyll family had, as the duke was so keen to demonstrate at any opportunity, been consistently staunch defenders of the British state.⁸² Closer to the duke in time and in importance was the fact that his own father had fought against the 'rebels' in Ireland in 1798.⁸³ After dragging the name of Argyll back into the political spotlight after years in the wilderness, the duke was adamant that the family cause would not again be eroded during his lifetime. He may have recently lost his cabinet position and thus some of his prominence, but it must have been a matter of principle that Britain should not disintegrate during his guardianship of the Argyll name. Home Rule and all of its associated evils had to be averted and the duke thus, once more, returned to the platform and began a sustained campaign to oppose Gladstone.

He began his assault with warnings to his former colleague about the course he was about to adopt. He told Gladstone that, 'we are passing under the yoke of Parnell and of creatures like Jesse Collings' and, when this approach failed, tried to ridicule the whole project,

The only temptation I feel to Home Rule is the temptation of getting rid of the Parnellites at Westminster. And if experiments in the govt of mankind were a legitimate amusement it would be most entertaining to see what follies an Irish parliament would indulge in...all this would be most amusing...but one can't indulge in such play with a good conscience at least I can't...it is with me a matter of personal honour not to hand over

⁸¹ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44106, f.79-84, Argyll to Gladstone, 25 Dec. 1885.

⁸² See Chapter Two for more on Argyll's pride in his family history.

⁸³ For more on the importance of family history to the duke, see Chapter Two.

Ireland to their [Parnell and his followers] sway, merely to get rid of a bad crew at Westminster, or to look upon an experiment which will involve the liberty and property of our fellow countrymen.⁸⁴

He chastised Gladstone for his turnaround from denouncing Parnell in 1882 to now offering him power and influence. He poured out his exasperation in the press and in public, writing repeatedly to *The Times* deprecating the attempts to build a new constitution.⁸⁵ He developed this theme further in a pamphlet entitled *The New British Constitution and its Master Builders* and made clear his objections to this course of action in a speech to the House of Lords,

The Constitution of this country, my Lords, has not been made: it has grown. During eight hundred or nine hundred years, by additions here and additions there, by developments here and developments there, from very small beginnings it has been built up into the glorious structure we now have...none of our statesmen are, or have been accustomed to, or are capable of, thinking out and drawing up a new Constitution...[Gladstone's attempt] was an unworkable Constitution; it was a paper Constitution; it was a Constitution made out of pasteboard, incapable of resisting the tremendous pressure of human passions which would have been brought to bear on it.⁸⁶

Thus, not only did the duke disagree with the principle of Home Rule for Ireland, he also thought that it was impossible to enact such a separation. The history of the two nations was so closely tied together and their future prosperity depended so much upon some form of mutual co-operation that Argyll could not perceive how any constitution which brought about Home Rule could be formed which would not damage one party or the other.

⁸⁴ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44106, f.88, Argyll to Gladstone, 29 Jan. 1886; BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44106, f.94-7, Argyll to Gladstone, 25 Apr. 1886.

⁸⁵ see particularly, *The Times*, 29 Dec. 1885, 6; *The Times*, 14 Jun. 1886, 13.

⁸⁶ Argyll, *The New British Constitution and its Master Builders*; PD, 3rd Series, vol. 328, col. 1053, 12 Jul. 1888.

The duke continued his assault on the policy of Home Rule for Ireland at public meetings, in the press, in parliament and through his voluminous publications and his contributions helped to steady the nerves of many of his new Liberal Unionist allies. The Duke of Bedford congratulated Argyll on his efforts and told him that, ‘I was looking about for a leader when you wrote’, Goschen also appreciated Argyll’s efforts and wrote to say, ‘I admire your letter to *The Times* immensely, and agree with every word of it.’⁸⁷ Lord Salisbury too, wrote to the duke, telling him that, ‘I read with great satisfaction your proceedings at Glasgow, which seem to have been in every way most successful and encouraging.’⁸⁸ As the debates over Home Rule raged on it seemed that there might be some hopes of a resurgence in the duke’s career. His name was one of those mentioned as a possible leader of a coalition of Conservatives and Liberal Unionists, however, although the Queen seems briefly to have considered asking him to form a government in July 1886, these plans were quickly dropped.⁸⁹ The duke took this in his stride however, and continued his assault upon the government. The House of Lords, of course, stood firmly against the proposals for Home Rule and it was in the debates in that House that Argyll’s most passionate speeches were made. His powerful oratory can be seen to have been at its very best in these final years of his life as he rallied the House to oppose Gladstone. In one memorable speech in 1893 he told his fellow peers,

My Lords, do not let us think that tonight we are fighting for the last time in a losing battle. I believe that we are winning in a great campaign. I believe that the future is on our side. Ours are not the time when great empires are being broken up into petty principalities. Ours is the era, ours is the century of Union, of strength of Union, and I believe that our strength will lie in the maintenance of this Union...We wish, my Lords,

⁸⁷ The Duke of Bedford to Argyll, (undated letter), as quoted in Argyll, *Autobiography & Memoirs*, Vol. II, 417; Goschen to Argyll, 31 Dec. 1885, as quoted in Argyll *Autobiography & Memoirs*, Vol. II, 417. Goschen and Bedford both broke ranks with Gladstone over Home Rule in 1886 and became Unionists, although Goschen was by far the more prominent and active of the two, see E. M. Lloyd Thomas Seccombe, ‘Russell, Lord George William (1790-1846)’, rev. James Falkner, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, 2004); T.J. Spinner, ‘Goschen, George Joachim, first Viscount Goschen (1831-1907)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, 2004); T.J. Spinner, *George Joachim Goschen: the transformation of a Victorian Liberal*, (Cambridge, 1973).

⁸⁸ Salisbury to Argyll, 9 Nov. 1893, as quoted in Argyll, *Autobiography & Memoirs*, Vol. II, 446.

⁸⁹ H.C.G. Matthew, ‘Campbell, George Douglas, eighth duke of Argyll in the peerage of Scotland, and first duke of Argyll in the peerage of the United Kingdom (1823-1900)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, 2004).

for a Union of hearts; we wish for a Union of interests; we wish for nothing more or nothing less. We desire and are determined that this Union shall be maintained – not a nominal Union, not a Union under the Crown merely, but a Union of Parliaments, a Union of Executives, a Union of the judiciary, a Union of one system of just and equal laws.⁹⁰

Argyll was at the forefront of the attempt to prevent Home Rule from being enacted and was successful in opposing it during his career, however, he had been incorrect in his analysis as outlined above: the future was not on his side and the Irish Question did not go away. Indeed, the duke was aware during the final years of his life that the Lords' continued resistance to the proposals was threatening their very existence. He had been in this position before, in the 1880s when opposition to Parliamentary Reform had threatened to destroy the public's perception of the House of Lords.⁹¹ At that time Argyll had urged the House to support the franchise extension and preserve their own position, however, he could not do this in the case of Home Rule. One reason for this was that he saw the worrying possibilities, not just for Ireland, but for his own nation if the Bills were ever enacted. As he had earlier preached to his largely receptive audience in the Lords, Scotland was not Ireland and certainly did not need its place in the Union tampered with by politicians. Scotland, he argued, did not even require a Secretary of State because although,

Lord Advocates might not always, owing to their private practice, be as accessible to Scotch members as might be wished; but this did not render it necessary to appoint a Chief Secretary for Scotland similar to the Chief Secretary for Ireland...when questions of general policy arose...there was no necessity for measures of that kind to be entrusted to any new officer, as any members of the government connected with the country naturally directed attention to them. A Chief Secretary would not have enough proper business to occupy his time, and he would be likely to fill it up by meddling with things which he had better leave alone.⁹²

⁹⁰ PD, 4th Series, vol. 17, cols. 201-224, 6 Sep. 1893.

⁹¹ see Chapter Five.

⁹² PD, 3rd Series, vol. 201, cols. 1039-1040, 20 May 1870.

The duke returned to these arguments in the 1890s and specifically highlighted the dangers of Home Rule. He reinforced the classic argument of Scotland's beneficial position as a result of the Union and told his fellow peers that,

The moment the Act of Union was passed the prosperity of Scotland began. Why should Scotland undergo the danger and risk of interfering with her present happy condition under the Union? The Imperial Parliament has hitherto been responsive in a lively manner to the desires of the Scottish people expressed through their Representatives.⁹³

Argyll had seen himself, especially during the height of his career, as precisely the type of representative cabinet member to whom the government of Scotland could be safely entrusted. He had consistently played a large part in 'Scottish' debates in the House of Lords and had, from an early date, pushed for recognition of what he saw as particularly Scottish problems. In various debates throughout his time in the House of Lords, the duke attempted to get Scotland either included in English Bills or addressed in separate legislation, for example in 1848 he had stated that he,

could not allow the second reading of the [Public Health] Bill to pass without expressing his anxious and earnest hope that the attention of the government would be directed to extending the benefits of this measure to the country with which he was most immediately connected. He would venture to say that the great cities of Scotland – Glasgow and Edinburgh – were perhaps in a worse condition with regard to sanitary reform than any cities in England.⁹⁴

Argyll also used his experience of what he saw as good in Scottish law to try to influence the course of 'English' legislation. In the debates upon the law of Divorce, Argyll was keen to advocate a system for England which mirrored the Scottish example, which he claimed was far more liberal and which, 'put the woman on the same equality as the man in respect to matters of divorce.'⁹⁵ This pride in Scottish

⁹³ PD, 4th Series, vol. 14, col. 521, 30 Jun. 1893.

⁹⁴ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 99, cols. 1408-1409, 30 Jun. 1848.

⁹⁵ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 147, col. 2044, 24 Aug. 1857. Argyll was generally in favour of an extension of women's rights and, although he did little to pursue the cause, he guardedly said in the House of Lords

institutions can also be detected in Argyll's attitude towards the question of education which consumed so much of his time during the late 1860s and early 1870s and in his support for the abolition of Church Patronage, which he saw as a way of strengthening the role of the Established Church of Scotland.⁹⁶ However, despite this pride and the strong institutional nationalism which he frequently displayed, Argyll was certain that the future prosperity of his country ultimately lay within the British Union. In an impassioned plea to the House of Lords, the duke said that,

There is a great deal in national sentiment; no one has it stronger than I have. I am proud of Scotland's position as an integral part of the British Empire, and I would never for a moment consent to sacrifice any part of the position of the Scottish Members in the Imperial Parliament for the sake of a base copy and imitation of Home Rule such as that which is clamoured for by a disloyal faction in Ireland, which desires to break up the integrity of the British Empire.⁹⁷

The duke's ultimate fear with regard to Home Rule for Ireland was that centuries of progress under the Union would disintegrate. Coupled with this was a fear that the Empire as a whole, and Scotland in particular, would be dragged down the same path if the Home Rule Bills were ever passed. Implicit (and often explicit) in all of his statements on Home Rule and related issues is the fear that Scotland could become another Ireland and that if a few measures were allowed to slip through parliament, home rule could creep up on them and lead to an immeasurably damaging separation. The Highlands and Islands of Scotland had previously been legislated for upon similar lines as Ireland with regard tocrofting legislation – the duke's fear was that under Gladstone and his 'illiberals' this precedent would again apply and that his former friend and ally was now bent on a course which would destroy everything which had made Britain great.⁹⁸

that, 'during recent years we have come to have new ideas in respect to the powers and qualifications and rights of women', PD, 3rd Series, vol. 327, col. 947, 22 Jun. 1888. The duke's daughter, Frances Balfour (who seems to have inherited more of her father's oratory skills and early reforming zeal than any of his other children) was a notable activist for the cause and is an individual who deserves further study.

⁹⁶ For more on the Scottish education question and on Church Patronage, see Chapter Four.

⁹⁷ PD, 4th Series, vol. 14, col. 521, 30 Jun. 1893.

⁹⁸ For more on the duke's response to land reform in Scotland and Ireland see Chapter Eight.

Argyll expended much effort in broadcasting his views as to the extent to which Gladstone's own opinions had changed on the issue, and devoted a large section of one of his final publications to this purpose. He told his readers of how,

When, in 1885, Mr. Gladstone suddenly threw himself with passion into a cause which up to that date he had often denounced in the strongest language, he told us to go back to our books and to read history – just as if either we, or himself, had not read the history of Ireland – only too much and too often, - in the past and in the experience of our own time. Still, it was not bad advice. Every hour spent in the study of Irish history has only confirmed me in the opinions which we had held before, – and of which Mr. Gladstone was a foremost exponent until he was confronted by a large addition to the number of Irish members. Surrender to a supposed political necessity is always conceivable. But the passionate espousal of a whole code of doctrines, and opinions, uniformly before rejected, is inconceivable to any man who respects his own intellectual integrity. Submission to the inevitable is one thing: acceptance of the untrue is quite another thing.⁹⁹

The controversy over Irish Home Rule would divide the duke and Gladstone perhaps more than any other issue during their lifetimes. Argyll had, by the 1880s, fought with his former friend over land reform, religion, and numerous other matters, but the issue of the Union was the one which provoked some of the most outspoken attacks from both men. The American Civil War had highlighted the differences between Argyll and Gladstone's respective views on the issue, and the seeds of the resulting struggles in the 1880s can easily be observed in their arguments during the 1860s.

Despite Argyll's continuing problems with aspects of Liberal party policy, there were issues which reunited him with some of his former colleagues. Argyll and Gladstone came together once more in 1895 to speak out against the Turkish atrocities in Armenia.¹⁰⁰ This cause united the two men in support of an issue in which they had

⁹⁹ Argyll, *Irish Nationalism: An Appeal to History*, 264-5.

¹⁰⁰ Argyll was particularly happy to be reunited with Gladstone on this issue, see BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44106, f.292-5, Argyll to Gladstone, 18 Apr. 1895; f.296-7, 6 May 1895; R. Douglas, 'Britain

been involved for some considerable time. The ramifications of the Crimean War had been very different to that which either man would have desired. Their innate suspicion of Turkey had not been quelled by what one author has termed the ‘spiral of maladministration, corruption, oppression, and insurrection’ that had characterised the government of that country since the 1850s.¹⁰¹ Argyll had, during the 1860s, raised his concerns over affairs in the region and had spoken in strong terms of his horror over the Cretan insurrection and the massacres there in 1867.¹⁰² Despite a lack of success in exciting any significant public support over this issue, the duke remained committed to the cause and, during the 1870s, became heavily involved in publicising the Bulgarian atrocities. In this endeavour he was joined by Gladstone whose influential pamphlet, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, was published at the same time as Argyll’s *What the Turks are, and how We have been Helping Them*.¹⁰³ Both men argued for essentially the same things: namely removal of Turkish government from Bulgaria and for a less pro-Turkish attitude from the British Foreign Office. Gladstone stated this clearly in his plea that the people of Britain should,

insist that our government which has been working in one direction shall work in the other, and shall apply all its vigour to concur with other states of Europe in obtaining the extinction of the Turkish executive power in Bulgaria. Let the Turks now carry away their abuses in the only possible manner, namely by carrying off themselves.¹⁰⁴

The duke echoed these statements in his *What the Turks are...* which had originally been a speech given in Glasgow at a meeting where Argyll had moved the first resolution,

and the Armenian Question, 1894-97’, *Historical Journal*, 19 (1976), 113-33; The Armenian issue brought together men from across the political spectrum and placed Argyll alongside such radicals as G.B. Clark the former Crofter M.P. and Labour candidate.

¹⁰¹ R.T. Shannon, *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation of 1876*, (London, 1963), 17.

¹⁰² PD, 3rd series, vol. 185, cols. 1512-1544; Argyll published parts of this speech during the 1870s—George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, *Conduct of the Foreign Office During the Insurrection in Crete in 1867*, (Glasgow, 1876).

¹⁰³ W.E. Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, (1876); George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, *What the Turks are, and how We have been Helping Them*, (Glasgow, 1876).

¹⁰⁴ Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, 18.

that this meeting of citizens of Glasgow regards with horror and indignation the atrocities perpetrated by the Turks on the inhabitants of Bulgaria and of the other provinces, and denounces the Ottoman Government for allowing such outrages on humanity, and for not punishing the responsible agents.¹⁰⁵

Along with Gladstone, however, the duke's 'horror and indignation' extended further than the Turkish Government. It extended to the British Government, and indeed to the other rulers of the other European countries who, with the exception of Russia, were to be held at least partially responsible in the duke's eyes for the horrors which occurred. Looking back on the issue some twenty years later, Argyll's attitude had not softened and he attempted to remind his readers what Britain had done, he expressed his opinion that,

although we knew that the insurgents had frightful grievances, and that they demanded nothing more than the most elementary benefits of a civilized government; although we knew that the Turks were, as usual, committing against them acts of perfidy and deeds of butchery, we actually implored the Porte to hasten to put down the insurrection with their own forces, so as to prevent it from being made the subject of foreign intervention...we ought to have remembered that the Turks have only one way of dealing with all revolts against their own misgovernment, and that is by raising irregular troops, the greatest ruffians in their dominions, and by allowing and encouraging them to butcher men, women and children as the sign and pledge of victory.¹⁰⁶

Both men, however, were fighting against the Government and British public opinion. Gladstone encountered the opposition which his opinions raised at first hand when, in February of 1878, a stone-throwing crowd broke some of the windows of his London

¹⁰⁵ *The Times*, 5 Oct. 1876, 10.

¹⁰⁶ George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, *Our Responsibilities for Turkey: Facts and Memories of Forty Years*, (London, 1896). This pamphlet has recently (2003) been reissued in paperback by Sterndale Classics as part of their series on the history of the Ottoman Empire. The above passage can be found on page 26 of this new edition.

home.¹⁰⁷ Argyll was not the victim of such physical attacks, however, he was not spared from his share of personal animosity. The *Oban Times* covered the duke's Glasgow speech, but was unenthusiastic about his standpoint and accused him of hypocrisy in attacking the Government when he and his fellow 'Crimean cabinet veterans' were as guilty in bringing about the situation as Lord Derby. It was claimed that,

as an exponent of political tenets, the duke of Argyll does not, perhaps, hold a very high place. In politics, as in science, whatever views he may hold are always subservient to preconceived dogmas. To be a Whig and a Presbyterian are, perhaps, foundation enough in His Grace's eyes to judge of the whole world besides. That neither Whig nor Presbyterian entitles him to any special horror over the Turks' brutalities he very well knows, but the Duke cannot avoid regarding the whole surroundings of the Eastern Question from his own little pedestal.¹⁰⁸

Despite such a reception, the duke refused to moderate his language. In an impassioned speech to the House of Lords he further denounced the weak action of the Government and responded to Disraeli's taunting of the opposition as the 'peace at any price' party,

I say you will have no peace in Europe, and you ought to have no peace in Europe, until the well-being of the Christian subjects of the Porte has been secured by the united action of the European Powers. And if you have sent one of your most distinguished Members to Constantinople, declaring beforehand your guns to be loaded with blank cartridge, I say you might just as well have sat still, twiddling your thumbs as you did for three months before...there are people who desire 'peace at any price', but it is a price to be paid by others and not by themselves. 'Anything for a quiet life': but the quietness of life is to be for themselves and not for others. That is a feeling of utter selfishness...if you have the chance of preserving peace, or of limiting war to one locality or for any definite purpose, for

¹⁰⁷ Partridge, *Gladstone*, 160.

¹⁰⁸ *Oban Times*, 23 Sep. 1876, 4.

Heaven's sake re-establish your European concord, and do not be so foolish and so weak as to say, 'We shall never fight; we shall never force our will on the Turks.' This course is one of utter fatuity; and my sincere belief is that sooner or later such a policy will end in a disastrous war...¹⁰⁹

Despite such warnings and despite continued agitation from the duke, Gladstone, and other supporters, they were to be defeated. As A.J.P. Taylor so succinctly put it, 'the isolationists triumphed...Great Britain did not join Russia in liberating the Bulgarians; nor did she go to war for the integrity of the Ottoman empire.'¹¹⁰ What Britain did do as far as Argyll was concerned was, through the Treaty of Berlin, to improperly insert themselves and the rest of Europe into the situation after the Russian defeat of Turkey. As he told a public meeting on the subject of Armenia some twenty years later,

At this moment our British Government intervened, and said: 'You shall not have this treaty [the Treaty of San Stefano]. It is true that you overcame the Turks; you have wrung from them this treaty; but we say you shall not have it. We will take it out of your hands, and insist that Turkey shall give these promises to all of us which you intended should be given to you alone.' That was our attitude at the time. There again, we saved Turkey, and gave her a new lease of life, restored her power, and that, if there were not a single word of treaty, imposed upon us a solemn obligation to defend the Christians of Turkey...I am sorry to say that we have never fulfilled our part of the obligation to the Christians of Turkey.¹¹¹

Thus, as the lives of both the duke of Argyll and W.E. Gladstone drew to a close, they were once again united by the continuing legacy of the Crimean War which had divided them so soon after they had first met. Their unity was certainly not universal, and indeed the two men differed even in their opinions on how best to tackle the 'Turkish problem', but what is remarkable is the joy with which both men met the

¹⁰⁹ PD, 3rd Series, Vol. 232, cols. 44-45.

¹¹⁰ A.J.P. Taylor, *The Troublemakers: Dissent over Foreign Policy, 1792-1939*, (London, 1957), 84.

¹¹¹ *The Times*, 10 May 1895.

prospect of uniting their efforts one last time. Gladstone entrusted Argyll to deliver a statement on his behalf at the public meeting in St. James Hall, London, and Argyll told Gladstone 'it is a great pleasure to me to be once more associated with you in such a matter - in which we were colleagues some 43 years ago!'¹¹² The strength of their friendship had endured and, when Gladstone died in 1898 it was ill-health rather than ill-will which prevented the duke from taking his place as one of his old friend's pall-bearers.¹¹³ Through all the times of the arguments and the agreements they continued to dine together and visit each other, much to the horror of Mrs Gladstone who was occasionally driven from the room by the ferocity of the rows between the two men, and up to the last years of their lives they continued to thrive on the heated and passionate debates that had characterised their relationship.¹¹⁴

By the time of Gladstone's death in 1898, the two men had known each other for almost fifty years and they had corresponded (whether in argument or agreement) on almost every political issue of the second half of the nineteenth century. During this time, the two men's careers had followed very different paths. Argyll's early promise had disappeared and he was, at the end of the nineteenth century, far from the power and influence that he had once hoped for. Gladstone's early troubles, however, had been overcome and his fame has continued long after his death. Gladstone came to shape later nineteenth century Liberalism and by examining Argyll's relationship with him it has been possible to identify the early conflicts and crises between the two men which would ultimately lead to Argyll's departure from cabinet office and his dislocation from Liberal party politics in general in the 1880s. The duke has previously been presented, even in most biographies of Gladstone, as a figure of minor importance – whose only noteworthy acts were his resignation and his

¹¹² BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44106, f.296-7, Argyll to Gladstone, 6 May 1895; Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. II, 469-71.

¹¹³ Matthew, 'Campbell, George Douglas, eighth duke of Argyll', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; That their relationship had improved between Argyll's resignation and Gladstone's death is perhaps best illustrated by comparing this incidence with his refusal to be part of a ceremony at the unveiling of a statue to Gladstone in 1882, [Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bryce MSS 46, Argyll to James Bryce, 4 and 5 May 1882] I am indebted to Ewen Cameron for drawing my attention to these letters.

¹¹⁴ See, BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. 44106, f.154-6, Argyll to Gladstone, 1 Aug. 1887, where Argyll invites Gladstone to visit saying that, 'I don't want to get upon politics at all - so Mrs Gladstone need not be afraid of such a row as drove her out of the room last time you were here!'

opposition to Liberal policy on the land question.¹¹⁵ This chapter has demonstrated that the eighth duke of Argyll was a more complex and a more important figure than that. The ‘radical duke’ who had supported the abolition of slavery in the 1850s and 1860s had become, in the popular mind at least, reactionary, backward-looking and rather ineffectual by the 1880s.¹¹⁶ However, this impression is, of course, too simplistic. Argyll’s eventual resignation has often been presented as being solely motivated by his feelings as a landowner, however, as this chapter has demonstrated, his problems with Gladstone and Liberalism in general had been in evidence for some considerable time before 1881. The differences between Argyll and Gladstone over the issue of unionism had been apparent since the time of the American Civil War; problems over religious questions had haunted them through the 1870s; and, even before the land question re-emerged in the 1880s, serious cracks were showing in their relationship. Of course, the land question was a key issue for Argyll, but the purpose of this chapter has been to consider the context of his actions in the latter part of his career.¹¹⁷ In so doing it has become abundantly clear that the accounts given of Argyll in the majority of the historiography are extremely narrow and neglect to identify any issue other than ‘the land’ as a motivation for his later resignation. By studying the duke’s career as a whole, it has been possible to see the gradual decline in his importance within the party, his influence over Gladstone and his general happiness as a member of the cabinet. The ‘land question’ was undoubtedly the catalyst for Argyll’s resignation, and his vociferous defence of landowners will be dealt with in Chapter Eight, but his discontent with Liberal party policy and with Gladstone in particular went beyond this one issue. It would be the ‘land question’ that finally forced the duke from cabinet, but in reality he had been an unsettled and unhappy figure within his party for some considerable time. Once freed from the restrictions of cabinet duty, Argyll was able to truly speak his mind and would turn his attention more fully to attacking the ‘fallacies’ which he perceived as being inherent in Liberal party policy on a variety of issues: among them disestablishment

¹¹⁵ Argyll gets little prominence in most of the modern accounts of Gladstone’s life. His role is dealt with in some more detail than most in, Matthew, *Gladstone, 1809-1898*. However, even in this work he appears only occasionally and is most often mentioned in connection with the ‘land question’.

