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# Jonathan Ranken Anderson and the Free Church of Scotland

## PART II

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### Synopsis

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#### Introduction

The first part of this paper<sup>1</sup> provided an overview of the career of Jonathan Ranken Anderson and then dealt, at some length, with the background to why he left the Free Church of Scotland at the General Assembly of May 1852. The narrative concluded with Anderson's resignation letter and the decision of the Assembly to suspend him from the "office and functions of the holy ministry" and to instruct the Glasgow Presbytery to prepare a libel against him.<sup>2</sup> As we noted, in Anderson's opinion, he had "separated" from the Free Church because his conscience would no longer allow him to remain in a Church whose courts had declared against the pure gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup> The view of the Free Church was very different; they considered his resignation at the 1852 General Assembly to be the action of a fugitive from discipline who had fled whilst there was a case of discipline pending against him. This concluding part of the paper deals with the setting up of congregations in both Glasgow and Aberdeen that were sympathetic to Anderson's stand, and with the Free Church case against him. A copy of the libel prepared by the Glasgow Presbytery calling for his deposition is given in an appendix. In a separate paper, we outline Anderson's critique

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<sup>1</sup> See *Scottish Reformation Society Historical Journal* (cited afterwards as *SRSJ*), Vol. 4 (2014), pp. 134-274.

<sup>2</sup> *Acts of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, convened at Edinburgh, May 1852. With the Proceedings of that Assembly, and of the Commission of the previous Assembly* (Edinburgh, 1852), p. 453 (cited afterwards as *AGAFCS*).

<sup>3</sup> See Jonathan Ranken Anderson, *The Free Church of Scotland: Her Character and Proceedings in a Series of Letters* (Glasgow, 1853), p. 2 (cited afterwards as *Letters on the Free Church*).

of what he considered to be the true character of the Free Church in the early 1850s.<sup>4</sup>

Although Anderson is relatively unknown at the present time, it should not be thought that this was so in Scotland during the 1850s. An editorial in the *Aberdeen Herald* in August 1852 began as follows: “The Rev. Jonathan Anderson has, for the past twelve months or so, enjoyed a prominence scarcely equalled by that of Dr. Candlish . . . and it is even questionable whether he has not occupied the time, or at least the public talk of the Free Church leaders, more than the absorbing Sustentation question.”<sup>5</sup>

## I. ABERDEEN AND THE PARKERS<sup>6</sup>

### 1. The week after the 1852 General Assembly

Anderson’s resignation letter was both written and sent to Angus Makellar, the Moderator of the General Assembly, on Monday 31st May 1852. Along with his wife he then returned from Edinburgh to Glasgow by train the same day. They were seen off at the station by two friends and had a “delightful run home”. Anderson records in his diary that the Lord’s countenance was “shining all the way, tho’ the enemy tried thro’ my wife to get in, but was rebuked. The dear children were all affection, and received us in a way they had never done, but very sparingly, and it is well for I like to be alone.”<sup>7</sup> On the day of his resignation Anderson had a measure of elation and a sense of freedom. This, however, was not to last very long, as elation was exchanged for a time of perplexity. Anderson saw his trials as analogous to the deliverance of the Israelites

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<sup>4</sup> See Roy Middleton, “Jonathan Ranken Anderson’s critique of the Free Church of Scotland in the 1850s”, *SRSHJ*, Vol. 5 (2015), pp. 321-351.

<sup>5</sup> *Aberdeen Herald*, 21st August 1852.

<sup>6</sup> The writer gratefully acknowledges the help given him by John Smith of Aberdeen in matters relating to Gavin Parker and the Free Church in Aberdeen and in obtaining photocopies of material both from books and from the Aberdeen Press in the nineteenth century.

<sup>7</sup> *Diary of the Late Reverend Jonathan Ranken Anderson, Minister of the Gospel in Glasgow*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 173 (cited after as *Anderson’s Diary*, with Volume, year, and page number). For further details of *Anderson’s Diary*, see *SRSHJ*, Vol. 4 (2014), p. 136, n. 3. Anderson’s second wife, Ann Alisa Alison, was a woman of an independent mind and did not always see eye to eye with her husband. Writing in his diary the following day he notes, “My dear wife is sorely tried too, and the enemy often gets at me thro’ her, but he is the occasion of leading me forth to a more wealthy place. A good time in prayer with my dear wife, but it was not so steady as I could have wished,” *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 174.

from Egypt. The following day he writes: “The fire continues to burn at intervals with awful fury, and I am likely to be consumed in it. I had some severe exercises before I rose, but got out, as I thought, by turning to the children of Israel and their exodus out of Egypt. I saw that at every step they sunk deeper and deeper till at last they came to the worst, with the Red Sea before and Pharaoh behind. I went a drive in the country and felt revived by the fresh air, but fightings constantly within.”<sup>8</sup> The following day he reflects on the events of the past week at the General Assembly: “In my bed this morning I was made to look upon myself as slain – in character, in ministry. I acquiesced and was silent. I next saw the Free Church had been weighed in the balance and found wanting. I confessed my faults to her as a church, but she blazoned them abroad thro’ the world and thus outraged the law of love. I was mercifully kept from retaliating, and tho’ I had gone so far as to print a reply it was checked, yet *they* would publish it. I thus saw the Free Church condemned.”<sup>9</sup>

Though Anderson had resigned from the Free Church, the question that now faced his congregation at John Knox’s was this: Would they follow him in separating from the denomination? It does not appear, either from his diary or from the letters which are available, that before taking such a decisive step Anderson had even consulted his elders and he had certainly not discussed it with members of the congregation. Consequently, though several of his people visited him expressing their sympathy, it was plain they were uncertain what they should do and what action to take. The enormity of Anderson’s decision was plain to one of the trustees of the church property, who called on Anderson anxious to do what he could to keep the church building. More ominously, Luke Henderson, one of the two elders that had supported him during his controversy with the majority of his Session regarding their estimate of the preaching of John Milne was, to use Anderson’s words, beginning “to change his tone” to which he adds, conscious of his weakness, “but I must be careful, knowing that I suffer from rash judgement”.<sup>10</sup>

Anderson’s perplexity was greatest over what he should do next. He was uncertain whether he should continue his ministry in the city of

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<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 174-175.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, p. 174.

Glasgow. On Wednesday, just two days after his resignation, whilst convinced he should continue in the ministry, he writes in his diary, “But a dark cloud hung over Glasgow, and I did not see how at present I could resume my ministry even among my own people”.<sup>11</sup> Following family worship on the morning of 2nd June 1852 Anderson opened a letter that had arrived that day which seemed to him to be the leading of providence regarding his current duty. It was from Mrs. Susan Parker, the widow of Gavin Parker, the first minister of Bon-Accord Free Church, inviting him to come immediately to Aberdeen and preach. Anderson records his feelings in these terms: “My heart at once closed with it and said this is my work at present.” He responded the same day to Mrs. Parker accepting the invitation “with freedom and pleasure”.<sup>12</sup> In the evening he had a meeting with his office-bearers that they had asked him to call, doubtless due to their perplexity at what course of action they should take. Anderson was wounded by comments from Luke Henderson at the meeting but, realising the new and untried circumstances they were in, he adds his desire was “to deal tenderly and patiently with them”. He told them of his intention to go to Aberdeen, which must have come to them as quite a surprise and could have only added to their uncertainty on what course they should take. He concludes a brief account of the meeting with the words, “We parted between 10 and 11 o’clock with mutual goodwill apparently”.<sup>13</sup> Though Luke Henderson had supported Anderson in his contending against the majority of the John Knox’s elders, he was unwilling to follow him in leaving the Free Church and remained an elder in John Knox’s, temporarily acting as Session clerk until a permanent replacement could be found.

The following day, Thursday 3rd June 1852,<sup>14</sup> after hearing that he was leaving them for Aberdeen, a number of his Glasgow congregation visited him assuring him of their attachment to his ministry and of their approval of the step he had taken. Some of his office-bearers also came

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<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>14</sup> In his *Diary* for 3rd June 1852, Anderson makes a quite remarkable comparison between the Apostle Peter’s sin and his own sin with regard to the ten elders. He writes: “The passage was often before me, ‘When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren’. I had a very overcoming thought about Peter. He was allowed to deny His Lord because he was to strengthen his brethren against apostasy – the sin to which they were peculiarly liable. I saw that I might have been left to sin as I had done, to warn brethren of the danger to which they were exposed,” *ibid.*, p. 176.

to see him, enquiring of him whether they should go to John Knox's Free Church on the coming Sabbath, to which he appears to have given them no answer or guidance. Anderson's view seems to have been that his people were to be tested regarding their fidelity to the truth and that they were to be left alone to see who would stand. He expresses this in his diary: ". . . they are to be sharply tried and I must bear them continually in my heart, that His own may be kept from sliding. . . . I admire His ways in taking me away from them and thus allowing the trial to have its full force so that the third part may be taken through the fire, and be prepared to take up and bear the banner which may be given them to be displayed because of truth. Oh, what need of prayer on behalf of His jewels!"<sup>15</sup>

Anderson's view that the John Knox's congregation needed to be tested must be due, in some degree, to the fact that he believed they had not supported him as fully as he would have wished after John Milne had supplied his pulpit. Three months earlier on 1st March 1852, in the midst of what he considered his duty to witness against compromise, he wrote: "My troubles increase as I go on and my poor weak heart is ready to faint. I am quite alone, and have not a creature to counsel me in anything I propose to do. I must lift up mine eyes to the hills whence cometh mine aid."<sup>16</sup> Whilst in a letter to his friend, John Bayne,<sup>17</sup> written on the day of his resignation, he again reflects on the congregation's lack of support: "I think it well for us that the beginning of our case was the preaching of Mr. Milne – one of the best of the modern school. I pronounced condemnation on it, and then it has been tested in the congregation – the Session – the Presbytery and the General Assembly. In the congregation too many were carried away – in the Session ten to two in the Presbytery not a voice was raised for the truth – and not one in the General Assembly."<sup>18</sup> Anderson reflects even more pointedly about the congregation in a further letter to John Bayne, written in Glasgow on the day he left for Aberdeen, "My people have gone into

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<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 176-177.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>17</sup> For biographical details of Bayne, see *SRSHJ*, Vol. 4, pp. 200-201, f.n. 212.

<sup>18</sup> *Letters from Rev. Jonathan Ranken Anderson, Glasgow to Mr. John Bayne, Dunblane commencing January 1851 and ending 1858*, letter dated 31st May 1852, pp. 22-23 (cited afterwards as *Letters to John Bayne*). There are two copies of this MS collection of letters in the Free Presbyterian Church Library in Glasgow. One is in two volumes whilst the second is a single volume. The citations in this paper are from the single volume.

captivity, and if they are to be humbled they will return, and I shall be brought back to them”.<sup>19</sup>

The next day Anderson and his wife packed up their necessary belongings and travelled from Glasgow to Aberdeen arriving between six and seven in the evening. They had a pleasant journey and Anderson’s mind was engrossed with spiritual exercises – “the most blessed exercises I ever had in my life. I felt as if I carried Christ formed in me and was, therefore, pierced in a way I have never been, and, on the other hand, had enjoyments I never had. I think a volume might be written with the exercises of this one day.”<sup>20</sup> Anderson and his wife were warmly received in Aberdeen by Susan Parker – he described it as “a most affectionate welcome”. At the evening worship he was introduced by Mrs. Parker to a Mrs. W., a venerable old lady who had been burdened for him, who shook his hand most cordially and announced to him, “The Lord has not left you”. He then had a conversation with her about an incident in Moses’ life and what he considered might be its application to him. He records it as follows: “I had a most interesting conversation with her about Moses who slew the Egyptian – hid him in the sand – a fugitive from discipline – and 40 years later sent to deliver Israel out of Egypt and saw my own case vividly depicted in it.”<sup>21</sup> Shortly after arriving in Aberdeen, Anderson wrote another letter to John Bayne making further observations about the John Knox’s congregation: “I know not how long I may be here, for I have all along been kept in the dark as to the future and have had to move on step by step as the way was opened up. But I think I shall not be allowed to return to my people till their uncircumcised hearts be humbled and they accept of the punishment of their iniquities. He will give them tears of sorrow to drink, and if they drink patiently, He will turn their mourning into joy.”<sup>22</sup>

As we reflect on this crucial week after his resignation, Anderson’s attitude, as a shepherd of Christ’s flock, can only be regarded as quite extraordinary. He had resigned as a minister of the Free Church on the Monday and then by Friday had forsaken his bewildered congregation

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<sup>19</sup> *Letters to John Bayne*, letter dated 4th June 1852, p. 24. Anderson begins this letter as follows: “My Dear Friend. I rejoice to hear you too are out. I go off to Aberdeen to preach there and elsewhere in the north as the Lord permit.” From this it is clear that Bayne, who was an elder in Dunblane, had separated from the Free Church along with Anderson.

<sup>20</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 177.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>22</sup> *Letters to John Bayne*, letter dated 8th June 1852, pp. 26-27.



*Gavin Parker.*

and departed with his wife to Aberdeen without giving them any help or guidance on what course of action they should take. In addition, he was of the firm belief that they needed to be humbled, their transgression being that many of his congregation believed that they had derived spiritual benefit from the preaching of John Milne, the Free Church minister who was a close friend of Andrew and Horatius Bonar and Robert Murray M'Cheyne. Then, rather surprisingly, whilst musing on incidents in the lives of Moses and Peter, he believed that he saw clear depictions of his own career; the similarities in question being an

admission that he had sinned in some of his actions towards ten of his elders, and that he was now a fugitive from discipline.

## 2. Gavin and Susan Parker

In Aberdeen the Andersons stayed at 52 Skene Terrace, the home of Susan Parker, the widow of the Free Church minister, Gavin Parker. In order to understand Anderson's attempt to set up a congregation in Aberdeen, it is necessary to outline in some detail the witness of Gavin Parker and the ecclesiastical situation in that city in the early 1850s. Comparatively little is known of the early life of Gavin Parker.<sup>23</sup> He was

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<sup>23</sup> There are very few biographical accounts of either Gavin or Susan Parker. The main sources are: Susan Parker (ed.), *Selected Portions from the Diary and Manuscripts of the Rev. Gavin Parker, Late minister of Bon-Accord Aberdeen* (Aberdeen, 1848); John Parker and Grace Parker (eds.), *An Example of the Life of God in the Soul of Man* (printed for private circulation, 1881). This latter volume contains excerpts from Susan Parker's diary, along with a few letters to her from her husband. Regrettably both the last entry in the diary and the last letter from Gavin Parker are dated in 1839. See also William Ewing (ed.), *Annals of the Free Church of Scotland, 1843-1900* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1914), Vol. 1, p. 287 (cited afterwards as *AFCS*); Hew Scott (ed.), *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae* (8 vols., 2nd edn., Edinburgh, 1915-50), Vol. 6, p. 42 (cited afterwards as *Hew Scott, Fasti*); William Robbie and Edward Tennant,



born near Port Glasgow on 18th July 1780. His mother died at his birth and his father died whilst he was still a child.<sup>24</sup> In a preface to his diary, his wife writes regarding his early training after the death of his parents, “he nevertheless grew up amongst those who directed his attention to the Word of God, and made him commit the Psalms to memory, and attend to the outward means of grace”.<sup>25</sup> As a young man he did not regard the gospel ministry as a profession he would follow and only gradually concluded that it was the will of God for him to be a minister. In her preface to the excerpts from his diary, Susan Parker cites an entry, not included in the main body of the volume, in which Gavin Parker reflects on his early career:

God did not grant me success in any other occupation, although I wrought with diligence. I had many thoughts regarding the work of the ministry, and strong desires towards it, which I considered from heaven. I associated in prayer-meetings, and had intercourse otherwise with godly men, from whom I received advice. Also the scriptures encouraged me, and some remarks in the *Evangelical Magazine* respecting a call and qualifications for the work. After some progress in teaching a school, I was shut out there also, and I could not find a house for a school. God had granted me money, and I went to Glasgow University in November 1806. God gave me health, money, fortitude, zeal, vigour of intellect, and considerable success in study. My mind enjoyed much pleasure in making progress in knowledge; my heart was always set on the work, with the desire and hope of doing good. After some hesitation, and difficulty, and discouragement, and delay, licence was granted in August 1815.<sup>26</sup>

A formative influence on Gavin Parker was the ministry of Dr. John Love (1757-1825)<sup>27</sup> of Anderston Chapel, Glasgow. Love’s ministry had been blessed to Parker both before he went to University and during

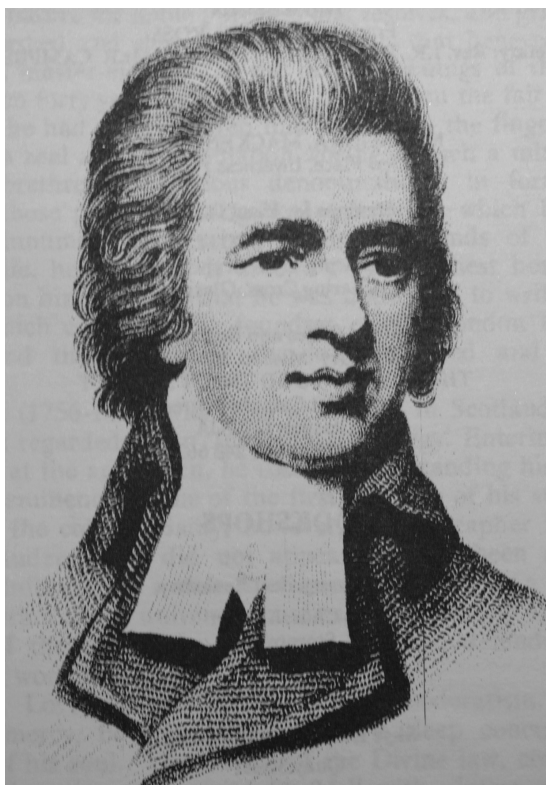
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*Bon-Accord United Free Church, Aberdeen – A Retrospect of 100 years 1828-1928* (Aberdeen, 1928), pp. 1-32 (cited afterwards as Robbie & Tennant); Ian R. Macdonald, “Gavin Parker 1780-1845”, *Free Church of Scotland Monthly Record*, December 1994, pp. 262-263; John A. Smith, “A Faithful Ambassador – Rev. Gavin Parker of Aberdeen”, *The Bulwark, Magazine of the Scottish Reformation Society*, January-March 2012, pp. 1-8.

<sup>24</sup> Susan Parker, *Selected Portions from the Diary and Manuscripts of the Rev. Gavin Parker*, p. vi.  
<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, p. vii.

<sup>27</sup> John Love was born at Paisley on 4th June 1857. He was educated at Paisley Grammar School and afterwards at Glasgow University. When still a child he was regarded as an intellectual prodigy as he entered the university at the age of ten. He distinguished himself during his academic career, especially in the Latin and Greek classics, and was licensed by the Presbytery of Paisley in December 1778. After being an assistant successively at Rutherglen and Greenock he was ordained minister of a Scots



*John Love, the Church of Scotland minister, who was highly esteemed by both Anderson and Gavin Parker.*

the period of his college course. David Brown writes: “Mr. Parker both in private intercourse on religious subjects, and in his public ministrations, walked so closely in the footsteps of Dr. Love, that he might be called a disciple or child of his; nor would he himself have deemed any commendation higher than this.”<sup>28</sup> The second discourse Gavin Parker ever delivered was from John Love’s pulpit.