¹¹⁶ Perhaps one of the best illustrations of this can be found in Argyll’s depiction in *Punch* at the time of the debates on the Irish Land Bill where he is depicted as an ineffectual and comic figure raging impotently against Gladstone and his colleagues.

¹¹⁷ The duke’s responses to the ‘land question’ are dealt with in depth in Chapter Eight

of the Scottish Church and Home Rule for Ireland.¹¹⁸ However, it would be on the issue of land legislation that the duke would make his most sustained assaults and some of the arguments that he developed for use in these attacks would be, as shall be seen in the following chapter, drawn from unexpected sources.

¹¹⁸ See Chapter Four for discussion of Scottish Disestablishment and above, 147-54, for Argyll's role in the battle to prevent Irish Home Rule.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SURVIVAL OF THE UNFITTEST

The appearance of views of society constructed out of an engagement with certain kinds of evolutionary analysis constitutes a division between the later Victorian period and what had gone before at least as significant as the movement towards electoral democracy or the development of the party system.¹

The 8th Duke of Argyll had been intimately involved in both the ‘movement towards electoral democracy’ and the ‘development of the party system’ and it should hardly come as a surprise that this polymath was also engaged in the third of Hoppen’s later Victorian pursuits – interest in evolutionary theory. As a member of the social and political elite in Britain, the duke was not unusual in his desire to engage with this debate, but what is perhaps somewhat surprising is the amount of time and effort he put into countering some of the arguments of the ‘Darwinian’ school of thought. From the 1860s until just before his death in 1900, Argyll poured forth a torrent of articles, letters, speeches and books which stated his case regarding the origin of life on earth.² For Argyll this crusade was a personal one, however, as we shall see, it also became intrinsically entwined with his political life and came to play a large role in his justification of his actions as a landowner.

In contrast to many other contributors to the debate, Argyll was not regarded as a serious man of science. His entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* stated rather generously that, ‘a prominent public man, immersed in politics and full of the cares of a great estate, who finds his recreation in scientific inquiry, must be counted among the beneficent influences of his time’; however, it must be acknowledged that

¹ Hoppen, *The Mid Victorian Generation*, 472.

² His most notable journal contributions are to the *Contemporary Review*, *Nineteenth Century* and *Nature*. In addition to this he published four books which were in whole or in part devoted to the subject; *The Reign of Law* (London, 1866), *Primeval Man* (London, 1868), *The Unity of Nature* (London, 1884), and *Organic Evolution Cross-Examined* (London, 1898). *The Unity of Nature* was initially published in serial form in the *Contemporary Review* and was slightly revised later when it appeared in book form. I have referenced the original *Contemporary Review* version in this thesis.

in most branches of science, Argyll was little more than an interested amateur.³ More recently the duke's contributions have been less sympathetically portrayed. H.C.G. Matthew termed his writings on science as being, 'characterized by a confidence which was impatient of understanding other opinions and arguments. His scientific writings, especially, became intemperate, relying increasingly on point scoring.'⁴ His style of writing and his increasing intolerance for others' theories would pose a serious problem for the duke as his critics were later able to dismiss him as an uninformed observer, or worse as a meddler whose only interest was in defending religious scripture and orthodoxy. However, both criticisms were, as shall be seen, somewhat open to question. In contrast to these negative portrayals, the 8th duke's early work on geology does seem to have been of some value and it seems to have been this, along with his early fascination with the study of nature, which led him to feel that he was more than qualified to take an active part in the evolutionary debate.⁵

Argyll's interest in this debate did not emerge from a mere desire to combat 'Darwinism'. Much of his solitary youth had been spent in the study of ornithology and his mind had been engaged upon the wonders of nature from an early age. Most interestingly, his observations of nature had frequently coincided with more spiritual occurrences – supernatural perhaps – which impressed upon him the presence of some 'other' force working alongside the natural world. Two examples of this from his youth should suffice to give an illustration of the workings of his mind. His study of birds, he recorded in his memoirs, had been for many years thwarted by the absence of one particular species which he longed to observe – the Redstart. As he later recorded,

It was in connection with this constant quest for missing birds that I had my first experience of those curious coincidences between certain vivid impressions of the mind and corresponding outward occurrences, which

³ *Dictionary of National Biography*, Supplement, 391.

⁴ Matthew, 'Campbell, George Douglas', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁵ His paper regarding the geology of the Island of Mull, which was given before the Geological Society in 1851, seems to have won him a degree of acclaim in geological circles and his work subsequently influenced much of the research on Tertiary volcanic actions. Two papers were published in the 1850s on this subject, the earliest was, 'On a fossiliferous deposit underlying basalt in the island of Mull', *British Association Report*, 2 (1850), 70-1, and the latter was a reprint of his speech to the Geological Society, 'On tertiary leaf beds in the Isle of Mull', *Geological Society Journal*, 2 (1851), 89-103.

few people pass through life without encountering occasionally, and which always strike them as mysterious, suggesting as they do some channels of connection between the internal and the external world which in their nature are unrecognised and unknown.

One day, when engaged in the study of 'Latin grammar, or some other horror of the like kind', the young boy was overcome with the image, idea and the name of the Redstart and, upon looking out of his schoolroom window, he claimed to have observed the bird sitting directly in front of the house.⁶

Another, more powerful instance of the same phenomenon occurred while Argyll was still a youth. As has already been outlined in Chapter Two, when Argyll was just fourteen years of age, his elder brother, John, had suddenly died. The shock of his passing had affected the young Argyll and, more particularly the boys' father, severely. Argyll recorded in his memoirs that he had had no expectation that the illness from which both boys suffered could take such a serious turn and his surprise at his brother's sudden demise was quickly replaced by a realisation of his own mortality. The days immediately after his brother's death were dark ones indeed for the young boy and his father, but it was during these days that Argyll again experienced a brush with the 'supernatural' world. The duke later recorded in his memoirs that, on the day after his brother's death, he had observed a white dove perched upon the tree nearest to his brother's bedroom window. This immediately struck him as unusual as the pigeons he usually observed were more prone to rest upon buildings or rocks than on trees, however, occupied as he was by other thoughts, he thought little of the occurrence until later when he again observed the bird in exactly the same position upon the bough. He tried to frighten the bird away by throwing pebbles at it, but the bird simply resettled upon the same branch after his attack. The bird remained outside the window of the deceased boy for three days before disappearing. For Argyll this was no coincidental occurrence. He took it as a sign from beyond his own realm, as 'a token for good' and as proof positive of not only the existence of God but also of the existence of a spiritual world with which there was the possibility of some form of communication. He later reflected that,

⁶ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. 1, 71-2.

I have ever since remembered it as a real response to that yearning for greater light which in the face of death and sorrow is often so distracting and oppressive. Those who think that the spirit of man can receive no intimations from the spiritual world, conveyed through the special use of means within what is called the ordinary course of Nature, may repute as impossible the interpretation which was forced upon me. But I have never seen any rational defence of the impossibility, or even the improbability, which is thus assumed.⁷

These early occurrences of supposedly ‘supernatural’ origins had a huge impact upon Argyll. Firstly they led him to a more careful study of Biblical texts and of the doctrines of his own church. His involvement in the religious controversies of the 1840s was thus largely influenced by the fruits of his boyhood studies as has already been seen.⁸ However, they also influenced him in another important way: his mind was, from an early age, open to the possibilities of new ideas. It was one of these new ideas, the theory of evolution, which would come to occupy much of his time and energy throughout his life.

The history of the numerous debates which raged before, during and after Darwin’s momentous ‘Theory of Evolution’ burst onto the Victorian world is complex and wide ranging and a discussion of these debates in any depth is beyond the scope of this study.⁹ What is essential here is to ascertain exactly what Argyll believed before moving on to determine how those beliefs influenced the man and his life. A clear picture of Argyll’s ideology is presented concisely in his first, and perhaps best known (among his contemporaries at least) work, *The Reign of Law*. The arguments contained in this book were based upon the fact (as Argyll saw it) that Darwin’s theory on the origin of species only ‘accounts, in part at least, for the success and establishment and spread of new Forms *when they have arisen*.’¹⁰ Argyll was more

⁷ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. I, 106-9.

⁸ See above, Chapter Four.

⁹ There are numerous works on the impact of ‘Darwin’s theory’ which have been of great use in the preparation of this thesis. Among these are, J.W. Burrow, *Evolution and Society: A Study in Victorian Social Theory*, (Cambridge, 1966); J. Durant (ed), *Darwinism and Divinity*, (Oxford, 1985). An excellent bibliography for this topic can be found in, Hoppen, *The Mid Victorian Generation*, 743-4.

¹⁰ Argyll, *The Reign of Law*, 230.

than willing to applaud Darwin's work and to admit that Natural Selection was a viable, and indeed a probable, theory, but he railed against the way that the evolutionary school had, in his eyes, taken this idea and run wild with it. For Argyll, Darwin's theory did nothing to,

suggest the law under which, or by which, or according to which, such new Forms are introduced. Natural Selection can do nothing except with the materials presented to its hands. It cannot select except among the things open to selection. Natural Selection can originate nothing; it can only pick out and choose among the things which are originated by some other law.¹¹

For Argyll, the whole development of species could only be accomplished by what he called the 'Reign of Law'. By law he essentially meant '*Order produced by Contrivance for a Purpose by Will,*' this will being the will of God.¹² Argyll was convinced that God created the Laws of Nature so that man could eventually 'evolve'. In this way, he was able to accept Darwin's theory of Natural Selection as long as it was in turn accepted that the actual 'origin of species' was initially instigated by a higher power.

Argyll's belief in his thesis was founded not only upon his own firm religious convictions, but also upon a number of more scientific and logical arguments. For Argyll, the presence of so much beauty, for its own sake, in the world was evidence of a controlling mind which had designed the world and its flora and fauna for his own pleasure. The duke's interest in ornithology served him well in this endeavour as he was able to illustrate his point by using an example from his earlier studies – the example of the hummingbird. With respect to their plumages, he pointed out that,

A crest of topaz is no better in the struggle for existence than a crest of sapphire. A frill ending in spangles of the emerald is no better in the battle of life than a frill ending in the spangles of the ruby. A tail is not affected for the purposes of flight, whether its marginal or its central

¹¹ Argyll, *The Reign of Law*, 230.

¹² J.O. Mahaffy, 'The Duke of Argyll and the Reign of Law' *Contemporary Review*, 5 (1867), 67-84

feathers are decorated with white. It is impossible to bring such varieties into relation with any physical law known to us. It has relation, however, to a Purpose, which stands in close analogy with our own knowledge of Purpose in the works of Man. Mere beauty and mere variety, for their own sake, are objects which we ourselves seek when we can make the Forces of nature subordinate to the attainment of them. There seems to be no conceivable reason why we should doubt or question, that these are ends and aims also in the Forms given to living Organisms, when the facts correspond with this view, and with no other. In this sense, we can trace a creative Law,- that is, we can see that these Forms of Life do fulfil a purpose and intention, which we can appreciate and understand.¹³

Argyll's mention of the purposes of flight is worthy of note. In *The Reign of Law* he devoted almost an entire chapter to speculations on the mechanics of the flight of birds. In this exceptional chapter Argyll largely successfully outlined the principles of flight and explained how birds navigate the air by acting on the force of aerial currents through the expansion and contraction of their wings. He had long been interested in this subject through his studies of ornithology and was probably also influenced by his late father's interest in mechanics. Argyll had spent many hours as a child indulging his passion for ornithology and his father's mechanical mind had been engaged for some time in a study of the flight of birds. Argyll later recalled that as a young boy he had been fascinated by his father's explanations of the flight of birds and he continued to research this throughout his life. His explanation of flight in *The Reign of Law* was thus influenced by his own observations, his father's earlier ideas, and his continued reading on the subject.¹⁴ He correctly stated that man would eventually be able to create flying machines when their technology caught up with his theory and explained in some detail the flaws of current attempts to create lighter than air machines which were 'mere toys' and worked on principles not seen in nature.¹⁵ However, the duke's arguments about the mechanics of flight were in many ways

¹³ Argyll, *The Reign of Law*, 247-8.

¹⁴ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. 1, 77-80; Argyll was instrumental in the founding of the Royal Aeronautical Society in 1866 and was its first President: 'it says much for the foresight of Argyll and his colleagues that they were in the business of promoting heavier-than-air flight 37 years before Orville Wright's successful flight', *The Leopard Magazine*,

<<http://www.leopardmag.co.uk/feats/5/those-magnificent-scots-and-their-flyng-machines>>

¹⁵ Argyll, *The Reign of Law*, 177-80.

secondary to his assertion that the beauty of nature was clear evidence of the work of one great mind. This was certainly one of the more intelligent arguments against evolutionary theory and was by no means completely rejected by all of Darwin's supporters. Alfred Russel Wallace (1823-1913), for example, was willing to admit that it was possible that a 'Creator' had established certain 'natural laws' that regulated the evolution of living creatures. However, Wallace believed that once these laws had been established, the Creator had no more need to interfere in evolution. Thus he answered Argyll's arguments,

It is simply a question of how the Creator has worked. The Duke (and I quote him as having well expressed the views of the more intelligent of Mr Darwin's opponents) maintains, that He has personally applied general laws to produce effects, which those laws are not in themselves capable of producing; that the universe alone, with all its laws intact, would be a sort of chaos, without variety, without harmony, without design, without beauty; that there is not (and therefore we may presume that there could not be) any self developing power in the universe. I believe, on the contrary, that the universe is so constituted as to be self regulating; that as long as it contains Life, the forms under which that life is manifested have an inherent power of adjustment to each other and to surrounding nature; and that this adjustment necessarily leads to the greatest amount of variety and beauty and enjoyment, because it does depend on general laws, and not on a continual supervision and rearrangement of details.¹⁶

Here Wallace was somewhat misrepresenting the duke's views. Argyll had never supported the opinion that God's hand had to be present every step of the way along a creature's evolving journey, he had simply pointed out that the Darwinian school were deceiving people when they suggested that 'evolution', 'natural selection' or later the 'survival of the fittest' could explain the very beginning of that creature's journey.¹⁷ Argyll believed that there had to be one great mind behind this phenomenon, and that 'evolutionists' were doing their theory no good by trying to

¹⁶ Alfred Russel Wallace, *Contributions to the theory of Natural Selection*, (London, 1870), 267-8.

¹⁷ This is more clearly expressed in the duke's arguments with Bishop Whately and Sir John Lubbock which are discussed below, 176. This argument would see the duke being wilfully misrepresented by his opponents as well.

avoid the fact, as he saw it, that it could not account for the first appearance of life on earth.

In addition to his arguments about the presence of beauty in the world, Argyll had a plethora of other 'reasons' why the origin of species must have been initiated and controlled by a creative power. He tackled the complex question of the development of new organs within living creatures and presented his views upon the issue as 'evidence' that a controlling mind must be behind all modifications in animal structure, thus,

Natural Selection cannot enter the secret chambers of the womb, and there shape the new Form in harmony with modified conditions of external life. How, then, are these external correlations provided for beforehand? There can be but one reply. It is by Utility, not acting as a Physical Cause upon organs already in existence, but acting through Motive as a Mental Purpose in contriving organs before they have begun to be. And where obvious utility does result, the only connecting Bond which can be conceived as capable of maintaining the Internal Correlations in harmony with the external Correlations, is the Bond of Creative Will giving to Organic Forces a foreseen direction.¹⁸

And that, 'Organic Forms are but as clay in the hands of the Potter, and...the 'Law' of structure is entirely subordinate to the 'Law' of Purpose and Intention under which the various parts of that structure are combined for use.'¹⁹ Therefore, Argyll could argue that, 'the Laws of Nature are seen to be nothing but combinations of Force with a view to Purpose: combinations which indicate complete knowledge not only of what is, but of what is to be, and which foresees the End from the Beginning.'²⁰

It is vital to point out that, for Argyll, Darwin's theory was not necessarily damaging or incompatible with his own ideas. Many of Darwin's ideas actually sat quite

¹⁸ Argyll, *The Reign of Law*, 273.

¹⁹ Argyll, *The Reign of Law*, 284.

²⁰ Argyll, *The Reign of Law*, 216.

comfortably with the duke and were, in his mind, worthy of consideration. He explained in 1897 that,

Darwin...spoke of the Creator first breathing the breath of life into a few, perhaps only into one single organic form. His followers generally seem to regard this as a weak concession on the part of their great master. They never dwell on it. They never realise that without it, or without some substitute for it, the whole structure of what they call organic evolution is without a basis – that it represents a chain hanging in mid air, having no point of attachment in the heavens or on earth.²¹

The development of species was completely acceptable to the duke as long as the principle of a guiding mind, perhaps even with only a small initial involvement, was also accepted. What Argyll objected to was the way in which the theory of evolution was being used by some to deny the presence of God. Argyll's response to this was, as we have seen, to synthesise the evolutionary process with the idea of a divine purpose. So, for Argyll, the facts were clear,

whatever may have been the method or process of creation, it is creation still. If it were proved tomorrow that the first man was 'born' from some pre-existing form of life, it would still be true that such a birth must have been, in every sense of the word, a new creation. It would still be as true that God formed him 'out of the dust of the earth', as it is true that He has so formed every child who is now called to answer the first question of all theologies.²²

Because God was working to a plan, it did not matter if man had evolved from some 'ape-like creature' as all this would prove was that God's work had been done gradually and not suddenly. Argyll was no absolute 'creationist'. He did not subscribe to a literal interpretation of the Bible, but neither was he willing to see its

²¹ George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, 'Mr. Herbert Spencer and Lord Salisbury on Evolution', Part I, *Nineteenth Century*, 41 (1897), 399.

²² George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, 'The Supernatural', *Edinburgh Review*, 114 (1862), 389.

'broader truths' discounted. Indeed, the language used in the Bible was, in some ways, an aid to his argument. As he explained in one piece of writing,

'Out of the dust of the ground'; that is, out of the ordinary elements of nature, was that body formed which is still upheld and perpetuated by organic forces acting under the rules of law. Nothing which science has discovered, or can discover, is capable of traversing that simple narrative.²³

Argyll railed against the use of Darwin's theory as a weapon against religious beliefs and made it his mission to provide logical arguments which could be utilised by the clergy to defend their position. He was horrified that Darwin's theory had been, in his words, 'erected into a sort of intellectual idol before which all the world has been called to bow...the pulpit has bowed down before the shrine, and great preachers have thought it necessary to conciliate cultivated audiences by general professions of acceptance.'²⁴ Argyll's third wife recorded that,

In the early and mid-Victorian days, a wave of infidelity appeared to follow in the wake of scientific discovery. The new light thrown upon the forces in Nature had revealed a new earth, and with the old earth there had passed away, for many, the old heaven. To those who found that doubt was "as lead upon the feet of their most anxious will" the firm stand made for the faith by a man like the Duke, who had kept abreast of all intellectual progress, and in whose great abilities and powers of judgement men placed confidence, formed a rallying-point when they had lost the old landmarks, and were in danger of missing the path in the darkness of infidelity. Many letters addressed to him testify to the help he had afforded to others, by his counsel and by his writings.²⁵

²³ Argyll, 'The Supernatural', 387-8.

²⁴ George Douglas Campbell, 'The Power of Loose Analogies', *Nineteenth Century*, 22 (1887), 764.

²⁵ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. II, 542. The duchess's pride in her husband's role in the matter is evident from this passage and represents the rather hagiographical approach that she took when detailing his life in general. The second half of the *Autobiography and Memoirs* is characterised by this 'worshipful' approach.

Argyll himself testified that, 'I have had letters from the most distant parts of the world – from the backwoods of America and the bush of Australia, from men whom I have never seen, nor can see, in this world, thanking me for having lifted from off their spirits that deadly nightmare of a rigid, fateful, and mechanical necessity seated on the throne of Nature.'²⁶

Thus the duke saw himself as a defender of the church and of its teachings, fighting against the inroads being made by the extremes to which Darwin's theory was being taken. However, he was not the pillar of religious orthodoxy that his opponents often labelled him. Instead, his ideas sat somewhat uncomfortably between the evolutionists and creationists and left him in something of a 'no man's land' in the midst of the arguments raging on either side of him. Argyll's major problem was that he saw the flaws and the logic of different parts of the arguments and could not firmly attach himself to one side or the other. To his long-standing friend, Professor Max Muller, he spelled out his difficulties and his frustrations with the whole argument,

I am, I confess, not able to dismiss as completely as you do, all idea of the substantial truth of the mosaic representation of Creation. I am quite ready to believe that the language is highly "metaphorical" - or "accommodative" - or "poetical" - or whatever other word you like to apply. But I mean that the idea of man being created, or made or born at first with a childlike knowledge and intuition of the Godhead as his Maker and Father in Heaven - is, in my opinion a natural and probable correlative of His special creation in any shape or form - and that those who deny this primeval intuition give up their belief in the only thing which makes it difficult assent at once to Darwinianism *pur et simple*. I could never care to fight against that conclusion for the sake of 'language' or 'concept' or anything else, if it be admitted as regards the most fundamental of all concepts - that of a Supreme Being.²⁷

Argyll was loosely attached to the 'Genesis version' of creation in the Bible, but only loosely. His interest in geology and particularly his friendships with Sir Charles Lyell

²⁶ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. II, 544.

²⁷ Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS.Eng.d.2347, Argyll to Max Muller, 2 Feb. 1875.

(1797-1875), Sir Archibald Geikie (1835-1924) and James Forbes (1809-1868) had given him ample opportunity to research and discuss not only the evolution of animals, but also to engage with respectable men of science on the important matter of the age of the Earth itself.²⁸ With regard to this issue, Argyll was firmly in the ‘catastrophist’ camp and believed in primeval convulsion in contrast to Lyell’s more gradual or ‘uniformitarian’ approach.²⁹ Through his interest in geology, Argyll quickly came to accept that the Bible could only be taken as a metaphor for how the Earth was formed and that this was also true with regard to its account of the birth of man.³⁰ His acceptance of this set him against the more staunch defenders of the church, but it also obviously displeased those men of science who refuted the truth of the Biblical account entirely. Argyll’s problems did not end there, however. His belief in ‘the reign of law’ was all encompassing. This meant that he professed a reluctance to accept any belief in the supernatural exerting any force in the universe. This obviously stands in contrast to the beliefs of many of his fellow Christians, as he was in effect denying the ‘miraculous’ properties of miracles and it meant that Argyll was challenging the recognised religious conventions almost as much as he was challenging evolutionists. It also seems, at first glance, to contradict Argyll’s own ‘supernatural’ experiences from his childhood.³¹ However, a closer examination of his thesis reveals the subtle distinction which he was trying to draw. The ‘creative power’ of which he so often spoke was, for Argyll, not utilising *supernatural* powers to exert influence – in the form of miracles and in the form of ordinary, everyday

²⁸ Argyll’s correspondence with Lyell, Geikie and Forbes is almost universally concerned with geology; Edinburgh University Library, Lyell Papers, Lyell 1, Argyll to Lyell, 1850-1874 [see especially, Argyll to Lyell, 1 May 1867]; Edinburgh University Library, Geikie Papers, Gen 524, Argyll to Geikie, 1888-1893; St Andrews University Library, Forbes Papers, MS DEP 7, Argyll to Forbes, 1851-1869 [see especially, Letterbook Vol. V]. For more on these three men see, D. Oldroyd, ‘Geikie, Sir Archibald (1835-1924)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, 2004); A. Geikie, *A long life’s work: an autobiography* (London, 1924); M. Rudwick, ‘Lyell, Sir Charles, first baronet (1797-1875)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, 2004); R.N. Smart, ‘Forbes, James David (1809-1868)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, 2004); F. Cunningham, *James David Forbes: pioneer Scottish glaciologist* (Edinburgh, 1990).

²⁹ R. Porter, ‘Charles Lyell and the principles of the history of geology’, *British Journal for the History of Science*, 9 (1976), 91–103; L.G Wilson, *Charles Lyell, the years to 1841: the revolution in geology* (1972).