Following his university course Gavin Parker was licensed in August 1815 and eight years later, on 1st October 1823, he was ordained as assistant minister to Alexander MacNeil<sup>29</sup> at St. Andrew’s Church in Dundee. After an assistant pastorate of

five years he was translated to Aberdeen following a disputed settlement at the city’s Trinity Chapel, a *quoad sacra* charge. In 1824, John

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Presbyterian congregation on Crispin Street in Spitalfields, London, on the 22nd August 1788 (see G. C. Cameron, *The Scots Kirk in London* (Oxford, 1979), p. 47; Kenneth M. Black, *The Scots Churches in England* (Edinburgh, 1906), p. 236. In 1795, whilst in London, he became one of the founders of the London Missionary Society and was the secretary of the society so long as he remained in the capital. A Chapel of Ease was set up in Clyde Street, Anderston, Glasgow, in 1799 and Love was elected to the charge, and returned to Scotland in 1800. Once back in the north, his zeal for foreign missions continued and he became the secretary of the Glasgow Missionary Society which had been set up in 1796. He died at his manse in Clyde Street, Glasgow, on 17th December 1825. The Church of Scotland’s first important mission station in Kaffraria (South Africa) – Lovedale – was named after him (see Elizabeth G. K. Hewat, *Vision and Achievement 1796-1956: A History of the Foreign Missions of the Churches united in the Church of Scotland* (London, 1960), pp. 175-192. For biographical information on John Love, see *Memorials of the Rev. John Love* (2 vols., Glasgow, 1857-58); *Letters of the Late John Love, DD* (Glasgow, 1838); John Morison, *The Fathers and Founders of the London Missionary Society* (London, 1844), pp. 254-267; Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 3, p. 389; and the entry by John R. McIntosh in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (afterwards cited as *ODNB*).

<sup>28</sup> David Brown, *Life of the late John Duncan, LLD* (Edinburgh, 1872), pp. 205-206.

<sup>29</sup> MacNeil had been licensed by the Presbytery of Edinburgh in 1806 and ordained by the Presbytery of Kincardine on 6th May 1807 as a missionary at Braemar. He was translated and admitted to St. Andrew’s Chapel of Ease, Dundee, on 6th December 1809.

Murray,<sup>30</sup> the minister of Trinity Chapel, was translated to the East Church, a prominent city charge that dated back to 1577. Three names were brought forward to fill the vacancy – David Simpson, then the minister of Burghead, William Leith, and Gavin Parker. The contest eventually boiled down to a choice between either Simpson or Parker. Eventually David Simpson was chosen as he had a considerable majority of the male communicants. However, those who had set their hearts on Gavin Parker were determined to bring him to Aberdeen. They resolved, as soon as the necessary arrangements could be completed, to withdraw from Trinity Chapel and to form a new congregation with a view to calling Gavin Parker to be their minister. Having obtained a constitution from the General Assembly and the approval of the Aberdeen Presbytery to set up a new congregation, they purchased from a Baptist congregation on Union Terrace a most suitable building which was too large for the Baptists' requirements.<sup>31</sup> The congregation had been started by John Gilmore<sup>32</sup> and was the precursor of Crown Terrace Baptist Church.<sup>33</sup> The Union Terrace Chapel was opened as a Presbyterian place of worship on Sabbath 27th July 1828. John Murray from the East Church preached in the morning and David Simpson of Trinity Chapel officiated in the evening. Three months later Gavin Parker was settled as pastor on 16th October 1828.<sup>34</sup>

A year after his settlement in Aberdeen Gavin Parker married Susan Watt, a like-minded lady; he was forty-nine and she was eighteen years his junior. Her father was Thomas Watt, a General Merchant in

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It appears that by the time Parker was ordained as his assistant, he was suffering from ill health. After Parker was translated to Aberdeen, James Ewing was appointed as his assistant and successor. However, at the Disruption in 1843, Ewing joined the Free Church. MacNeil then had a further two assistants and successors before he died on 16th April 1853. See Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 5, p. 337.

<sup>30</sup> Murray's predecessor at Trinity was Alexander Kirkland, who had been trained under the ministry of John Love and, like Parker, had been an assistant at St. Andrew's Chapel of Ease in Dundee; see Robbie & Tennant, *ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> The price paid was £1,100 and the purchase was in the name of six gentlemen, one of whom was William Gray, the father of Rev. Andrew Gray, the first minister of Woodside Chapel of Ease in Aberdeen and afterwards of Perth.

<sup>32</sup> John Gilmore was from Irvine and was an agent of the Baptist Itinerant Society. See George Yuille (ed.), *History of the Baptists in Scotland* (Glasgow, 1926), p. 89.

<sup>33</sup> See, Yuille, *ibid.*, pp. 89-90; David W. Bebbington (ed.), *The Baptists in Scotland – A History* (Glasgow, 1988), p. 35; Alexander Gammie, *The Churches of Aberdeen: Historical and Descriptive* (Aberdeen, 1909), pp. 271-275.

<sup>34</sup> For details of the origin of the Union Terrace Chapel, see Robbie & Tennant, *ibid.*, pp. 1-6.

Dundee; her mother's name was Grace Scott.<sup>35</sup> From her diary it is plain that she attended St. Andrew's congregation in Dundee where Parker was the assistant. Her diary records the details of many of his sermons and lectures during his Dundee ministry. In the printed diary of Mrs. Parker there are no entries between May and late November 1829. However, on 25th November she writes: "Ah, I little thought of the connection which my own prospects in life had with the removal of my revered pastor, who is now my beloved husband, counsellor and friend. Twelfth of August [1829] was the day that engaged me to give myself to a husband, having previously desired and endeavoured first to give myself to the Lord."<sup>36</sup> Twenty-three years later Mrs. Parker, then a widow, would play a crucial role in promoting Anderson's Aberdeen ministry. The Parkers had three children: their first child, Elizabeth, died in infancy aged just six months on 16th April 1834; John,<sup>37</sup> their only son, was born in January 1836; whilst Grace, their third child, was named after Susan Parker's mother.

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<sup>35</sup> Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 6, p. 42.

<sup>36</sup> John Parker and Grace Parker, *An Example of the Life of God in the Soul of Man*, p. 133.

<sup>37</sup> John Parker, M.A. (1836-1920), studied law and was an advocate in Aberdeen until his retirement at the early age of 52. Following Anderson's death in 1859, he, along with his mother and sister, gave support to those seeking to uphold Anderson's witness, though he seems to have attended the Aberdeen congregation of the Original Secession Church on Skene Street. His obituary in the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* of 18th August 1920 states he had "a considerable chamber practice and an extensive clientele", and adds, "For many years he was a familiar figure driving through the streets of the city in his carriage and pair". When Anderson's old Glasgow congregation joined the Free Presbyterian Church in 1895, and after James S. Sinclair had been inducted as the minister the following year, John Parker became a communicant member. Neither he nor his sister ever married and, though connected with Sinclair's Glasgow congregation, they continued to live in their parents' house, 52 Skene Terrace, Aberdeen. John gave a lecture on Anderson's witness on the fiftieth anniversary of his death. For an account of this lecture, see the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 14, pp. 99-102. Two addresses by him are printed in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 18, pp. 338-339, and Vol. 19, pp. 344-346. An informative obituary of John Parker, written by James Sinclair, is in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 25, pp. 208-211. John Parker was a decided Protestant; he loved the Lord's Day and took a great interest in the Aberdeen Deaf and Dumb Benevolent Society, of which he was the treasurer for a long period. Though he was a member of Sinclair's Glasgow congregation, he still retained his connection with the Original Secession Church in Aberdeen. The *Press and Journal*, 9th May 1903, records that Parker spoke on behalf of the congregation when a presentation was being made to Robert M'Vicar on his becoming the minister of the congregation. Though M'Vicar seems to have been an able man, the congregation declined and, after M'Vicar demitted his charge and joined the Free Church, it was dissolved in November 1907. For details of the congregation's history, see Gammie, *The Churches of Aberdeen*, pp. 334-338. Rather surprisingly, John Parker was a member of the St. Machar Lodge of Freemasons. See the *Press and Journal*, 21st August 1920.

In the early 1830s the evangelicals, led by Thomas Chalmers, gained a majority in the Church of Scotland General Assembly and in 1834 passed an Act erecting the Chapels of Ease into *quoad sacra* parishes. An immediate effect of the Act that was passed in 1834 was to give Chapel of Ease ministers like Parker, Anderson and Robert Murray M'Cheyne a seat in the Church courts. When the former Chapel of Ease ministers took their place in Church courts this gave the evangelicals an even larger majority, as most of them were Chalmers' supporters. In addition, such congregations could now elect their own office-bearers and become responsible for their own discipline. In November 1834 the Aberdeen Presbytery met and adjusted the lists of ruling elders to include those newly elected from the *quoad sacra* parishes.<sup>38</sup> At the same time Parker's Union Terrace Chapel changed its name to Bon-Accord. Between 1834 and the Disruption in 1843 there were three different elections of elders at Bon-Accord; on the third election, in 1840, a man named Robert Ness was elected to the eldership in Parker's congregation.<sup>39</sup> Twelve years later in 1852, Ness would figure prominently, along with Susan Parker, in seeking to establish Jonathan Ranken Anderson's ministry in Aberdeen.

William Robbie, in his section of the history of the Bon-Accord congregation that covers Parker's ministry, notes that, "Mr. Parker never aimed at popularity; and, indeed, neither his manner nor his matter was fitted to attract a crowd<sup>40</sup> but such as desired to hear pure Gospel truth clearly and faithfully stated valued him very highly, and he drew around him a numerous congregation. Both the Pastor and people of Bon-Accord were in Mr. Parker's day credited with being somewhat narrow in their views, or more strait-laced than their neighbours." Robbie goes on to point out that Parker was a "very decided Calvinist" and "believing as he did in the doctrine of particular redemption, he was not the man to keep it in the background. Some of his admirers, indeed, were disposed

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<sup>38</sup> Robbie & Tennant, *ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 8, 176-177.

<sup>40</sup> Parker's co-presbyter in Aberdeen was Dr. James Kidd of Gilcomston who, though a Calvinist like the Bon-Accord minister, was a complete contrast, both in his manner in the pulpit and in his Irish wit. Kidd attracted a vast congregation and was noted for rebuking from the pulpit members of the congregation who slept under his preaching. On one occasion, supposedly, he stopped in the middle of a sermon to chastise a man who was snoring, and "having got him to raise his head, told him, if he wanted sleeping, to go down to that sleepy 'boddie' Parker, where he would get a whole pew to sleep in, and another for his stick, and a third for his hat," John Bruce, *The Aberdeen Pulpit and Universities* (Aberdeen, 1844), p. 91.

to think at times he gave undue prominence to that particular truth. What he was really afraid of was that worldly men, living in sin, might lay the flattering unction to their souls that, if Christ died for the whole world, then their ultimate salvation was secured. If there was one thing that he denounced more earnestly than another it was the habit which he conceived many preachers had of addressing a mixed congregation as if they were all true Christians, for he maintained that no surer method could be taken to lull careless sinners to sleep in their sins. . . . Such expressions as ‘My Christian Friends’ or ‘My Christian Brethren’ were never uttered by him in the pulpit.”<sup>41</sup> Believing as he did in a definite atonement, Parker also disapproved of using in public discourses to a mixed congregation the very common phrase, ‘Our Saviour’. However, decided though he was on the extent of the atonement, like all evangelical Calvinists he was concerned for lost sinners and for outgoing evangelism and was one of the main supporters of the young William Chalmers Burns when he came to Aberdeen.<sup>42</sup>

### 3. The Disruption in Aberdeen

Three years later, Parker, like Anderson, left the Church of Scotland at the Disruption to become a Free Church minister. He held firm views of the nature of the struggle that preceded the Disruption and was at pains to keep his congregation well informed regarding the principles involved. Dr. William Henderson,<sup>43</sup> an elder on the Bon-Accord Session, was a member of the General Assembly in 1843 and was one of the large company of ministers and elders who left the Church of Scotland General Assembly, meeting in St. Andrew’s Church, Edinburgh, and, led by David Welsh and Thomas Chalmers, processed to the Tanfield Hall

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<sup>41</sup> Robbie & Tennant, *ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>42</sup> Burns came to Aberdeen in April 1840. In the previous year and the early months of 1840 he had been successively in Dundee, Perth, and St. Andrews. In Dundee he was supplying St. Peter’s in Robert M’Cheyne’s absence whilst he and Andrew Bonar were on the Mission of Inquiry to the Jews in Palestine. After that he was in Perth assisting Andrew Gray and John Milne, who had recently been ordained at St. Leonard’s, and finally in St. Andrews. Wherever the young preacher went he witnessed scenes of revival under his preaching. It was at the same time as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit under the preaching of Burns in Dundee, Perth, and St. Andrews that Anderson was in the midst of a revival in his own congregation at Kirkfield Chapel in Glasgow. For details of Burns’ ministry at this time see Islay Burns, *Memoir of the Rev. Wm. C. Burns* (London, 1870), pp. 83-187. For the revival at Kirkfield Chapel, see *SRSJHJ*, Vol. 4 (2014), pp. 151-154.

<sup>43</sup> For a sketch of Henderson’s life, see Robbie & Tennant, *ibid.*, pp. 137-141.



*Bon-Accord Free Church, Aberdeen.*

in Canonmills to constitute the Church of Scotland – Free. As Parker was not present at that first General Assembly of the Free Church, unlike Anderson, he could not sign the Act of Separation and Deed of Demission. He did, however, sign the Supplementary Act of Separation and Deed of Demission, designed for those who were not present at the Assembly or who had not an opportunity of signing the original Act and Deed.<sup>44</sup>

Practically all the ministers who left the establishment lost their church buildings and Parker expected to lose his. There was, however, an important difference with respect to the Bon-Accord Church. Though the Church of Scotland could claim it as one of their *quoad sacra* buildings, it was held in the name of the managers of the church as private individuals and not in any representative capacity. However, as most of the other congregations had given up their buildings, Parker did not feel at liberty to occupy Bon-Accord for over a month after the Disruption. He preached in the morning, weather permitting, in the

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<sup>44</sup> See, *AFCS*, Vol. 1, pp. 39-40. Parker's name is in the middle column on p. 40.

open air in front of the church. A second service was held, either at the middle of the day or in the evening, in the United Original Secession Church in Skene Street, which was kindly loaned to them. The minister of the congregation was John Aitken, the son of James Aitken of Kirriemuir. His father, along with three other ministers, Archibald Bruce of Whitburn, James Hog of Kelso, and Thomas M'Crie of Edinburgh, formed the Constitutional Presbytery in 1806. This body was known as the Old Light Antiburghers.<sup>45</sup> They separated from the Antiburgher Synod in order to preserve a witness to the Establishment Principle. John Aitken<sup>46</sup> was the first licentiate of the Constitutional Presbytery and was ordained in Aberdeen in July 1811.

Parker and his congregation resumed their occupation of the church building on the first Sabbath in July 1843. The Church of Scotland was reluctant to reclaim the Bon-Accord building due to the fact that there was a large debt on the property. Anticipating the possibility of the Disruption in the years prior to 1843, the managers had made no attempt whatsoever to reduce the debt. In order to bring the matter of ownership to a head, the managers, who were responsible for the building and the debt, advertised it to be sold by public auction on 6th March 1844 for an upset price of £1,130. A Bon-Accord member attended the auction and offered the required price. As was expected there was no other bid, and the building became the undoubted property of the office-bearers and their successors in office as representing the congregation. No money changed hands; the building was merely legally transferred from the managers to the minister and office-bearers as representing the congregation. Unlike the other major Scottish cities, all the fifteen Church of Scotland ministers in Aberdeen joined the Free Church in 1843.<sup>47</sup> Gavin Parker died two years after the Disruption on

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<sup>45</sup> For details of the formation of the Constitutional Presbytery, see David Scott, *Annals and Statistics of the Original Secession Church* (Edinburgh, 1886), pp. 80-99.

<sup>46</sup> For details of John Aitken, see David Scott, *ibid.*, pp. 537-540. Two years after his father's death he published a volume of his sermons along with a memoir and a number of his father's letters – *Sermons by the Late Rev. James Aitken* (Edinburgh, 1836). In 1852, when the majority of the United Original Seceders united with the Free Church, Aitken was one of the leaders of thirteen ministers who refused to join the union. For details of the historical background to the union, and to the rupture in the United Original Secession Synod, see David Scott, *ibid.*, pp. 177-238; Charles G. M'Crie, *The Church of Scotland: Her Divisions and Her Re-Unions* (Edinburgh, 1901), pp. 187-214; *SRSHJ*, Vol. 4, pp. 232-233.

<sup>47</sup> A. Allan MacLaren, *Religion and Social Class: The Disruption years in Aberdeen* (London, 1974), pp. 30, 54.



5th June 1845, at the early age of 64 and eleven months. Susan Parker became a widow when she was just forty-seven years of age and had the care of her two young children. John Parker, the eldest, was only nine when his father died.

#### 4. Division at Bon-Accord

The vacancy at Bon-Accord lasted for almost twelve months. John Murray, the minister of the Free North Church, was appointed by the Presbytery as the interim moderator of the Session. Two names were put forward to succeed Parker; these were William Pirie Smith, the Minister of Keig and Tough in Aberdeenshire and the father of William Robertson Smith,<sup>48</sup> and Samuel Grant, the Minister of Ardoch (Braco) in the Presbytery of Auchterarder. The majority of the office-bearers thought that Smith's name would tend to division; hence his proposer did not press his motion. The man to whom the great body of the people looked was the minister of Ardoch. With a view to hearing him preach, Grant had been asked to the October 1845 communion, and his services on that occasion had deepened the favourable impression produced by the strong testimony in his favour by those who knew him. In due time a call was signed by nearly six hundred members and adherents to seek his translation before the Auchterarder Presbytery.

Samuel Grant was born in Brora, Sutherlandshire, in 1805; he was educated at Aberdeen University and ordained in Ardoch *quoad sacra* charge of the Church of Scotland in 1840. He joined the Free Church at the Disruption and signed the Act of Separation and Deed of Demission.



*Samuel Grant, the minister of Bon-Accord Free Church, Aberdeen.*

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<sup>48</sup> For biographical information on Smith, see the biography of his son, J. S. Black and G. Crystal, *The Life of William Robertson Smith* (London, 1912), especially pp. 1-31 and entries in the index.

The Presbytery of Auchterarder was one of the epicentres of the struggle during the Ten Years' Conflict, hence Grant's congregation were deprived of their church and interdicted from burying in the parish churchyard. Accordingly the Free Church had to secure ground for a separate cemetery. From the little information that is available it seems that Grant was zealous for the Free Church cause and was instrumental in forming a Free Church not only in Ardoch but a further one in nearby Blackford.<sup>49</sup> He did not at first see his way to accepting the call to Bon-Accord, in consequence of which the Presbytery refused to translate him. At this stage the Bon-Accord commissioners appealed to the Synod of Perth. By the time the Synod met in April 1846, Grant intimated his willingness to go to Aberdeen if the Court should loose him from his charge at Ardoch. The Synod therefore ordered his translation and he was inducted to the pastoral charge of Bon-Accord on 11th June 1846.

A leading part in securing the translation of Samuel Grant was taken by Robert Ness;<sup>50</sup> but, within two years of his induction in Aberdeen, Grant had placed Ness under discipline; and four years later it was Robert Ness, along with Susan Parker and her sister, who were Anderson's main supporters in encouraging him to form a congregation in Aberdeen. Like Mrs. Parker, Ness was born in Dundee. At the time of Grant's induction Ness was aged forty. Though he came to Aberdeen as a youth; it is quite possible that he may have heard Gavin Parker whilst he was an assistant to Alexander MacNeil at St. Andrew's Church in Dundee.<sup>51</sup> In Aberdeen, Ness learned the trade of coach-building and, along with a business partner, Alexander Laing, he built up the largest coach-building business in the north of Scotland, with extensive interests in both London and India. In addition, Ness took a keen interest in public affairs and was for several years a Police Commissioner with a seat on the Police Board. This was at the time when the Police Board carried on its activities independently of the Town Council. In that position he took a leading role in all matters bearing on the social well-being of the community; several instances of this are his seeking to enforce laws protecting the Sabbath, his attempts with others to curtail

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<sup>49</sup> For Grant, see Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 4, p. 257; *AFCS*, Vol. 1, p. 175, Vol. 2, p. 137; and Robbie & Tennant, *ibid.*, pp. 33-42.

<sup>50</sup> For biographical information on Robert Ness see the following obituaries: *Aberdeen Free Press*, 30th August 1888, and *Aberdeen Journal*, 29th August 1888.

<sup>51</sup> Ness would have been seventeen when Parker was ordained at St. Andrew's, Dundee.

prostitution,<sup>52</sup> and his seeking restrictions on the drink traffic through the powers of the much-abused Forbes Mackenzie Act of 1853. This Act was designed to regulate public houses in Scotland by requiring their closure on the Sabbath and at 10 o'clock in the evening on weekdays.<sup>53</sup> Ness was also an active supporter of the Scottish Reformation Society and the meetings of the Aberdeen Branch were held in his home at 220 Union Street. After the Disruption, an advanced class for the instruction of young people was commenced in the church on Sabbath evenings by the Bon-Accord congregation. The instruction was provided by Dr. Henderson and by Robert Ness. The *Confession of Faith* was the class-book used by Henderson, whilst Ness took the young people consecutively through some of the Pauline Epistles.<sup>54</sup>

It is also clear that Ness was an outspoken man; one of his obituaries speaks of him in these terms: "And while his views always lay to the side of strict orthodoxy, were wont to be delivered with outspoken keenness, there was therewith combined a wonderful amount of hearty geniality and readiness to take as well as give a hard hit."<sup>55</sup> This outspoken disposition in Ness may have been the reason that he came into conflict with Samuel Grant. William Robbie, in his history of the Bon-Accord congregation, makes several observations with respect to Grant. He writes: "Although he was thoroughly Calvinistic in his convictions, he did not give undue prominence to these views; but when they came up naturally in the subject under consideration, he did not fail to state them fully and unmistakably."<sup>56</sup> This would have been quite a change from the preaching of Parker, who was explicitly Calvinistic in

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<sup>52</sup> William Carnie, *Reporting Reminiscences* (Aberdeen University Press, 1902), pp. 4, 203.

<sup>53</sup> William Forbes Mackenzie, (1807-1862) was a politician and temperance reformer. Born on 18th April 1807 at Portmore, Peeblesshire, he was the third and eldest surviving son of Colin Mackenzie, Writer to the Signet in Edinburgh, Deputy Keeper of the Signet, and a friend of Sir Walter Scott. Forbes Mackenzie succeeded to the estate of Portmore on the death of his father in September 1830, and in 1831 was appointed Deputy Lieutenant of the county of Peebles. He also sat in the House of Commons as Member for that county in 1837-41, 1841-7, and 1847-52. From 26th April 1845 until 11th March 1846 he was a junior whip, resigning over the Corn-law repeal. From February 1852 until January 1853 he was Benjamin Disraeli's Parliamentary Secretary at the Treasury. He was elected MP for Liverpool in July 1852 but lost his seat on petition in June 1853. He was an ardent temperance reformer, his chief achievement being to originate the Act for the Regulation of Public Houses in Scotland. (See the article on Forbes Mackenzie by H. C. G. Matthew in *ODNB*.)

<sup>54</sup> Robbie & Tennant, *ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>55</sup> *Aberdeen Free Press*, 30th August 1888.

<sup>56</sup> Robbie & Tennant, *ibid.*, p. 40.

both his theology and his preaching, especially with respect to the extent of the atonement. More telling, however, is another observation of the Bon-Accord historian: “When a man is remarkable for force of character, little imperfections are perhaps more apparent. It cannot be denied that Mr. Grant had a hasty temper, and was also apt to manifest impatience at the expression of an opinion in any way different from his own – traits which more than once produced unpleasantness in the Session and Deacons’ Court; but these little manifestations were quite momentary on his part, and he cherished no ill feeling.”<sup>57</sup> It is not difficult to see how the difference between the two men in their theological emphases could easily be the source for a clash. Ness, like Parker, was distinctly Calvinistic, whilst Grant was less explicitly so. Then, crucially for what was to follow, both of them had forceful temperaments. The clash occurred just two years after Grant’s induction at Bon-Accord when serious differences arose between the minister and a group of elders and deacons led by Ness. Ian Macdonald has described what took place: “In March 1848 the minister suspended one of his most prominent elders, Robert Ness, for disruptive behaviour and intemperate language. Subsequently, two other elders and three deacons all resigned.”<sup>58</sup> The resignations took place a year later in 1849 and the other resigning elders besides Ness appear to have been Dr. John Wood and James Kerr. Four deacons resigned in 1849 so we cannot be exactly sure who the three were that supported Ness. The names of the deacons resigning that year were Absalom Poulter, John Melvin, William Ritchie, and John Clark.<sup>59</sup>

When Jonathan Ranken Anderson and his wife arrived at Susan Parker’s house, four days after he had resigned from the Free Church, the situation in her husband’s old congregation was one of dissatisfaction and dissent. From the fact that Mrs. Parker had invited Anderson to come and preach in Aberdeen, it appears that she also had a measure of disaffection with the ministry of Samuel Grant and quite possibly with the other Free Church ministers in Aberdeen. At this juncture we cannot be sure what the basis of her dissatisfaction was. It may have been that she sympathised with the resigning office-bearers. All the elders, and one of the deacons, had been ordained to office during her husband’s ministry. The remaining deacons were ordained the year after Parker

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<sup>57</sup> Robbie & Tennant, *ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>55</sup> Ian R. MacDonald, *Aberdeen and the Highland Church (1785-1900)* (Edinburgh, 2000), p. 180.

<sup>59</sup> Robbie & Tennant, *ibid.*, pp. 177, 180-181.

died but would all have been members of his congregation. Like Ness, she may also have had misgivings that Grant's Calvinism was less explicit than that of her husband. It was, however, largely from this group of men and their families, who were disaffected with Samuel Grant and Bon-Accord that Anderson was to form a congregation in Aberdeen.<sup>60</sup>

## 5. The Glasgow Presbytery libel Anderson

On 4th June 1852, the very day Anderson and his wife arrived in Aberdeen and received a warm welcome from Mrs. Parker, the Glasgow Presbytery met as instructed by the General Assembly.<sup>61</sup> Their main business was to appoint a committee to prepare a libel against Anderson. The men selected by the Presbytery to form the committee were Robert Buchanan, James Henderson, John Smyth, John Forbes, and James Gibson – Ministers, with William Wilson and John Robertson – Elders. Robert Buchanan was appointed convener and the committee were

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<sup>60</sup> The thought of forming another congregation in Aberdeen, separate from the Free Church, in 1852, would have been regarded by many as a rather daunting task. It is clear from the 1851 census that the Free Church was by far the dominant denomination in Aberdeen. The census revealed around 39 per cent of the population of the city attended a place of worship on the census Sabbath. Of those attending public worship more than 41 per cent attended a Free Church spread over its fifteen congregations; none of the other denominations achieved even half that figure. The nearest was the Church of Scotland with 19 per cent. In addition, it must be remembered that this dominance had occurred in a very short period. Just eight years earlier none of these congregations were in existence. "In these eight years the Free Church had broken from the Establishment, built and filled new church buildings, and by 1851 claimed just over 60 per cent of all Presbyterians in the city. It was a very remarkable achievement." (See MacLaren, *ibid.*, p. 45. I am indebted to MacLaren for his analysis of the 1851 census and for the percentages cited above.)

<sup>61</sup> The Presbytery also met five days later on 9th June 1852 and appointed James Gibson, the Presbytery Clerk and minister of the Kingston congregation, as moderator of the Knox's Session, and arranged supply until 8th August 1852. See *Minutes of the Glasgow Presbytery of the Free Church of Scotland, 5th April 1848-29th April 1856*, NRS CH3/146/35, p. 322. These minutes are located at the Mitchell Library in Glasgow and are cited afterwards as *Minutes of the Glasgow Presbytery*. It is possibly indicative of Anderson's preaching ability that in 1848 Gibson's Kingston congregation had a membership of 110 whilst Anderson's congregation had a membership of 500, *AFCS*, Vol. 2, pp. 94-95. The pulpit supply arranged by the Presbytery of necessity included many of the men who had taken a leading role in dealing with Anderson's case, which must have been rather irritating to Anderson's supporters at John Knox's. Amongst such men were James Henderson, John Smyth, and Robert Buchanan. Another less controversial minister who supplied John Knox's was John Bonar, then of the Renfield Church in Glasgow. His first charge in the Church of Scotland had been Larbert and Dunipace, where he had as his assistant, in 1835, Robert Murray M'Cheyne. John Bonar was a cousin of Horatius and Andrew Bonar.

instructed to prepare “the said libel, and report with all convenient speed”. The concluding part of the minute records the decision of the Presbytery to appoint Peter Currie, the minister of the Stockwell Church, to preach in John Knox’s on the coming Sabbath, 6th June 1852, in “both forenoon and afternoon, and at the conclusion of the service in the forenoon, of the said sixth of June instant, to intimate the sentence of the General Assembly in the Case of Mr. Anderson, to the congregation of the said Church”.<sup>62</sup>

The committee completed its work, as instructed, very quickly and reported to a meeting of the Glasgow Presbytery twelve days later on 16th June 1852.<sup>63</sup> It charged Anderson with four offences:

Firstly – slanderous and injurious charges against the public teaching of a brother minister and against the character of church office-bearers.

Secondly – breach of engagement affecting the character of a brother minister.

Thirdly – wilful misrepresentation and falsehood.

Fourthly – contumacy in refusing obedience to the judicatories of the church.

The libel then detailed six counts of evidence in support of these charges. A summary of these six counts is as follows:

Firstly – In a pamphlet, titled *A Reply to the speeches delivered in the Free Presbytery of Glasgow 11th February 1852*, copies of which Anderson had distributed to others, he had wrongfully and calumniously accused ten of his elders of a range of offences including laboring to defeat one of the principal ends of the ministry, of committing a revengeful act of bare-faced injustice and then by resigning seeking to force their minister to capitulate. That he had taken no steps to establish any of the charges in the Courts of the Church and had put an unwarranted construction on their letter of resignation making it to appear in the minutes of the Kirk Session that they had confessed to these charges.

Secondly – That after an exchange of pulpits with John Milne of Perth he had slanderously and injuriously attacked his preaching

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<sup>62</sup> *Minutes of the Glasgow Presbytery*, 4th June 1852, pp. 312-313.

<sup>63</sup> *Minutes of the Glasgow Presbytery*, 16th June 1852, p. 323.

and laboured to persuade others that he did not preach a pure Gospel, or that he preached another Gospel. In addition, from the pulpit he had used language fitted to convey to those present a similar impression.

Thirdly – Though Anderson held the view that Milne did not preach a pure Gospel before the pulpit exchange, nevertheless he still invited him to preach at John Knox's. Then when he was in the Perth manse, before Milne went to Glasgow, whilst professing friendship, he privately made notes of what occurred in the Milne household. After Milne had preached at John Knox's, he then read these notes to his Kirk Session with a view to shaking the favourable impression that most of his elders entertained regarding Milne's preaching.

Fourthly – That on 5th April 1852, in reference to his conduct towards Milne detailed in the third count, he had confessed he was guilty of a moral wrong and had agreed to write to Milne expressing his regret for the wrong he had done and to provide the Clerk of the Glasgow Presbytery with a copy of the letter. Notwithstanding this engagement, Anderson had still not written to Milne.

Fifthly – In the pamphlet, specified in the first count of the libel, Anderson had given an account of what had taken place at a meeting of the Glasgow Presbytery on 8th January 1851 at which a sentence was pronounced upon his conduct in reference to a sermon he had preached in Hope Street Gaelic Church in November 1850. The fifth count of evidence in the libel accused him of wilfully and slanderously misrepresenting the facts of what had taken place at the Glasgow Presbytery in January 1851. As far as the Presbytery was concerned, Anderson had at that meeting withdrawn his defence, expressed sorrow and yielded to the sentence pronounced upon him. In the pamphlet, however, he stated that he did this only because he had been overborne by numbers and because to continue with his defence would have been to throw it away on men who were far gone in spiritual blindness and delusion respecting spiritual things. He had further stated in his pamphlet that the sorrow he had expressed was sorrow in finding that the precious truth contained in his defence was condemned by the Presbytery.

Sixthly – That Anderson had been guilty of contumaciously disobeying the judicatories of the Church. He had refused to surrender the pamphlet specified in the first count to his own Presbytery and for a time he had refused to surrender it to the General Assembly. In addition, he had contumaciously failed to appear at the bar of the Assembly when cited to attend, with no sufficient plea of inability. Then in order to screen his conduct from judicial investigation, and to obstruct the discipline of the Church, he had attempted to renounce his connection with the Free Church of Scotland.

The libel concluded with the statement that if the charges were proven Anderson ought to be deposed.<sup>64</sup> The document was read to the Presbytery and after due consideration it was approved unanimously. The court then instructed both the Moderator and Clerk to sign the libel, after which it was to be served on Anderson in due form by the officer of the Presbytery, who was also to inform him that he was “cited to appear for his own interest in the same at an adjourned meeting of the Presbytery to be held on Tuesday the twenty-ninth current at twelve o’clock noon when the relevancy of the libel will be considered and the further steps necessary in the case be taken”.<sup>65</sup>

Though the meeting of the Presbytery took place on 16th June 1852, it was five days later before Anderson, who was then in Aberdeen, received the document and the citation. Whilst he opened the letter he did not read the libel but returned it to James Gibson the Presbytery Clerk. The diary record is very brief: “I had an Indictment from the Presbytery sent to me, but not owning any longer the jurisdiction of the Free Church, I resolved not to read it, but to send it back. I wrote a letter to the Clerk and trust a testimony was borne to the truth.”<sup>66</sup> His letter to Gibson returning the libel read as follows:

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<sup>64</sup> See *Minutes of the Glasgow Presbytery*, 16th June 1852, pp. 316-323, for a copy of the libel, the list of witnesses, and the documents to be adduced as proof. The libel and documents to be relied on (but not the list of witnesses) are also printed in *The Case of the Rev. Jonathan R Anderson before the Church Courts, with authentic documents, illustrative and explanatory* (Glasgow, 1852), pp. 47-49 (cited hereafter as *Case of J. R. Anderson*). The libel as recorded in the Minutes of the Presbytery is reproduced as an appendix to this paper.

<sup>65</sup> *Minutes of the Glasgow Presbytery*, 16th June 1852, p. 323.

<sup>66</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, pp. 197-198. The delay in Anderson’s receiving the libel was due to its having been sent to his home in Glasgow and then forwarded to him in Aberdeen.



To the Rev. James Gibson, Clerk of the Free Presbytery of Glasgow.  
Aberdeen, 21st June 1852

Rev. Sir, - I felt it my duty, after much anxious deliberation, to renounce my connection with the Free Church, not because I shrink from the discipline of truth and love – the only discipline which the church of Christ is entitled to exercise – but because from the painful experience of months, I had learned that the discipline to which I was subjected was entirely of a different description, tending only to inveigle the simple and oppress the conscientious; and also because I had discovered that the Free Church in her courts, from the lowest to the highest, declared in favour of what I have repeatedly indicated, I cannot regard as the pure gospel of Jesus Christ. The necessary consequence of this has been, that instead of frankly going into this inquiry whether my judgment is correct, attempts have been made, by all means, to blast the character of one who feels that it is his duty and happiness to devote his all to the maintenance and propagation of the truth which is unto salvation – the truth which he finds revealed in the holy scriptures, and systematically arranged in the Westminster Confession of Faith, and other standards to which he still adheres – but the truth which is in the very teeth of what the courts of the Free Church have sanctioned and applauded, and condemnatory of the course which in their discipline these courts have pursued.

I intimated my resolution to the General Assembly through its Moderator, and thenceforth regarded myself as free from their jurisdiction. I have seen nothing to shake the resolution I took to separate from the Free Church, but very much to confirm it; and every day brings to my mind fresh evidence that I have escaped from what threatened to involve me in irretrievable ruin.

In conformity with the resolution I took and acted upon, I have not read the document which was left at my house, and has been forwarded to me at this place, and now take leave to return it to you as clerk of the Free Presbytery of Glasgow, from which body I presume it has emanated, and am, Rev, Sir, yours faithfully.

Jon. R. Anderson<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> *Letters on the Free Church*, pp. 1-2.

## II. TWO CRUCIAL MONTHS

When Anderson left Glasgow on the 4th June 1852, the Friday of the week in which he had resigned from the Free Church on the Monday, little did he realise that it would be over two months before he would return to his home, months that would be crucial with respect to his future career.

### 1. Three Sabbaths in Aberdeen

The first eighteen days were spent in Aberdeen in the home of Susan Parker. Anderson records in his diary a significant meeting that took place the day after he arrived: “A very pleasant morning – the light clear and steady – no tumult but perfect peace. I had freedom in worship and afterwards Mr. Ness called to see if I was to preach. I said ‘Yes’. He asked, ‘Where?’. I said, ‘In this room – the church in the house’. He said, ‘I’ll come’, so that I have thus the prospect of four and what is singular we shall have a minister, an elder, and two people. Oh, that His promise may be made out to us. I thought too we should make a collection for the poor tho’ but two mites it may be accepted. . . . I saw that great tenderness will be required in dealing with His people who may be delivered from the ruin that is coming upon anti-Christian bodies. I saw the first Disruption was like the exodus out of Egypt, or separation from the world: the second will be like the return from Babylon – or separation from the Church. . . . I have had many very humbling views of my sin, especially my pride and contempt of others. Oh, that I were made truly humble. He alone can do it. He does it in the way of watchfulness and prayer under trying dispensations of providence.”<sup>68</sup>

We can do no better than let Anderson describe his first Sabbath after he left the Free Church. “A day never to be forgotten. I had looked to have only three or four to form my church in the house: for even Mrs. Parker spoke of going out: tho’ I was pretty well persuaded she would not be allowed, and yet I left her to His own guidance and I was not disappointed. She came up at eleven and said her heart beat at the numbers that were come. I went down with trembling, under a weighty sense of His greatness. I lectured on Zechariah III: 1-5.<sup>69</sup> I felt a little stiff and timid, but enough freedom as told me all is well with my

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<sup>68</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, pp. 178-179.

<sup>69</sup> It is to be regretted that no notes appear to have been taken of Anderson’s preaching in Aberdeen on the first three Sabbaths after he left the Free Church.

ministry and that it is likely to be more than ever a ministry of fire. We made a little collection for His poor at the close and I was struck to find there was a Presbyterian minister and two elders and a little congregation. The congregation in the afternoon was larger. I preached from Revelation VII, 14 and 15 and had more liberty and enlargement than in the lecture. In the evening the congregation was larger still, and the impression deeper and weightier. I felt that I never had such a Sabbath since I was a minister, and was unspeakably happy yet kept needy and dependent. . . . To describe the scene is impossible – it will be opened up in eternity and I have considerable hope that good will then be found to have sprung from this day’s work.” Anderson then adds in a note of defiance in response to his suspension by the General Assembly, “I have not appeared in public – it would not have been agreeable to my bruised state of mind to do so, but neither have I suspended my ministry to testify the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ”.<sup>70</sup>

On Monday morning Anderson received a bundle of letters remonstrating with him for the step he had taken in leaving the Free Church. His response was, “I was unmoved and instead of seeking to defend my character, resolved to leave that to Him and to keep silence”. No sooner had he read the letters than Robert Ness arrived at Mrs. Parker’s, giving him a hearty handshake and informing him that, “a poor man was in the service yesterday that perhaps had never crossed the threshold of a church and he looked riveted”. Anderson responded by saying it “may be the fulfilment of the word, ‘I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are not a people’.”<sup>71</sup> The following day a further two letters arrived from Glasgow that were of very great interest to him. The first gave details of what had occurred at John Knox’s the previous Sabbath when his suspension from the office and functions of the ministry had been intimated from the pulpit. He records in his diary the substance of what was in the letter: “I said to my wife, ‘Mr. Currie will preach’, and so he did from ‘Bring forth the best robe etc.’. He stopped when half way through the sentence of suspension, the paper dropped from his hand and he did not resume it. Dr. Henderson was to preach in the afternoon, but sent his beadle to say he could not and so Currie had to do it himself. My heart was pained for the men and I felt it a loud call

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<sup>70</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, pp. 179-180.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*, p. 181.

to compassion and prayer.”<sup>72</sup> The second letter was from William Anderson, Anderson’s Session Clerk at John Knox’s and one of his supporters, informing him about the congregation. The term “congregation” as used by William Anderson is a reference to those who did not attend John Knox’s but held a worship service elsewhere. The letter also informed him that Luke Henderson was in John Knox’s and not with Anderson’s group of supporters.