³⁰ Argyll was not alone in holding this view. James Lachlan MacLeod has devoted some space in his study of the Free Church in Scotland to the views of some of that Church’s leading figures. These included Robert Rainy, Marcus Dods and Henry Drummond who were all, to varying degrees, willing to admit that the *Genesis* version of events must be interpreted less literally. He contrasts this with their critics who believed that acceptance of evolution invalidated Christianity; J.L. MacLeod, *The Second Disruption: The Free Church in Victorian Scotland and the Origins of the Free Presbyterian Church*, (East Linton, 2000), 101-24.

³¹ See above, 162-4.

control over the development of species – it was merely using *superhuman* powers. Argyll hypothesised that ‘God’ was a being with a greater knowledge of the laws of the universe than that possessed by man. Thus,

If we choose to understand by ‘Nature’ the whole system of things in which we live and of which we form a part, then the belief in the agency of other Beings of greater power does not necessarily involve any belief whatever that they are outside of that system.³²

And additionally,

If the progress of discovery is as rapid during the next 400 years as it has been during the last 400 years, men will be able to do many things which...would now appear to be ‘supernatural’. There is no difficulty in conceiving how a complete knowledge of all natural laws would give, if not complete power, at least degrees of power immensely greater than those which we now possess...No man can have any difficulty in believing there are natural laws of which he is ignorant; nor in conceiving that there may be Beings, who do know them, and can use them, even as he himself now uses the few laws with which he is acquainted.³³

The Duke was thus making a subtle, but important distinction between his theory and the belief system of the Church. It was never made explicit whether Argyll believed that this ‘supreme being’ had indeed even created the Laws of Nature himself or whether it was simply the case that his knowledge was so immense that he could use the already established Laws for his own purpose. Argyll never directly answered this fundamental question, although his perpetual reliance on the ‘reign of law’ makes the latter assertion most likely to be the one with which he privately concurred.

It seems that Argyll’s theory was designed to tie in his religious beliefs with his scientific knowledge – to create a ‘rational religiosity’ which would bridge the gap

³² George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, ‘The Unity of Nature, Part VIII: On the Origin of Religion’, in *Contemporary Review*, 38 (1880), 497.

³³ Argyll, ‘The Supernatural’, 383.

between the two sides. He did not deny the general truths, as he saw them, of the Biblical texts. Indeed, he thought long and hard about their importance and his writings reinforced his conclusions on the matter,

But what of Revelation? Are its history and doctrines incompatible with the belief that God uniformly acts through the use of means? The narrative of creation is given to us in abstract only, and is told in two different forms, both having for their special object the presenting to our conception the personal agency of a living God. Yet this narrative indicates, however slightly, that room is left for the idea of a material process.³⁴

Argyll's belief that the account of creation in Genesis was a thinly disguised allegory which should have been evident to all is closely connected to his problems with the term 'supernatural'. His writings displayed a constant struggle against the misuse and misunderstanding of language and stemmed from his own studies on the matter. He carried out a long correspondence with Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900) on the issue and the two men's debate raged back and forth for years over the perpetual question of whether thought preceded language.³⁵ The debate was never satisfactorily concluded; however, the correspondence proves illuminating, illustrating the details which were so important to Argyll's arguments. When the two men had reached a final impasse in their argument, Argyll wrote to his friend,

My conclusion is that we differ too little to make it worthwhile to carry on the controversy. You say that a true concept cannot be clear and definite until it has first been named. I say, on the contrary, that such a concept cannot be named until after it has been first mentally conceived. This seems a direct antithesis: and yet the practical conclusion we aim at is the same – that phrases are becoming increasingly deceptive and that the analysis of Words would clear up the thoughts of all of us – immensely!³⁶

³⁴ Argyll, 'The Supernatural', 387-88.

³⁵ R.C.C. Fynes, 'Müller, Friedrich Max (1823-1900)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, 2004).

³⁶ Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS.Eng.d.2347, Argyll to Max Muller, 3 Mar. 1889.

For Argyll, this was more than an interesting aside. Throughout his life he had become increasingly frustrated with the way that his opponents took words and phrases out of context (or at least out of the context to which Argyll believed they applied) in order to confuse and mislead the public. In the political realm, the duke singled out Gladstone for his misrepresentation of what the 1881 Irish Land Act actually meant.³⁷ In the context of the evolutionary debate it was Herbert Spencer's contributions to the theory of evolution which particularly rankled with the fastidious duke. In one instance, Argyll directly attacked Spencer in an attempt to bring to the fore the gross misuse of language which he saw as being foisted upon an ignorant and unsuspecting public.

The survival of the fittest? Fittest for what? For surviving. So that the phrase means no more than this, that the survivor does survive. It surely did not need the united exertions of the greatest natural observer of modern times, and the reasonings of one of the most popular of modern philosophers, to assure us of the truth of this identical proposition.³⁸

However, for Argyll, the misuse of words spread beyond the realm of science and philosophy and intruded increasingly upon the realm of politics. In another candid letter to Max Muller he expressed his horror at the misunderstanding which led to (for him) repugnant terms being used by those who should know better and used his examples to strengthen his argument over the origins of thought and language.

You ask whether the vague use of certain words – such as “nature” – “natural selection” – “home rule” etc. – has not done mischief enough in Science – Politics – in Philosophy. Hear, Hear, I exclaim in Parliamentary emotion. I entirely agree in the fallacies promoted by, and often consisting in the lax and confused use of words: and if your theory helps you to expose this source of all human error, I am glad of it. Only please let me say that so far as I understand it, your theory would not help me one bit in this great and most needful work. On the contrary, the fallacies hid under language seem to me to point – not to the identity of

³⁷ See Chapter Six above, 143.

³⁸ Argyll, ‘Mr. Herbert Spencer and Lord Salisbury on Evolution’, Part I, 394.

Thought and Language - but to their essential separability. Why is “Home Rule” a fallacy? Why is “Natural Selection” another fallacy? Because thought is infinitely more subtle than speech – because language is infinitely too blunt for the purposes of really accurate thought.³⁹

Within these intellectual arguments are the specific problems faced by Argyll and many others when discussing human evolution. That animals possessed instinct was not in doubt for Argyll and that humans had evolved from more primitive predecessors could also be speculatively accepted. However, Argyll was, within this argument, seeking to find his own ‘first man’ – he was attempting to account for the way in which instinct had turned to rational thought. Could such thought be achieved through a development of instinct? Could a thought be formed without language to express it? Or did there have to be some sort of ‘evolutionary leap’, assisted by outside intervention, which resulted in a fully formed, or more accurately fully informed, man? Argyll attempted to answer these questions in *Primeval Man* which was published first as a series of articles in *Good Words* and then in book form in 1868. His purpose in this work was to reveal the flaws in the arguments of both sides of the debate on the origins of man. In this publication he again found himself occupying the middle ground of the debate – disagreeing with both the theory of Archbishop Richard Whately (1787-1863) that primeval man had been truly civilised and with the opposing theory of Sir John Lubbock (1834-1913) which emphasised the savagery of the first men.⁴⁰ In so doing, of course, Argyll set himself up for attack from both sides of the argument, however, it was the supporters of Lubbock who pressed him hardest. Indeed, it appears from much of the criticism levelled against the duke that most of these critics acquired their knowledge of the duke’s arguments in *Primeval Man* not from reading it, but from reading the biased and unfair account of it given later by Lubbock.⁴¹ *Primeval Man* itself is a far more balanced and mature

³⁹ Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS.Eng.d.2347, Argyll to Max Muller, 29 Nov. 1888.

⁴⁰ The debate between these two men and Argyll’s response to it is covered with some finesse in an unusually sympathetic (towards Argyll!) article by Neal C. Gillespie. His footnotes contain references to a wealth of relevant sources for further study of this issue. N.C. Gillespie, ‘The Duke of Argyll, Evolutionary Anthropology, and the Art of Scientific Controversy’, *Isis*, 68 (1977), 40-54; see also, R. Brent, ‘Whately, Richard (1787-1863)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, 2004); T.L. Alborn, ‘Lubbock, John, first Baron Avebury (1834-1913)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, 2004); H.G. Hutchinson, *Life of Sir John Lubbock, Lord Avebury*. 2 vols. (London, 1914).

⁴¹ Gillespie, ‘Evolutionary Anthropology’, 53-4.

argumentative piece than its detractors ever acknowledged and forms a vital part of any consideration of Argyll's wider ideology.

The duke's belief in the essential truth of the Bible and most especially in the condition and beliefs of primeval man formed a final and vitally important part of his theory of evolution. In the first instance, Argyll was convinced that man could never have evolved from 'lower animals' by the process of natural selection alone because his form is so comparatively feeble to his supposed ancestors. 'Man as a mere animal is the most helpless of all animals. His whole frame has relation to his mind, and apart from that relation, it is feebler than the frame of any of the brutes.'⁴² The first men, Argyll argued, would have been exterminated by their more powerful neighbours as their weakened physical forms would not have been a positive adaptation in the struggle for survival no matter how much smarter than 'the other apes' they were. He believed that man's mind would have to have been fully formed before the changes to his body took place, however, he could not see how this could possibly be explained by natural selection. If man had evolved from a lower creature, Argyll argued, natural selection would never have favoured changes which weakened a creature's physical form – these would surely have been to the detriment of the creature. Talking of the earliest supposed progenitors of man, the duke outlined his hypothesis,

To exist at all, this creature must have been more animal in its structure; it must have had bodily powers and organs more like those of the beasts. The continual improvement and perfection of these would be the direction of variation most favourable to the continuance of the species. These could not be modified in the direction of greater weakness without inevitable destruction, until first by the gift of reason and of mental capacities of contrivance, there had been established an adequate preparation for the change.⁴³

⁴² Argyll, *The Reign of Law*, 290.

⁴³ George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, *Primeval Man: an examination of some recent speculations*, (New York, 1884) [first published, 1868], 22.

Thus these early beasts would have been busy perfecting their strength and adaptations to their mental processes would have been swept aside: a slightly smarter ‘ape’ would have been of little evolutionary value when compared with a slightly stronger one. The only way that Argyll could perceive the first man arriving on the world stage was if the adaptations to his mind and body were almost simultaneous. However, he reasoned that “‘natural selection’” could not possibly explain the first origin of anything. It is obvious that selection cannot be exercised upon variations until those variations have actually arisen and have been presented to the selecting process.’⁴⁴ As natural selection must fail to deliver such an end, the Creator’s hand had to be seen in this process as far as Argyll was concerned – guiding the development of human beings, creating them for a purpose, as the embodiment of the highest form of life and made in the image of God himself. However, Argyll (in direct contrast to Whately) accepted that the extent of this divine aid may simply be ‘nothing more than the aid of a Body and of a Mind, so marvellously endowed, that Thought was an instinct, and Contrivance was at once a necessity and a delight.’⁴⁵ God need not have arrived on Earth one day and created a whole new species of creature, or guided man every step of the way, but simply implanted in him, from the beginning, the potential to successfully develop into what he would eventually become. This had to be the work of one all seeing mind and Argyll believed that evidence for this was already evident for those who wished to acknowledge it.

This evidence, as Argyll saw it, was to be found in the field of comparative anatomy. He believed that supposedly redundant organs or aborted limbs in some creatures were not always evidence of these animals having made use of them in the past, but were instead an indication that they were developing them for possible use in the future. This may seem a curiously ‘evolutionary’ argument for someone who was trying to refute the claims of Darwin’s followers, but it must be reiterated that Argyll never denied the likelihood of ‘natural selection’ as a force in nature: he merely doubted that it could operate without the Creator’s influence. He gave some examples, one of which was the presence of ‘rudiments of legs’ in some varieties of snake, which he claimed showed that the Creator had planted the seeds of evolution in

⁴⁴ George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, ‘Kidd on Social Evolution’, *Edinburgh Review*, 179 (1894), 484.

⁴⁵ Argyll, *Primeval Man*, 64.

these creatures at the beginning of time with the purpose of their being able to walk at some point in the future. Snakes did not need legs, Argyll did not believe that they had ever had legs, and a snake with the ‘rudiments of legs’ would be no better placed in the fight for survival than one without them. Why, he asked, should there exist any ‘leg structure’ present in these creatures unless they were developing as part of a plan?⁴⁶ His logic led him to argue that God must therefore exist and must have planned the development of all creatures at the dawn of time.

Argyll did not stop there, however. For Argyll, the earliest people must, as the Bible asserts, have had a knowledge of God – a monotheistic religious belief system. This part of Argyll’s theory put him in direct conflict with other contemporary scientists and anthropologists because Argyll asserted that the ‘savages’ who were in evidence across the world in the nineteenth century were not examples of earlier, more primitive races but degenerate versions of more advanced predecessors. Their savagery was not an indication of their antiquity, but simply of their retarded development. He claimed that,

There is no reason whatever to suppose that the races which are now generally civilized are of a more recent origin than those which are generally savage...neither savagery nor civilization, as we now see them, can represent the primeval condition of Man. Both of them are the work of time. Both of them are the product of evolution.⁴⁷

Argyll theorised that man had first appeared in the Garden of Eden just as the Bible said. This Garden was a metaphor for a place on Earth (Argyll suggested that it was somewhere in Asia) where there was plentiful food and sustenance. The initial population was small and tied together by belief in the presence of one God and by close family affections and there were no population pressures on the available resources. However, as time progressed and the population grew, the stronger members of society came to dominate the resources and pushed the weaker peoples

⁴⁶ Argyll, *The Reign of Law*, 116-21. The use of the snake as an example was an unfortunate one on Argyll’s part as he seems to ignore the fact that *Genesis* explicitly state that snakes had been equipped with legs (or some other form of mobility) before the apple was eaten in the Garden of Eden.

⁴⁷ George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, ‘The Unity of Nature’, Part VII: On the Moral Character of Man, *Contemporary Review*, 39 (1881), 341-2.

out of the Garden – away from the central and temperate regions of the globe and to the inhospitable margins of the planet. This was the fall of man which the Bible described and for this theory the duke was able to present his conclusive evidence that,

It is a fact that the lowest and rudest tribes in the population of the globe have been found, as we have seen, at the farthest extremities of its larger continents – or in the distant islands of its great oceans, or among the hills and forests which in every land have been the last refuge of the victims of violence and misfortune.⁴⁸

These ‘rude tribes’ were in plentiful evidence during the nineteenth century. With the expansion of Empire and exploration came contact with people so different as to be virtually unrecognisable to the Victorians as fellow human beings. One young English naturalist shocked by the sight of some ‘primitive’ Fuegians had commented,

Viewing such men, one can hardly make one’s self believe that they are fellow-creatures, and inhabitants of the same world. We often try to imagine what pleasure in life some of the lower animals can enjoy: how much more reasonably the same questions may be asked concerning these barbarians!⁴⁹

The young man was Charles Darwin! Thus, for Argyll to believe that the Fuegians, Eskimos and natives of Australasia were barbaric was by no means unusual. However, his assertion that they were not examples of a primitive human past, but simply degenerate versions of their more sophisticated ancestors, is noteworthy. He saw the movement of these, already weak, peoples to the inhospitable fringes of the world as the cause of this degeneration. As they came to settle in the most difficult areas of the world, so their ‘humanity’ was brutalised and destroyed by the harsh conditions and their earlier nature and notions – particularly their ‘civilised’ belief in one God – was eradicated.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Argyll, ‘The Unity of Nature’, Part VII: On the Moral Character of Man, 355-6.

⁴⁹ Charles Darwin as quoted in, J. Shreeve, *The Neanderthal Enigma*, (Chicago, 1995), 33.

⁵⁰ This theme is explored in great depth throughout Argyll’s *Primeval Man* and in *The Unity of Nature*.

To support this view he found a compelling flaw in the reasoning of Lubbock and his supporters by highlighting the difficulty of attributing man's early innovations to a group of savage 'half-apes'. He accepted that throwing a stick or a rock could be attributed to instinct (thus disagreeing with Whately's ideas of divine intervention and continual instruction), however, he could not accept that innovations like fire, farming and language could have been conceived and implemented by creatures who had just swung down from the trees. For Argyll, 'the very earliest inventions of our race must have been the most wonderful of all, and the richest in the fruits they bore', and to argue that these essential attributes of man had been developed by savage half-beasts was simply ludicrous.⁵¹ Argyll was not alone in seeing the paradox. Even Darwin himself acknowledged the problems with accounting for the evolution of the human brain. Darwin's long-standing disagreement with Alfred Russell Wallace on the issue led him to make a point very similar to Argyll's,

These several inventions, by which man in the rudest state has become so pre-eminent, are the direct result of the development of his powers of observation, memory, curiosity, imagination, and reason. I cannot, therefore, understand how it is that Mr. Wallace maintains that "natural selection could only have endowed the savage with a brain a little superior to that of an ape".⁵²

Thus, the earliest man must, in Argyll's eyes, have been more than a savage. He must have had extensive brain capacity and an innate ability to think and to reason. These attributes could only have occurred so early in man's existence through the agency of God. The only logical explanation for the existence in the present of 'savages' was that they had been pushed to areas with such extreme climactic conditions that their former knowledge and abilities had been lost in their struggle to simply survive.

For those with even a passing acquaintance with nineteenth century British history, it must be obvious where conclusions like this would lead Argyll in relation to his views

⁵¹ Argyll, *Primeval Man*, 50.

⁵² C.R. Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in relation to sex*, (London, 1871), Vol. 1, 132.

of his own countrymen. Hoppen summed up the feelings of a large number of Victorians when he said that,

Those who [held fears] about the masses and about democracy...found added cause for unease in the agrarian agitation of the 1870s, in the increasing violence of the Irish countryside during the Land War of 1879-82, and in the industrial unrest of the 1880s. The information about poverty, distress, despair, and occasional discontent, thrown up by new examinations of urban life produced for some, however mistakenly, the uncomfortable feeling of sitting upon a social volcano, with the lower classes cast in the role of destructive and primitive savages.⁵³

For Argyll, this perception was especially acute. Argyll was aware of this 'social volcano' and was concerned that socialism was making new converts as popular discontent became more apparent. He railed against the advocates of a national system of welfare and turned his attention instead to the 'work of wisdom and beneficence' that Thomas Chalmers had undertaken in his parish relief work during the 1840s.⁵⁴ Argyll argued that Chalmers remained the best example of a 'Christian Socialist' as,

it must be true, everywhere and always, that the payment of compulsory rates involves no exercise of charity. It must be equally true that the receipt of them can never call forth any return of gratitude...when men find their want supplied out of the industry of others, they tend to become demoralised, and thus that pauperism will grow upon that which feeds it.⁵⁵

In contrast to the demands of modern 'Christian Socialists', Argyll argued, Thomas Chalmers had not divorced his efforts 'from the spirit and the methods of strictly scientific reasoning. The heart and the head worked in harmony together – as they must do if men are to effect any permanent reforms in the condition of society.'⁵⁶ The

⁵³ Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*, 482-3.

⁵⁴ Brown, *Thomas Chalmers and the godly commonwealth in Scotland*.

⁵⁵ George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, 'Christian Socialism', *Nineteenth Century*, (1894), 696.

⁵⁶ Argyll, 'Christian Socialism', 697.

duke had used similar arguments about the perils of ‘unearned’ aid at the time of the famine in Ireland and the west of Scotland during the 1840s and 1850s.⁵⁷ Now, at the end of his life he was forced to return to these arguments as socialist ideas became more of a threat to his ideals. However, it was not just welfare reform that seemed to be slipping dangerously towards radicalism. The duke’s most pressing concern was the increasing demands for land reform and, in his defence of the position of landowners, his evolutionary theories were to prove a useful tool.

The best expression of his feelings can be found in an article published in *Nineteenth Century* in 1889 in which he set out his argument that the people who were now living at the edges of the British Isles – in Ireland and in the Scottish Hebrides – were prime examples of the degeneration of character which he had identified.⁵⁸ In his article he expressed the belief that these people who were isolated from the ‘positive’ influences of the Teutonic races had essentially evolved backwards – devolved to a primitive condition which impaired their ability to function as productive members of society. In a Scottish context this feeling was certainly not unique and its expression can be found on other occasions throughout the century. A notable example (and one who was closely connected to Argyll personally) can be found in Sir John McNeill, who commented in an official Government report that the Highlanders – and most especially the Hebrideans – exhibited certain negative characteristics which accounted in some way for their relative poverty and social condition.⁵⁹

Argyll’s aforementioned article, entitled ‘Isolation: or the Survival of the Unfittest’, took this idea and applied it specifically to the people of the island of Lewis. The whole article was designed as a damning indictment of the condition of the crofting population of the island and is an excellent example of how Argyll saw his evolutionary beliefs being played out on his very doorstep. The article largely speaks for itself, and to give a flavour of the author’s sentiments it is necessary only to give a few examples of his language. Thus, he told his reader,

⁵⁷ See Chapter Three.

⁵⁸ George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, ‘Isolation: or survival of the unfittest’, *Nineteenth Century*, (1889), 12-34.

⁵⁹ See, PP, XXVI, *Report to the Board of Supervision by Sir John McNeill on the Western Highlands and Islands, 1851*. McNeill was the duke’s brother-in-law and the two men were usually in complete agreement when it came to questions concerning crofters.

The people remained to multiply...never were the natural laws of population, under special and defined conditions, more strikingly and experimentally exhibited. They were now saved from the ravages of war by the growing power and civilisation of a central government. They were saved, farther on, from the ravages of small-pox – not less destructive – by the introduction of inoculation. They were exempted from the necessity of exertion and of agricultural improvement by the abundant, but idle and demoralising, provision of the potato. They were, at a critical time, powerfully stimulated to further increase by the sudden rise of a local manufacture in the products of seaweed. They were ringed off by distance, by the sea, by lethargy, and by increasing poverty, from the rising industries of the Low Country. For some years a sort of paroxysm of discouragement and of discomfort made them throw off swarms to the New World. But not even this, nor frequent famines, could keep down the rising tide of population.⁶⁰

The population continued to increase because of, ‘the profound and almost unfathomable ignorance and barbarism of the native agriculture, together with a traditional system of occupation, which, as it were, enshrined and encased every ancestral stupidity in an impenetrable panoply of inveterate customs.’⁶¹

And he tied this idea into his thesis on the backward development of people thus isolated:

There is...something almost mysterious in the helpless ignorance of Scottish rural customs up to the middle of the last century. We are tempted to ask – was it a case of degradation? of development in the wrong direction, of the human mind given up so wholly to wars and feuds and plunder, that the most ancient of all arts had been neglected and forgotten?...Of this condition of things, the isle of Lewis is the typical example. It simply represents, in our civilised and industrial age, the barbarous ignorance and the wasteful customs which made Scotland the

⁶⁰ Argyll, ‘Isolation: or Survival of the Unfittest’, 25-6.

⁶¹ Argyll, ‘Isolation: or Survival of the Unfittest’, 26.

poorest country in the world some three centuries ago. It is a survival of the unfittest caused by isolation, and by the inveteracy of old Celtic usages.⁶²

And Argyll could not resist making certain that his readers fully understood his meaning by summing up his argument with a few well chosen conclusions.

In short, we have here a survival of the wretched husbandry of the lowest period of the military ages staring at us in the fierce light of our own scientific and industrial times. And it must be confessed that there are some men who return the stare with a stupefaction almost as phenomenal. They suggest that the State is to undertake the duty of renovating this little world of ancient chaos...The laws of nature cannot be suspended in favour of any men merely because they speak Gaelic. To 'root these poor people in the soil', which they have not the knowledge, or the skill, or the industry to cultivate, which they have not the capital, nor a fraction of the capital, even to stock with the only beasts that can turn its comparative barrenness to the use of man – this is the panacea suggested to us. To root them in that soil is to bury them in a bog – a bog physical, a bog mental, and a bog moral.⁶³

These arguments were obviously motivated by the continuing attacks that had been directed at Argyll and other landlords during the 1880s. The ideas of men like Henry George had a serious impact upon the duke and will be discussed in a later chapter.⁶⁴ However, it is worth mentioning here the influence of another contributor to the evolutionary debate upon the land question. Alfred Russel Wallace, who had earlier attacked Argyll's stance on the role of a creator in human development, was increasingly known in his later life a social commentator and had published in 1880 an article entitled 'How to nationalise the land'. This was followed two years later by his *Land Nationalisation* which further developed his ideology.⁶⁵ Wallace's ideas

⁶² Argyll, 'Isolation: or Survival of the Unfittest', 31-3.

⁶³ Argyll, 'Isolation: or Survival of the Unfittest', 33.

⁶⁴ See Chapter Eight.