It is clear from William Anderson’s letters and from the *Minutes of the John Knox’s Free Church of Scotland* that Joseph Anderson, the elder who along with Luke Henderson had supported Anderson in his dispute with the ten demitting elders, started separate services on 6th June 1852, the first Sabbath after Anderson had left the Free Church. The John Knox’s minute describes Joseph Anderson’s activities in these terms – he was “conducting in a separate place, Divine worship during the hours of Divine service on Sabbath to a portion of Knox’s congregation”.<sup>73</sup> The separate Glasgow congregation to which Anderson would minister for the remainder of his life was really started by the three elders that left John Knox’s in support of him.<sup>74</sup> Though these men had confidence in Anderson in June 1852, they were undoubtedly perplexed at his leaving them and going to Aberdeen without giving them any advice on how to

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*, p. 182. Unless there was a last minute alteration, it seems that either Anderson or his informant was mistaken regarding James Henderson’s preaching in the afternoon. As we have noted, the Glasgow Presbytery on 4th June appointed Peter Currie to preach at John Knox’s “both forenoon and afternoon, and at the conclusion of the service in the forenoon to intimate the sentence of the General Assembly”, *Minutes of the Glasgow Presbytery*, p. 313.

<sup>73</sup> *Minutes of John Knox’s Free Church of Scotland Kirk Session*, meeting of 10th September 1852, p. 192 (cited afterwards as *John Knox’s Minutes*). These minutes are in the Mitchell Library in Glasgow, Reference CH3/1299/2.

<sup>74</sup> The three elders were Joseph Anderson, whom Jonathan Ranken Anderson speaks of as his “principal elder” (*Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 195); William Anderson, who had been the Session Clerk at John Knox’s; and George Renton, who seems to have taken a leading part in transcribing Anderson’s sermons both before and after he left the Free Church. Whether Renton originally took shorthand notes and then wrote them out in full or whether he copied out carefully the notes of others we do not know. After Anderson’s separation from the Free Church these transcribed volumes, both by Renton and others, were read in public worship if he was away or ill, and then for thirty-six years after he died until the congregation joined the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in 1895. Anderson was aware of Renton’s activities, as the record in his diary on 2nd December 1853 shows: “I was waited on by two of my deacons about printing in volumes the notes Mr. Renton has of Lectures and Sermons” (*Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 3, 1853, p. 337). Seventeen of the forty-eight handwritten volumes of Anderson’s transcribed sermons, that are in the Library of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in Glasgow, have either George Renton’s name in the front or are in his handwriting.

proceed. They would have been even more perplexed had they known he believed that he would not be allowed to return to his former congregation “till their uncircumcised hearts be humbled and they accept the punishment of their iniquities”.<sup>75</sup> Four years later their discontent would surface and the thinking of two of these elders in the summer of 1852 would become clear when Joseph Anderson and William Anderson left Anderson’s ministry. In a booklet, written in 1857 vindicating their action of the previous year, Joseph Anderson reflects on his minister’s leaving them to go to the North-East in June 1852, when he writes: “How much did he care for the Knox congregation, his pastoral office, or Free Church connection, when, nearly five years ago, he left all behind him, and went to Aberdeen? I know not what effect such an action had upon the dead, but it certainly produced a great sensation among the living.”<sup>76</sup>

William Anderson wrote again to his minister in Aberdeen on 9th June 1852 explaining in more detail the services his supporters were holding. In a letter to John Bayne, his ardent supporter in Dunblane, Anderson explains the action they had taken. “My people hold a weekly prayer meeting on Wednesday evening, and meet also on Sabbath forenoon, and as soon as they get a place they are to meet in the afternoon also – for all who care for their safety must abandon antichrist.”<sup>77</sup> He replied to his old Session Clerk six days later in what Anderson describes as “a pastoral letter to my poor people which it is to be desired may refresh them a little in the wilderness”.<sup>78</sup> The burden of the letter was twofold. Firstly, he wanted to express his approval of the steps they had taken and, secondly, to emphasize the winnowing process

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<sup>75</sup> *Letters to John Bayne*, letter dated 8th June 1852, p. 27.

<sup>76</sup> Joseph and William Anderson, *Reasons for leaving the ministry of the Rev. Jon. R. Anderson* (Glasgow, 1857), p. 25. William Anderson details a further element of this underlying discontent in his section of the pamphlet. He explains that he left the Free Church in sympathy with Anderson as he thought at the time that his minister was being oppressed by the Church courts. He then adds that he had done so, “although no clear and decided testimony for the pure truth had ever been raised by him, so far as I could see, before any of the Church Courts; and although there was an apparent want of manliness, straightforwardness, and honesty in his conduct, which pained me excessively, and for which I could account in no other way than by the help of scripture ‘Oppression maketh a wise man mad’ (Proverbs 7:7), for it was in such striking contrast with that other passage, ‘The righteous are as bold as a lion’,” *ibid.*, p. 26-27.

<sup>77</sup> *Letters to John Bayne*, letter dated 17th June 1852, pp. 30-31. Anderson’s view of the Free Church should be noted; within a month of leaving that body, he is speaking of it as an antichrist.

<sup>78</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 190.

that was going on among those who profess to be the people of God. With respect to the first he writes: “I received your letter of the 9th instant, and so far as I can judge, am pleased with the course you have taken. . . . I highly approve of your meeting together on the Sabbath, and shall rejoice to find that you are in circumstances to do so as well in the afternoon as the forenoon.”<sup>79</sup> He then exhorted them not to attend services in the Free Church and to continue their separate meetings and in his absence to be content with reading scripture. His concluding encouragement was in these words: “For a people to seek the living among the dead! What an absurdity! I wonder who would go to polluted streams, because here and there a pure drop was to be found; when, by simple reading of the word, singing the songs of Zion, and prayer, he has access to the fountain of his own word! For as the Catechism has it, ‘The Spirit of God maketh the reading but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners and building them up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation’. When, therefore, we cannot get preaching, we ought to fall back on the reading of the word. Oh, who for a moment would compare the reading of *the word of God* with the preaching of *the words of men*; far less prefer the latter to the former?”<sup>80</sup>

The letter majors on explaining the character of a true profession of Christianity. Anderson regarded preaching on this topic as an essential part of his ministry and he believed that his explanation of this sifting process taking place amongst professed believers would play a significant role in his future witness. He observes: “I hope it will not be lost sight of, that the central point of our contest is the ministration of divine truth in opposition to the imaginations of men. Now to express an adherence to this in principle in words is very easy; but to do it in heart and deed, requires the purifying fire of the Holy Ghost. . . . We may, indeed, assume a profession which shall lead others, and even ourselves, to think we are the friends of truth, while, remaining in our natural state, we are at bottom its bitter enemies. But in these days such professions are being tested, and though every effort is in some cases made to keep them up, they are hewn down and cast into the fire. . . . In this process, over which the Great Refiner sits, they lose nothing but the dross of their own corruptions – the dross of carnal associations of an ecclesiastical kind –

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<sup>79</sup> *Letters on the Free Church*, pp. 18, 20.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 20-21 (emphasis is Anderson’s).

and the dross of the corruptions that are in the world through lust. . . . 'I will search Jerusalem with candles, saith the Lord, and will punish the men that are settled on their lees.' We have in this an allusion to the work of the Spirit of God in searching the hearts and trying the reins. By this means people are brought to loathe themselves in the sight of the Holy One, who is of 'purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and cannot look upon sin'.<sup>81</sup>

Anderson preached in Mrs. Parker's house for two more Sabbaths, 13th and 20th June 1852; on both occasions he believed he had been divinely assisted in preaching to ever-increasing congregations. Describing the three meetings of the 13th June he writes: "We had a large congregation in the morning – larger than the evening one of the last Sabbath. In the afternoon it was still larger and at night it was crowded and some in the lobby and up the stairs. I went on each occasion in weakness and fear and some trembling and was enabled to hang on to Him almost the whole day."<sup>82</sup> His description of the third Sabbath is in similar glowing terms: "A day that will never be forgotten – indeed it will be heard of in eternity as a day of espousals and the day of the gladness of Messiah's heart." At first he seemed to have difficulty on selecting the text on which to preach: "I was fixed on my subjects – was driven from both and brought back to them and in the face of the formidable difficulties they presented was called to go up and possess the land. And truly it turned out to be a good land, full of vineyards and olive yards, of streams and fountains of waters. We had crowded congregations at all our three services and I trust the Master Himself. I was kept lively all day and very dependent and got the benefit of it. For the truth flowed in rivers of living water. His heritage was refreshed and towards the close hardly a dry eye could be seen."<sup>83</sup>

## **2. John Knox's Free Church asks Anderson to reconsider his resignation**

The first meeting of the John Knox's Free Church Session, after Anderson's resignation, took place on 12th June 1852. This was six days after Anderson's suspension had been intimated from the pulpit and Joseph Anderson had held separate services for Anderson's ardent

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<sup>81</sup> *Letters on the Free Church*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>82</sup> *Anderson's Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 188.

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 196-197.

supporters for the first time. The Session was comprised of James Gibson, the Interim Moderator, and five elders. Rather surprisingly, one of these was Joseph Anderson who apparently still considered himself a member of the Session though he had conducted public worship away from John Knox's with those sympathetic to Anderson's stand. The remaining four were Luke Henderson and three elders that had been ordained by Anderson after the ten demitting elders had resigned: Donald Munro, and William and James Macfie. Two elders that were not present were the Session Clerk, William Anderson, and George Renton. There were two reasons for calling a meeting of the Session. The first was to arrange a congregational meeting for the following Monday to consider, in the words of the Session minute, "the propriety of adopting a Memorial to the Rev. J. R. Anderson, their pastor, to be transmitted to him with the view to prevail upon him to reconsider his letter of resignation to the General Assembly and submit himself to the judicatories of the Church". It was agreed that such a meeting be held at 8 o'clock in the evening and intimation was to be made from the pulpit the following day. The other reason why the meeting was called was to receive letters of resignation from four deacons; James Davidson, Peter Doig, John Anderson, and William Dewar. These men were all ardent supporters of Anderson; the Session took no action with respect to these letters of resignation and resolved that they should lie on the table for future consideration.<sup>84</sup>

A congregational meeting was held on Monday 19th June 1852, where it was agreed that a memorial should be sent to Anderson. The meeting was not chaired by James Gibson, the Interim Moderator, but by William Macfie who had been one of Anderson's elders. The approved document was signed by over a hundred and fifty members and adherents of John Knox's and sent by post to Anderson. Who drew up the draft memorial or what were its precise contents we do not know with any accuracy. The only hint of its content is the John Knox's Session minute cited in the previous paragraph and brief references to its contents in both Anderson's diary and his letter of response to the Memorial that was sent to "Certain office-bearers, members and adherents of Knox's Free Church, Glasgow". The relevant diary entry for 26th June 1852, by which time Anderson had left Aberdeen and was in Strathpeffer, reads: "I afterwards went down to the Post Office and got a

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<sup>84</sup> *John Knox's Minutes*, meeting of 12th June 1852, p. 189.



large packet containing the Memorial from about 150 of my people praying me to reconsider my separation from the Free Church. I glanced at first at the names and saw few that surprised me and as to the document itself there is really nothing in it: yet I felt I should deal tenderly with those who have supported it.”<sup>85</sup> Anderson’s letter of response is a little more helpful with respect to the content of the memorial as it seems to contain an exact citation. He writes: “I see from your memorial that you advise me to submit myself to the government of the Church, and thus put honour upon an ordinance appointed not for destruction but for edification.”<sup>86</sup>

### **3. Anderson’s defence of separation**

Anderson’s detailed response is in a letter, dated 1st July 1852, that was sent to William Macfie, the chairman of the congregational meeting.<sup>87</sup> Written within a month of the General Assembly at which he resigned, the letter forms a contemporaneous manifesto of his view of the Free Church and of their case against him. There is, to the present writer’s knowledge, no more comprehensive statement of Anderson’s position, written in the weeks immediately after the 1852 General Assembly, than this letter and a pastoral letter written nine days earlier that was sent to those who had left John Knox’s in his support. The views Anderson expresses in these letters are diametrically opposed to how the leaders of the Free Church saw the issues.

#### ***(a) Anderson’s letter to John Knox’s Free Church***

Though sent to Macfie, the printed version says that it is a “*Reply to the Memorial of certain office-bearers, members and adherents of Knox’s Free Church, Glasgow*”. Anderson begins by giving a rationale for his departure from them to Aberdeen: “I did not intend at this time to address you on the peculiar position in which we are placed. For having acted on my own independent judgment throughout the painful struggle, I thought I should deal most fairly and honourably by you in leaving you to do the same. But the memorial you have sent seems to require that I so far depart from this line of policy; and, since you yourselves have invited it,

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<sup>85</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 204.

<sup>86</sup> *Letters on the Free Church*, p. 8.

<sup>87</sup> The printed version is in *Letters on the Free Church*, pp. 3-10, and covers seven and a third pages.

to raise once more my warning voice in the midst of you. . . . I was willing to give you ample time to make up your own minds – in no way have I interfered with your right to judge for yourselves: I have even left my home and those who expressed their adherence to my ministry, that they, and you, and all concerned, might have the fullest opportunity to weigh matters, and calmly look at the subject in all its bearings before you committed yourselves to a course which promises nothing that can flatter the pride of the carnal heart, but rather which is likely to expose to the scorn and contempt of those that are at ease.”<sup>88</sup> Anderson then goes on to detail his case against the Free Church just weeks after tendering his resignation. The rather lengthy key section comes in response to the advice contained in the memorial that he should submit himself “to the government of the Church, and thus put honour upon an ordinance appointed not for destruction but for edification”. Clearly these words stirred Anderson; his response is trenchant:

But what is the meaning of this language? What is the Church to whose government you call me to submit myself? You will say, “It is the Free Church”. And where am I to find the Free Church? I have been told, “In the Standards”. I do submit most cordially to the Standards. But give me leave to say the Standards do not rule – they do not administer laws – *that* is done by living men. Now I have been in a Free Church Session – said to be the most intelligent and pious body of men to be found within her borders; and there by a majority of ten to two, my cause has been condemned, and a ministry applauded, against which I protest.<sup>89</sup> I have been in a Free Church Presbytery, the second in point of numbers and influence within her pale, and there, without a dissentient voice, my cause has been condemned, and the ministry praised, against which I protest. I might have gone to a Free Church Synod, the second too, in every respect, within the Church, and there also, without doubt, my cause would have been condemned, and the ministry lauded against which I protest. I have been before the General Assembly, and there without a dissentient voice, my cause has been condemned, and a ministry virtually applauded, from which, not I only, but others in the church dissent. I have been in conference with the leaders of the Free Church – for Presbyterian though she be in name, he must be utterly blind who does not see that in reality she is ruled by an ecclesiastical oligarchy – and by

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<sup>88</sup> *Letters on the Free Church*, pp. 3, 6.

<sup>89</sup> The ministry against which Anderson protested was that of such men as John Milne, Alexander Somerville, William Arnot, and Horatius and Andrew Bonar. See Section II in the first part of this paper in *SRSJHJ*, Vol. 4, pp. 163-174.

them my cause has been condemned and the ministry favoured against which I protest.<sup>90</sup>

Now, if this were a righteous sentence, and had it been righteously reached, I should at once have submitted and taken the consequences. I own my obligation in respect of the authority of the Church in the Lord – that is, by men acting in his Spirit, according to his word, and with a view to his glory. But I have seen nothing of this in the Free Church Courts *in the Lord*, but the very reverse. Some amongst yourselves were wont to talk as if they had seen nothing there *in the Lord*, but the very reverse. And if you interrogate them, they will perhaps explain what they mean, or give account of the new light that has broken in upon them, and let all of us have the benefit of it. But may I not, with some confidence, appeal to yourselves, whether you have heard of anything in the conduct of the courts of the Free Church at all like what the scriptures describe as the authority of the Church of God? For example, it is said, “Obey them which have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls as those that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief; for that is unprofitable unto you”. I found that instead of being in the hands of men who cared for my soul, the sooner I got out of their hands the better.

Nor will it be different with you should you come under the same influence. You may indeed – and it is here you stand in imminent danger – become acquainted with the thing, just as the lungs may be trained to breathe an unwholesome atmosphere; you may lose the sense you perhaps yet retain of the beauty and sweetness of what is spiritual, and cease to perceive the manifest deformity of what is carnal; you may blunt the sensibility to what is pure, and noble, and excellent in the Christian religion, and become satisfied with what you get, however base and worthless it be; you may forget all you have learned and heard of the happiness of the highway of holiness, and sink down into the beaten path of formality or hypocrisy. But you will one day awake to a dreadful reality

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<sup>90</sup> Sadly, throughout the case against him, Anderson failed to see his own fault, that though he objected to the preaching of John Milne and others, he never raised a case against them in Church courts. Anderson believed that both Milne and Horatius Bonar held Morisonian views, but took no formal action against their teaching. He rather, in his view, testified against them from the pulpit or criticised them to others in conversation. Such an unconstitutional procedure meant that the men whose preaching he thought to be both unfaithful and heterodox had no opportunity to answer the charges levelled against them. It was, therefore, not unexpected that the Church courts took notice of his conduct. It was not correct to say he had been condemned and the ministry against which he protested favoured. What had occurred was that Anderson’s procedure had been condemned and sympathy expressed to the men whom he had criticised without giving them the opportunity to respond. Their alleged Morisonianism and non-experimental preaching had never been brought before a Church court.

of an unfaithful ministry, a worthless gospel, and a lost soul. And, “what will it profit a man though he gain the whole world and lose his soul?”. Oh flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold of eternal life. “To-day, while it is called to day, do not harden your hearts.”<sup>91</sup>

The clear message of Anderson’s letter in response to the Knox’s memorial was that he would not submit himself to the judicatories of the Free Church. Indeed, his letter urged the Knox’s congregation to flee from that organisation themselves and warned that a possible consequence of their failing to do so would be a lost eternity. On Saturday 17th July 1852, the John Knox’s Session met to consider Anderson’s response and appointed a congregational meeting for the following Monday to inform members and adherents of his answer to their memorial. The elders, possibly anticipating difficulties, requested that James Gibson, the Interim Moderator and Clerk of the Glasgow Presbytery, preside at the congregational meeting.<sup>92</sup> The John Knox’s memorial to Anderson was the final attempt by any Free Church body to try to bring Anderson back into the Church. When the Knox’s Session met again on 28th August 1852 they agreed to call a further congregational meeting, the purpose of which was to take steps with a view to calling a new minister – they had concluded rightly that Anderson’s ministry in that congregation had irrevocably ended. The next step in the Free Church’s relationship with Anderson would be for the Glasgow Presbytery to carry out the General Assembly’s instructions to prosecute a libel against him.

***(b) Anderson’s pastoral letter to those who had left John Knox’s***

On 21st June 1852 Anderson was preparing to leave Aberdeen the following day and travel to Ross-shire, where he intended to stay for a month. His planning must have been somewhat disturbed by the arrival of two letters, one from James Gibson, containing the libel against him by the Glasgow Presbytery, and a second from William Anderson, his former Session clerk at John Knox’s. As we have noticed he did not read the Glasgow Presbytery’s libel but returned it back to Gibson with a covering letter. He then wrote a pastoral letter to the group of his supporters in Glasgow, who were now meeting separately, along with a covering letter to William Anderson. The letter to his old Session clerk

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<sup>91</sup> *Letters on the Free Church*, pp. 8-10.

<sup>92</sup> *John Knox’s Minutes*, meeting of 17th July 1852, p. 190.

explained his short-term intentions. “We go off to Ross-shire tomorrow, if the Lord permit, and intend to remain there for four weeks. My way is at present quite shut up in the direction of Glasgow; but so soon as it is opened, I trust I shall be prepared to take it. I hope my people are of one mind with me in this respect, and do not desire I should come to them a day sooner than I am sent. I should otherwise have no comfort, and do them no good.”<sup>93</sup>

As we have observed, this first pastoral letter,<sup>94</sup> along with the letter returning the memorial, form a contemporaneous manifesto of Anderson’s view of the Free Church in the weeks after the 1852 General Assembly and a defence of why he thought separation from the Free Church to be a duty for those who were committed to old school Calvinism. He records in his diary: “I . . . wrote a long letter to those of my people that have announced their adherence to their testimony, and was led to show that the Free Church has proved unfaithful, both in the key of doctrine and the key of discipline. I was fully occupied till dinner.”<sup>95</sup> The pastoral letter begins by commending them for separating from the Free Church. “I rejoiced greatly to hear of your meeting last week, and the solemnity that appears to reign in your assemblies. I felt as if I were in the midst of you, and was pretty sure the dew was falling upon you. I shall endeavour to be with you in spirit, so long as I am absent in body; and strive together with you in prayer, that the things which have befallen us may turn rather to the furtherance of the Gospel.”<sup>96</sup> He then goes on to detail a significant change in his thinking. He writes: “I now see that, while in the Free Church, I was to a fearful extent wrapped in a mist, and that with all my apparent faithfulness, I was sparing things in myself, and in the ministers with whom I was associated, and in the people among whom I laboured, which I am now disposed to lament and condemn.”

He then explains the main area in which he had been both sparing himself and other Free Church ministers: “I judged it my duty, in the

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<sup>93</sup> *Letters on the Free Church*, p. 22.

<sup>94</sup> The letter is printed in *Letters on the Free Church*, pp. 22-28. Between 21st June and 21st September 1852 Anderson wrote nine pastoral letters to those who had seceded to form the congregation that would eventually be called “John Knox’s Church of Scotland Tabernacle”. These and a few other letters were printed in late 1852 in *Letters on the Free Church*. They are invaluable historical documents in detailing Anderson’s activities and his views during these crucial months after the 1852 General Assembly.

<sup>95</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 198.

<sup>96</sup> *Letters on the Free Church*, pp. 22-23.

exercise of Christian prudence and forbearance, not unnecessarily to expose her [the Free Church] defections. In many cases these were so glaring in her worship, and doctrine, and discipline, that I could not be silent; yet I laboured hard to throw my testimony – my honest and heartbroken testimony – into a shape the least offensive to *persons*, which I sought to make as pointed and as I could against *things*. I began to flatter myself that I was making good progress in this peaceful policy, when happily for me, the office-bearers of the Free Church, first in the case of the Hope Street sermon, and then in the case of Mr. Milne’s ministry stepped [*sic*] in, and dashed all my fair schemes of conciliation. For had I succeeded, I must have lulled my conscience asleep, and lost myself in the spiritual blindness and delusion, with which so many appear to be smitten.”<sup>97</sup> Almost three months later, in a letter to John Bayne, Anderson again refers to this question of separation and the new light he had received. He is stressing to Bayne that it is no easy matter for the people of God to hold fast to their testimony for the truth and he continues:

The grand point on which they are pressed, is that they may maintain this testimony, as well in one condition as another – and that it is of no consequence what their associates be in the work of the Lord. But this is a great mistake, a dangerous error, and one which, if carried fully out, would have kept our forefathers in Popery at the first Reformation, in Prelacy at the second, Erastianism at the third, and in a combination of all three in corrupt Evangelicalism. The true reason why the Reformers left the Church of Rome was that she did not faithfully adhere to, and stand for the truth. And so at other eventful periods of our history. The reason we separate from the Free Church is she does not faithfully adhere to the truth and fully proclaim it. And not only so but she would have us believe that there never was a more noble testimony borne in Scotland.<sup>98</sup>

The remainder of the pastoral letter focuses on Anderson’s view of the Free Church and the way he had been treated in its various courts. The central thrust of his case was as follows:

- (i) He did not regard the Church as having acted in a charitable or Christian manner. He believed there were individuals in the Free Church that belonged to the visible church, but he regarded the Church Courts that had dealt with him as

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<sup>97</sup> *ibid.* pp. 23-24.

<sup>98</sup> *Letters to John Bayne*, letter dated 13th September 1852, pp. 46-47.

unchristian. In his view their conduct revealed that they did not belong to the visible church.<sup>99</sup>

- (ii) Anderson thought that the case against him had been manufactured. That his opposers were hunting for material to catch him out. He writes: “But what I say is, that whatever be made of me and my conduct as a minister of Christ, the courts of the Free Church are – in my judgment, and in the court of my conscience, enlightened, I trust, by the word of God – weighed in the balance and found wanting.”<sup>100</sup>
- (iii) Then quite startlingly he writes: “I am no purist – I am no perfectionist. I demand nothing more of the ministers of the church than a credible profession of the Christian religion; and unless I am satisfied that I have before me such a profession, I cannot give to any man the right hand of fellowship.” Anderson then goes on to make the sweeping charge that he did not regard as having a credible profession of faith the ten elders that resigned from John Knox’s, the members of the Glasgow Presbytery and the leaders of the General Assembly. He adds, “I cannot, with a good conscience, receive them as men that make a credible profession of that religion which it is a man’s glory to hold and teach”. He further adds, however, “I shall still hold fellowship with all within her pale who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and abide by his simple truth, and walk in his ways”.<sup>101</sup>
- (iv) A central plank of his critique of the Free Church, which regrettably is not expanded upon, is encapsulated in this sentence – “The whole body, from the elders up to the General Assembly, have tacitly or expressly recorded their approbation of a kind of preaching which I have been constrained to condemn”.<sup>102</sup> This was the preaching of men like John Milne, Andrew and Horatius Bonar, Alexander Somerville and William Arnot. Anderson did not regard their type of preaching as “the pure gospel”. With some feeling he adds:

I find another kind of religion in the word of God and the standards of the church – I took up another kind of religion when I first professed His

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<sup>99</sup> *Letters on the Free Church*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>100</sup> *ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*, p. 26.

name at His holy table – I subscribed to another kind of religion when I was ordained to the ministry – I received a banner of another kind of religion at the memorable Disruption – I have taught another kind of religion publicly, and from house to house among my own flock and throughout the land – I have seen another religion in the people of God whom I dearly love, and love in proportion as His image shines in them – I seek after another religion for myself, my family and friends – and, I calmly look forward to the day when that other religion will be owned and honoured before the great white throne; while all others, be they what they may, and take what name their votaries please, and meet with what favour they can, will be utterly and forever abolished.<sup>103</sup>

He concludes this first pastoral letter by reflecting on his having left the Free Church: “Having escaped from the mist myself, I am anxious that others should escape; and certainly my first care is due to those of my flock that are willing to adhere to me for the truths sake.”<sup>104</sup>

#### 4. A disturbed month in Strathpeffer

On Tuesday 22nd June 1852 Anderson and his wife left Aberdeen at ten in the morning, in a horse-driven carriage, to go first to Huntly where they would stay overnight, then on to Inverness, where they would stay a further night, before arriving at their destination of Strathpeffer on the Thursday. After a five-and-a-half-hour journey they arrived at Huntly, the scene of the ministry of the young Robert Rainy. Anderson had a small

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<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*, p. 27. In the exchange of letters between Milne and Anderson, which we noticed in the first part of this paper, Anderson told Milne there was “a wide and material difference between the character of your ministry and mine”, yet he refused to tell him the nature of the difference, see *SRSJ*, Vol. 4. pp. 217-218. It is regrettable that both in his dealings with Milne, and throughout the case against him in the courts of the Free Church, Anderson does not appear to have made any explicit statement of what he considered to be the substance of this difference. The only clear statement which he made whilst the Church courts were dealing with him was that he regarded the preaching of the Milne-Bonar circle to be Morisonian. As we notice in the following paper, *SRSJ*, Vol. 5, p. 331, it was only when he began to publish his monthly magazine, *The Alarm! A Magazine for the times* (cited afterwards as *Alarm*), two and a half years later in 1855, that he explained in more detail what he regarded as the difference between himself and the Milne-Bonar circle.

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*, p. 28. The issue of separation from unfaithful churches became a topic to which Anderson gave a great deal of attention. In the last issue of the *Alarm*, June 1856, pp. 282-287, he reviews two books dealing with the topic. The first was the *Memoir of the Life of Elizabeth Cairns* (London, 1855) in which she states, “her parents had been deprived of all they had in the world, and cast out of house and hold, because of their joining with, and adhering and cleaving to, the then persecuted gospel remnant”. The second volume he reviewed was James Fraser of Brea, *The Lawfulness and Duty of Separation from Corrupt Ministers and Churches* (Edinburgh, 1744).



group of supporters in Huntly that were both attached to him and dissatisfied with Rainy's preaching. In the evening he held a meeting in the home of one of his supporters. His description of the gathering is full of interest: "The meeting – the humblest I have yet held – a poor house with mud floor very irregular and not many present, and some poor, old and withered. I got singular things laid to my hand for a while and then they stopped, and do what I could I got no more. The solemnity in the last prayer was awful."<sup>105</sup>

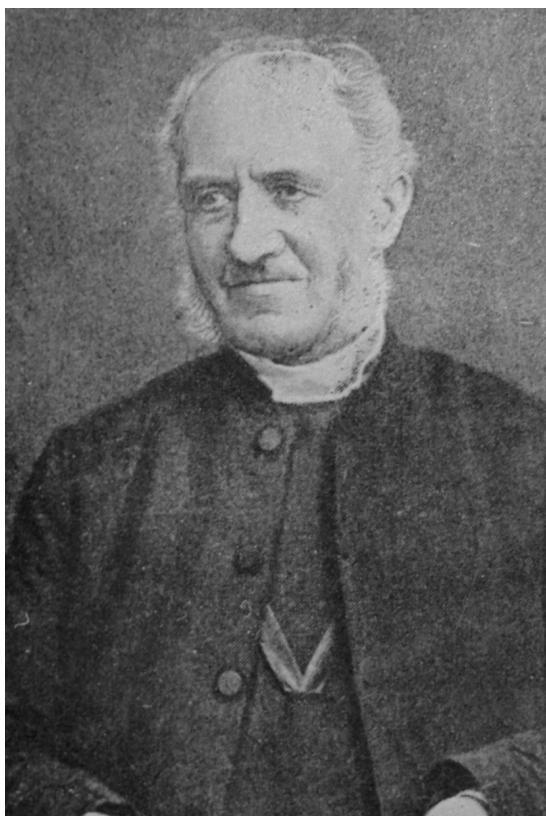
Almost a month later, whilst he was still in Strathpeffer, Anderson makes this observation in his diary: "A remarkable letter from Huntly. Rainy debarred the flower of Huntly from the table, and my friend, followed by four others, left the church! I solemnly rejoiced in this high-handed measure, as showing what men in power are prepared to do. I thought we should spend a Sabbath at Huntly on our way south to strengthen the hands of these poor outcasts. My heart cleaves to them in tender love."<sup>106</sup> Robert Rainy's biographer provides the background from a rather different perspective: "When Rainy came [to Huntly] at the age of twenty-five he had not an easy task and for some time he had – to use his own phrase – 'to walk on eggshells'. There had arisen parties, and in particular a 'spiritual party' who



*Robert Rainy as a young man.*

<sup>105</sup> *Anderson's Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 199. In a letter to John Bayne, written after he had arrived at Strathpeffer, Anderson gives a further description of the gathering: "I had a singular meeting in Huntly on my way north. The place was very small, and only a select company of friends were invited. To the carnal eye it was a sorry sight, so poor, so carnal, so withered, so black. But what a savour! I think it was the most remarkable meeting I have yet had," *Letters to John Bayne*, letter dated 26th June 1852, p. 32.

<sup>106</sup> *Anderson's Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 230.



*Robert Eden, Bishop of Moray,  
Anderson's fellow traveller to Inverness.*

regarded themselves as the real church and all others as of the world. The new minister's observation on this point of view of the 'unco guid' of the place is characteristic: 'The opinion may be right or may be wrong, but it is an unsafe opinion for anyone to hold in regard to his own case.'" His biographer goes on to say that Rainy's "wisdom, combined with his own invariable fairness and courtesy and his high example of Christian behaviour, did its work and the evil spirit of division was exorcised".<sup>107</sup>

After visiting some of his supporters the following morning, the Andersons left Huntly at noon in a coach for Inverness and to his surprise a fellow passenger was the

Bishop of Moray.<sup>108</sup> These are Anderson's comments on his Episcopalian travelling companion: "I had a feeling of pity for the man, but recoiled with a kind of horror from his profession. Is it religion? Is it

<sup>107</sup> Patrick Carnegie Simpson, *The Life of Principal Rainy* (2 vols., London, 1909), Vol. 1, pp. 111-112. The term "unco guid" is used to describe those that others consider excessively religious, self-righteous, or narrow-minded. Rainy's use of it doubtless came from one of Robert Burns' poems written in 1786, "An address to the Unco Guid, an attack on the rigidly righteous".

<sup>108</sup> The Bishop of Moray, Ross and Caithness, in June 1852, was Robert Eden (1804-1886). He was the third son of Sir Frederick Morton Eden and educated at Westminster School and Christ Church, Oxford. After several curacies he became rector of Leigh in Essex in 1837. He was consecrated Bishop of Moray, Ross, and Caithness, on 9th March 1851. Cambridge University awarded him a D.D. on his elevation. He made, however, a personal sacrifice in accepting a see in the poor Scottish Episcopal Church, relinquishing a comfortable English living worth approximately £600 a year for a position of no more than £150 with no Episcopal residence. In 1862 he was elected Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church in succession to Charles Terrot. He was said to have been a capable, if not brilliant, preacher. There could hardly have been a starker contrast between Anderson and Eden. It is recorded of the Bishop that his good humour and love of jokes were even distasteful to some older, stricter Episcopalian. Theologically he was a moderate high churchman and politically he was an uncompromising Tory. See *Biographies of Highland Clergymen* (Inverness, 1889), pp. 120-135; *ODNB*; and F. Goldie, *A Short History of the Scottish Episcopal Church* (Edinburgh, 1976), p. 119-120.

not superstition?”<sup>109</sup> Another five-hour coach drive from Inverness saw the Andersons arrive at Strathpeffer at five o’clock in the evening of the following day.<sup>110</sup>

The Andersons stayed in Strathpeffer for almost a month. Their reason for going there seems to have been to have a period of rest and recuperation in the beauty of the Scottish Highlands. In the Victorian era, Strathpeffer was popular as a spa resort owing to the discovery of sulphurous springs in the eighteenth century. The pump-room in the middle of the village dates from 1819. On the four Sabbaths they were in Ross-shire Anderson preached in the place where he was staying to just his family and a small group of friends. On some Sabbaths the little group included Susan Parker and her sister Miss Watt, who joined the Andersons for part of their stay in Strathpeffer. If, however, Anderson was hoping for a period of complete rest, after the momentous few weeks through which he had just passed, he was to be sadly mistaken. The weeks in Strathpeffer were another significant turning point with respect to his future career and were marked by four distinct events.

#### ***(a) The John Knox’s Memorial***

As we noted earlier, it was whilst Anderson was in Strathpeffer that the memorial came from the John Knox’s congregation asking him to reconsider his separation from the Free Church and advising him to submit himself to the government of the Church. The memorial arrived on the Saturday following their arrival on the Thursday. It was five days later before he responded with a letter dated 1st July 1852. As we have noted, it was a ringing statement of his assessment of the Free Church. Anderson’s response took him some time and effort to write. He records in his diary three days after receiving the memorial, “I slept well and awoke early, and caught my mind busily concocting a reply to the Memorial and framing arguments by which to convince my people that I did right in leaving the Free Church, and that they would do well to follow me”.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 201.

<sup>110</sup> In these days of travelling, besides taking in the scenery, Anderson was occupying his time reading Puritan authors: Thomas Brooks on the Covenant of Grace (probably a reference to the treatise “Paradise Opened” in *The Works of Thomas Brooks*, Banner of Truth reprint, 1980, Vol. 5, pp. 265-414) and Obadiah Sedgwick’s *The Anatomy of Secret Sins*. See *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, pp. 200-201.

<sup>111</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 207.

***(b) The relevancy of the Glasgow Presbytery's libel***

The first citation for Anderson to be present at the Glasgow Presbytery on 29th June 1852, when the relevancy of their libel against him would be considered, was sent to his home during his stay in Aberdeen. James Gibson, the Presbytery Clerk, reported to the Presbytery that the libel had been duly served and the officer of the court had returned an execution of service. Gibson then produced and read the letter from Anderson we noticed earlier, in which he stated that he declined the jurisdiction of the Church and had returned the libel unread.<sup>112</sup> The second citation was again delivered to his home in Glasgow whilst he was in Strathpeffer. This was to attend a meeting of the Glasgow Presbytery on the 12th July 1852. No mention is made of this second citation in his diary. What is clear, however, is that it was whilst he was at Strathpeffer that Anderson learned for the first time the nature of the charges against him that were contained in the libel. On the day he finished his letter responding to the memorial, he records the following: "My wife . . . told me of the charges in the libel. I went on my knees, and was able to confess myself guilty of all that was charged in His sight, but saw that to remain in the Free Church was to entangle myself in a net out of which I might never escape."<sup>113</sup>

***(c) Discontent amongst his Glasgow supporters***

Whilst he was in Ross-shire it became very clear to Anderson that his supporters in Glasgow were unhappy that he had left them immediately after the General Assembly and wished that he would now return. Over a month had now elapsed and whilst they were holding separate meetings and facing heavy criticism in Glasgow he was resting in a spa town in the Highlands. On 3rd July 1852 he received a letter from one of his young deacons.<sup>114</sup> His diary details the main contents of the letter.

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<sup>112</sup> *Minutes of the Glasgow Presbytery*, 29th June 1852, pp. 324-325. See also *Aberdeen Herald*, 3rd July 1852. (The pagination of the minutes of the Glasgow Presbytery is faulty between pages 324 and 334; they are numbered incorrectly 224 to 234. Earlier pages have, therefore, identical numbers. In citations in this paper I have added 100 to the numbers in the actual pages of the minute book so that they read 324 to 334.)

<sup>113</sup> *Anderson's Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 210. Anderson's wife probably obtained the details from a newspaper, as she gave him the information two days after the meeting of the Presbytery at which he had been cited to appear for the first time. Anderson's admission of guilt to all the charges of the libel is quite extraordinary.

<sup>114</sup> The letter was from a "Mr. D". As three of his deacons' surnames began with D it is not possible to accurately identify his correspondent. Their names were James Davidson, Peter Doig, and William Dewar.

It gave a favourable account of what Anderson calls “my poor people” but then he adds, “some are impatient for my return and talk of going back to the Free Church if I do not resume my ministry among them”. Anderson, however, still appears very reluctant to go back to Glasgow and notes in his diary, “I think if I had the means I would tie myself to no spot but go everywhere preaching the word”.<sup>115</sup> Three days later, on 6th July 1852, a deputation of two of his former John Knox’s office-bearers arrived at Strathpeffer late in the evening. They came as the official representatives of those in Glasgow that had left the Free Church in his support with a formal document, signed by three hundred and six people,<sup>116</sup> asking him to return to Glasgow. The document read as follows:

We, the undersigned office-bearers, members and adherents, late of John Knox’s Free Church, Glasgow, having taken into prayerful consideration the recent solemn dispensations through which you, as our pastor, have been called to pass, as we believe in the maintenance of the truth; and farther, [*sic*] having considered that you have seen it your duty to resign your connection with the Free Church, do hereby resolve to resign our connection with said church, and adhere to your ministry in the truth for the following reasons:

1st, The Free Church, as represented by its courts, has in your case, we believe, virtually decided for error, and consequently against the truth.

2nd, In conformity with that decision, she has sought to exercise discipline upon you, which we consider not warranted by the word of God, being based on an unjust foundation.

3rd, She has compelled you to leave her communion (being a virtual exclusion) to preserve a conscience void of offence toward God, and an unfettered testimony for the truth.

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<sup>115</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 213.