⁶⁵ Alfred Russel Wallace, 'How to nationalise the land', *Contemporary Review*, 38 (1880), 716–36; Alfred Russel Wallace, *Land Nationalisation*, (London, 1882).

were closely related to those of Henry George, but he had developed his own particular concept of rent which ‘took into account both the locational value of a parcel of land and value added to it over time’ and which detailed his plans for breaking up the stranglehold of landowners on large swathes of property.⁶⁶ Wallace also envisaged strict controls being placed on the management of the large amount of state owned land which his plans would encourage. Argyll and Wallace held diametrically opposing views on the correct solution to the ‘land question’, but both were influenced to a large extent by their studies of evolutionary science. However, while Wallace’s enquiries had led him to greatly appreciate the qualities of supposedly ‘uncivilised’ people and to champion the cause of ‘social justice’, Argyll’s studies and circumstances had led him in an entirely opposite direction.

For Argyll, as for so many other notable nineteenth century thinkers, the debate on evolution became of immense importance. What is most interesting about Argyll’s contribution to the debates, however, is not the scientific quality of his arguments – for he seems to have gained little real respect among most other ‘scientific’ commentators – but the way in which he chose to use his theory of evolution as a weapon against both atheism and, more especially, against the tide of sympathy for the crofting way of life.⁶⁷ For Argyll, evolution became another reason why the landed classes were best suited to manage the land and keep paternal control of the tenants, especially in the areas of the country where the poorest classes were ‘degenerates’. Argyll believed in the survival of the fittest, however, to him the fittest had already triumphed: society was already organised in the best manner – with the rich, landholding classes occupying their rightful place, by virtue of their historical and hard-won merits, and the less able members of society being ‘protected from themselves’ by the wisdom and superiority of their betters. Evolutionary arguments would continue to play a part in Argyll’s life until his death in 1900, notably in his

⁶⁶ Wallace, *Land Nationalisation*; C.H. Smith, ‘Alfred Russel Wallace (1823-1913)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; Wallace was president of the Land Nationalisation Society until his death in 1913.

⁶⁷ The lack of respect with which Argyll’s arguments were often received is perhaps best exemplified in the series of debates which took place between Argyll and Thomas Huxley in the various contemporary journals. Huxley was scathing of Argyll’s theories and poured scorn upon him in numerous essays – Argyll, of course, replied in kind, exhibiting some of the ‘points scoring’ which Matthew alluded to. This are best represented by three articles in particular - George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, ‘Professor Huxley on the Warpath’, *Nineteenth Century*, 29 (1891), 1-33; ‘Professor Huxley and the Duke of Argyll’, *Nineteenth Century*, 29 (1891), 685-89; ‘Lord Bacon vs. Huxley’, *Nineteenth Century*, 36 (1894), 959-69.

attempts to restore the 'shattered science' of political economy and in his efforts to refute new socialist and nationalist ideologies.⁶⁸ However, it was to the land question that Argyll would now turn and his attention would be focussed firmly upon those members of the tribe of the 'unfittest' who remained upon his estates.

⁶⁸ Argyll's attitude towards Home Rule and Nationalism have been discussed in Chapter Six. His attempts to counter Socialism and his views on political economy will be dealt with in Chapter Eight.

CHAPTER EIGHT

HOLDING BACK THE TIDE

Argyll's resignation from cabinet office in 1881 had come after many years of growing dissatisfaction with the path that his party was taking. As seen in Chapter Six, the duke had found it increasingly difficult to 'toe the party line' on a variety of issues, but it was only when the 'land question' had come to the fore in the 1880s that he had decided finally to break formally from his cabinet colleagues. However, Argyll's distaste for his party's attitude towards the land predated the 1880s and he had been developing his arguments in opposition to land reform for some considerable time. The duke's resignation in 1881 did not come out of the blue, but was the final act in a long saga that had seen him become more and more unhappy with the way his party approached the question of land tenure. It is the purpose of this chapter to outline Argyll's long association with the 'land question' and to highlight the way in which his views on the issue developed and strengthened until, by the 1880s, they had become so powerful that they necessitated his resignation.

During the 1860s Argyll had, as seen in Chapter Six, finally managed to break free of his relatively undemanding and low status appointment as Lord Privy Seal and had secured a cabinet position that would offer him, he hoped, real administrative duties. His appointment at the India Office was the realisation of a long held ambition and the duke grasped the opportunities it presented with vigour, however, the post would throw a whole new set of problems in his path.¹ Argyll would find that the power of his new office was perhaps not so great as he would have liked and his struggles to exert influence over his Viceroy and Council would bring him once again into conflict with colleagues as well as opponents. Argyll's new position as Secretary for India would also bring two key facets of his life – politics and land – into close contact for the first time as he was forced to deal with land tenure abroad just as it was becoming a real political issue at home. As the duke struggled to control the path of land reform in India, he became increasingly aware of the potential dangers that this issue could raise in Britain. From the 1860s onwards the duke would be increasingly caught between his duties as a politician and his responsibilities as a landowner, and the

¹ See above, Chapter Six.

contradictions between these two roles would force a crisis that would change Argyll's life and career.

There had been indications of what was to come from an early date. The duke's experience of the 'land question' had not been limited to knowledge gleaned from his Scottish estates alone.² As well as having many friends and acquaintances who owned land in England and Ireland, Argyll also had his parliamentary experiences to draw upon. In 1854, the duke (at the relatively tender age of 30) had presided over the select committee set up to deal with the Irish land question and had been widely praised in both houses for the way in which he directed that committee. The Whig Marquess of Clanricarde (1802-1874) and the Tory Lord Malmesbury (1807-1889) both complimented the duke's ability as did the member for the University of Dublin, Sir Joseph Napier (1804-1882), who commented in the House of Commons that he felt it would have been,

impossible to have made a better selection than the Duke of Argyll to preside over such a committee, conversant as he was with Scotch law, from which several of the provisions of the Bill [Landlord and Tenant (Ireland)] were borrowed; his Grace had made himself master of almost every branch and every detail of the question, and he [Napier] had never met and he could never expect to meet with greater courtesy and fairness than had been exhibited by that nobleman.³

The debates which took place on this bill are extremely illuminating as they illustrate Argyll's definite views on the issues surrounding the relationship between landlord and tenant and demonstrate vividly the themes to which he would return time and again throughout his career. During these lively debates, Argyll set out his position by stating that, 'he held in the main that for the future the relation between landlord and tenant ought to rest upon contract, and upon contract only' and further that,

² For more details on the duke's early management of his estates see Chapter Three.

³ PD, 3rd Series, vol.135, col.170, 13 Jul. 1854; see also, the Marquess of Clanricarde, PD, 3rd Series, vol.133, col.517, 18 May 1854; Lord Malmesbury, PD, 3rd Series, vol. 135, col. 138, 13 Jul. 1854.

whilst it would be but right to adopt a measure giving compensation to the tenant under a state of things that was now rapidly passing away, and in which it was but fair and just that his exertions and his outlay should be considered, let their compensation be retrospective, and retrospective only, and for the future let it depend entirely upon contract.⁴

Argyll's firm support for a system based upon individual contract rather than upon custom or abstract notions of tradition would be a theme throughout the remainder of his career; however, it was not a solution which the duke was able to apply to every situation with which he was forced to deal. Argyll would continue to speak frequently on the land question in Scotland, Ireland, England and Wales for the rest of his career, but in the 1850s and 1860s it was the question of Indian land reform that came to consume much of his time and energy and which gave him a new perspective on how land reform should be carried out throughout the empire. Argyll would become Secretary of State for India in 1868, but from the mid-1850s onwards he was the Liberal party's spokesman for India in the House of Lords. Although it is difficult to ascertain exactly when he was given this role, it would appear from the parliamentary debates that he was appointed spokesman in 1856 as, in that year, he made extensive contributions to debates on India.⁵ Argyll's interest in Indian affairs naturally covered a variety of topics from railway companies to military concerns to finances, however, it is the land question which is the theme of this chapter and it was the land question that the duke found himself tackling at the outset of his period in office.⁶

⁴ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 135, cols. 157-158, 13 Jul. 1854.

⁵ During the terms of Aberdeen and Palmerston's governments, the task of dealing with India had been officially undertaken by a member of the House of Commons, Sir C. Wood, first at the Board of Control and, after the office was created, as Secretary for India. Argyll seems to have acted as spokesman in the Lords during Wood's period of control of Indian affairs.

⁶ As well as his frequent contributions to parliamentary debates, Argyll later also published two articles on the recent history of India - George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, 'India under Lord Dalhousie', *Edinburgh Review*, 239, (1863), 1-42; 'India under Lord Canning', *Edinburgh Review*, 240, (1863), 444-97. Argyll's time at the India Office was one of both trouble and change for the country and there is a wealth of sources available for study at the British Library in London. It has proved to be beyond the scope of this study to undertake a complete evaluation of all of the aspects of Argyll's 'Indian experience'. Indeed there is probably enough material for an entire PhD thesis on Argyll's time as Secretary for India. In this chapter the issues relating to land tenure will be explored in greater depth, however, a complete study of the India Office papers would undoubtedly be beneficial in throwing more light upon the complicated questions which surround this topic.

There had been some initial concern in Britain that with a man like Argyll as Secretary for India and an Irish landlord like the Conservative Lord Mayo (1822-1872) as Viceroy, there would be little chance for meaningful land reform in India.⁷ However, Argyll did accept the need for change in India and gave his support to the recent Punjab Tenancy Act of 1868.⁸ Lord Mayo was influential in this decision and proved able to persuade Argyll that some form of security of tenure was necessary in order to prevent India becoming another Ireland. Crucially, Steele has suggested that Argyll was convinced that the Punjabi landlords were unable to base their claims on absolute proprietary right and that this separated their case from that of Irish and Scottish landowners. Argyll was thus able to treat India as a distinct case and support land reform there while still feeling justified in opposing measures closer to home.⁹ His decision was not an easy one, however, and he confided to Gladstone that the council were not easily persuaded of the Act's merits either. He wrote to his premier that his support for the act was somewhat reluctant and warned him that he could foresee difficulties ahead if reforms were pushed too far and too fast,

whatever course is taken will be discussed and condemned by one party or the other...there are no questions connected with Indian govt so difficult and complicated as those relating to the land tenures and every point is fought over by two opposite schools of theoretical opinion...on the whole the council are satisfied that we can't safely disallow the Act - but the great majority of the council are, I think, much opposed to its provisions.¹⁰

⁷ J.S. Mill (among others) expressed concern about the possibility of Argyll and Mayo's tendency to stand up for the rights of landlords rather than tenants getting in the way of reform, see, Steele, 'Ireland and the Empire in the 1860s', 68.

⁸ This was despite some initial misgivings, see, Steele, 'Ireland and the Empire in the 1860s', 68-70; BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44101, f.55-60, Argyll to Gladstone, 23 Aug. 1869; CUL, Add. MS. 7490, Argyll to Mayo, 2 Jul. 1869. The Punjab Tenancy Act was an important piece of legislation and one of its principle measures divided tenants into two distinct classes: tenants at will and occupancy tenants. Occupancy tenants would receive greater rights than before and it was hoped that this would increase investment and improve security of tenure for longstanding tenants – themes which would emerge in Britain during the 1870s and 1880s.

⁹ Steele, 'Ireland and the Empire in the 1860s', 69. Steele has used the extensive correspondence between Argyll, Mayo and Gladstone to make his case for this assertion, see especially, CUL, Add. MS. 7490, Argyll to Mayo, 1 Nov. 1869; BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44101, f.55-60, Argyll to Gladstone, 23 Aug. 1869. Steele also noted that when the 3^d duchess reproduced Argyll's letter to Mayo (1 Nov. 1869) in Argyll's memoirs, the part about the limitations of landlord right was omitted.

¹⁰ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44101, f.55-60, Argyll to Gladstone, 23 Aug. 1869.

To Lord Mayo the duke was much more candid. He wrote that, 'I am jealous and suspicious (I confess) of many of its provisions...I dislike the clause allowing tenants to sublet and subdivide, this is no necessary part of a Right of Occupancy and may lead to most mischievous subdivision.'¹¹ Although the duke was extremely uncertain about the prudence of enacting in India measures which were, in his eyes at least, potentially dangerous, he was not in any position to raise any substantial opposition. He had discovered that his new cabinet position was very different from that to which he had previously become accustomed and that his own powers were severely curtailed by both the Indian Council and, in some instances, by the government's man in India – the Viceroy.¹²

Argyll had initially been able to acquiesce to the Punjab Tenancy Act in its entirety however, it had an immediate and, for Argyll, extremely worrying consequence. The Indian legislation had a profound impact upon some members of the Liberal government and when, in 1869 and 1870, land reform was being considered for Ireland, the reforms made in India returned to haunt him. Whilst Argyll had been adamant that India was a completely separate case to Ireland or Britain as a whole, Gladstone and his supporters had very different ideas. In particular Sir George Campbell, the Indian civil servant, and J.S. Mill linked the situations in Ireland and India and advocated tenant right in both cases.¹³ Campbell was an experienced administrator and the historicist arguments in his *The Irish Land* had a significant impact upon Gladstone.¹⁴ However, Campbell was not the first to advance the historicist case. His ideas, as well as those of so many others, were heavily influenced by the new historicist school best exemplified by Henry Maine whose *Ancient Law*:

¹¹ CUL, Add. MS. 7490, Argyll to Mayo, 20 Sep. 1869; see also CUL, Add. MS. 7490, Argyll to Mayo, 1 Nov. 1869, where Argyll expressed his strong desire that landlords should receive easy access to courts to challenge occupancy rights and also his fear that the Act would promote an increase in population leading to a crisis similar to that in Ireland.

¹² See, BL, MSS Eur, IOR, Neg 4244, 'Note on the Punjab Tenancy Act', 4 Sep. 1869; CUL, Add. MS. 7490, Argyll to Mayo, 1 Nov. 1869; the limitations of the communications system meant that the letters between Argyll and his Viceroy routinely took over one month to arrive, thus the business of running the country was largely the duty of the Viceroy and the Council in India rather than the Secretary of State. Argyll found himself in more of an advisory role and indeed could often only offer retrospective advice on events that had already occurred.

¹³ J.S. Mill, *England and Ireland*, (London, 1868); This was the first time that Mill had explicitly connected the situations in Ireland and India, see Steele, 'Ireland and the Empire in the 1860s', 69-77; Sir G. Campbell, *The Irish Land*, (London, 1869); Campbell, Sir G., 'The Tenure of Land in India', in J. W. Probyn (ed.), *Systems of Land Tenure in Various Countries: A Series of Essays Published under the Sanction of the Cobden Club*, (London, 1881), 213-89.

¹⁴ R.C.D. Black, *Economic Thought and the Irish Question, 1817-1870*, (Cambridge, 1960), 55.

its connection with the early history of society and its relation to modern ideas had rehabilitated 'the customary and the collective at the expense of the contractual and the individual'.¹⁵ This idea was anathema to Argyll who later declared that,

Like many other noble words that are used without thought, the word Custom has suffered degradation. It has a venerable sound – reminding us of harmless ancestral usages, loved, regretted, and commemorated...But nothing can be more different from this high idea of Custom than that other idea which consecrates under the same name every stupid practice and every abuse which may creep in and establish itself among the ignorant or the weak.¹⁶

It was the historicists' emphasis on the value of these 'stupid practices' that so enraged Argyll and, by the time he penned the above, he had been waging a battle for many years to make his point of view understood. As his frustrations grew throughout the 1860s and 1870s, his arguments became more vehement and in one characteristic exchange, the duke told Gladstone,

I wish I had you here to see the cottier tenantry - the 'homologues' of those in the west of Ireland...you would see what stuff it is to talk about their 'improvements' and how insane it would be to take any steps to make them a permanent class of tenants in the country. There is no improvement, literally none, except when they have been got rid of, and the tenements converted into moderately sized farms...I am satisfied that the same economic laws prevail in Ireland and what emigration there has been among the small tenantry since the famine of '46 has been nothing more than the inevitable result of, and the only remedy for, the overpopulation which both here and in Ireland, arose under potato culture and the

¹⁵ Dewey, 'Celtic Agrarian Legislation and the Celtic Revival', 39-40; C. Dewey, 'The influence of Sir Henry Maine on agrarian policy in India' in A. Diamond, (ed.), *The Victorian Achievement of Sir Henry Maine: A Centennial Reappraisal*, (Cambridge, 1991); H. Maine, *Ancient Law: its connection with the early history of society and its relation to modern ideas*, (London, 1861); J. Shaw, 'Land, people and nation: historicist voices in the Highland land campaign, c.1850-1883', in E.F. Biagini (ed.), *Citizenship and community: Liberals, radical and collective identities in the British Isles, 1865-1931*, (Cambridge, 1996), 305-24.

¹⁶ Argyll, *Scotland as it was and as it is*, 397-8.

indefinite subdivision of holdings. All the phenomena are precisely the same in the two countries except the temper of the people...and I am sure the Irish have had abundant cause for bad temper but it would be a capital error to address ourselves to the remedy of this by fostering a tenure of land which is thoroughly bad - and the most insuperable impediment to agricultural improvement. It would do JS Mill a world of good to be compelled to administer a Highland estate for 10 years.¹⁷

However, Argyll was fighting a losing battle. In one letter, Gladstone argued fiercely against Argyll's objections to universal tenant right. He said that, 'I dare not say and shall never say in public, what I think of...Irish evictions, and some of them in particular' and he advised Argyll to read Sir Charles Dilke's *Greater Britain*, in order to understand the similarities between the Irish and Indian situations.¹⁸ This made it explicitly clear to a concerned Argyll that Gladstone had taken an entirely different view to him of the exceptional nature of Indian land reform. It now appeared to the duke that his acceptance of Indian reforms had set a precedent for land reform elsewhere. This was galling and was the very last thing that he had intended.

Nevertheless, Argyll was finally persuaded to accept the relatively moderate reforms that Gladstone pushed through for Ireland. This was not an easy decision, however, and the duke seriously considered resigning from the government.¹⁹ The inducements of continuing at the India Office and his concerns about whether anyone else could exert a restraining influence upon Gladstone if he left finally seem to have persuaded him to stay.²⁰ An extremely important factor in this decision was that he could see that the Bill would not end the power of all landowners, as he pointed out in a letter to Sir Roundell Palmer, 'it leaves every landowner free to raise his rent to any amount up to the point at which the tenant will prefer to say "I would rather go".'²¹ His support of the measure, however, was never more than lukewarm, and his private correspondence with Gladstone reveals his growing discontent with the government's

¹⁷ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44100, f.229-234, Argyll to Gladstone, 21 Sep. 1868.

¹⁸ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44538, f.41, Gladstone to Argyll, 5 Jan. 1870; Steele, 'Ireland and the Empire in the 1860s', 79.

¹⁹ Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, Vol. II, 252.

²⁰ For further discussion of this point see Chapter Six.

²¹ Argyll to Sir Roundell Palmer, 23 Apr. 1870, as quoted in, Argyll, *Autobiography and Memoirs*, vol. II, 265.

policies for Ireland and the land. For example, before the Irish Land bill had even been discussed in parliament, Argyll had informed the Prime Minister in no uncertain terms that he was,

against sitting in perpetual sackcloth and ashes because the Irish are violent and disaffected. It is true, no doubt, that Ireland formerly has been ill-used and ill-governed; and it is true also that the diseased condition of the country is due in some measure to those old sins of England. But for the last two generations at least there has been a general disposition to deal justly with Ireland, and not only a disposition, but a steady progress in legislative reform...I feel quite sure that the language of self-reproach and humiliation may very easily be overdone in the present state of Ireland, and that it is entirely thrown away on the spirit of Fenianism, and I think it tends to make men, already highly excited, expect sweeping changes, corresponding in importance to the depths of the repentance we express.²²

The duke had also written to Lord Granville (almost certainly knowing that the latter would pass on his views to Gladstone) denouncing the concept of tenant right.²³ Argyll's repeated warnings, however, fell on deaf ears and despite repeated attempts to put his point across to the party leader, Gladstone pressed ahead, pausing only to advise Argyll that his objections 'would melt of themselves could I get you to take that large dose of Irish History which I have sometimes prescribed, and which I have partially drunk myself.'²⁴ To a self-professed student of history like Argyll, this advice must have been somewhat insulting; however, he remained within the party and gave his, somewhat grudging acquiescence to the Bill as it was passing through the House of Lords, saying that he had,

come to the conclusion that this measure is just and necessary in itself; that it interferes unduly with no right of property, and that it is due in justice to the people of Ireland...I am satisfied that in the peculiar

²² BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44101, f.90-5, Argyll to Gladstone, 29 Nov. 1869.

²³ PRO, PRO 30/29/51, Argyll to Granville, 12 Nov. 1869.

²⁴ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44101, f.190-1, Gladstone to Argyll, 8 Jan. 1870.

circumstances of Ireland the system which has succeeded in England and Scotland is not at present applicable, although I trust it will be applied to that country in the course of future years.²⁵

As Steele has pointed out, everyone within the cabinet had known how far Gladstone had wanted to take his plans for reforming the land system in Ireland and everyone had known that the 1870 Act had been a compromise which had seen Gladstone give up his more radical ideas for change.²⁶ As his speech in the House of Commons on the introduction of the Bill had shown, Gladstone wanted to go much further, and his colleagues (especially Argyll and Robert Lowe) knew that they had probably only won a brief respite after which Gladstone would pursue his plans once more. However, as Argyll was soon to discover, it was not only Gladstone who was keen to revolutionise landholding in Britain – the Conservatives under Disraeli were soon to adopt the cause as well.

Before the Liberals slipped from power in 1874 however, Argyll had further duties to discharge at the India Office and he was faced with the question of land reform once again. The Rent and Revenue Acts for the North-West provinces caused him serious concern and prompted him to write a long letter to the new Viceroy, Lord Northbrook, stating his objections.²⁷ Parts of this letter are worth quoting in some detail as they illuminate the limits on how far Argyll was prepared to go with regard to Indian land reform. He was now more cautious after the recent influence that Indian reform had had upon Ireland and of particular concern to him was a measure to ‘protect’ Indian landowners by reserving certain rights to them if they sold their land. This measure was to be retrospective and its result would be, in Argyll’s eyes at least, that many of those who had bought land (particularly in the aftermath of the mutiny) would suddenly find themselves dispossessed of at least part of their holding and that protection would be given to ‘every idle or extravagant proprietor who may get into

²⁵ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 202, cols. 243-244, 16 Jun. 1870.

²⁶ Steele, ‘Ireland and the Empire in the 1860s’, 81.

²⁷ Lord Mayo had been murdered on the 12th February 1872. Argyll had tried to get his great friend Lord Dufferin appointed Viceroy after Mayo’s death, but had been overruled by Gladstone and had to accept Lord Northbrook instead, see BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44102, f.116-9, Argyll to Gladstone, 13 Feb. 1872; f.128-30, 19 Feb. 1872. Northbrook could not take up his position until the summer of 1872 and the position of Viceroy was temporarily filled by Francis Napier, Lord Napier (1819-1898) with whom Argyll would later have a troubled relationship, see below, 207-9.

debt, profess to sell his property, and then get the State to give him back so much of it as may keep him in a favoured position as a tenant.' In particular Argyll railed against the system as it would promote and extend the life of what he saw as the backward system of village ownership. As he explained to Northbrook,

I entertain very great doubts about some of the new provisions, especially about the new class created of privileged tenants...a general provision both for the past and for the future, that all bankrupt proprietors who have to sell their interest in their land shall have special 'protection' in order to keep some part of that right of property which they profess to sell, seems to me a provision against all reason, and very impolitic...could a better law be devised for weakening and destroying the motives which make men careful, industrious and thrifty?...the object seems to be to bolster up the system of village ownership against the natural causes which are at work to break it up and bring on the system of individual ownership.

Again, Argyll was faced here by the implications of the historicist view of land tenure and found himself largely powerless to oppose them. In addition to these concerns, he was furious that the government were considering granting fixity of rents for periods of up to thirty years. He professed astonishment that it was planned to pass legislation that would, 'prevent enhancement [of rent] for so long a term as thirty years, and which do[es] not recognise the increased value of produce (as distinguished from increased productiveness of land) as a legitimate ground of enhancement.' In a final attack on the reforms, Argyll set out his arguments in an outpouring of frustration and anger against the provisions of the Act,

Perpetual entails are being denounced in Europe by land reformers where those entails are in favour of large owners. You are now proposing to introduce them in India in favour of a pauper and bankrupt class of peasant proprietors! '*Heritable*, but not *transferable*, rights of privileged occupancy.' What is this but a bastard ownership, perpetually entailed upon a class which in the 'struggle for existence' which the progress of

society involves, and without which no progress is possible, is being found too weak to hold its own?²⁸

Although Argyll was able to argue his case for reducing the period of fixity of rent (getting the term down to ten years), he was unable to exert any influence to change the substance of the rest of the Act. When the Liberals went out of office the following year, and Argyll left the India Office, his disillusionment with the job and his party and his general fatigue was clear to see. In his final official letter to Northbrook he wrote of the overthrow of the government, saying, ‘personally I can’t regret it. Politically too, there are many compensations to me, as I am not a Radical, and many of the extreme joints of our tail had been wagging too much.’²⁹ With his term at the India Office over, Argyll could now turn his full attention to matters closer to home, and in particular to the burgeoning land question.