<sup>116</sup> When the *about* hundred and fifty people who signed the memorial from John Knox’s are added to the three hundred and six who seceded from John Knox’s, we arrive at a comparable total to the membership statistics given for that congregation in 1848 of five hundred (see *AFCS*, Vol. 2, p. 94). This assumes that the clearly rounded five hundred figure includes adherents. We cannot, however, be certain of this, as in the statistics of a number of congregations detailed in *AFCS*, Vol. 2, there is a star (\*) against membership numbers with a note saying that it includes adherents. There is no star against any congregation in the Glasgow Presbytery. The numbers signing the memorial to Anderson and the call of the seceders certainly included adherents. The breakdown of the three hundred and six seceders is as follows: Two elders, six deacons, one hundred and seventy-eight communicants and one hundred and twenty adherents. The specification by Anderson of two elders is perplexing as three elders had left John Knox’s in his support.

4th, We value, and would desire to value more highly, a faithful Christian ministry, which yours has, through the divine blessing, hitherto proved to many, and which it is our earnest prayer it may still continue to prove.

In the following up of this resolution, we affectionately call on you to return to us as our pastor, desiring that you may be sent back to us in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ; and resolve that, through grace, we will adhere to you so long as you adhere to the truth, that God may be glorified, and our souls saved with an everlasting salvation.<sup>117</sup>

Anderson records in his diary that he talked with the two office-bearers until it was late, indeed one could imagine it went on into the early hours of the following day, as the deputation had only arrived at ten that evening. As we shall notice presently, the previous day Anderson had met Archibald Cook, who had urged him to return to the Free Church. The exhortations of Cook in one direction and then the conversation with his Glasgow friends, accompanied by the written call of two-thirds of his congregation to return to them, threw Anderson completely off his balance. He was clearly tossed in his mind on what course of action to take. The following evening Anderson wrote in his diary: “We had a prayer meeting on account of our friends with us – it was a good time and I was loathe to stop. We afterwards talked of my people, and their anxiety to get me amongst them. I thought I saw they had much to learn in the way of self-denial, and patience and so have I.” Still, he clearly thought, notwithstanding the signed call to return to them, that his congregation had let him down in the past and needed further repentance for their lack of support in his contending against the preaching of John Milne. He adds, “Oh when will I learn in meekness to instruct those who oppose themselves, if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. ‘Ye have need of Patience.’”<sup>118</sup> Joseph Anderson and his colleague left the following day after further conversations with Anderson. Reflecting again on the view he held when he left Glasgow, that his congregation needed to be tested, he says he found them, “candid and open to conviction”. Then he adds

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<sup>117</sup> *Letters on the Free Church*, p. 40. This statement was drawn up by William Anderson. In his section of the pamphlet written by Joseph and William Anderson, when they left Anderson’s ministry at Knox’s Tabernacle, he gives the following explanation: “I alone drew up the call which we sent to our minister to return to us, wherein my sentiments at that time are plainly stated, and although it was afterwards submitted to the office-bearers for approval and adoption, only one or two words were altered.” Joseph and William Anderson, *Reasons for leaving the ministry of the Rev. Jon. R. Anderson*, p. 27.

<sup>118</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 218.

finally, “We resumed the subject after breakfast and brought it, I trust, to some head so that Messrs. Anderson and D may return home satisfied they have not come on a bootless errand”.<sup>119</sup>

In addition to Anderson’s first pastoral letter, he wrote two further letters before the delegation from Glasgow arrived on 6th July 1852. In his second pastoral letter, dated 25th June 1852, he comments at length on his opposition to the preaching exemplified by John Milne, Alexander Somerville, and William Arnot. His trenchant observations are as follows:

The most powerful instrument he (Satan) employs is a spurious evangelicalism, the prominent features of which have been pointed out to you in the course of a ministry of nearly twenty years. The light of Scripture truth seemed so clear and discriminating, that we were ever ready to think no one that received it could ever mistake his way, or lend the smallest countenance to what is opposed to it. But it is one thing to judge sitting under the vine and fig-tree in quiet meditation, and another thing to suffer in the fiery hour of trial. . . . The day was, and you remember it, when we all apparently stood for the simple gospel, the pure milk of the Word, the faithful exposition and pungent application of Holy Scripture, and protested against a something which, as a friend expressed it to me, “I cannot tell so well what it is, as I can what it is not” – it is not the glorious gospel of the blessed God. . . . The great enemy of the soul in our day, and in our land, is carnal religion under the mask of evangelicalism; to which may be fitly enough assigned the name of Evangelical Antichrist. To prevail against this enemy, to the salvation of our own souls, and the souls of others, will require deep humility, constant watchfulness, habitual self-denial, untiring patience, ardent zeal and unceasing prayer.<sup>120</sup>

Notwithstanding his opinion, that his Glasgow congregation needed further testing, after a second reading of the document they had addressed to him, Anderson was pleased with what they had written. In a fourth pastoral letter, written four days after the delegation had returned to Glasgow, in which he addresses them as “My Beloved Friends and Brethren”,<sup>121</sup> he writes:

I welcomed the deputation you sent, to put into my hands the noble testimony you have raised for the truth which it has been my happiness to minister to you. I was sensibly moved, when after they had left, I read

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<sup>119</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 218-219.

<sup>120</sup> *Letters on the Free Church*, pp. 29, 31, 33.

<sup>121</sup> The two previous letters had been addressed, “My Dear Friends”.



*Archibald Cook (1789-1865),  
Free Church minister of Daviot.*

the document a second time, and felt it was all I wished, and more than I expected. The expression of your regard for your minister, and your attachment to his ministry, powerfully touched my feelings. But happy was I to observe, that you had carefully guarded those expressions, so that they should bind you to me, only so long as I adhere to the truth. For the moment I turn aside from it, either in my life or doctrine, you have left yourselves free to obey the injunction of the apostle, "from such turn away".<sup>122</sup>

***(d) Anderson's break with the Cook brothers***

The fourth major event, during the month that Anderson was in Strathpeffer, was the beginning of the break in his friendship with the Cook brothers. We noticed, in the first part of this paper, his close attachment to Archibald and Finlay Cook. At the John Knox's April Communion in 1850, 1851, and 1852 Archibald Cook had been the assisting minister. At the evening service on the Friday of the communion in April 1852, Cook had preached on the text, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" (Galatians 3:1). Commenting on the sermon, Anderson wrote: "The truth surpassing what I have ever heard from this dear man of God. . . . I could not speak when he came up to the vestry, but threw my arms round his neck and kissed him."<sup>123</sup> Just

The fourth major event, during the month that Anderson was in Strathpeffer, was the beginning of

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<sup>122</sup> *Letters on the Free Church*, pp. 39-41. In a letter to John Bayne, eight days later, one senses Anderson's satisfaction with the document he had received from his Glasgow supporters. He writes: "I have an invitation from 306 of my people to resume my pastoral charge of them, to which I felt it my duty at once and cordially to respond, reserving, however, the time to be determined by His will, whose I profess to be, and whom I am bound to serve." *Letters to John Bayne*, letter dated 20th July 1852, p. 33.

<sup>123</sup> *Anderson's Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 112.



three months after that communion, in July 1852, this friendship was beginning to collapse.

Shortly after their arrival in Strathpeffer, Anderson's wife told him that Archibald Cook had written to James Gibson concerning the Free Church case against him. Anderson clearly thought this was pointless and writes, "but honest man, he might have saved himself the trouble: for what will it profit?". Then, possibly expressing a measure of doubt in Cook's motivation, he adds, "I need to be wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove".<sup>124</sup> Four days later Anderson received a long letter from Cook, and from the account in his diary it seems that Cook was laying out the arguments why he ought to remain in the Free Church and submit to the Church's discipline, a position with which he strongly disagreed. Anderson observed: "I had a nice letter from the children, and a long one from Mr. Archibald Cook, but nothing in it which could not be answered with the stroke of a pen. I felt my position all the stronger because of the feeble attacks that are made upon it by friends who have both the power and the will to move me from it."<sup>125</sup> There is no indication from his diary that Anderson replied to Cook's letter; accordingly the Daviot minister decided to make a visit to his friend in Strathpeffer.

On 6th July 1852, Anderson was on his way to the Post Office when to his surprise he met Cook on the street walking to the place where they were staying. He records candidly the conversation that ensued when Cook re-stated his view that he should stay in the Free Church and then, rather surprisingly, encouraged him to leave Glasgow and find another congregation. "I was truly glad to see him and got as usual a most affectionate reception. I was somewhat disconcerted by the stream of remark that the feeling of good people is I should stay in the Free Church. I had occasion to go out for a little, and turning the matter over in my mind I at once saw it was no rule of duty to me. But I found when we were alone that all the length he was prepared to go was that if an opening occurred in His providence I should not in a spirit of wilfulness refuse. I trust He who has cared for me hitherto will preserve me from this. I need the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left. . . . My friend advised me to leave Glasgow if an opening offered itself, but how this should be if I continue in the Free Church it

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<sup>124</sup> *ibid.*, p. 202. It is highly probable that Cook had written to Anderson's wife privately giving her this information.

<sup>125</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 206-207.

is hard to say. Let me wait upon Him who leads the blind in a way they know not.”<sup>126</sup> Cook appears to have returned home the following day; Anderson accompanied him to Dingwall and records that their conversation was, “quiet and profitable showing me, if possible, still more clearly that the only way he can keep his conscience easy is by being in a corner and working at things and making himself practically an Independent”.<sup>127</sup>

This exchange in Strathpeffer was the first step in what would become a total breakdown in their friendship. Less than a fortnight after their meeting in Ross-shire, Anderson observes, “My heart trembles for the Messrs. Cook and how they are to get through I know not”.<sup>128</sup> Two issues involving Archibald Cook were a particular concern to Anderson during the remainder of 1852 and the early months of the following year. Because Cook had preached so acceptably for the last three years at the April Communion at John Knox’s, his refusal to leave the Free Church with Anderson, and his encouraging him to submit to Free Church discipline, were significant factors in a number of his former congregation hesitating to follow the example of their minister and separate from the Free Church.<sup>129</sup> The other matter that troubled Anderson was Cook’s willingness to preach in the Glasgow Free Churches and it particularly grieved him when he preached at John Knox’s. When the latter occurred he called Cook “another minister of darkness.”<sup>130</sup> They were, however, still exchanging letters into the early months of 1853, though the tone is becoming gradually more pointed. On 25th December 1852 Anderson wrote to Cook and he describes the

<sup>126</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 216-217.

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 217-218.

<sup>128</sup> *ibid.*, p. 231. The reference to Messrs. Cook is to Archibald Cook and his elder brother Finlay Cook (1778-1858), who was the Free Church minister of Reay in Caithness. Finlay Cook had preached in John Knox’s in May 1849. Two sermon transcripts of his preaching on Psalm 31:23 are in Volume 12 of the sermon notes transcribed by George Renton in the Free Presbyterian Library in Glasgow (afterwards called the Renton series of transcriptions).

<sup>129</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 338. In Anderson’s diary for 22nd October 1852 he records that a Mrs. K called in a state of agitation on account of his separation from the Free Church, and then he adds, “She hoped I would yet get honourably back to the Free Church! I said she was in effect proposing apostasy from Christ. She is in deep Free Church Popery and hangs upon fathers Cook, and deaf to all reason and argument in opposition to her cherished notions,” *ibid.*, p. 340.

<sup>130</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 3, 1853, p. 7. Anderson adds regarding Cook’s preaching at John Knox’s, “He entertained his hearers with anecdotes! Is this what the Holy One of Israel hath chosen!”

letter in these terms: “I wrote a second letter to Archibald Cook in reply to his: and more plainly than before set his sin before him and expostulated with him on his crooked policy and perilous position. Oh, how difficult it is for any man to save himself from this untoward generation!”<sup>131</sup>

Four years later, in September 1856, in a letter to his Session clerk, William Anderson,<sup>132</sup> he writes: “If I ever saw a minister that engaged my sympathies and love, it was Archibald Cook; yet he has, by his conduct, swept away all hope I once had of his recovery, and is now mingled with those he at one time would not associate with. . . . Meanwhile I can say that, alone and in secret, I bear not one feeling of ill-will to them or any man.”<sup>133</sup>

In a similar vein, Principal John Macleod, in his sketch of the life of Francis Macbean,<sup>134</sup> makes this instructive observation: “He (Macbean) belonged unmistakably to the out-and-out school of Disruption worthies, and was one of the last along with Archibald Cook that Jonathan Anderson broke fellowship with when he set up on his own account. They were of the set that at an early stage detected the working

<sup>131</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 415.

<sup>132</sup> In 1856, William Anderson, the Session clerk at both John Knox’s Free Church and John Knox’s Tabernacle, along with Joseph Anderson, left Anderson’s ministry due to their disapproval of the way he condemned Free Church ministers. The significance of this should not be missed. These men were two of Anderson’s key supporters in his controversy with the majority of the John Knox’s Session regarding the preaching of John Milne. Joseph Anderson was one of the two elders that had supported Anderson in that controversy and on his own initiative had started separate services when his minister had left the congregation, after the 1852 General Assembly, and gone to Aberdeen. Joseph Anderson was also the man that Anderson had called his principal elder.

<sup>133</sup> The letter is printed in Joseph and William Anderson, *Reasons for leaving the Ministry of the Rev. Jon. R. Anderson*, pp. 31-32. The citations are on p. 32. For further details of the breach with the Cook brothers, see Norman Campbell, *One of Heaven’s Jewels: Rev. Archibald Cook of Daviot and the Free North Church, Inverness* (Stornoway, 2009), pp. 191-198.

<sup>134</sup> Francis Macbean (1793-1869) was born in Corpach and, after a period as schoolteacher in his native village, he became an inspector for the Edinburgh Society for the support of Gaelic Schools. Macbean visited Lewis in that capacity in 1825-1826 and is said to have presided at the first Question Meeting to be held in connection with a communion season in that island. He joined the Original Secession Church and was ordained in 1836 as a missionary-minister for the whole area of Lochaber and Lewis. After the Disruption he joined the Free Church and became the first minister of Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston. For biographical details see John Macleod, *By-Paths of Highland Church History* (Edinburgh, 1965), pp. 22-40; the article on Macbean by Donald Meek in Nigel M. de S. Cameron (ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh, 1993), p. 504 (cited hereafter as *DSCHT*); *AFCS*, Vol. 1, p. 215; David Scott, *ibid.*, pp. 575-576, Ian M. Allan, *West the Glen: A History of the Free Church just west of the Great Glen* (privately published, 1997), pp. 113-121.

of leaven that was destined to revolutionize their Church. In his *Alarm* Jonathan Anderson coupled together Mr. Macbean and his comrade John Macrae as specimens of what he called strong ministers.”<sup>135</sup>

### 5. Momentous weeks in Aberdeen

The Andersons left Strathpeffer on Tuesday 20th July 1852 and arrived back in Aberdeen three days later on the Friday. On the return journey they stayed one night in Inverness and two in Mulben, sixteen miles north-west of Huntly. On the journey to Inverness Anderson records his rather extreme view of the Free Church less than ten years after the Disruption: “Much mercy has been shown me in driving us out of the Free Church. I saw that according to Scripture it is putting on the aspect and doing the deeds of Anti-Christ who denies the Father and the Son – for they will put out of the Synagogue etc. ‘because they know not the Father nor me’.”<sup>136</sup>

After a delightful drive from Inverness to Nairn and then to Forres they arrived at Mulben where, after consulting with friends about Huntly, he decided for the present not to preach to the dissenters from Rainy’s congregation.<sup>137</sup> In journeying from Mulben the Andersons dined at Huntly and met briefly some of his supporters before arriving at 52 Skene Terrace – Mrs. Parker’s home – in the early evening. Two matters were to make this return visit to Aberdeen momentous for Anderson. It was during this sixteen-day stay with Susan Parker that Robert Ness announced that he had purchased a substantial building in which Anderson could preach when he was in the Granite City. The other matter that made this stay at Skene Terrace memorable concerned the Glasgow Presbytery. It was whilst he was in Aberdeen for the second time after leaving the Free Church that the Presbytery considered the libel against him.

The day after the Andersons arrived in Aberdeen, Robert Ness appeared at Mrs. Parker’s home giving Anderson what he considered to be a number of encouraging pieces of information. The most significant in Anderson’s view was that Ness seemed to have made up his mind to leave the Free Church and form a small congregation.<sup>138</sup> On his first two

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<sup>135</sup> John Macleod, *By-Paths of Highland Church History*, p. 29.

<sup>136</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 233. This is a slight misquotation of John 16:3 which reads, “Because they have not known the Father, nor me”.

<sup>137</sup> *ibid.*, p. 235.

<sup>138</sup> *ibid.*, p. 238.

Sabbaths after his return to Aberdeen, Anderson preached to gatherings in Mrs. Parker's house, as he had done before he went to Strathpeffer, then on the Friday before the third Sabbath he records in his diary an event that was a cause of some amazement. "I was not long seated at my work (after breakfast) when Mr. Ness called, and to my utter astonishment announced that he had bought an old Episcopal Church in a most eligible part of the city, and meant to leave the Free Church. I went to see it, and was amazed at what I saw. I returned and with that scripture went to my knees – 'they shall fear the Lord and His goodness'. I was afraid of it, but tried to give it up to Him to be kept by Himself. I had a nice chat with Miss Watt (Susan Parker's sister) who in reference to our little church said 'we are to possess the gates of our enemies'."<sup>139</sup>

The building that Ness had bought was the old St. John's Episcopal Church in Golden Square. St. John's in Aberdeen claims descent from the second charge of the parish of St. Nicholas – the East Church.<sup>140</sup> It was begun by George Garden<sup>141</sup> who was a close friend of Henry Scougal.<sup>142</sup> He was ejected from the East charge in 1693 for not conforming to the Presbyterian Establishment and for refusing to pray

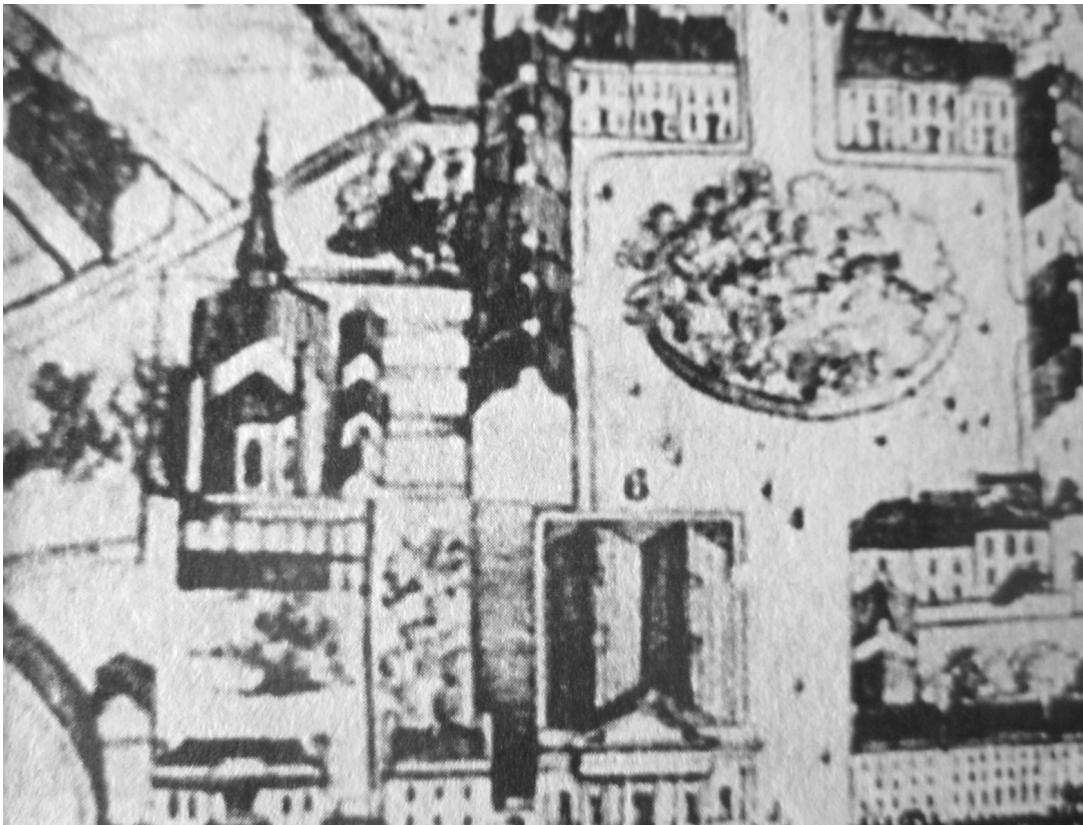
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<sup>139</sup> *ibid.*, p. 253.

<sup>140</sup> For a brief history of the congregation, see Alexander Gammie, *The Churches of Aberdeen*, pp. 294-297.

<sup>141</sup> George Garden or Gairden (1649-1733), though an Episcopalian by conviction, following the re-establishment of Presbyterianism continued to preach in the East Church until his ejection in 1693. He was influenced by the work of the French mystic Antoinette Bourignon and in 1699 published *An Apology for Madame Antonia Bourignon*. This work was condemned by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1701 and Garden was deposed from exercising any ministerial office. As a result of the Garden case, and alarmed at the prospect of Bourignonists within her borders, the Church of Scotland in 1711 required ministers at their ordination to disown "all Popish, Arian, Socinian, Arminian, Bourignon, and other doctrines, tenets, and opinions whatsoever, contrary to and inconsistent with the Confession of Faith". In 1846, after the Disruption, the Free Church of Scotland substituted "Erastian" for "Bourignon", see C. G. M'Crie, *The Confessions of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1907), pp. 95-97. Whilst Garden was abroad he became increasingly influenced by another French mystic, Madame Jeanne Guyon. Garden was at her deathbed in 1717. He also preached the funeral sermon of his close friend Henry Scougal. The sermon is appended to Scougal's Works. For biographical details of Garden, see *ODNB*; Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 6, p. 2; G. D. Henderson, *Mystics of the North-East* (Third Spalding Club, 1934).

<sup>142</sup> Henry Scougal (1650-1678) was a childhood friend of Garden's and a fellow student at King's College, Aberdeen. In the summer of 1673 he was ordained the minister of Auchterless, Aberdeenshire, where he served for little more than a year. On 12th August 1674 he was appointed by the Synod of Aberdeen as the professor of Divinity at King's College, from which position he was influential in securing for Garden the office of regent of the same institution. Scougal is chiefly known as the author of a small treatise that has become a devotional classic, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*. George Whitefield



*A section of an aerial view of Aberdeen, produced in 1850 by George Washington Wilson, showing St. John's Episcopal Church that was to become the Aberdeen Tabernacle.*

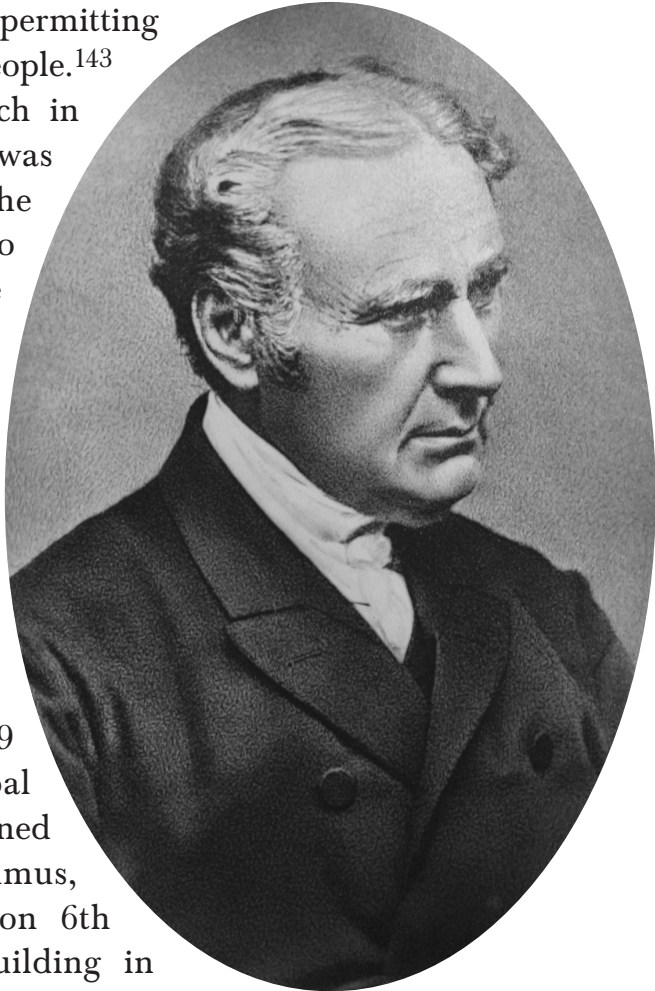
for the King and Queen, William and Mary, or to read proclamations that referred to them. Those of his congregation who still adhered to Episcopacy left the Established Church with him. In 1720, after five years in exile in the Netherlands, he returned to Aberdeen and gathered the remnants of his congregation together. This was the beginning of St. John's in Aberdeen. Initially, the little congregation worshipped in a chapel located in the house of their minister. However, the congregation prospered after the repeal of the Penal Laws in 1792 which granted relief

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ascribed the reading of Scougal's book as having a significant part to play in his conversion. Whitefield wrote in his journal: "In a short time he [Charles Wesley] let me have another book, entitled, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*; and, though I had fasted, watched and prayed, and received the Sacrament so long, yet I never knew what true religion was, till God sent me that excellent treatise by the hands of my never-to-be-forgotten friend," *George Whitefield's Journals* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1960), pp. 46-47. In a sermon on Ecclesiastes 6:6, titled "All men's place", Whitefield refers to the effect Scougal's treatise had on him, "God showed that I must be born again or be damned", *Eighteen Sermons preached by the late George Whitefield* (London, 1771), p. 360. For biographical details of Scougal, see G. Garden, "A sermon preached at the funeral of the Revd Henry Scougal", in *The Works of Henry Scougal* (New York, 1846), pp. 223-272; D. Butler, *Henry Scougal and the Oxford Methodists* (Edinburgh, 1899); *ODNB*.

to the Episcopal clergy by permitting them to minister to their people.<sup>143</sup>

In 1806 they built a church in Golden Square. It was dedicated to St. John the Evangelist and was said to have been a handsome edifice with a spire.<sup>144</sup> The minister of the congregation from 1818 was Patrick Cheyne<sup>145</sup> who was the driving force behind the move to build a new church on Crown Terrace where the congregation still meet. The foundation stone was laid in November 1849 when it was, in Episcopal terms, consecrated and opened for worship by the Primus, Bishop William Skinner, on 6th May 1851. It was this building in Golden Square, vacated by the Episcopalians, that was purchased by Ness for the incipient Aberdeen congregation that supported the stand of Jonathan Ranken Anderson.



*Mackintosh Mackay.*

Following his return to Aberdeen, Anderson replied to a kindly letter addressed to him from Dr. Mackintosh Mackay, the Free Church

<sup>143</sup> For details of the repeal of the penal laws against Episcopalians, see Goldie, pp. 63-73.

<sup>144</sup> It is described in Gammie's *The Churches of Aberdeen*, p. 295, as having "a small handsome spire and in its interior it was said to be a model of architectural correctness, and of lightness and elegance of appearance".

<sup>145</sup> Patrick Cheyne (1793-1878) was a high Anglican and an advocate of the Oxford Movement. Following the publication in 1858 of his *Six Sermons on the Doctrine of the Most Holy Eucharist*, in which he maintained the doctrine of the real presence in the communion elements, he was subject to an ecclesiastical trial and suspended for four years. Fourteen years earlier he had preached a sermon before the Bishop and Clergy of the Diocese of Aberdeen that elicited a response entitled *Popery in the Scotch Episcopal Church: An Examination of a Sermon Preached by the Rev. P. Cheyne*. It is doubtless due to Cheyne's sympathy with Romanism that when Jane Watt, Mrs. Parker's sister, heard that Ness had purchased the old St. John's building she said to Anderson, "we are to possess the gates of our enemies".

minister of Dunoon.<sup>146</sup> Though Mackay's letter to Anderson is lost, it is clear from Anderson's reply to him that he had been encouraging him not to make a hasty decision and that he would be more useful to the cause of Christ inside the Free Church than outside of it. Anderson's reply is a most interesting document, revealing very clearly that his view of the Free Church ministry was hardening, and that he regarded the General Assembly as tyrannical in not accepting his resignation and in proceeding against him with a libel.<sup>147</sup> The letter is also interesting in providing Anderson's most comprehensive response to the charge that it was wrong for him to have invited John Milne to preach at John Knox's when in his private judgment he did not regard him as a faithful witness for the truth. In replying to Mackay, Anderson admits that he should not have done so; "I was wrong in asking a man to my pulpit I ought not to have asked". Though not excusing his conduct, Anderson pointed out to Mackay the shamefulness of the Glasgow Presbytery member who had responded to Anderson's question to that court, "Was it expedient to ask a person to supply your pulpit whom you did not regard as entirely faithful?", with the cutting comment, "What, you an under-shepherd under the Great Shepherd, on your own showing, bringing a wolf into the flock!". The minister who made the remark had, before the Disruption, asked a notorious Moderate to fill his pulpit and excused himself at the time to Anderson by saying that he could not avoid it as he was a relative. Anderson with exasperation writes to Mackay, "My blood boils with honest indignation as I write it – this very minister could taunt me in the Presbytery with letting a wolf in among my flock!".<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Mackintosh Mackay (1793-1873) was a Gaelic Scholar and Church leader. A native of Eddrachillis, Sutherland, he became the Church of Scotland minister of Dunoon in 1832. He joined the Free Church at the Disruption and was Moderator of the General Assembly six years later in 1849. From 1854 to 1861 he ministered to Gaelic-speaking congregations in Australia – firstly in Melbourne and then in Sydney. In 1862 he returned to Scotland and was settled as the Free Church minister of Tarbert in Harris. He edited the Highland Society's *Gaelic Dictionary*. For biographical details, see Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 4, p. 24, which lists his extensive publications; J. Greig (ed.) *Disruption Worthies of the Highlands* (Edinburgh, 1877), pp. 79-88 – this sketch of Mackay's life is written by John Kennedy of Dingwall; *DSCHT*, p. 520; *AFCs*, Vol. 1, p. 235; *ODNB*.

<sup>147</sup> The long letter, dated 26th July 1852, along with several interesting footnotes by Anderson, written whilst he was in Aberdeen, is reproduced in *Letters on the Free Church*, pp. 10-18.

<sup>148</sup> *ibid.*, p. 14. The name of the minister involved is withheld by Anderson – beyond the fact that he speaks of him as Doctor. For the background, see Part I of this article, *SRSHJ*, Vol. 4, p. 223.



### III. THE LIBEL AGAINST ANDERSON

#### 1. Glasgow Presbytery take proof of their libel

Anderson was first cited to appear before the Presbytery whilst he was in Aberdeen for the first time; the second citation came when he was in Strathpeffer. The third citation would have been served at least a week before the meeting of the Presbytery on 28th July 1852, at which time he was returning from Strathpeffer to Aberdeen. Though the citations were most probably served on him at his home in Glasgow, we cannot be certain that he ever received the last two citations. We must assume that the citations were forwarded on to him, but whether he received them timeously is open to doubt. His diary makes no reference to any citation in the week before the Presbytery met.<sup>149</sup> After his failing to appear the third time, the Presbytery sustained the relevancy of the libel. Then at a further meeting of the Presbytery six days later on 3rd August 1852, in Anderson's absence, the Presbytery proceeded to the proof of the libel. They also "resolved that the proof and other proceedings of the case of Mr. Anderson be taken in a separate record – which was done accordingly".<sup>150</sup> The Presbytery then proceeded to take proofs of the counts of evidence in the order they were placed in the libel.<sup>151</sup>

#### *(a) The first count – Anderson's charges against ten of his elders*

The *first count* of evidence was read regarding Anderson's wrongful accusations against ten of his elders. James Gibson, the Presbytery clerk, produced the copy of the pamphlet that Anderson had given in to the General Assembly in which these accusations appeared. Four witnesses were cited to give evidence; they were William Lauder, the Free Church minister of Strachur,<sup>152</sup> Luke Henderson, who was one of the two elders

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<sup>149</sup> The meetings of the Glasgow Presbytery at which Anderson was cited to appear were on 29th June, 12th July, and 28th July 1852. *Minutes of the Glasgow Presbytery*, pp. 224-228. See *Case of J. R. Anderson*, p. 50.

<sup>150</sup> *Minutes of the Glasgow Presbytery*, p. 229. The manuscript record is not with the Presbytery minutes in the Mitchell Library, Glasgow. However, a very full and important record of the 3rd August meeting, when proof of the libel was considered, is contained in the *Case of J. R. Anderson*, pp. 50-65.

<sup>151</sup> The minutes of the Presbytery are very brief and merely record the decision of the court.

<sup>152</sup> William Lauder (1807-1885) was ordained at Invergarry in 1840. He left the Church of Scotland at the Disruption and was translated to Strachur and Strathlachlan in 1844. Francis Macbean succeeded him and became the first minister of the new Free Church

that took Anderson's side in the controversy with the majority of the John Knox's Session; and two of the demitting elders – David Dunlop and George Cowan.

Lauder could not be present as he was assisting at a communion in Lochgilphead. He, therefore, submitted a letter to the Presbytery stating that Anderson had sent him a copy of the pamphlet, but after a few days had asked him to return it, which he had done. Lauder expressed the view that he had been sent the pamphlet in order to disabuse his mind of any unfavourable impressions of Anderson's case that he might have gained from reports in the press.<sup>153</sup> Luke Henderson in his evidence stated that Anderson had read the entire manuscript to the new Session after the ten elders had resigned and concluded by asking them whether it should be printed. Henderson added, "There was opposition to the printing of it at the meeting, and it was agreed not to print it; and he was surprised when he learned that it was printed". He concluded by saying he did not know how Anderson was led to print the document, as opposition to the printing of it by the elders was general. Indeed, Anderson himself had said at the meeting when he read the manuscript that he thought it was better not to print it.<sup>154</sup>

David Dunlop, one of the ten resigning elders, read from Anderson's pamphlet those sections which made the sweeping accusations against the ten elders referred to in the first count of evidence. These are the paragraphs Dunlop then read from the pamphlet – at the beginning Anderson is reflecting on a speech by Alexander Somerville at the meeting of the Glasgow Presbytery on 11th February 1852:

The tone of Mr. Somerville's speech is kindly, but, like most of his brethren around him, he is evidently quite in the dark as to the facts of the case. He is quite right in the opinion that it is most humiliating; but quite wrong that it is a paltry affair. I am pretty sure, had it happened

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charge of Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston. Principal John Macleod says that Lauder was of a like spirit to Macbean (*Bypaths of Highland Church History*, p. 29). It is understandable, therefore, why Anderson had sufficient confidence in Lauder to send him a copy of his pamphlet against the Glasgow Presbytery. In his diary he spoke of Lauder as "judicious and cautious" (*Anderson's Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 78). In addition, as we noticed in the first part of this paper, Anderson and Lauder had been at a communion together just prior to Anderson's sending Lauder a proof copy of the pamphlet; see *SRSJH*, Vol. 4, p. 211.

<sup>153</sup> The letter to the Presbytery is printed in full in *Case of J. R. Anderson*, p. 51. There is a short reference to Lauder in Anderson's diary on 7th October 1852. It reads: "Mr. L(auder) of S(trachur) called! I told him he was under guilt of shutting my mouth and hoped a fire would be kindled in his conscience," *Anderson's Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 322.

<sup>154</sup> *Case of J. R. Anderson*, p. 51.

to *him*, he would have judged very differently. He might think it humiliating, but certainly not paltry, that ten of his elders, after adhering to him through the stirring events of the Disruption, and others hardly less trying – after professing unbounded attachment to his person and ministry, and enduring a share of the reproaches that were plentifully cast upon both – after earning by these, and similar means, the reputation of men of judgment, men of discernment, men of piety – after thus securing a place in the eye of his congregation, and the church at large, which perhaps nothing else could confer – after all this, suddenly to turn round, and labour to defeat one of the principal ends of the ministry, the separation, by the faithful exposition of the Word of God, of the chaff from the wheat: – and when they found themselves baffled at all points, to venture upon an act of barefaced injustice, in turning a catechist out of his situation without a reason given and received, and vote a favourite of their own into his place, that he might receive his wages and eat his bread; – and, to crown all, on discovering that they could not thus accomplish their fondly-cherished scheme of “bringing down” the Minister and “standing by” their friend, should in a body, throw up their office, in the vain hope of forcing their Minister to capitulate and submit to them, on whatever terms they might dictate; – if all this were to happen to my reverend friend, very sure am I he would think it anything but paltry, however he might feel it humiliating. To me it appears a very grave affair; nor have I the shadow of doubt that so it will one day appear to these infatuated men themselves. Nor will the screen which the Free Presbytery of Glasgow has thrown around them, avail to protect them from the piercing light of truth from without, and the agonizing voice on conscience from within. . . . Let them only hear from the pulpit something they imagine is levelled at them, and whether it be fairly applicable to them or not, they will make the preacher feel that they are men not to be touched with impunity; and if they cannot compel him to confess what they are themselves unable to put into words, they will try to scatter his flock and blast his ministry.<sup>155</sup>

Dunlop then deponed that Anderson had never taken any steps to establish the charges he had made against them in the courts of the church. He added, he could not say that he had ever heard Anderson make the charges, in the specific terms that he had, until he made them in the pamphlet.<sup>156</sup> The last witness to the first count was George Cowan who repeated Dunlop’s assertion that Anderson had never taken any

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<sup>155</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 51-52. This is a substantial citation from the now lost pamphlet of J. R. Anderson, *A Reply to the Speeches delivered in the Free Presbytery of Glasgow in the case of elders of Knox’s Session, on Wednesday, the 11th February, 1852*, pp. 23-24, 30.

<sup>156</sup> *ibid.*, p. 52.

steps to establish his charges against them in the courts of the church. He then went on to explain his dealings with Anderson when he called his proposal for a fast a “Jezebel fast”. Cowan added that Anderson had not only asked him to retract what he had said regarding the fast (which he did on several occasions) but he wanted him to recant of his judgment regarding the ministry of John Milne in Knox’s Church. In addition, Anderson produced a document, in his own handwriting, entitled, “A confession recommended to Mr. George Cowan, to be adopted as his own – *not required* 25 March 1851”. Cowan refused to sign it, because “he believed it a confession unworthy to be proposed to any man, and exceedingly unsuitable to him. There was no truth in it.”<sup>157</sup>

***(b) The second and third counts – Anderson and John Milne***

In summary the evidence in *count two* was as follows: after exchanging pulpits with John Milne, Anderson had slanderously and injuriously attacked his preaching and sought to persuade others that he did not preach a pure gospel. Then in *count three*, whilst Anderson held these views about Milne’s preaching before the pulpit exchange, yet he had been the one who had initiated the exchange arrangement. In addition, whilst he was in Milne’s manse, Anderson had made notes of what had taken place and read these notes to members of his Kirk Session with the object of seeking to alter their opinion of his preaching.