After the fall of the Liberals in 1874, Argyll had once more to contend with attempts to ‘meddle’ in the landholding system. The Agricultural Holdings Bill of 1875 put Argyll in a difficult position. On the one hand he was unhappy to see any interference in freedom of contract with regard to land – especially in England which could not, in his eyes, be designated as a special case like India or even Ireland. On the other hand, he was aware that the changes proposed were moderate and that the Bill would still give landowners the opportunity to make a counter-claim against their tenants for any compensation for improvements. In addition to this, Argyll was able to see to it that landlords would not be required to compensate for improvements which had been put in place by the tenant without prior notice being given to the landowner.³⁰ His unease was still apparent, but he finally agreed to support the Bill – his rationale being that it would do little harm as it was a permissive rather than a compulsory measure. In the House of Lords, an initially sceptical Argyll had stated that,

I can affirm that special contracts in respect to compensation for improvements are being adopted rapidly over numerous English counties...I do not say that they are all perfect; but I do say, that the very

²⁸ BL, MSS Eur, IOR, Neg 4238, Argyll to Northbrook, 17 Sep. 1873.

²⁹ BL, MSS Eur, IOR, Neg 4239, Argyll to Northbrook, 13 Feb. 1874.

³⁰ See Argyll’s suggestions to the House, PD, 3rd Series, vol. 223, cols. 942-956; 964, 15 Apr. 1875.

worst of them are better than any general Parliamentary contract you can possibly impose.³¹

And further that,

To restrict competition has been the endeavour of every class and every interest in turn. Each in succession has had its plea for special treatment and exceptional laws. Each class-interest has urged these pleas with the most perfect sincerity and simplicity of heart – “We are a class specially circumstanced. Our industry is exceptionally important to the country.” And what, during recent years, has been the reply of Parliament to all such pleas? It has not been any denial of the importance of the classes concerned, or of their industries to the public interests. On the contrary, it has been substantially this – “We admit your importance. We admit the immense interest we have in the success of your industry. But argument and experience have at last taught us, that both you and your industries will flourish best in the atmosphere and under the stimulus of freedom”...I hold that whatever legislative changes are made should be confined to changes simply in the presumption of the law, and that no attempt should be made to interfere with that complete freedom of contract which is the very breath of life in this, not less than in all other, industrial pursuits.³²

However, less than one month later, he had altered his opinions to such an extent that he was extolling the virtues of the Bill as one which, ‘we believe is based on sound principles and which will place landlords under strong and powerful motives to adopt agreements consistent with those principles.’³³ Argyll’s mind had been changed and it seems probable that this change was one of expediency rather than one of conscience. He could see that the Bill would change very little and that it stopped short of the compulsory regulation of which he had been so fearful, and he could also no doubt see that with-holding his support would have done his reputation (and that of

³¹ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 223, col. 956, 15 Apr. 1875.

³² PD, 3rd Series, vol. 223, cols. 952, 956, 15 Apr. 1875.

³³ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 224, col. 567, 13 May 1875.

his party) little good. The 1875 Act was of insufficient importance to make a stand upon, it was a piece of legislation which Argyll would rather have seen dismissed, but it was, in his mind at least, an acceptable compromise which lost landowners little in reality. He was able to express his true feelings however, in an article published in the *Contemporary Review* in which he stated that an Act of Parliament could never establish whether a tenant had been compensated for improvements by cheap rent, or by natural increase in his productivity, or by both. He further asserted that by legislating, the government would make owners demand the very highest rent that they could get – which, Argyll claimed, would harm those sitting tenants who had previously been given lower rents because of their reliability. In summary, he argued that,

The inevitable effect, therefore, of a compulsory law attempting to enforce in a particular form special security for a farmer's outlay, would be to deprive them universally of that other form of security which they now have in cheap or abated rents.³⁴

This is only one example of how Argyll the politician often had to compromise on things which Argyll the landowner held to be true. Expediency was something which had characterised many of Argyll's decisions regarding land. He had supported changes to the law of rural Hypothec, not necessarily because he saw the justice of the claims of its opponents but because, as he told his son, 'unless men of position agree to let go this law, none but a lower class...will get in for any Scotch county.'³⁵ On another occasion, he had objected violently to the 'monstrous injustice' of the Game Laws Bill of 1877, but had been able to exert his influence in committee to see an amendment passed which would reserve the right of killing game, as it already was, in favour of the landlord instead of transferring all or some of these rights to the tenant.³⁶ His amendment was passed against the express wishes of the chairman of the

³⁴ George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, 'The Agricultural Holdings Act of 1875', *Contemporary Review*, 27 (1876), 502-8.

³⁵ NLS, Acc.9209/1, Argyll to John, Marquis of Lorne, 11 Jan. 1873. The law of agricultural hypothec was a controversial matter, particularly in Scotland. It was restricted by the Hypothec Amendment (Scotland) Act 1867, and finally ended by the Hypothec Abolition (Scotland) Act 1880 where it was enacted that the landlords right of hypothec for the rent of land, including the rent of any buildings thereon, exceeding two acres in extent, let for agriculture or pasture, would cease.

³⁶ NLS, Acc. 9209/1, Argyll to Lorne, 8 May 1877; PD, 3rd Series, vol.234, cols. 1416-1427, 7 Jun. 1877

committee, Lord Rosebery, and it was supported by the vast majority of those members present (seventy-three in favour against thirty-four in opposition to his motion) and, Argyll stated to his fellow committee members that he felt that the 'object of this Bill was fair and equitable' and that 'the general scope and object of the Bill he considered very valuable, and in his opinion it was not inconsistent with the general law of Scotland.'³⁷ Argyll had compromised some of his beliefs, but he had not yet been forced to abandon any of his most closely held ideological views. This would all change in the following decade.

During 1879, Argyll's growing discontent with the Liberal party was matched by his increasing unease about the actions of his tenants. In a series of revealing letters to his son, he expressed his opinions as follows,

I am not very sorry to see the row between Hartington and Chamberlain. These rows are getting to be intolerable. But it will confirm the impression that the Liberals are not fit for office...I have such fits of the lows – of which I say nothing³⁸

and later that year, he complained that, 'things are serious as to rents...Gibbon has expressed his opinion that it would be wise to give abatements. The result of such would be a reduction of my income of £3000 on that estate alone.'³⁹ As well as this advice from estate managers, Argyll was soon to become increasingly aware of demands for rent reductions from tenants across his estates. Later in August, Argyll mentioned to his son that more of his tenants in Kintyre were agitating for reductions and that some of his best tenants were threatening to give up their farms if they did not have their rents reduced. This would not perhaps have been a problem some five or ten years previously, but as agricultural depression continued through 1879 and into the 1880s Argyll found that, 'the farms in Kintyre out of lease have generally no offers...what a change! I don't believe it will be permanent. But if it is it will be serious.'⁴⁰ That the demands for rent reductions were now coming from farmers as

³⁷ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 234, cols. 1417, 1419, 7 Jun. 1877

³⁸ NLS, Acc. 9209/1, Argyll to Lorne, 9 July. 1879

³⁹ NLS, Acc. 9209/1, Argyll to Lorne, 24 Aug. 1879. Mr Gibbon was the duke's chamberlain in Kintyre.

⁴⁰ NLS, Acc. 9209/1, Argyll to Lorne, 27 Aug. 1879; 31 Aug. 1879; 4 Sep. 1879.

well as crofters made Argyll increasingly concerned. He had told his old friend and colleague Lord Halifax that he was not going to simply accept such threats and that ‘all the weak kneed men as to capital will be weeded out’, but as agitation from the crofters gathered pace, the duke was forced to take serious notice of the potential problems.⁴¹

The troubles of managing his estate were intimately tied to the troubles facing Argyll in parliament. With the return of the Liberals in 1880, Argyll had hoped for some new stabilising influence to take over the reigns of the party. It seems more than likely that Argyll’s dearest wish was that his brother-in-law, Lord Granville, should be trusted with the formation of the new administration and that Gladstone and his ‘radical’ friends should be relegated to less senior roles.⁴² However, this was not how matters transpired and Argyll once more found himself working under Gladstone and relegated once more to the position of Lord Privy Seal. To his son, he expressed his feelings on the matter in some detail,

I have accepted the Privy Seal in preference to the President of the Council (which was offered to me) because as I could not get what I wanted most [i.e. India], which was almost due to Hartington, I wished to [*leave myself?*] as free as possible from tiresome detailed work in which I could take no real interest and also from attendance at all formal councils. So on the whole I preferred the Privy Seal, tho’ I am not quite sure I was right in some aspects of the question at least...I look with weariness on our work – having no longer the keenness I used to have – fearing much disagreement with colleagues – which worries me more than anything.⁴³

His worries would quickly prove well founded. Argyll had assured his friend Lord Dufferin that although he had, ‘not yet seen any symptoms of the Liberal leaders

⁴¹ Borthwick Institute, York, Halifax Papers, A4, Argyll to Halifax, 11 Sep. 1879.

⁴² Argyll, *Autobiography*, Vol. II, 346-348; There is an awkward gap in the correspondence between Argyll and his son during much of the vital period between February and April 1880 however, the duke did write enigmatically to his friend Lord Dufferin that he was disappointed with what had transpired and his disappointment does not seem to be confined to his own relegation to Lord Privy Seal, PRONI. D1071/H/B/C/95, Argyll to Dufferin, 28 Apr. 1880.

⁴³ NLS, Acc. 9209/1, Argyll to Lorne, 26 Apr. 1880. The words in italics were virtually unreadable in the original letter and I have inserted my ‘best guess’ as to what Argyll had written.

patting Parnell on the back...if they do so, I shall part company' and that his major concern was that, 'when men are incited to believe that they may take the property of others as their own, the doctrine is not unlikely to be widely accepted.'⁴⁴ Within a few months of this letter Argyll found himself at odds with his party leader over Gladstone's plans for Ireland.⁴⁵ The 1880 Compensation for Disturbance (Ireland) Bill caused Argyll the most serious problems of his career to date. Unable to support measures which would protect or compensate some tenants who were evicted for non-payment of rent, Argyll offered his resignation to Gladstone and set out his reasons in some detail. He did not believe that it would be a temporary measure or that it would do anything other than make the government look weak in the face of unlawful agitation, however, his biggest objection was that as a landowner he could not argue that, 'it is just to place in the hands of a legal court the power of compelling an owner to pay a fine of from five to seven years' rent to a tenant whom he may be compelled to remove for insolvency.'⁴⁶

Despite this antipathy towards the Bill itself and Argyll's own claims that he was completely disillusioned with the world of politics, a measure of his earlier ambition must have remained as he was persuaded by colleagues to withdraw this resignation and even spoke some words of support for a modified version of the Bill in the House of Lords.⁴⁷ Argyll probably knew that it would never pass through that House and, as such, he may have decided that it would be better to grudgingly support the Bill and remain within the party than it would have been to remove himself (and what he saw as his rational and stabilising influence) from the Liberals. It also seems highly probable that he knew that further attacks on landholding were approaching and he still clung to his earlier idea that he could hold back the forces of radicalism and exert a degree of pressure on Gladstone. To Dufferin again he wrote, 'I see that in resisting I shall ultimately stand alone. What I may do under those conditions I do not know. I wish and long to be out, but I have to consider the political position and the certainty

⁴⁴ PRO Northern Ireland, D1071/H/B/C/95, Argyll to Dufferin, 13 Jan. 1880.

⁴⁵ For more detail on Gladstone and his Irish policies see, A. Warren, 'Gladstone, land and social reconstruction in Ireland, 1881-1887', *Parliamentary History*, 2 (1983); Dewey, 'Celtic Agrarian Legislation and the Celtic Revival', 56-63.

⁴⁶ BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44104, f.177-80, Argyll to Gladstone, 14 Jun. 1880.

⁴⁷ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 255, cols. 78-94, 3 Aug. 1880

that Gladstone may be driven to extremes.’⁴⁸ Within months, Argyll’s notion of his own importance to his friend and party leader would face its final test.

The Irish Land Bill was to be the final straw for the duke. His opposition to ‘the three F’s’ was of such intensity that he felt impelled once more to offer his resignation – and this time he was not to be dissuaded. Argyll once again wrote candidly to his son about the developments in parliament and attacked Gladstone in particular as having,

laid down general propositions in which I agree. Then he has followed up with proposals which do not seem to me consistent. I am fighting tooth and nail. But how long I may be able to do so I don’t know...They say the Scotch tenants are getting excited and some of the worst men in Ireland are Scotchmen.

In the same letter he linked this Irish legislation with the fortunes of his own Scottish estates. For some time, Argyll had seen the disruptive effects of the possibility of Irish land legislation on his own tenants who had been withholding their rents and demanding reductions, now he saw that one of his long term plans – to sell the estate of Rosneath – was also in danger of being jeopardised. As he pointed out to Lorne, ‘possibly soon there may be no rental to sell!, if Parnell’s doctrines spread all over the kingdom...the Liberals are now talking of ownership of land being only the ownership of a rental – not of the land itself.’⁴⁹ As 1881 progressed, the duke’s crisis with his political colleagues came to a head and, after resigning in April of that year, Argyll finally found himself free of the shackles of the Liberal party.⁵⁰ However, his problems were by no means over. The 1880s would prove to be one of the most difficult periods in the management of his estate that the duke had ever faced and one to which he would often later refer as the ‘epoch of the fools.’⁵¹

⁴⁸ PRO Northern Ireland, D1071/H/B/C/95, Argyll to Lord Dufferin, undated letter (probably written during July 1880)

⁴⁹ NLS, Acc. 9209/1, Argyll to Lorne, 2 Jan. 1881. It is worth noting that the duke also used some extremely interesting arguments to defend his ideas about landholding– linking the system and his own ideology to evolution and science. These ideas have been explored in Chapter Seven.

⁵⁰ The period leading up to and encompassing Argyll’s resignation is covered in greater detail in Chapter Six.

⁵¹ Balfour, *Lady Victoria Campbell*, 160.

Almost as soon as Argyll resigned from the Cabinet, he began his campaign to discredit Gladstone and the Liberal party's land policy. He poured forth a torrent of criticism upon the path that his party were taking, arguing consistently that landowners must retain control of their affairs and that government had no right to interfere with their private business.⁵² In his later monograph *The Unseen Foundations of Society* Argyll expressed his opinion that,

the doctrine of Burke, often praised by Cobden, and since epitomized by Mr Morley, seemed to me the only sound doctrine – namely, this: that it is a “futile and mischievous system to deal with agriculture as if it were different to any other branch of commerce.”⁵³

This was perhaps the clearest and simplest statement of the duke's opinions and was an argument that Argyll emphasised time and again. He railed against the presumption that land should be treated differently to any other business venture and argued that it was only logical that landowners ‘should be left the most complete power in the selection of those to whom their land is to be let on hire’ and that as businessmen they must have the power to select only ‘those in whose personal character or skill they think they can safely trust’.⁵⁴ These were the powers which the duke saw being withdrawn from landowners by freedom of sale – one of the ‘three F's’ of Gladstone's Irish land legislation – and without these powers, Argyll argued, landowners could not continue to operate their legitimate business.

The duke was soon to find that the Irish Land Act's impact spread far beyond that island and that its influence during the ‘epoch of the fools’ was to threaten his own ‘legitimate business’. He had seen Indian land reform used to justify Irish land

⁵² From 1881 to 1885 Argyll was particularly busy writing articles on the ‘land question’ to various journals, his most notable works were, George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, ‘The New Irish Land Bill’, *Nineteenth Century*, 9 (1881); Argyll, ‘Agricultural depression’, *Contemporary Review*, 41 (1882), 177-94, 381-403; Argyll, ‘On the Economic Condition of the Highlands’, *Nineteenth Century*, 13 (1883); Argyll, ‘The Prophet of San Francisco’, *Nineteenth Century*, 15 (1884); Argyll, ‘A Corrected Picture of the Highlands’, *Nineteenth Century*, 16 (1884), 681-701; Argyll, ‘Land reformers’, *Contemporary Review*, 48 (1885), 470-79; Argyll, ‘Land tenure in Scotland’, *Edinburgh Review*, 161 (1885), 299-331; Argyll, ‘Capital and the improvement of Land’, *Nineteenth Century*, 18 (1885), 1003-10; Argyll, ‘A Moral Land Law’, *Fortnightly Review*, 41 (1887), 1-23.

⁵³ George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, *The Unseen Foundations of Society: an examination of the fallacies and failures of economic science due to neglected elements*. (London, 1893).

⁵⁴ Argyll, ‘Agricultural depression’, 193-4.

reform and was now aware that the recent Irish Land Act could have worrying implications for his own estates in Scotland. Land agitation was becoming increasingly evident across the Highland region as a whole and the tenants on the duke's estates were becoming increasingly restless.⁵⁵ When the Liberal government appointed a Royal Commission to examine the situation, Argyll was less than impressed. The evidence that Lord Napier and his fellow commissioners gathered during their tour of the Highlands and Islands uncovered a large number of complaints from crofters and cottars across the area as a whole and the evidence from the tenants on the Argyll estates proved to be no exception. As was the case across the area, complaints on Mull and Tiree in particular centred around the typical themes of past evictions, confiscations of common grazing pasture and high rents.⁵⁶ A noteworthy feature to emerge, however, is that of all the places that the Napier Commission sat, there were only six where the issue of high rent featured more prominently than the issue of land (confiscations of grazings, evictions, etc.) and three of these places – Iona, Tiree and the Ross of Mull – were part of the Argyll estates.⁵⁷ It is not the purpose of this study to examine the individual complaints of tenants on the estate; however, there are a number of themes which emerge from a consideration of the evidence of the Commission and it is well worth investigating these and the response of the 8th duke.

One theme which emerged from the evidence was that, in common with other areas in the Highlands, crofters and cottars were unwilling to blame the proprietor directly for any ills that they had suffered. A characteristic statement made by one tenant from Tiree was repeated many times by others from across the estates, this crofter claimed that it was his belief that, 'on the part of the proprietor...he is willing to hear and redress our grievances' and laid the blame for his condition firmly at the door of

⁵⁵ The crofters' war and the setting up of the Napier Commission are covered in detail in various other works, see particularly, E.A. Cameron, *Land for the People? The British Government and the Scottish Highlands, c 1880-1925*, (East Linton, 1996), 16-23; H.J. Hanham, 'The problem of Highland discontent, 1880-1885', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., 19 (1969), 21-66; Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community*, 131-84, I.M.M. Macphail, 'The prelude to the Crofters' War, 1870-1880', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, 49 (1974-5), 159-88; I.M.M. Macphail, *The Crofters' War*, (Stornoway, 1989).

⁵⁶ See particularly, N[apier] C[ommission] E[vidence], QQ. 33428-33700, 34373-34390, for evidence from Mull and Tiree crofters. There are, as may be imagined, numerous passages in the evidence of the Napier Commission which demonstrate the feelings of the crofters and cottars on these issues. In addition, the evidence given has also been discussed in numerous other publications. One author who made extensive use of the evidence is James Hunter in his *The Making of the Crofting Community*.

⁵⁷ Macarthur, *Iona*, 131.

factors past and present.⁵⁸ Whether this was a true statement of belief or simply a tactic being employed by crofters and cottars in order to protect themselves is a debateable point, but it does seem that Argyll did excite some respect (if not affection) from a number of his tenants – especially those whose lives had been altered for the better by the opportunities for improvement which his estate policies had opened up. There are a number of statements given to the effect that when tenants were able to address the duke directly, their difficulties were resolved by him personally, but that the factors often obstructed them and that the duke did not know what his estate managers were doing.⁵⁹

Argyll, however, was not a man to let estate managers pull the wool over his eyes. Without access to the official estate papers it is difficult to know how tightly the duke held the reins of his estates and the degree to which his managers held *carte blanche*; however, it would be inconsistent with Argyll's character if he had allowed his factors to set policy on his own lands. Additionally, the duke often wrote candidly to his son about decisions he had made regarding tenants and estate policy, and there is no sign in any of these letters that the duke was either out of touch with the workings of his estate or was inclined to be any more lenient than his factors.⁶⁰ It seems that the duke was undoubtedly behind most of the decisions made upon his estates. His policy during and after the famine years had been ruthless, and he was determined to carry on rationalising his estates.⁶¹ He was also determined that government should not upset his carefully laid plans. This determination can be clearly seen in the duke's response to the Napier Commission. With respect to the business of the Commission, Argyll can be seen as being less than helpful. He was unwilling to appear before the Commission and, it would appear that his factors (most probably under the duke's instruction) were also somewhat backwards about coming forwards with information. In one instance the duke's factor for Tiree and Mull, James Wyllie, told the commission secretary that, 'I will be engaged with my rent collections till the end of

⁵⁸ N.C.E., QQ.33428.

⁵⁹ One good example of this can be found in, N.C.E., QQ.33542, where tenants directly stated their belief that the duke's factors were misinforming the duke about what was being done on the estate.

⁶⁰ See particularly, NLS, Acc. 9209/1, Argyll to Lorne, 23rd April 1867 [which deals with evictions]; Argyll to Lorne, 15th January 1873 [which deals with organisation of lands]; Argyll to Lorne, 27th November 1873; Argyll to Lorne, 15th February 1876 [which deals with the duke withholding aid from islanders who had chosen a minister of whom Argyll did not approve.]

⁶¹ For details of the duke's earlier estate policy see Chapter Three.

July, and I do not well see when I can have this return completed, as there will be considerable trouble connected with it'⁶² and both Wyllie and Argyll additionally tried to provide only partial responses to the enquiries of the secretary regarding the number of tenants and cottars on the estate and about evictions that had taken place.⁶³ Although Argyll was willing to give firm assurances that none of his tenants would be penalised in any way for evidence that they gave, he was characteristically not content to remain quiet while his estate policies were being undermined. He clashed with Lord Napier, the chairman of the commission, on a number of occasions culminating most publicly in a heated debate carried out through the pages of *Nineteenth Century*.⁶⁴ He later attacked the report that the commissioners produced, pouring scorn on Napier's advocacy of the 'township' as a solution to the problems of the area and claiming that,

It is a grotesque misinterpretation of historical facts to confound primitive and semi-barbarous modes of cultivating land in wild and undivided pastures, or village customs for dividing cattle and plots of land, with any ideas of true communal institutions or communal independence.⁶⁵

Argyll disagreed with Napier's whole perception of the situation in the Highlands. It is vital to emphasise that, in contrast to the prevailing views of his time, the duke had a totally different notion of what crofting actually meant. For Argyll, crofting had never been meant to sustain a whole family without a supplementary form of income. He argued that the contemporary criticism of the small size of crofters' holdings was distorting their initial purpose and that crofters should not be regarded as small farmers but as labourers whose land supplemented their income from other sources.⁶⁶ However, the duke's arguments on this issue were largely swept aside, not least by Lord Napier who emphasised the difference between the feelings of an ordinary labourer to his allotment and the psychological tie between the crofter and his parcel

⁶² NAS, AF50/4/19/480, J. Wyllie to Malcolm McNeill, 25 May 1883.

⁶³ NAS, AF50/4/10/270, Wyllie to McNeill, 30 Apr. 1883; AF50/4/19/499, Argyll to McNeill, 1 Jun. 1883; AF50/4/23/573, Wyllie to McNeill, 6 Jun. 1883.

⁶⁴ Argyll, 'A Corrected Picture of the Highlands'; Lord Napier, 'The Highland Crofters: a vindication of the report of the Crofters' Commission', *Nineteenth Century*, 17 (1885), 437-63; Cameron, *Land for the People?*, 25-7.

⁶⁵ Argyll, 'Land tenure in Scotland', 323.

⁶⁶ Argyll, 'A Corrected Picture of the Highlands', passim.

of land.⁶⁷ Here Argyll was defeated by the historicist argument and, in his new position outside the inner circle of political power, it proved impossible for him to influence the direction of government policy.

To understand more fully the objections to land reform which had prompted the duke to resign it is essential to examine his motivations and beliefs. Argyll has previously been demonised by commentators and characterised as ‘the arch opponent of all land reform’.⁶⁸ It is tempting to see his opposition to the Government’s measures as the reaction of a desperate and self-interested landlord trying to retain his stranglehold on the privileges of his class. However, this of course is not the whole story. Argyll was proud of his heritage and certainly wanted to preserve the inheritance which he had received from his ancestors, however, his opposition to land reform was not based solely upon his pride or on pecuniary self-interest. His objections went far beyond this and touched upon what was without doubt one of his key beliefs – his assertion of the central truth of natural laws.

The duke had already developed his thoughts on these natural laws in response to the evolutionary arguments which were being promoted by Darwin, Wallace and others, and later used his interpretation of these laws to deliver a damning indictment on the ‘unfit’ condition of the inhabitants of the Outer Hebrides of Scotland.⁶⁹ For Argyll these ‘natural laws’ were not merely connected with evolution and land tenure but were also of incalculable value in formulating a way to restore the ‘shattered science’ of political economy.⁷⁰ The duke had long-held and firm views on political economy and had developed these throughout his career, however, by the 1880s his ideas had become completely divergent from those being espoused by his party leader.⁷¹ While it had been easy for Argyll during the early part of his career to agree with his colleagues on removing restrictions on trade and imposing restrictions on workers, it was impossible for him to consent to plans to alter relations between landlord and tenant in the 1880s which were based upon what he saw as an hysterical historicist

⁶⁷ Napier, ‘The Highland Crofters: a vindication of the report of the Crofters’ Commission’; Cameron, *Land for the People?*, 25-8.

⁶⁸ Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community*, 161.

⁶⁹ See above Chapter Seven; Argyll, ‘Isolation: or survival of the unfittest’, 1234.

⁷⁰ Argyll, *The Unseen Foundations of Society*, 2; Mason, ‘The Duke of Argyll and the Land Question’, 162-70

⁷¹ Dewey, ‘Celtic Agrarian Legislation and the Celtic Revival’, 30-70

reaction.⁷² The duke was a believer in the ‘cultural degeneration’ theory of human development and for him the idea of making laws based upon the customs of those who he saw as degenerates was ludicrous.⁷³ In fact, although he never alluded to this fact in his published writings, Argyll must have been acutely aware that he was witnessing something which actually supported his ‘degeneration’ theory: the savages were actually infecting civilisation with their barbaric customs – this surely was how the degeneration of cultured people spread.

Thus for Argyll what the government were doing by abandoning *laissez-faire* thinking and replacing it with an emphasis on historicism was effectively turning their backs upon hundreds of years of progress and handing over power to the unfittest in society. Argyll’s reaction may to some seem extreme, but he had been driven to these extremes by a recognisable change in Liberal party policy during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Clive Dewey has demonstrated that the abandonment of the free trade in land philosophy represented a fundamental change in ideology which saw agrarian custom put ahead of law and private property.⁷⁴ Argyll could not and would not accept this change and it was his own sincere belief in the established truths of political economy that prevented his acquiescence.

Argyll had begun to outline his views on the role of political economy in the land question before the crisis of 1881. Four years earlier he had penned a tract for the *Cobden Club* in which he had insisted that political economy (or at least Argyll’s version of it) was central to any understanding of the principles of land tenure. He had argued that landlord/tenant relations had to be seen as a purely economic bargain and that market competition was far more effective than any government interference in ensuring a fair system. As has been pointed out by John W. Mason, however, this stance seemed to put the duke in the same camp as moderate ‘free trade in land’ reformers, and this was not what Argyll was aiming for.⁷⁵ He thus added to his argument the caveat that contracts were at the heart of equitable and sustainable

⁷² Although the duke had agreed that legislation was morally necessary in order to protect the lives of factory and other workers and had been able to support changes to the Law of Hypothec in the 1870s, he was unable to see the justice of further measures designed to interfere between landlord and tenant; see PD, 3rd Series, Vol. 223, cols. 950-953, 15 Apr. 1875.

⁷³ See Chapter Seven.

⁷⁴ Dewey, ‘Celtic Agrarian Legislation and the Celtic Revival’.

⁷⁵ Mason, ‘The Duke of Argyll and the Land Question’, 155-7.

relations between landlord and tenant and that, once established, these contracts would be all that was required to ensure a fair system.⁷⁶ His aim was, of course, to persuade his readers (among them his parliamentary colleagues) that a wholesale change which would alter the basis of the entire land tenure system (and indeed wider property rights) beyond recognition was simply unnecessary and possibly dangerous. The duke argued that freedom of contract between both parties always resulted in a better system of protection for tenants while still ensuring the fulfilment of those rights and privileges which owners should enjoy. These rights were fundamental to Argyll, but he was quick to point out that his motivations were ultimately selfless. He repeatedly pointed out that all improvements in land tenure and all innovations in the farming system had come not from the occupiers of land but from the owners of the land and he insisted that if the owner's rights were stripped away from them, there would be no more improvements ever made.⁷⁷

The duke had previously made an attempt to get these ideas across in 1876 when, after the passage of the Agricultural Holdings Act of the previous year, he had outlined his objections to government interference in the 'business' of land. In an article published in the *Contemporary Review* he had rehearsed some of the arguments that he would later repeat and embellish in his numerous attempts to refute the claims of land reformers.⁷⁸ In this article Argyll began his long battle against 'the 3 F's' which land reformers advocated and tried to illuminate the fallacies (as he saw them) which his opponents used when talking of the existing system. His defence of his position was based not only upon a series of attacks upon these 'fallacies', but also on the logic of those who proposed them. He consistently strove to ridicule his opponents' position and had characterised the 3 F's in typically robust language,

⁷⁶ George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, *Essay on the Commercial Principles Applicable to Contracts for the Hire of Land*, (London, 1877), 15.

⁷⁷ What Argyll failed to mention, of course, was that it had not previously been worth tenants' while making improvements as they had received no compensation for them. After the passage of the Crofters' Act this changed as tenants now had some protection and could improve their land with confidence knowing that the benefits would not be taken from them, see A. Collier, *The Crofting Problem*, (Cambridge, 1953), 98; T.M. Devine, *Clanship to Crofters' War: the Social Transformation of the Scottish Highlands*, (Manchester, 1994), 233.

⁷⁸ George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, 'The Agricultural Holdings Act of 1875', *Contemporary Review*, 27 (1876), 497-521. This article was written before Argyll's resignation and is a good indication of the growing unease with which he regarded the actions of both political parties with regard to land reform.

The demand for what is called 'fair rents' is a demand that prices shall be cheapened by Act of Parliament in favour of the particular individuals who now hold farms in Ireland. The demand for 'fixity of tenure' is a demand that all other Irishmen shall be prohibited from dealing with owners for these coveted possessions. The demand for the right of 'free sale' by the present holders is a demand that no part of these Parliamentary privileges shall be passed on to any farmers coming after them.⁷⁹

The duke argued that people had no conception of what these 3 F's meant and that ordinary people were being beguiled and confused by the historicist interpretation of events which was increasingly being used to justify government interference. In particular he was at pains to point out that legislating on the principle of tenant right was completely at odds with the principles which had been consistently applied to other businesses, that in effect it was a return to the system of protection. It would protect,

a limited number of individuals from the competition, not of foreigners, but of their own countrymen and of each other...it will certainly not tend to make small ownership more profitable or more attractive to weight it with interferences of law which have long been abandoned as vicious in principle when applied to every other kind of business.⁸⁰

The duke saw that the historicist reaction was pushing orthodox political economic ideology aside. His argument against this was complex. In essence, he felt that by interfering at all in the processes of land tenure the government had implicitly recognised that land was a commodity and that its cultivation was in fact a business. Accepting this, he argued, it must also be accepted that legislation should then be motivated by the same concerns which prompted the government to interfere in any other business. As he told his colleagues at some length during a debate in the House of Lords,

⁷⁹ Argyll, 'The Agricultural Holdings Act of 1875', 512.

⁸⁰ Argyll, 'The Agricultural Holdings Act of 1875', 513-5.

We have placed restrictions on the hours of factory labour, because we found that a whole generation was growing up under conditions of the utmost moral and physical degeneration. We have put restrictions on labour in mines for the same reason. We have put other restraints on the management of mines for the protection of human life and health...At this very moment we are considering the necessity of further restrictions with a view to the saving of life at sea.⁸¹

Argyll's argument was that all restrictions that had been placed upon other businesses had been implemented for moral rather than economic reasons and that this was the only basis upon which governments should interfere in business transactions. He further supported his argument by referring to one of his own particular interests – that of free trade,

We have found it wise to repeal all laws whose object it was to regulate the price of anything or to secure the remuneration of any class. First we repealed all laws which attempted to regulate the price of labour...then we repealed all laws to regulate the price of manufactures; then all laws to regulate the price of food, or the price of money, or the price of ships.⁸²

All of these restrictions had been lifted, the duke argued, to secure purely economic results. Thus history had taught the parliamentary representatives of the country that, 'restrictive legislation for the attainment of purely economic ends is not only needless but injurious' and that it should never be attempted. This was, Argyll claimed, the true historical lesson which should be applied to the business of landholding. There was no moral argument, in his eyes, which allowed the government to apply any restriction to the complete 'freedom' between landlord and tenant which Argyll claimed existed. English farmers were not, he asserted, starving and they could not, he further claimed, be said to be under any restrictions when it came to negotiating contracts with their landlords. Indeed, competition between applicants for leases was the very thing which ensured progress in the agricultural world, and it was this competition which must, the duke proclaimed, be protected from outside interference

⁸¹ PD, 3rd Series, Vol. 223, cols. 950-951, 15 Apr. 1875.

⁸² PD, 3rd Series, Vol. 223, cols. 952-953, 15 Apr. 1875.

at all costs. Argyll further asked, if government interference was permitted in the realm of land laws, where would it end. He enquired of his fellow Lords, ‘when a labouring man goes to buy meat, and only offers 8*d* a-pound, what is it that deprives him of his liberty to secure the meat at that price, except this, that hundreds of other people are willing to give 10*d* or 1*s*?’⁸³

By interfering with a landlord’s freedom to negotiate with his tenants, Argyll claimed, the government was not only turning political economy on its head, they were actually using arguments supposedly grounded in ‘history’ which actually ignored the lessons of all parliamentary and legislative history. Additionally, they were ignoring the enormous benefits which the duke perceived in the existing situation – most particularly the benefit of personal attachment between landowners and tenants which, he claimed, resulted in ample compensations for the tenant in any agreement which was made between the two parties. In this, the duke was straying somewhat from the implications of legislation for England and moving onto his area of more particular interest, namely Scotland. He passionately believed, and claimed that he knew from personal experience, that landowners were already complying with the spirit of compensation for improvements in the arrangements which they made with their tenants. Landlords across Scotland, he asserted, routinely let their crofts and farms at a figure substantially lower than the market value to any sitting tenants whom they trusted or to ‘local, reliable men’. This cheaper rent, Argyll claimed, was surely compensation enough for any improvements which the tenant may make, and he further argued that diligence and hard work on the part of the tenant would fully ensure that no situation would arise through which they would lose their possession.⁸⁴

This, of course, was an idealised picture of the situation given by a landowner and Argyll offered no evidence other than anecdotal to support these claims. Indeed, the management of his estates, as demonstrated in Chapter Three, casts some considerable doubt on the ubiquity of these claimed benefits. Whether Argyll believed in the veracity of what he was saying is difficult to judge. He certainly felt that he was, and always had been, a paternalistic landowner, and he did earnestly believe in the overwhelming merits of the system of landholding as it stood. This

⁸³ PD, 3rd Series, Vol. 223, cols. 950-953, 15 Apr. 1875.

⁸⁴ Argyll, ‘The Agricultural Holdings Act of 1875’, 502-5

belief was buttressed by his certainty that it had always been and would always be property owners who created wealth – wealth which was then dispersed through the population as a whole. This, Argyll claimed, was the ‘natural law’ which had operated throughout history and across nations. This ‘law’ had led to the observable development of the economy and society of Great Britain. It was the law of progress and it could, he claimed, be seen on any Highland estate,

the moment any ‘Crofter’ becomes exceptionally industrious and exceptionally prosperous, he earnestly desires, above all things, that his grazings as well as his arable land, should be fenced off from those of his neighbours, so that he may have the exclusive use of his own faculties in the better tillage of his land and in the better breeding of his stock.⁸⁵

What the crofter craved, Argyll argued, was individual possession of the land that he worked and it was possession that had driven all of the economic growth of the world since time immemorial. In his major treatise on political economy, *The Unseen Foundations of Society*, Argyll echoed and elaborated these earlier arguments and, in so doing, outlined his own plans for the restoration of the ‘shattered science’ of political economy.⁸⁶

The subtitle of the duke’s treatise was *An Examination of the Fallacies and Failures of Economic Science Due to Neglected Elements* and it was upon these ‘neglected’ elements that Argyll based his arguments. He railed against the perception of possession of property as an evil and appealed to his readers to consider the historical reasons for the development of such a system. Returning to his familiar theme of Natural Law the duke tracked the progress of society through the system of property ownership. He singled out the Romans as a shining example of a society that had become successful because they offered protection to the propertied classes – they understood the natural order of things and used this to build their empire. Everywhere the Romans had gone, the duke argued, they had carried with them and imposed their system of laws: a system which had at its very heart the principles of individual rights

⁸⁵ George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, *Scotland as it was and as it is*, (Edinburgh, 1887), 445.

⁸⁶ Argyll, *The Unseen Foundations of Society*, 2.

and protection of property. He contrasted their power to that of the Persians or the Turks who had instead used their despotic regimes to restrict the freedom of their most industrious citizens and who had used their military might, not to protect the rights of their own property but to mindlessly dispossess their foreign enemies.⁸⁷

Thus, Argyll asserted, all that was known of human history proved that the principle of protection of possession had strengthened those ancient nations who adhered to it while those who ignored it had paid the price. This right of possession was one of the ‘neglected’ elements to which the duke drew attention, but there was another major factor upon which he laid much stress – the power of the mind. For him, this was the most neglected feature of economic arguments and *The Unseen Foundations of Society* was written largely to correct this error. Argyll was bewildered by the insistence that the sources of wealth could be defined solely as ‘land, labour and capital’ with no account taken of the influence of mental powers on the process. Those who had traditionally owned property, the duke insisted, had not come upon it by chance or by luck but because, in a world where men were created unequal in their mental and physical powers, some had risen above the rank and file and had been able to protect their weaker fellow humans by their own exertions. This was how private property had developed and, for Argyll, it was decisive proof of the influence of mental powers in the determination of human society.⁸⁸ John W. Mason expresses the whole tone of the duke’s writing succinctly when he states that,

A kind of suffused Darwinism and Old Testament austerity runs throughout Argyll’s book: man fights man for territory so that he can wrest from nature the necessities of life by the sweat of his brow. Nothing is won easily. The very possession of land denotes the successful outcome of a fierce struggle and is the furthest remove from what he sees as the radical or socialist idea of illicit gain.⁸⁹

Of course, *The Unseen Foundations of Society* did not burst forth spontaneously upon an unsuspecting world, it was a reaction by the duke to the new (and to him

⁸⁷ Argyll, *The Unseen Foundations of Society*, 146.

⁸⁸ Argyll, *The Unseen Foundations of Society*, 104-12.

⁸⁹ Mason, ‘The Duke of Argyll and the Land Question’, 164.

dangerous) doctrines being espoused by socialists and radicals. As he told Earl Grey in 1892, 'what a chaos Economic science is in now! Proposals daily made worthy of the dark ages and sensible men not seeing the folly of them.'⁹⁰ In particular, the 'dark age' proposals of Henry George had prompted Argyll to reply in kind, however, before he could directly attack George, the duke had more economic 'myths' to slay.

The first of these was the Ricardian theory on rent. For Argyll, this was a personal crusade as 'Fair Rent' had been one of the 3 F's which had hit him hardest during the 1880s.⁹¹ The duke ridiculed the idea that it was possible (as Ricardo's doctrine implied) to practically distinguish between land in a state of nature and land which was truly cultivated.⁹² Instead he returned to his premise that the business of land was the same as any other business and that it followed that supply and demand should be the primary factors in determining rent. This was a familiar argument that the duke had been expounding for some considerable time. As we have seen he had earlier claimed that competition among tenants to secure land was a positive factor in the improvement of their lives. It was, in many ways, survival of the fittest: land was worth whatever the current market led someone to offer for it, and the best people would thus be able to consistently improve their lives by moving up from small crofts to small farms and onwards by developing the skills and saving the capital necessary to succeed. Landowners had to live by supply and demand too. If the market was slow then they had to accept lower rents or risk not letting their farms at all. This meant that there was, for Argyll, no such thing as 'unearned increment' as landowners and other businessmen could justify their profits as accruing through the power of their own vision. Landowners thus deserved increased profits when they had turned their estates into economically viable concerns (as the duke believed he had done) just as much as a businessman deserved a larger income when he had built his business into a successful franchise. They took the risks and could therefore expect to enjoy the benefits.⁹³

⁹⁰ University of Durham, Earl Grey Papers, Argyll to Grey, 30 Nov. 1892.

⁹¹ For details of the reductions of rent imposed by the Crofters Commission on the Argyll estates see below, 226.

⁹² For a detailed discussion of theories of rent and land tenure generally see, U. Vogel, 'The Land-Question: A Liberal Theory of Communal Property', *History Workshop Journal*, 27 (1989), 106-35.

⁹³ Argyll talks of this idea throughout *The Unseen Foundations of Society*, see especially, 430-51.

Of course this all looked very impressive on paper, however. the duke neglected to mention that not all landowners would willingly reduce rents in times of agricultural depression. His own estate management policies in the 1840s and 1850s opens this theory to considerable doubt.⁹⁴ Additionally, despite his protestations about the ‘fallacy’ of unearned increment, the duke had certainly made considerable profits from farms with which he had had little or no involvement, as he admitted privately to his wife in 1871, ‘we are to have a good rise on the Glens Farm in Mull, at the upper end of Loch Baa from £450 to £750 – J.S. Mill would take it all from us – for there has been no outlay!’⁹⁵ It was these realities which had, in part, resulted in the land agitation of the 1880s and which had forced the duke to defend himself and his class in the first place, and his partial and biased defence did not go unnoticed.⁹⁶

Argyll’s opposition to John Stuart Mill went beyond the latter’s thoughts on ‘unearned increment’. The duke was also anxious to dispel the ‘myth’, which Mill and others had espoused, that land was a ‘natural monopoly’ in contrast to other forms of property.⁹⁷ This was anathema to Argyll: not only were the government refusing to treat agriculture as they would other business, but it was now being asserted by Mill that land should not be treated like any other type of property. The idea of land as a natural monopoly was simply ludicrous to the duke who had early on set out his objections as follows,

If an article, however rare or limited, is open to the acquisition of all who can give its value, it is simply a misapplication of language to call it a monopoly...the letting value, therefore, of agricultural land is regulated by the price of articles in which there is absolute freedom of trade. In other words, the value of that which is described as a monopoly is

⁹⁴ During the famine period Argyll had raised rents across his estates, see Chapter Three.

⁹⁵ British Library, Mss Eur, [I]ndia [O]ffice [R]ecords, Neg 4244, Misc. Correspondence, Argyll to Elizabeth Leveson Gower, 1st November 1871.

⁹⁶ Even sympathetic reviewers of Argyll’s work saw the flaws in his arguments and the ‘inwardness’, as one commentator described it, of his theories, see W.S. Lilly, ‘The Unseen Foundations of Society’, *The Quarterly Review*, 176 (1893), 404-32.

⁹⁷ For more on J.S. Mill, unearned increment and monopolies see, J.E. Cairns, ‘Political Economy and Land’, in *Essays in Political Economy, theoretical and applied*, (London, 1873); Vogel, ‘The Land Question’ 115-20; B. Price, ‘Mr. Mill on Land’, *Blackwoods Magazine*, (July, 1871), 30-45; J.S. Mill, *Principles of Political Economy. Collected Works*, (London, 1965).

determined by the value of produce in which there is no monopoly at all.
but is subject to unlimited competition.⁹⁸

One man, during the 1880s, attempted to bring together some of these strands of thinking and formulated a policy which could not have been more opposed to Argyll's own beliefs. This was the American land reformer Henry George whose writings and speeches captured the imagination of so many people desperate for some change.⁹⁹ *The Unseen Foundations of Society* was, of course, written as an attempt to completely discredit George and the duke's deprecation of Ricardo was an integral part of this plan. However, an earlier work penned by Argyll was even more explicit in its denunciation of George's *Progress and Poverty*. This was the duke's famous article entitled 'The Prophet of San Francisco'.¹⁰⁰ Interest in the subject had reached an extremely high level by the middle of the 1880s and an advance notice that the duke would be publishing this article had created a run on the journal, *Nineteenth Century*, resulting in the issue being oversubscribed before it even emerged from the press.¹⁰¹ When it appeared, the article was an extreme, and in places vitriolic, personal attack upon George and his views. Argyll criticised and mocked what he called George's 'childish logic and...profligate conclusions' and cast him as 'a Preacher of Unrighteousness', reducing his arguments on national debt and land nationalisation to the theory that 'whenever "the people" see any large handful in the hands of anyone, they have a right to have it – in order to save themselves from any necessity of submitting to taxation.'¹⁰²

Argyll dismissed George's ideas on the 'single tax' and was quick to use his experiences both at home and abroad to back up his own assertions. The duke's difficult decisions on land tenure in India had previously come back to haunt him when the government had begun adopting exceptional measures (like those Argyll

⁹⁸ Argyll, 'The Agricultural Holdings Act of 1875', 498-9.

⁹⁹ Henry George has been the subject of a number of biographies, see Henry George jr., *The Life of Henry George*, (New York, 1943); E.P. Lawrence, *Henry George in the British Isles*, (Michigan, 1957); see also, Newby, "'Shoulder to shoulder?": Scottish and Irish land reformers in the Highlands of Scotland, 1878-90', 168-76.

¹⁰⁰ George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, 'The Prophet of San Francisco', *Nineteenth Century*, 15 (1884), 537-59. This was reprinted in a pamphlet entitled *The Peer and the Prophet: being The Duke of Argyll's 'The Prophet of San Francisco' and the reply of Henry George entitled, 'The Reduction to Iniquity'*, (London, no date).

¹⁰¹ Lawrence, *Henry George in the British Isles*, 72.

¹⁰² Argyll, 'The Prophet of San Francisco', 549-50.

had grudgingly approved in India) for Ireland and England in the 1870s.¹⁰³ Now, however, the duke's Indian experience gave him the ideal example, as he saw it, of how land nationalisation would prove fatal to progress. Other authors had already cited the examples of Belgium and Russia as proof that land reform did not result in either proliferation of good sized small-holdings or a more prosperous peasant class, and Argyll was able to develop this theme from his own knowledge of Indian affairs.¹⁰⁴ Only in Lower Bengal, the duke stated, was there any sign of prosperity and this was solely due to the fact that the land was in the hands of a class of private landowners. The rest of the country was not so fortunate and he claimed that,

India is a country in which, theoretically at least, the state is the only and universal landowner, and over a large part of it the state does actually take to itself a share of the gross produce which fully represents ordinary rent. Yet this is the very country in which the poverty of the masses is so abject that millions live only from hand to mouth, and when there is any – even a partial – failure of the crops, thousands and hundreds of thousands are in danger of actual starvation.¹⁰⁵

This, Argyll stated, would be the result if the power, patronage and protection of landowners was removed in Britain. There would be no-one to aid and educate the crofters and small farmers apart from an anonymous state machine which could not possibly fill the local void which would be left if landowners disappeared. Argyll's view of the industry and intelligence of many of these tenants had already been (and would continue to be) amply demonstrated in a number of his publications.¹⁰⁶ He was certain that, if the state removed the benefits of the controlling, discerning and all-powerful minds of individual landowners, the country would ultimately descend into chaos and poverty.

¹⁰³ see above, 193-98.

¹⁰⁴ For these arguments about Belgium and Russia see, H. Merrivale, 'Essays of the tenure of Land', *Edinburgh Review*, (October, 1871), 454, and, T. Mitchell, 'The Russian Land Laws and Peasant Proprietors', *Quarterly Review*, (April, 1881), 446-62.

¹⁰⁵ Argyll, 'The Prophet of San Francisco', 555.

¹⁰⁶ Argyll's views of the people who lived and worked on the Western Isles of Scotland are perhaps best expressed in his 'Isolation: or survival of the unfittest', 12-34, which is discussed in Chapter Seven. This theme also runs through his, *Scotland as it was and as it is*.

Despite his repeated and impassioned attempts, Argyll failed in his attempt to restore the ‘shattered science’ of political economy. His key argument that it was the mind of the individual rather than the land itself which was the essential economic resource was too dependent upon a concept of economy in which free agency was paramount. His theory took too little account of the growing popular and intellectual movement in economic theory towards a more interventionist and ‘social’ approach. The duke was, almost from the start, fighting a losing battle. His political economy was a thing of the past and new men with new ideas were abandoning *laissez faire* principles in favour of more active policies. In essence, Argyll’s arguments would only ever convince the converted: fellow landowners or products of the old school of economics. However, these men were not the force in politics that once they had been. Men like Joseph Chamberlain and G.O. Trevelyan were pressing for more aggressive legislation and the Liberal party was being led, as Argyll saw it, by these ‘radicals’ who had taken the reins of the party from its leader. He told Gladstone in 1885 that, ‘I don’t envy you the team you seek to drive!’ and hinted repeatedly that his old friend was losing control of his cabinet members.¹⁰⁷ However, this did little to help Argyll in his struggle for support. By the time *The Unseen Foundations of Society* was published, the duke was in his seventies and few familiar faces remained in Parliament or indeed anywhere else to support or augment his theories. The challenge to political economy was being brought by young men of a different generation and Argyll as the ‘old fossil’¹⁰⁸ of parliament was largely powerless to combat them.

Despite this observable lack of success, it is vital to note that it was largely due to Argyll that, as J.W. Mason points out, ‘the debate on the land question was not hopelessly one-sided, with all the intellectual armoury on the side of the reformers.’¹⁰⁹ Argyll was acutely aware of the isolated position in which he stood and was anxious to gather support from other landowners as he told A. J. Balfour,

¹⁰⁷ BL. Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44106, f.49, Argyll to Gladstone, 6 Nov. 1885; f.62, .9 Dec. 1885; f.72-5, 18 Dec. 1885.

¹⁰⁸ This was what Argyll’s former friend and confidante, Granville, labelled him as in 1886; BL. Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44179, f.98-9, Granville to Gladstone, 1 May 1886.

¹⁰⁹ Mason, ‘The Duke of Argyll and the Land Question’, 168.

I am anxious to form an association to meet and contradict the continual lies as to fact told by the various new land leaguers. I can't do this work alone. It would occupy my whole time. As yet in England and in the lowlands, the enemy is only working by literature and the press to undermine opinion. In the Highlands they have done it and are within measurable distance of civil war. It will spread quickly. I want an association not committing any man against any reform but engaged to set forth the truth - to contradict lies - and generally to put our case before the public. An association with such objects might be called 'the landowners truth defence association' or some little marking that we aim mainly at all facts being properly stated and all lies properly contradicted.¹¹⁰

The duke wanted help and wished to be relieved from his position as a lone voice in the wilderness. He had earlier told his son that he was trying to write on philosophy but was, 'interrupted by having to write and read on these eternal land questions on which Gladstone's lawless measures have upset everybody's mind.'¹¹¹ However his efforts met with a poor response and he lamented the idleness of his fellow proprietors,

I called a meeting of all who would come to Stafford House last July. But none came. It was an unlucky day – for the races & c. I think that by an annual subscription (each) of £10 we might get up an office – the sec. should be a man of literary ability able to wield a good pen. Will you consult Salisbury and others and try if we can get up a good strong association...we are too isolated and have no organisation.¹¹²

Without his prominent cabinet position, the duke seemed less able to rally support. Although he had led a delegation to the Home Office where he tried to refute claims that Crofters were subject to reprisals for giving evidence to the Napier Commission, it was Donald Cameron of Locheil who eventually organised and led the well known

¹¹⁰ BL, Arthur Balfour papers, Add. 49800, f.3-6, Argyll to Balfour, 27 Oct. 1884. A.J. Balfour was related to Argyll through the marriage of Argyll's daughter, Frances, to Balfour's younger brother, Eustace.

¹¹¹ NLS, Acc. 9209/1, Argyll to Lorne, 29 Dec. 1882.

¹¹² BL, Arthur Balfour papers, Add. MS 49800, f.3-6, Argyll to Balfour, 27 Oct. 1884.

Inverness Conference of landowners in 1885.¹¹³ Argyll's frustration increased throughout the decade and he poured some of this into his publication, *Crofts and Farms in the Hebrides*, which was written as a direct response to the investigations of the aforementioned Napier Commission. This tract had originally been a long letter which Argyll had asked Lord Napier to include in the evidence of the commission. When Napier did not do this, Argyll decided to publish the tract himself and answer his critics in his own particular manner. It is a powerful piece of writing and is based not only on Argyll's own estate records and reminiscences, but also on the family estate papers stretching back a number of generations. Indeed, *Crofts and Farms in the Hebrides* stands out as an extremely important piece of historical evidence which has been under utilised in studies of the Highland land question. It is one of the very few published examples of the landowners' side of the story and no study of the evidence of the Napier Commission can be complete without reference to this tract. In it, Argyll mounted a ferocious attack upon those tenants who had complained to the Commission and tackled each of their grievances in turn – answering each one and ridiculing those who had made the accusations. In a typically scathing attack, he finished by stating that,

I have seen a man so influenced, in a room in Princes Street, Edinburgh, made to believe that he was at a market and that a piano in the room was a horse for sale. Possibly something of this nature may account for the dream of the tenants on the three farms in the north end of Tyree, that they are suffering from “evictions”, when not one has ever taken place; that their pasture has been taken from them, when not a single acre has ever been subtracted from the possessions; that they are surrounded by “sheep runs”, when they are really surrounded by crofters like themselves; and that the very existence on the island of a successful dairy farm is the cause of all evil and of all poverty.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Cameron, *Land for the People?*, 21, 28-31; Macphail, *The Crofters War*, 169. The duke did attend the meeting of proprietors in London in November 1884, but was unable to attend the January conference through ill-health and thus did not contribute to the resolutions adopted there, *Scotsman*, 15 Jan. 1885, 7.

¹¹⁴ Argyll, *Crofts and Farms in the Hebrides*, 60-1.

While the duke was using these arguments in an attempt to win the ideological battles over the 'land question', he was faced with the increasing threat of lawlessness on his own estates. The 'land war' in the western Highlands and Islands has attracted much attention in other publications.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, it is interesting to examine how Argyll expressed his own opinions on events and it is to the candid letters which he wrote to his eldest son that we may again turn to understand events from his perspective. As stated earlier, Argyll had been concerned for some time about problems with some tenants on his estates. These problems, however, would become his primary concern in the period between 1881 and 1886 and his concern would soon turn to anger and astonishment at the actions of both the government and his tenants. After his resignation in 1881 Argyll had complained that the 'cult' of Gladstone's personality had reached such proportions that he could 'carry anything he chooses'.¹¹⁶ This fear intensified over the next few years, and was amplified by the actions and claims of his tenants who were making demands that an exasperated Argyll described as 'such trash'.¹¹⁷ Hopes in 1882 that a good harvest would go some way to quieten the crofters' concerns proved short lived and by December of that year Argyll was deeply concerned and complained privately that, 'I am so disgusted with Liberalism just now that I don't care about them. The danger is that some radical may start appealing to the greed of tenants who wish to possess the landlords' property...I feel that may spring up at any moment.'¹¹⁸

These fears proved prophetic and it was under these circumstances that the aforementioned Napier Commission had arrived on the Argyll estates to take its evidence. However, as is well known, the final report of the Commission did not form the basis of the Act which the government would decide to implement – the Act itself would be more heavily based upon the 1881 Irish Land Act over which Argyll had resigned from government. Predictably enough, this was a measure which found little favour with the duke. He chastised the government for their foolish attitude and claimed that attempts to alter the system of land tenure would make the entire

¹¹⁵ For coverage of events in the highlands at this time see particularly, Cameron, *Land for the People?*, 16-39; Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community*, chs. 8-10; Macphail, *The Crofters War*; Macphail, 'Gunboats to the Hebrides'; Mason, 'The duke of Argyll and the land question in late nineteenth-century Britain', 149-70.

¹¹⁶ NLS, Acc. 9209/1, Argyll to Lorne, 6 Apr. 1881.

¹¹⁷ NLS, Acc. 9209/1, Argyll to Lorne, 15 May 1884.

¹¹⁸ NLS, Acc. 9209/1, Argyll to Lorne, 29 Dec. 1882.

Highland area into an economic black hole. Taking the island of Lewis as a potent example, he asserted that the condition of that island,

is the condition to which the whole of the Highlands would have been reduced if both the people and the proprietors had not taken warning in time. And this is the condition to which they would be reduced again, if they were to listen to those who would arrest the progress of civilisation and of improvement by establishing in the Highlands another population like that which is now living, half-starved as we are told, in the hovels of Donegal and Kerry.¹¹⁹

In a notably vitriolic and sarcastic piece of writing Argyll would later ridicule those who sought to reform land tenure and, particularly, those who advocated reducing or even abolishing rents for those whose land did not afford them a full means of living. In 'A reply to our Appellant', Argyll noted that it was not explained,

how far bad cultivation is to be admitted as a cause of that insufficiency in produce which ought to be counted as entitling to exemption. Rents abated in proportion to the 'three I's', Ignorance, Idleness, and Impecuniosity – this is indeed a marvellous prescription for the improvement of a country!¹²⁰

These ideas were anathema to Argyll, but all of his efforts could not stop the *Crofters Holdings (Scotland) Act* being passed in 1886. Argyll saw this Act as a direct and obvious effort to bribe the newly enfranchised voters in the Highlands – it seemed that all of his worst fears were coming to pass and that his earlier warnings to his son in 1884 that, 'the government would do nothing...to offend the new voters at this moment. Such is "Liberalism" now!',¹²¹ had been accurate. In desperation, Argyll

¹¹⁹ Argyll, 'On the economic conditions of the Highlands of Scotland', 1978.

¹²⁰ George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll, 'A Reply to our Appellant', *Contemporary Review*, 55 (1889), 17. The 'appellant' was Frederic Harrison (1831-1923) philosopher, positivist and supporter of the Trade Unions, who had previously written criticising the Liberal Unionists' attitude and had also advocated that no man should pay rent on land if that land did not supply a full living to him. Needless to say, this was not an idea to which Argyll was favourably disposed!; F. Harrison, 'An Appeal to Liberal Unionists', *Contemporary Review*, 54 (1888), 769-73; F. Harrison, 'A Rejoinder to the Duke of Argyll', *Contemporary Review*, 55 (1889), 301-17.

¹²¹ NLS, Acc. 9209/1, Argyll to Lorne, 21 Oct. 1884.

spoke out against the Bill as it was passing through the House of Lords, saying that, 'on its merits, the Bill might be denominated by a new title. It would be no travesty...to call it a Bill to arrest agricultural improvements in certain counties in Scotland.'¹²² However, Argyll could do little to prevent the Bill becoming law and the Crofters Act would prove not the only matter of concern for the duke.

During 1886 events on the Argyll estates took a turn for the worse and the duke was forced to deal with a number of his Tiree tenants who had taken matters into their own hands by preventing a tenant from taking possession of the large Greenhill farm. Argyll was enraged. The tenant in question was actually a crofter who, through hard work, had managed to raise the money and acquire the skills needed to take possession of a large farm. This was exactly the kind of tenant that Argyll had been trying to create through all of his reforms on the island and his plans were now being ruined by, in his opinion, less industrious tenants who wanted the farm divided among themselves. Lurid descriptions of events on the island printed in *The Scotsman* panicked the duke and the government enough for gunboats to be sent to the island. The events which unfolded are well covered by other authors and need not be reiterated here.¹²³ What is important here is to emphasise the effect which such lawlessness had upon the duke's perception of his tenants. The tenant of Greenhill was eventually reinstated and those who had seized his land were imprisoned, however, the impact of events upon the duke was marked. He began to distance himself still further from his tenants and it was in this climate of mutual distrust that the Crofters' Commission arrived on the Argyll estates. Argyll had reduced rents across his estates in 1884, however, when the commission arrived at the various islands rents were reduced and cancelled on a large scale.¹²⁴ More than 30% of rents were further reduced and more than 60% of arrears were cancelled across the county of Argyll as a whole and, as the major landowner in the area, the properties of the duke himself were heavily affected.¹²⁵

¹²² PD, 3rd Series, vol. 305, col. 1480, 20 May 1886.

¹²³ The whole incident is covered succinctly in Macphail, *The Crofters War*, 186-92, and it is also touched upon by James Hunter in his, *The Making of the Crofting Community*, 163-5, and by Ewen Cameron in, *Land for the People?*, 63.

¹²⁴ Macarthur, *Iona*, 131.

¹²⁵ Cameron, *Land for the People?*, 54; *Crofters' Commission Annual Reports*, 1886-1895.

Argyll was horrified. He had written repeatedly to the Home Secretary, Sir William Harcourt, during 1884 asking for advice, petitioning for the rights of landowners and eventually almost begging for government help. His pleas had largely fallen on deaf ears, however, and although he had begged for more time to be given to landowners to work out voluntary plans for enlargement of crofters' holdings and related issues, the Crofters Act had been passed anyway.¹²⁶ Argyll further retreated from his tenants and began refusing to help when they petitioned him for aid. In one letter written by Argyll to crofters on Iona who requested aid in replacing a barn which had burned down, the duke stated his case succinctly, saying that, 'You ask for my help in building a new one which I should be most glad to give you at once if our relations on such matters of business had been left on the old footing.'¹²⁷ It also seems probable that other schemes for improvement were affected by this new crofting legislation. Repeated petitions from Tiree tenants for a pier were met with no positive response from the duke. Argyll was determined not to fund the entire project himself, even though the lack of an adequate pier on the island proved to be a significant danger to islanders. Indeed, the duke's determination not to give way on this issue actually endangered his only unmarried daughter, Victoria (who was physically disabled). She lived on the island for a period and was repeatedly forced to make the sometimes dangerous landing at one of the small piers or, in extreme conditions, on the sands at Gott Bay. The issue was eventually resolved when the Congested Districts Board got involved in the situation at the end of the century, but the pier was not built during the 8th duke's lifetime.¹²⁸

Argyll continued to write and speak on land issues until the end of his life. His voice was often heard cautioning officials and members of parliament to act conservatively and to preserve what was left of landlords' power. His arguments, however, grew less persuasive as they grew more vitriolic. In one exchange in the House of Lords in 1887, Argyll made an impassioned statement about government policy, saying,

¹²⁶ see particularly, Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Harcourt, Dep. 74, Argyll to Harcourt, 15 Nov. 1884; Argyll to Harcourt, 27 Nov. 1884.

¹²⁷ Argyll, as quoted in, Macarthur, *Iona*, 206.

¹²⁸ NAS, AF 42/32, collection of documents regarding a pier on Tiree, 1891-1899; Balfour, *Lady Victoria Campbell*, 237-51; Construction on a suitable pier was not actually begun until 1909, after the duke's death and the issue is covered in depth in MacAskill, "'A Silver Fringe?'"', Chapter 8.

You have cursed Ireland with a perpetual curse; you have destroyed ownership; you have not merely transferred it from one class to another. Do not talk to me of dual ownership; you have destroyed ownership, something that is unknown in any country in the world. You have got a system which is destructive to all improvements, which stereotypes everything that is bad, and makes reforms impossible.¹²⁹

And in another debate, this time on colonisation, Argyll returned to his example of Lewis and made the point that,

You cannot force people to emigrate. You have taken away from the proprietors the power, which was so well exercised over the rest of Scotland, of gradually thinning the population as agriculture improved...You have stopped that by the Crofter Act...When applied to people like those in the Isle of Lewis it has no effect whatever, except to root them in their bogs, and to keep them steeped in their misery.¹³⁰

In an impassioned letter to Secretary for Scotland, Lord Lothian, in 1887, Argyll made clear his views both on the previous path that governments had followed with regard to land and his ideas of how to proceed. Extracts from the letter are worth quoting at some length in order to give a full picture of the duke's position;

whatever you do don't agree to another 'Commission'. That is fatal. The men on such commissions can't be content with reporting facts. They all have to audition to recommend some great land scheme and once a commission has reported in...every folly it may advise is taken as gospel. I know as a fact that Gladstone's cabinet were aghast at Lord Napier's absurd report and recommendations. But they had not the courage of their opinions and thought they must 'do something!'...It will always be so with such bodies. They are quite unfit for such recasting of fundamental laws and we shall be landed in bother inconceivable if we appoint any more of them...One of the cabinet told me he would never have consented

¹²⁹ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 313, col. 1562, 22 Apr. 1887.

¹³⁰ PD, 3rd Series, vol. 354, col. 261, 12 Jun. 1891.

to the appointment of the ‘Crofters Commission’ under Napier if he had had the least idea that it was to be at liberty to make such recommendations...All the facts are easily ascertainable without such perilous machinery.¹³¹

However, Argyll would be disappointed. Over the next quarter century, numerous commissions would be set up to investigate and report upon the ‘special area’ of the Highlands and Islands.¹³² Argyll would continue to protest and would continue to be disappointed by the response of the government, almost until his dying day. Indeed, it seems fitting that his last speech in the House of Lords was a short statement made during a debate upon land tenure in Wales where a now ailing Argyll took the opportunity to raise a challenge to the government one last time,

I take this opportunity of protesting against the system which is growing of legislating by Commissions – not merely of governing by Commissions, but legislating by Commissions...They [the government] say “Oh, we will issue a Commission to enquire”. The result of the Commission is foreknown. It is generally composed of men of extreme, or at least, of strong opinions.¹³³

Over the final twenty years of his life Argyll had developed a complex series of arguments to counter the claims of land reformers. He had attempted to develop his own historical arguments and had tried to reinvigorate the ideas of traditional *laissez faire* political economy to support his assertion that the land was best managed by the landowners. However, Argyll was to be continually disappointed by the lack of support he could gather. His theories and arguments were massively unfashionable and were largely disregarded or ridiculed and, after his resignation from cabinet in

¹³¹ NAS, Lothian Muniments, GD40/9/481, letter from Argyll to Lord Lothian, 13 Dec. 1887.

¹³² There were a number of high profile Commissions and Reports undertaken by the government into aspects of the situation in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland during the last few decades of the nineteenth century. These included the *Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the Condition of the Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*, 1884; the *Crofters’ Commission Reports*; the 1890 *Committee to enquire into certain matters affecting the interests of the population of the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland*, and the *Royal Commission (Highlands and Islands) 1892*. These various bodies, their investigations and reports have been covered in detail elsewhere, see Cameron, *Land for the People?*.

¹³³ PD, 4th Series, vol. 73, col. 381, 23 Jun. 1899.

1881, he slipped further and further from the centre of power and influence. Without even a position in cabinet, the duke was relatively isolated and had no political allies of any weight who could be relied upon to support him. In a time of changing ideas and priorities, the duke came to be seen as the voice of the past – clinging to old ideas and outdated theories against the tide of progress. For this man of strong opinions whose voice had been gradually fading from importance for the past fifteen years, the tide had finally turned against him. When he died, in April 1900, he died a disappointed man with few victories to show for his final twenty years in the House of Lords.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Other aspects of Argyll's final years in the House of Lords have been covered in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

The 8th Duke of Argyll's life spanned almost the entire reign of Queen Victoria and his career as a politician had taken him from the arguments over free trade in the 1840s to the debates over the future of Ireland at the end of the century. During this time he had also become a prominent figure in the fields of science and literature and had found time to push forward the changes to his immense Highland estates. The duke was a true Victorian polymath and it is unfortunate that today he is remembered, when he is remembered at all, solely as a stereotypical reactionary fighting against the forces of justice and progress in the debate over land reform. Argyll was more than this. As was seen in Chapter Two, he was a man with an overwhelming sense of responsibility for the inheritance which had been passed down to him through generations of his family. The Campbell family, as the duke was very well aware, had previously fought and died for their position in Scottish society and for the lands that they held. The 8th duke spent his life trying to regain and retain the position that his ancestors had once so proudly held and that had been so recently squandered by their less prudent descendants. If his family's history had taught him anything, it was that an Argyll could and should be at the forefront of Scottish, and indeed British, affairs and that it was in the 8th duke's power to bring his family back to the prominence to which he believed they were entitled.

It was this belief that powered the duke's early determination to enter the world of politics and which encouraged him to push himself at an early age to the forefront of that world. His actions illustrate not only the strength of his own self-belief, but also the astuteness which served him so well in his early political life. He had managed to stay on the sidelines as the Derbyite, Peelite and Whig groups had jostled for position and influence during the late 1840s and it was certainly no accident that the young duke eventually joined with the fledgling Peelite group. Not only was he fully committed personally to their doctrine of free trade, but he was also able to see the benefits of being associated with such a talented group of men. As a member of the aristocracy, Argyll was in some ways part of the old order which would be gradually replaced as the century progressed by a new type of politician who had to appeal to a

mass audience. By joining with the Peelites, the duke was aligning himself with some of the most promising men in parliament and when he was made Lord Privy Seal in Lord Aberdeen's cabinet of 1853 it looked like the beginning of a glittering career. At the age of just twenty-nine the duke of Argyll had gained a cabinet position and was ideally placed to make the friends and contacts he needed to climb the ladder of political prominence. However, he would die a renegade member of a divided Liberal party in which he no longer had any faith.

It has become accepted knowledge that the duke's problems with the Liberal party and his resignation from the cabinet position which he so prized all stemmed from one issue: the land question. It has been one of the key aims of this thesis to ascertain the accuracy of this assumption and, to this end, various aspects of his life have been examined. These have included the unmistakably important land question but it has also proved worthwhile to look at the duke's contributions to other areas including religious questions, his reactions to home and foreign policies, and the part that he played in the debate on evolutionary theory. By taking a thematic approach to the study of the duke's life it has proved possible to evaluate the impact that each of these interconnected areas had on the duke's life. In turn, the implications that the decisions he made had on his future have also been examined and a fuller picture than was previously available has been presented of this Victorian statesman.

What has emerged from this study is a picture of a broad and diverse mind which was applied in a variety of interesting ways to the issues which the duke faced throughout his life. Argyll's early years certainly had an important impact on the way his mind developed and his relative isolation as a child made him more self-reliant than many other young men of his class. His isolation also seems to have encouraged him to study widely and to apply his mind to the wonders of the world which he saw around him. Encouraged by his scientific father, the young boy had enquired into nature and had spent many hours engaged in his favourite passion – ornithology. This interest, and his early experiences of death within his own family, had led him to thoughts of the 'how and why' of natural forces and had, as discussed in Chapter Four, influenced the future duke's early studies of religion. Although from a committed Presbyterian family, Argyll had been raised without a great deal of religious training and had approached the history of his and other religions from a position of relative ignorance.

In his later years, as seen in Chapter Seven, he would expend considerable energy in attempting to discredit the way in which the ‘theory of evolution’ was being used to deny the idea of God as the creator figure. However, earlier in his life his involvement in the controversy surrounding the Disruption of the Church of Scotland showed his early ignorance both in terms of the political and religious situations and represented both his first foray into the public world and his first notable failure.

The attitudes of contemporary British politicians to the Scottish church question greatly vexed the future 8th duke and would continue to trouble him for the rest of his life. It is essential to recognise the impact that religious controversies had on Argyll as his life progressed: indeed his reactions to them neatly summarise his changing priorities throughout his political career. The ambitious young Marquis of Lorne had put aside his sympathy for the Evangelical claims for spiritual independence in the 1840s and had refused to ‘go out’ and join the Free Church – most likely fearing his own political future if he chose such a path. In the 1860s he had accepted the necessity of disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in order to support his party and his leader. However, by the 1870s cracks were beginning to show in the duke’s adherence to the Liberals and he had supported the Conservatives over the issue of patronage, despite Gladstone’s vehement objections. By the 1880s, Argyll’s connection to his party was seriously fractured and he emerged as one of the leading opponents to the calls from Liberal radicals for disestablishment of the Church of Scotland. The Liberal party’s responses to religious questions troubled the duke as greatly as their attitude towards land reform and presented a serious problem for him. Argyll’s unease had been apparent during the debates over the disestablishment of the Irish Church in 1869, particularly over the precedent which such a step may set, but he had been able to support his party nonetheless. By 1874 the duke was no longer willing to simply follow his party over the issue of patronage and by the 1880s he was in open rebellion against them over Scottish disestablishment. Religious as well as social and economic thinking was changing and, in many ways, Argyll’s own values had remained as they were in the 1850s when moral individualism, political economy and *laissez-faire* capitalism held sway. Argyll’s actions were motivated not only by his own beliefs, but also by his recognition that the Liberal party was changing and that Gladstone, whom he had initially supported so loyally, was not going to hold back the progress of this change.

This must have been particularly galling to one who had previously made such a conscious effort to promote his own reputation as a forward thinker on the issues of the day. As we saw in Chapter Five, in his early career the duke had actively sought to support many 'liberal' measures. From his opening speech in the House of Lords on the removal of Jewish disabilities, through his support for the abolition of the religious test in universities, to his defence of the Maynooth Grant in the 1850s, Argyll put himself firmly in position as one of the most liberal members of the Liberal party. However, this was an approach he had adopted only after some initial false starts. His conduct during the Ecclesiastical Titles debates showed the limits of his tolerance for Roman Catholicism and the duke found himself swept along by the passions aroused by 'papal aggression'. This controversy taught the duke some valuable lessons. Perhaps most importantly he saw that his opposition to the leading Peelites over this issue did him few favours and he must have realised that, in order to enhance his career, he had to endeavour to make himself more acceptable to them as an ally. This was where 'the radical duke' came most prominently to the fore and Argyll busied himself during the 1850s and 1860s supporting many 'liberal' measures. Among these was, of course, the issue of slavery which may be seen as one example of an issue where the duke's personal morals and political ambitions were wholly in tune. His support for the North during the American Civil War was genuinely motivated by a hatred of slavery but, and it is vital to emphasise this, his opposition to the Confederacy also stemmed from his own firm belief in the binding nature of political unions. This concern would return to haunt the duke in his later years.

It is perhaps Argyll's pragmatism rather than his supposed 'radicalism' that emerges most strongly from a study of the early and middle years of his political career. His 'liberalism' was certainly at least partially motivated by personal ambition and had its limits. He had remained in government despite the departure of his leader, Lord Aberdeen, at the time of the Crimean War and had moved from being one of the most reliable members of the 'peace party' within Aberdeen's coalition to fully supporting the war under Palmerston.¹ He had come to see the necessity of being close to the centre of power and his fortunes were becoming increasingly tied to the Liberal party

¹ See above, Chapter Five, 115-118; Chapter Six, 132-135

in parliament. Despite his later claims that he had always been of a 'cross bench/independent mind'² the duke had, by the 1860s, realised that it was only within the Liberal party that he would be able to advance: and that was exactly what he hoped to do. When the question of franchise reform came to the fore, Argyll supported his party's attempts to broaden the electorate despite his own personal fears of the evils of democracy. This political expediency marked much of the duke's early career and much of his 'radicalism' was, in reality, a side-effect of his ambitions. He had to align himself with the leading Liberals to gain any real power and his support of many of their policies must be seen in this light. Even the stand that he took, independently of his party, on the American Civil War was motivated as much by his unionist principles as by his abhorrence of the institution of slavery. It is possible to see some of the problems which lay ahead for Argyll during these early years in parliament: his strong opinions on some issues being pushed aside by the practicalities of political advancement. However, there were some issues on which the duke would be unable to compromise and he would increasingly be drawn further from his party during the 1870s and 1880s – a period which would mark the highest and lowest points of his political career.

When Argyll had been given the position of Secretary for India in 1868 he had been happy that his constant support for the Liberal party and for his new leader Gladstone had finally paid off. However, as he settled into his new role he found that his power and status were not greatly elevated. The nature of governing the subcontinent meant that decisions regarding India were largely made by others and Argyll was forced to rely heavily on his Viceroys, council, and advisors who in reality formed much of the policy.³ Despite this, the duke was keen to hold onto his long desired position as Secretary and his acceptance of many aspects of Liberal policy was motivated by this desire. Most prominent among these, in Argyll's eyes, dubious policies was the 1870 Irish Land Act, which the duke saw as pernicious meddling and which he must have recognised as a sign of things to come. Despite this and despite all of his other concerns he remained in the government, although his distaste for the path that the party was taking was becoming increasingly apparent.

² PD, 3rd Series, vol. 290, col. 135, 7 Jul. 1884

³ See above, Chapter Six, 138-140

In the late 1870s and the 1880s it would, of course, be the land question that tested Argyll's devotion to his party to its limits and that finally pushed him away from the friends and colleagues that he had tried for so long to support. His position as one of the largest landowners in Scotland made some measure of interest in the matter inevitable, but the duke also brought real passion and an array of impressive intellectual arguments to bear on the matter. Argyll's defence of landowners and the established system of land tenure was notable for its complexity and for the energy which the duke poured into it. His opposition to land reform was much more detailed and persuasive than that of any other commentator and, as J.W. Mason has previously pointed out, it was largely due to Argyll that 'the debate on the land question was not hopelessly one-sided, with all the intellectual armoury on the side of the reformers.'⁴ The duke's arguments were unusually impressive: few other commentators who took the same view as Argyll on the land debate could employ such 'intellectual armoury' to back up their arguments and the duke's defence of landowning must be recognised as almost unique in its scope and its detail. As the examination of Argyll's response to the 'theory of evolution' in Chapter Seven has shown, he was able to combat the historicist view of the land question with an opposing historical view of his own. In the duke's history, however, the crofters and cottars across the North-West of Scotland and their counterparts throughout Ireland were not demonstrative of a traditional, romantic culture making use of ancient customs, but were degenerates of more civilised predecessors who had remained isolated in their ignorance when the process of civilisation had re-educated their neighbours in England and Lowland Scotland.

This was not simply an intellectual theory in Argyll's mind. His experiences as a landowner had proved to him the truth of such assertions. During the famine period of the 1840s and 1850s, the tenants on his estates had suffered terribly and it had taken considerable effort to avert a crisis there – particularly on the islands of Tiree and Mull.⁵ What the duke had learned from this period was that the crofters on these islands were, in his eyes, so tied to the land and their 'barbarous customs' that they were blind to their true situation and too ill informed to help themselves and their families by removing to less populated areas. The duke's remedy to this problem had

⁴ Mason, 'The Duke of Argyll and the Land Question', 168.

⁵ See above, Chapter Three, 42-58

been harsh in the extreme, but he had been somewhat satisfied with the results. By the middle of the 1870s the populations of Mull and Tiree had been significantly reduced and, although the problem of landless cottars continued on both islands, Argyll could see that he was progressing towards his goal – a truly efficient estate where the land could fully support the population.⁶

It was thus, for Argyll, over thirty years of hard work that were being threatened by the Liberals' attempts to tinker with the system of landholding but, although he would never have admitted it, in part the duke was responsible for his own problems. Argyll had taken part in some of the early political decisions which made land reform in Britain almost inevitable. During his tenure at the India Office Argyll had acquiesced to the controversial Punjab Tenancy Act which had been built on the premise of tenant right and which had allowed subletting and subdivision of holdings by tenants – something that Argyll vigorously opposed in his own country. In addition, he had grudgingly accepted the Rent and Revenues Act for the North-West provinces in India which went even further and introduced fixity of rents and what the duke termed 'bastard ownership' for a class of people who were 'too weak to hold [their] own'.⁷

Argyll's acceptance of these measures had been based upon his belief that India was so different to Great Britain and Ireland that no legislation along similar lines could be expected there. However, in this he was avoiding the inevitable. J.S. Mill and Sir George Campbell, among others, had already connected the situations in India and Ireland and their arguments were beginning to gain credence not only with 'radicals' but with the Liberal party leader himself. By 1881 the duke had been pushed to his limit. Having already given way on the issues of the law of rural Hypothec and, to a certain extent, on the controversial Game Laws, Argyll was not prepared to go any further. He had seen Indian legislation being used as justification for attempts to 'meddle' in the Irish land tenure system and he saw the probability that the historicist solution to the 'land question' would be extended to encompass Scotland as well. This was too much for the duke and he resigned, finally, from the party that he had been a member of since its inception.

⁶ See above, Chapter Three, 44: 49.

⁷ BL, MSS Eur, IOR, Neg 4238, Argyll to Northbrook, 17 Sep. 1873.

When the breaking point finally came for Argyll in 1881 he was an embittered man. The early promise of his career had never fully come to fruition and he had found himself in 1880 back in the role of Lord Privy Seal. Relegated to the office that he had laboured so long to escape, his bitterness was overwhelming and his relations with his party leader became difficult in the extreme.⁸ It was the Irish Land Act of 1881 which finally prompted the duke's resignation from cabinet, however, his unhappiness had been clear to see for some considerable time prior to this event. Even Gladstone had confessed that he had entertained doubts about Argyll when he had formed the cabinet in 1880, but he had hoped that the duke could still be convinced of the wisdom of the Liberal land policy. In this, Gladstone was to be disappointed. Argyll left the cabinet in April 1881 and would embark on a campaign of opposition to Liberal policy on a variety of topics for the remainder of his life.

Towards the end of his time in parliament the most prominent among these topics was Irish Home Rule: a subject which was close to Argyll's heart not just politically but personally too.⁹ His pride in his family history and his ancestors' role in binding the nations of Scotland and England together almost two centuries previously weighed heavily on the duke. His own life had not resulted in the glittering career that he had initially pursued but he was determined that the Union between Scotland, England, Ireland and Wales would not be allowed to fall apart during his lifetime. When the question of Home Rule for Ireland began to become prominent in parliament in the mid-1880s, the duke was in his seventh decade of life and his health, which had always been delicate, was now weaker than ever. Despite this, his exertions on the issue of Home Rule were vigorous and he spoke on platforms across the country with his new Liberal Unionist allies as well as writing prolifically in opposition to the scheme until the time of his death.

Argyll complained at various points throughout his life that the business of politics was little more to him than an annoying distraction from his intellectual pursuits. He certainly found the parliamentary world an uncomfortable one to move in and never truly settled into life as a party member. In many ways this was a legacy of his early life. Being raised by a staunchly Tory father and then married into a powerful Whig

⁸ See above, Chapter Six, 143-146.

⁹ This is discussed in Chapter Eight, above.

family left the young Argyll somewhere in the middle ground when he entered the House of Lords. Despite his ambitions to remain 'independent' the realities of the political situation made it highly impractical for the duke to take this course. He attached himself initially to the Peelites in the hopes of political advancement and found himself part of the new Liberal party within a few years. In many ways, the duke never truly abandoned the Conservative legacy of his Peelite beginnings and, as Gladstone and the Liberals moved further and further away from these, Argyll became increasingly uncomfortable. Ambition and personal loyalty to Gladstone kept the duke within the party until 1881, but he had, in reality, been an unwilling member for some considerable time.

When the duke died in 1900 he had travelled a long way from his rather isolated existence as a boy to being one of the most outspoken members of the House of Lords. However, Argyll's fame during his lifetime quickly evaporated after his death and he has been portrayed as a minor figure in most modern accounts of the Victorian era. This is to be deprecated, but it can be easily understood. Argyll was a man whose role is, in many ways, difficult to ascertain precisely. His breadth of interests and the diverse topics which he addressed during his lifetime make any survey of his life necessarily complex. His opposition to land reform in Ireland and the Scottish Highlands has been seized on by most contemporary commentators as the key episode in his life and the most important contribution he made to society. One purpose of this thesis has been to explore the veracity of this assumption and to examine the duke's career as a whole. What has emerged is a picture of a man of contrasts and complexity. Argyll was 'the radical duke' – the Scottish landed proprietor who supported free trade, the complete abolition of slavery and the removal of religious restrictions on public servants. However, he was also 'the pragmatic duke' who refused to join the Free Church of Scotland in 1843, despite sympathy for their cause, and who supported his party on franchise reform and the Crimean War to strengthen their position despite his own doubts on the wisdom of their policy. As his career progressed he became increasingly 'the conservative duke' who opposed the historicist interpretation of the 'land question' and stood firmly against Home Rule for Ireland. However, these labels are too prescriptive and do not tell the whole story. Perhaps more than anything else Argyll was 'the intellectual duke' whose penchant

for involving himself on the losing side in a variety of debates has masked the true breadth and depth of his talents and knowledge.

The duke's biographer in the original *Dictionary of National Biography* asserted that 'in estimating Argyll's career the most pregnant question that can be asked is why he did not rise to supreme place in the state'.¹⁰ One answer may be that he was attempting to fill too many roles at once and, as his life progressed, these roles could not sit comfortably together. The purpose of this thesis has been to bring together all of these various roles and to present a fuller account of Argyll's career than has been previously attempted. The 8th duke of Argyll was not simply a 'one issue man' and, by examining his motivations and actions it has been possible to present a fuller picture of the man, his life and his work – a picture which it is vital to take into consideration when discussing his career as a whole. In so doing it is hoped that the duke has emerged as a fully rounded figure – not simply a disgruntled Scottish aristocratic who was unhappy with Liberal land policy, but an intellectual politician and an archetypal Victorian.

¹⁰ *Dictionary of National Biography*, Supplement, 391.

APPENDIX ONE

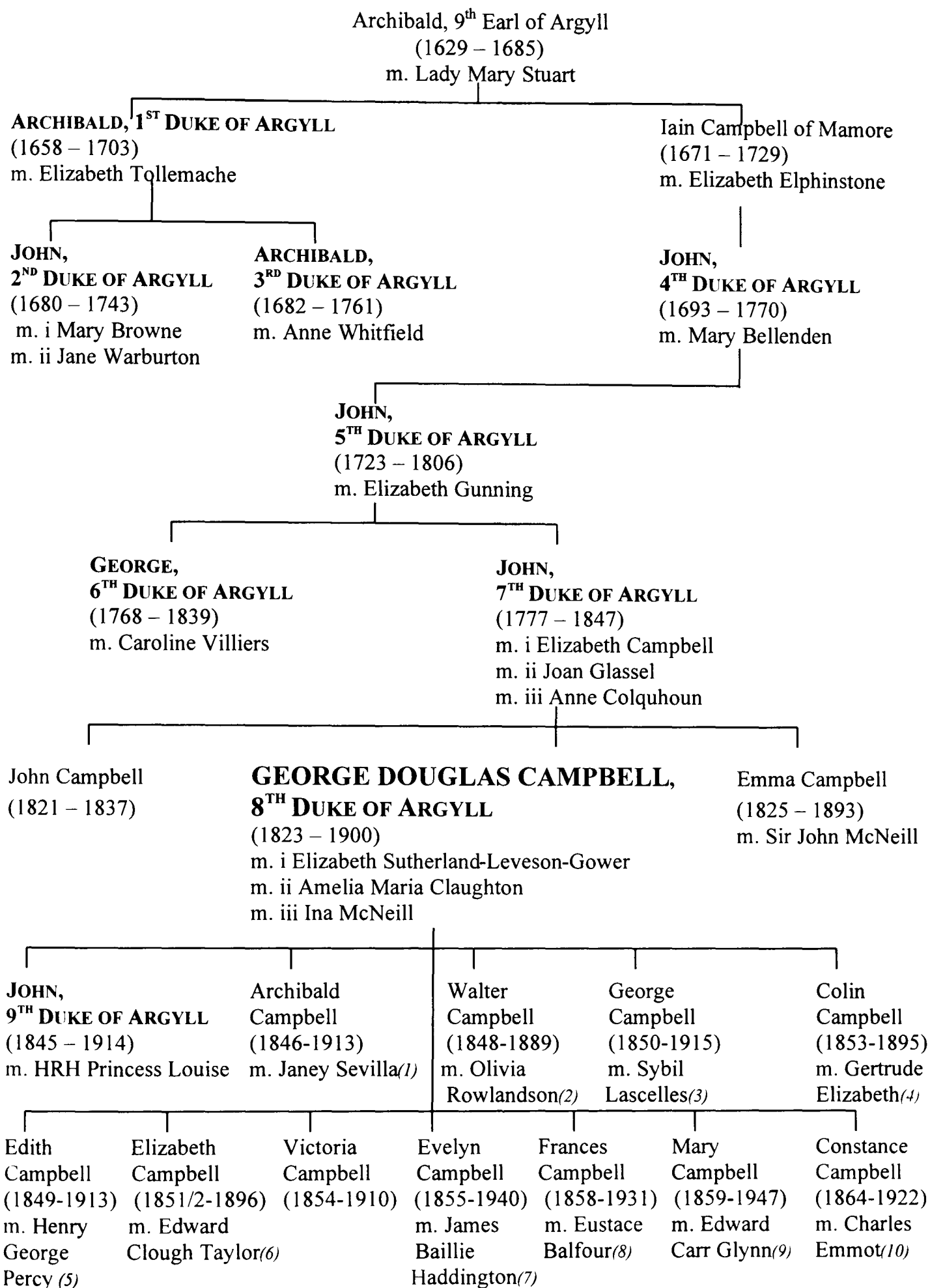
CABINET POSITIONS OF THE 8TH DUKE OF ARGYLL

DATE	PRIME MINISTER	ARGYLL'S CABINET POSITION/NOTES
1846-1852	Lord John Russell	<i>Argyll was offered a position outside the cabinet but refused to take it.</i>
1852	Earl of Derby	-
1852-1855	Earl of Aberdeen	Lord Privy Seal. <i>Other Cabinet members: Lord Cranworth, Earl Granville, W.E. Gladstone, Viscount Palmerston, Lord John Russell, Duke of Newcastle, Sir James Graham, Sir C. Wood, Sidney Herbert, Marquess of Lansdowne, Earl of Clarendon, Sir G. Grey.</i>
1855-1858	Viscount Palmerston	Lord Privy Seal (Feb.-Nov. 1855). Postmaster General (Nov. 1855-Feb. 1858). <i>Other Cabinet members: Cranworth, Granville, Gladstone, Grey, Clarendon, Lord Panmure, Herbert, Graham, Wood, Sir W. Molesworth, Viscount Canning, Lansdowne, Sir G. Cornwall Lewis, Russell, R.V. Smith, H. Labouchere, Lord Stanley of Alderley, Earl of Harrowby, M.T. Baines, Marquess of Clanricarde.</i>
1858-1859	Earl of Derby	-
1859-1865	Viscount Palmerston	Lord Privy Seal and in addition he was appointed: Postmaster General (May-Aug. 1860). <i>Other Cabinet members: Lord Campbell, Granville, Gladstone, Cornwall Lewis, Russell, Herbert, Newcastle, Duke of Somerset, Wood, Grey, E. Cardwell, Earl of Elgin, T. Milner Gibson, C.P. Villiers, Stanley of Alderley, Lord Westbury, Earl de Grey, Clarendon, Cranworth.</i>
1865-1866	Earl Russell	Lord Privy Seal. <i>Other Cabinet members: largely as Palmerston's second cabinet, with the addition of G.J. Goschen.</i>
1866-1867	Earl of Derby	-
1867-1868	B. Disraeli	-
1868-1874	W.E. Gladstone	Secretary for India. <i>Other Cabinet members: Lord Hatherley, de Grey, Earl of Kimberley, R. Lowe, H.A. Bruce, Clarendon, Cardwell, Granville, H.C.E. Childers, J. Bright, C. Fortescue, Marquess of Hartington, Goschen, W.E. Forster, Viscount Halifax, J. Stansfield, Lord Selborne, H.A. Bruce.</i>
1874-1880	B. Disraeli	-
1880-1885	W.E. Gladstone	Lord Privy Seal (resigned, April 1881) <i>Other Cabinet members: Gladstone, Selborne, Earl Spencer, Sir W.V. Harcourt, Granville, Childers, Kimberley, Earl of Northbrook, J. Chamberlain, Hartington, Forster, J.G. Dodson, Bright.</i>

A full list of all those appointed to the Cabinet in each administration which Argyll served in has been given above. For more details and for information on which offices these men filled, see Hoppen, *The Mid Victorian Generation*, 716-724.

APPENDIX TWO

THE ARGYLL FAMILY TREE



(1) daughter of James Henry Callendar of Ardkinglass & Craigforth; (2) daughter of John Clarkson Miln of Assory House, Bute. (3) daughter of James Bruce Alexander; (4) daughter of Edward Maghlin Blood of Brickhill, Co. Clare; (5) 7th Duke of Northumberland, son of Algernon George Percy, 6th Duke of Northumberland; (6) Lieutenant-Colonel in the 23rd Royal Welsh Fusiliers, son of Edward Clough-Taylor of Firby Hall, Yorkshire; (7) son of Admiral William Alexander Baillie-Hamilton, (8) Colonel in the London Scottish R.V., son of James Maitland Balfour and Lady Blanche Mary Harriet Gascoyne-Cecil; (9) Bishop of Peterborough, son of George Carr Glyn, 1st Baron Wolverton; (10) son of Thomas Emmott of Brookfield, Oldham

APPENDIX THREE THE ARGYLL ESTATES¹

1855-1856

North Argyll	Inveraray	38 holdings	£4000 rental ²
	Glassary	1 holding	£260 rental
Kintyre	Campbeltown	113 holdings	£9849 rental ³
	Southend	62 holdings	£5816 rental ⁴
	Killean & Kilkenzie	24 holdings	£2327 rental ⁵
Lorne	Kilninver & Kilmelford	5 holdings	£355 rental ⁶
Mull	Kilfinichen & Kilvickeon	149 holdings	£2256 rental ⁷
	Pennygowan & Torosary	2 holdings	£900 rental ⁸
	Tiree	295 holdings	£2920 rental ⁹
Totals		689 holdings	£28683 rental.

¹ These figures are taken from, NAS, VR89/1-10, Valuation Rolls for Argyll, 1855-56; 1864-65; 1875-76. Rents have been quoted to the nearest whole pound.

² Of these, 3 were let at over £100 p.a. and 12 at less than £10 p.a.

³ Of these, 48 were let at over £100 p.a. and 33 at less than £10 p.a.

⁴ Of these, 24 were let at over £100 p.a. and 5 at less than £10 p.a.

⁵ Of these, 12 were let at over £100 p.a. and 3 at less than £10 p.a.

⁶ Of these, 2 were let at over £100 p.a. and none at less than £10 p.a.

⁷ Of these, 4 were let at over £100 p.a. and 99 at less than £10 p.a.

⁸ One of these holdings was let at £870 p.a. and the other at £30 p.a.

⁹ Of these, 4 were let at over £100 p.a. and 238 at less than £10 p.a.

1864-1865

North Argyll	Inveraray	79 holdings	£5110 rental ¹⁰
	Glassary	1 holding	£260 rental ¹¹
	Glenorchy & Innishail	1 holding	£260 rental ¹²
Kintyre	Campbeltown	100 holdings	£11179 rental ¹³
	Southend	69 holdings	£9373 rental ¹⁴
	Killean & Kilkenzie	17 holdings	£2077 rental ¹⁵
Lorne	Kilninver & Kilmelford	5 holdings	£365 rental ¹⁶
Mull	Kilfinichen & Kilvickeon	126 holdings	£2256 rental ¹⁷
	Pennygowan & Torosary	2 holdings	£1000 rental ¹⁸
	Tiree	253 holdings	£4029 rental ¹⁹
Totals		653 holdings	£35909 rental.

¹⁰ Of these, 15 were let at over £100 p.a. and 15 at less than £10 p.a. 5 were under lease.

¹¹ This farm was under lease.

¹² This farm was under lease.

¹³ Of these, 44 were let at over £100 p.a. and 26 at less than £10 p.a. 63 were under lease.

¹⁴ Of these, 42 were let at over £100 p.a. and 5 at less than £10 p.a. 59 were under lease.

¹⁵ Of these, 11 were let at over £100 p.a. and 2 at less than £10 p.a. 14 were under lease.

¹⁶ Of these, 2 were let at over £100 p.a. and none at less than £10 p.a. None were under lease.

¹⁷ Of these, 7 were let at over £100 p.a. and 65 at less than £10 p.a. 5 were under lease.

¹⁸ Both of these were let at over £100 p.a. One of these was under lease.

¹⁹ Of these, 6 were let at over £100 p.a. and 146 at less than £10 p.a. 4 were under lease.

1875-1876

North Argyll	Inveraray	77 holdings	£5369 rental ²⁰
	Glassary	1 holding	£365 rental ²¹
	Glenorchy & Innishail	1 holding	£250 rental ²²
	Kilchrenan & Dalavick	1 holding	£5 rental ²³
Cowall	Strachur	6 holdings	£280 rental ²⁴
Kintyre	Campbeltown	94 holdings	£15387 rental ²⁵
	Southend	75 holdings	£11116 rental ²⁶
	Killean & Kilkenzie	23 holdings	£2823 rental ²⁷
Lorne	Kilninver & Kilmelford	4 holdings	£465 rental ²⁸
	Lismore & Appin	17 holdings	£1763 rental ²⁹
Mull	Kilfinichen & Kilvickeon	118 holdings	£4955 rental ³⁰
	Pennygowan & Torosary	4 holdings	£1510 rental ³¹
	Tiree	202 holdings	£5084 rental ³²
Totals		623 holdings	£49447 rental.

²⁰ Of these, 13 were let at over £100 p.a. and 9 at less than £10 p.a. 4 were under lease. There was an additional £20 of rent from tenants paying £4 or less.

²¹ This farm was under lease.

²² This farm was under lease.

²³ This holding was not under lease.

²⁴ Of these, one was let at over £100 p.a. and none at less than £10 p.a. None were under lease.

²⁵ Of these, 54 were let at over £100 p.a. and 13 at less than £10 p.a. 62 were under lease. There was an additional £13 of rent from tenants paying £4 or less.

²⁶ Of these, 47 were let at over £100 p.a. and 8 at less than £10 p.a. 57 were under lease.

²⁷ Of these, 11 were let at over £100 p.a. and 4 at less than £10 p.a. 13 were under lease. There was an additional £9 of rent from tenants paying £4 or less.

²⁸ Of these, 2 were let at over £100 p.a. and none at less than £10 p.a. None were under lease.

²⁹ Of these, none were let at over £100 p.a. and 2 at less than £10 p.a. None were under lease. There was an additional £11 of rent from tenants paying £4 or less.

³⁰ Of these, 13 were let at over £100 p.a. and 51 at less than £10 p.a. 4 were under lease. There was an additional £22 of rent from tenants paying £4 or less.

³¹ Of these, 3 were let at over £100 p.a. and none at less than £10 p.a. All of these were under lease.

³² Of these, 8 were let at over £100 p.a. and 85 at less than £10 p.a. 2 were under lease.

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Carnarvon Papers Add MSS 60803, 60832, 60867, 60868
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Cross Papers, Add MSS 51275-51280
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