The witnesses on both counts were John Milne and two of the ten demitting elders – John Cuthbertson and George Cowan. In giving evidence on the third count Milne stated that Anderson had written to him saying he was fagged and wished a little repose and had suggested to Milne a pulpit exchange on Sabbath 29th September 1850 and that, in addition, he would take Milne’s place at his weekday prayer meeting. As Anderson arrived in Perth on the Thursday and Milne did not leave for Glasgow until the Saturday, they had the better part of two days together. Milne testified they had very friendly intercourse during the period and that he had received Anderson with the most brotherly feelings and he had been in under his roof until the Monday, when he went on to Aberdeen. Milne added, they had a great deal of conversation on religious subjects, especially regarding the work of the ministry and that in these conversations Anderson had never indicated a difference of

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<sup>157</sup> *Case of J. R. Anderson*, pp. 52-54. The confession that Anderson recommended to Cowan is printed in full on pp. 53-54.

opinion. He concluded by saying, that since the matter had become public, he had “tried before God, to recollect whether anything had passed between them to indicate that Mr. Anderson differed from him on any point, but can recollect none; and he left him on the Saturday morning, to go to Glasgow, in the belief that they were entirely at one, in fact without the shadow of a thought, or suspicion that there was any difference between them; and he felt he could not express too strongly the feeling of confidence he had in their entire agreement”.<sup>158</sup>

That John Milne was gravely mistaken in this assessment became painfully clear from the testimony of the two elders. John Cuthbertson stated that Milne’s sermons had been the subject of considerable conversation among the John Knox office-bearers and the general impression of his preaching was “exceedingly favourable”. Following Anderson’s return from Aberdeen, Cuthbertson stated he had occasion to meet him over another matter. At the time they met, Anderson was in conversation with another person who was informing him of his appreciation of Milne’s preaching. To this assessment Cuthbertson expressed his agreement. In response to these appreciative testimonies, presumably much to the surprise of Cuthbertson, Anderson expressed himself very strongly as to it “being impossible that Mr. Milne could preach good sermons”. Cuthbertson then stated to the Presbytery that he still adhered to the following statement he had given in to that Court on 12th January 1852 in which he asserted that in response to his expressing a favourable opinion of John Milne’s preaching, “Mr. Anderson read to me from a journal,<sup>159</sup> some notes which he had taken at Perth, which he thought quite sufficient to prove that I must be wrong in the estimate which I had formed of Mr. Milne. Upon this I asked him, how then it could be possible that Mr. Milne did preach excellent sermons on that day? To this Mr. Anderson replied, apparently in earnest, that as he had been in Perth from the Thursday evening till Monday, and had spent Friday chiefly in Mr. Milne’s company, Mr. Milne had come to Knox’s Church with the

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<sup>158</sup> *Case of J. R. Anderson*, p. 56.

<sup>159</sup> *ibid.*, p. 54. The eight volume set of the Anderson’s diaries, held in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland Library in Glasgow, starts at 1st January 1851. From Cuthbertson and Cowan’s testimony it seems very probable that Anderson was keeping a journal/diary before that date. If that assumption is correct, the volumes covering the period prior to 1851 appear to have been either lost or destroyed. Cuthbertson testified that he remembered from the notes that Anderson had read to him, “that the view they gave of Mr. Milne’s spiritual character was founded on Mr. Anderson’s opinion of the religious duties of the family, as conducted by Mr. Milne, and not in anything in Mr. Milne’s conduct or conversation”, *ibid.*, p. 57.

varnish which he had received from him.”<sup>160</sup> Cuthbertson then concluded, quite perceptively, giving it as his opinion that Anderson’s objections were to a class of preaching, of which Milne’s was an example. According to Cuthbertson, shortly after Milne supplied John Knox’s, Anderson had, in his sermons on more than one occasion, disapproved and condemned such preaching. Cuthbertson then testified that a number of brethren on the John Knox’s Session were clear that these condemnatory references were aimed in particular at John Milne.<sup>161</sup>

The testimony of George Cowan on count two was in the same vein. He asserted that Anderson regarded Milne as preaching an impure Gospel and thought that those who supported Milne were countenancing error. Cowan asked Anderson quite pointedly how it was possible for him to form a judgment of Milne’s preaching in John Knox’s when he was not there and did not hear it. To this he added, in his testimony, that he never got from Anderson anything tangible about what was deficient in Milne’s preaching.<sup>162</sup> In discussing Milne’s preaching with Anderson, Cowan asserted, “that the Lord was among them of a truth the day that Mr. Milne preached”. This assertion clearly disturbed Anderson, who asserted that if this was so, “all for which he had lived was lost”. When Anderson was later condemning preaching of which he disapproved, Cowan was certain he was referring to Milne when he spoke of those who heard such sermons and said, “The Lord was present”.<sup>163</sup> Regarding count three, Cowan testified that, following a debate with Anderson on whether the Lord was present in the congregation when Milne preached at Knox’s, he read extracts from a journal “referring to what he heard and saw in the house of Mr. Milne while he was living with him. These notes appeared to be a daily journal, and to have been written at the time of Mr. Anderson’s residence in Mr. Milne’s house. The object Mr. Anderson had in view, in reading these notes, was that the witness (Cowan) might see it was impossible that the Lord could be with Mr. Milne in Knox’s Church, when Mr. Milne preached.” Cowan added that he was “not able to recollect the tenor of the notes, but the tendency was to represent Mr. Milne as a carnal man. By carnal man, he understood that Mr. Milne was destitute of grace.”<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> *ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>161</sup> *ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>162</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> *ibid.*, p. 56.

The evidence on counts two and three was concluded by the reading of a passage from the minutes of a meeting of the Glasgow Presbytery held four months earlier on 5th April 1852. The passage was as follows:

The Presbytery then took up the case of Mr. Anderson and the matter as affecting the Reverend Mr. Milne of Perth. The facts as given in the statements of the demitting elders, having been brought before Mr. Anderson, and the facts being admitted to the effect that he (Mr. Anderson) held that Mr. Milne did not preach the pure Gospel; that, while holding this before going on a visit to Perth, and having there conversed with Mr. Milne on the 27th day of September 1850, and having taken notes of conversation with Mr. Milne, which he alleged confirmed him in that belief, he continued the engagement formerly entered into with Mr. Milne, to exchange with him, and to preach in Knox's Church; and thereafter read the said notes of conversation to some of his elders, to justify his opinion of Mr. Milne as above expressed, after Mr. Milne had preached in Knox's Church; and the Presbytery, having dealt with Mr. Anderson's conscience on the point of having brought a man of whom he held this opinion to preach to his people, and on the point of so acting with a brother with whom he had confidential intercourse in his own house, without ever having expressed his mind to that brother himself, Mr. Anderson acknowledged that, in these respects, he had been guilty of a moral wrong.<sup>165</sup>

***(c) The fourth count – Anderson's promise to write to Milne***

The *fourth count* of evidence against Anderson was that he had promised at the Presbytery on 5th April 1852 to write to John Milne expressing regret for the moral wrong he had done him and to send a copy of the letter to James Gibson the Clerk of the Glasgow Presbytery. However, notwithstanding this undertaking, four months had passed and he still had not fulfilled his promise.

The relevant section of the Glasgow Presbytery minute of 5th April 1852 was read in which Anderson undertook, "to express his regret to Mr. Milne for the wrong he had done him, and to make him aware of the judgment he entertains concerning his views of Gospel truth, as expressed to this Presbytery, and that he would furnish the Clerk of this Presbytery with a copy of the letter to Mr. Milne".<sup>166</sup> John Milne was then asked if he had received the letter referred to in the minute from

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<sup>165</sup> *Minutes of the Glasgow Presbytery*, p. 294. See also *Case of J. R. Anderson*, p. 57.

<sup>166</sup> *Minutes of the Glasgow Presbytery*, pp. 294-295. See also *Case of J. R. Anderson*, p. 59.

Anderson, to which he answered – No.<sup>167</sup> This was particularly disturbing to the Glasgow Presbytery as it was on the basis of Anderson's commitment to write this letter that they decided not to inform the Perth Presbytery that they considered the charges against Milne to be wholly without foundation.<sup>168</sup>

***(d) The fifth count – A different account of the Hope Street sermon***

At the Glasgow Presbytery on 8th January 1851 Anderson had withdrawn some of the statements he had made in his Hope Street sermon on 17th November 1850 and expressed regret for others. However, in the pamphlet that Anderson had reluctantly handed in to the General Assembly he painted an entirely different picture regarding the aftermath of the sermon. The evidence before the Presbytery can be summarized as follows.

The minutes of the Glasgow Presbytery for 8th January 1851 were read in which the committee appointed to review Anderson's sermon gave in their report. The document stated that, whilst Anderson did not have a manuscript of what he had said, he asserted that some of the expressions imputed to him he had never used. Other statements, though used by him, were qualified such that their meaning was significantly modified. With respect to a third group of observations imputed to him he was unsure whether he used them or not, and finally regarding a fourth group of statements he acknowledged he had made them and saw no reason to regret or recall them.<sup>169</sup> The committee's report added, that whilst they were satisfied with the fact he had disclaimed some of the statements he was alleged to have made and

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<sup>167</sup> At that time, unknown to both Milne and the Glasgow Presbytery, Anderson was writing, on the very day that the Presbytery were considering the libel against him, a long letter to Milne. The letter became public when the Commission of the General Assembly considered the reference to it from the Glasgow Presbytery eight days later on 11th August 1852.

<sup>168</sup> See the *Minutes of the Glasgow Presbytery*, pp. 294-295, meeting of 5th April 1852; and the *Case of J. R. Anderson*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>169</sup> The substance of the discussion of the proceedings of the 8th January 1851 meeting of the Glasgow Presbytery is taken from the *Case of J. R. Anderson*, pp. 60-62. The minute of Glasgow Presbytery when the report was given in is very brief. It merely records that the report was read by the convener, Dr. John Smyth, the minister of St. George's, and was agreed to unanimously. The minute adds that "the report containing Mr. Anderson's acknowledgement of wrong done to certain of his brethren in the language he employed in the pulpit in the sermon referred to, and his expressions of regret for the same is ordered to be kept in retentis", *Minutes of the Glasgow Presbytery*, pp. 217-218.



other offensive statements were modified in their meaning by explanations, nevertheless there remained particular expressions not withdrawn that were pervaded by a strain of indiscriminate censure and condemnation which the committee considered “highly improper to be used anywhere and most especially in the pulpit”.<sup>170</sup>

The January 1851 report went on to detail that the committee had asked Anderson whether, in some of the statements they considered offensive, he had in view specific ministers of the Glasgow Presbytery. If this was the case it would have been not only offensive but highly culpable. In response to questioning Anderson admitted that he did have two ministerial members of the Glasgow Presbytery in view in some of the observations he had made. He then acknowledged he had done wrong in listening to reports made to him about them and in not conferring with his brethren privately. Anderson added that he had aggravated his offence by making the matter public, and “he therefore withdrew that portion of his discourse with sorrow”.<sup>171</sup> The substance of this minute, in which Anderson expressed regret for his actions, was the first strand of evidence to prove the *fifth count* of the Presbytery libel.

The second strand of evidence was the pamphlet handed in to the General Assembly which gave a rather different picture of what had taken place. The matter at hand on that occasion was the report of a second Presbytery Committee, this time dealing with Anderson’s subsequent involvement in the resignation of ten of the elders on the John Knox Kirk Session. Apparently, in the discussion, Robert Buchanan had held out the prospect that Anderson would back down over that matter as he had done a year earlier with respect to his Hope Street sermon. This prompted Anderson to give his view of what had occurred when he acquiesced in January 1851. The pamphlet stated:

Dr. Buchanan held out to the Presbytery the hope that I would ultimately acquiesce in the judgment of the Presbytery, because on a former occasion I had done the same, after a show of determination to resist. I would rather that this painful affair had not been stirred; but since, without the least provocation, Dr. Buchanan has chosen to do so, on his head, not on mine, be the consequences. I yielded on the former occasion because I was overborne by numbers, and because the faithful and stirring appeals which I made were lost upon those to whom they were addressed. I was amazed at what I heard in the Free Presbytery of

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<sup>170</sup> *Case of J. R. Anderson*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>171</sup> *ibid.*, p. 61.

Glasgow on the eventful night to which I now refer. I had prepared a statement in defence of the sermon I preached at Hope Street, and inserted [in it] a sketch from memory of the sermon itself. For I was not, as some have falsely asserted, guilty of the baseness of saying at one time I had no manuscript, and afterwards producing it. I stated truly that I had none, and what was afterwards read was a sketch begun some weeks after the sermon was delivered. In preparing the statement, I was led in my simplicity to hope that the plain and solemn truths it contained would tell on the minds of my brethren as they did on my own. But I was miserably disappointed. For it raised a storm such as I almost never encountered. A series of speeches were delivered which I am sure will never be forgotten by some who heard them. I shall not trust myself to characterise them. But this much I must take leave to say, that they confirmed all I had ever surmised of the state of the ministry in the Free Church, and proved that I had fallen short of the truth, and not exceeded in the descriptions of it I had attempted. In this judgment I had, as it seemed, the cordial sympathy of the chief of the ten Elders that have now left us.<sup>172</sup> And were that man to speak in the language he was wont to speak, and which I believe is agreeable to his mind and conscience, he would soon see the men who have laboured to justify him, in full cry against him as a pestilent fellow and mover of sedition.

I withdrew my statement, not because a sentence of it had been overturned or even touched – for it was assailed only with a torrent of abuse and friendly exhortation to its unhappy author, but because I felt it was thrown away upon men who seem far gone in utter blindness and delusion respecting spiritual things. I expressed my sorrow that I had brought it forward, being grieved to find precious truth so condemned, and being content to suffer in silence when I could not prevail by argument.<sup>173</sup>

The manifest discrepancy between what Anderson stated at the Presbytery and his subsequent explanations in his pamphlet confirmed the Presbytery in its view that he was clearly guilty of the third of the four offences he was charged with, namely – wilful misrepresentation and falsehood.

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<sup>172</sup> This is a reference to the catechist in John Knox's congregation – George Cowan.

<sup>173</sup> *A Reply to the speeches delivered in the Free Presbytery of Glasgow on the 11th February 1852*, p. 9, cited in *Case of J. R. Anderson*, pp. 59-60. This citation from the now missing pamphlet, along with the excerpt printed in the paragraph dealing with the first count of evidence, are the two longest passages that appear to be in existence from the document that was a major factor in Anderson's ultimately leaving the Free Church.

***(e) The sixth count – Contumacy***

The *sixth count* that Anderson was charged with was contumacy. The Presbytery alleged three grounds for making the charge that he had disobeyed the judicatories of the Church. The first ground was his refusing to surrender his pamphlet, the second was failing to appear at the bar of Church courts when cited, and the third was renouncing his connection with the Free Church in order to screen his conduct from judicial investigation and so obstruct discipline.

The evidence supplied to establish this count was quite simply the reading of Glasgow Presbytery and General Assembly minutes in which Anderson had refused to hand over his pamphlet and had failed to appear when cited at the bar of the Presbytery and the General Assembly. To establish the point that he was a fugitive from discipline, an excerpt from his letter to the Moderator of the General Assembly dated 31st May 1852 was read in which he renounced his connection with the Free Church of Scotland.

Following further testimony, confirmatory of the evidence detailed above, the Presbytery declared the proof in Anderson's case to be closed and adjourned further consideration of the case until the following day – 4th August 1852. The relevant minute of that day reads as follows: "The Presbytery resumed consideration of the case of Mr. J. R. Anderson. The Presbytery, after deliberation, in consideration of the circumstance that the accused party had not been at the bar, resolved without pronouncing any judgment on the proof, to refer the whole case to the Commission of the General Assembly for final disposal. The Presbytery appoint Dr. Buchanan, Dr. Lorimer, Mr. Arnot and Mr. Gibson to state the reference to the Commission." At the same meeting the Presbytery arranged supply for the John Knox's congregation until the 12th of September 1852.<sup>174</sup>

Anderson was in Aberdeen at the time that the Glasgow Presbytery dealt with the libel against him and, without coming to a judgment on the proof, referred the whole case to the Commission of the General Assembly. On the day that the Presbytery met to consider the libel – 3rd August 1852 – Anderson records in his diary: "Mr. Ness called and stayed to tea. He said he had seen a report of the proceedings of the Presbytery of Glasgow on my case, and his blood boiled at the

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<sup>174</sup> *Minutes of the Glasgow Presbytery*, pp. 330-331. See footnote 112 for an explanation of the faulty pagination in the Glasgow Presbytery Minutes.

wickedness of the men. I was happy to hear that they have at length come upon the doctrine I preach, and said there is a wide difference between me and them. Oh, how nicely they are doing my work and making manifest what I perhaps never could do! I was glad to see also that all they say, instead of cooling any of my friends, seems only to make them more zealous.”<sup>175</sup> The latter comment regarding his friends becoming more zealous is most probably a reference to his supporters in Aberdeen. Four days earlier Ness had again been for tea at Mrs. Parker’s and Anderson observed, with a measure of satisfaction, “I was stirred up and enlivened by the conversation, which related to the Free Church and its doings in my case”.<sup>176</sup>

Though the Presbytery meetings had been on the Tuesday and Wednesday, it was not until the following Saturday that Anderson learned the details of what had taken place. His wife had obtained a newspaper which contained an account of the proceedings and had informed her husband. It was only then that he learned who the witnesses were that were giving evidence against him. He writes: “My wife came and told me of the witnesses in the libel before the Presbytery. I got a shock, but soon recovered my composure.”<sup>177</sup> The actions of the Glasgow Presbytery seem, for a time at least, to have had a marked effect on Susan Parker’s thinking. Less than a week after the Presbytery met, Anderson reports, “I learned that our worthy friend has her mind made up to leave the Free Church entirely because she believes the truth requires it”.<sup>178</sup>

## **2. The August 1852 Commission of the Free Church General Assembly**

The Commission of the General Assembly met the following week, on 11th August 1852, in the Hall at 80 George Street, Edinburgh. The

<sup>175</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 249.

<sup>176</sup> *ibid.*, p. 245.

<sup>177</sup> *ibid.*, p. 254. His shock was probably due to the presence as witnesses of the following three men: his friend, William Lauder, Free Church Minister of Strachur; Luke Henderson, one of the two elders that had supported him over the preaching of John Milne; and John McKechnie. Seven months earlier, Anderson had hinted that McKechnie might have assisted him by becoming a missionary at John Knox’s; see *SRSHJ*, Vol. 4, p. 164, n. 92 (the reference in that note to a meeting of the Glasgow Presbytery dated 6th October 1850 is incorrect; the date should have read 16th June 1852).

<sup>178</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 256. As we shall see, this was a resolution in which Gavin Parker’s widow would waver.

papers in the case were produced and the parties called. Robert Buchanan and James Gibson appeared for the Presbytery to explain why, in the view of the Glasgow Presbytery, the reference should be received. Anderson was called, first in the court, and three times at the door by the officer of the Commission, but did not appear.<sup>179</sup> The reference was sustained on the motion of Robert Candlish, after which the Commission proceeded to take up the case. The libel framed by the Glasgow Presbytery and the proof of the charges along with the relative minutes were read. James Gibson also gave in to the Commission a copy of a letter Anderson had written to John Milne dated Aberdeen 3rd August 1852. This was the letter that Anderson had promised the Presbytery he would send to Milne on 5th April 1852. Gibson had received it on 6th August; two days after the Presbytery had referred the case to the Commission. Anderson's letter was then read to the Commission.<sup>180</sup> They then adjourned the consideration of the case until the evening diet in Candlish's St. George's Church.<sup>181</sup>

At the evening meeting of the Commission, Anderson was again called, first in the court, and afterwards three times at the door by the officer of the Commission, but again did not appear. Robert Buchanan on behalf of the Presbytery detailed, at some length, the proceedings of the Presbytery of Glasgow in the case and gave, what the press called, an elaborate analysis of the evidence, to show that it justified the libel.<sup>182</sup> The Commission then fully considered the libel against Anderson, along with the evidence of the six counts of proof in relation to the four charges levelled against him.

Candlish, after making some remarks on the case, moved that the Commission find the libel proven, reserving to a subsequent stage the question as to what sentence the finding should involve. William

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<sup>179</sup> Anderson was in Inverkip on 11th August 1852. He had left Aberdeen on the 9th August, spent the night in Bridge of Allan, and arrived at Inverkip (a coastal town on the Clyde coast, six miles below Greenock) the following day for a short rest. He then returned to Glasgow on Saturday 14th August to resume his ministry to the seceders from John Knox's the following day.

<sup>180</sup> The letter is printed in the *Case of J. R. Anderson*, pp. 65-69. It does not contain the promised expression of regret for the wrong he had done to Milne. See *Minutes of the Glasgow Presbytery*, pp. 294-295.

<sup>181</sup> Proceedings of the Commission of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, August and November 1852, and March 1853, in *AGAFCS*, 1853, p. 69.

<sup>182</sup> The report in *AGAFCS*, 1853, contained on pp. 69-71 is very brief. Additional information on the Commission's proceedings in Anderson's case is provided by the report in the *Aberdeen Herald* of 21st August 1852.

Cunningham, in seconding the motion, made the very strong statement “that it was very manifest that the whole history of the case afforded a very striking warning of the extreme danger of men indulging in inordinate vanity and self-conceit, the indulgence of which, if indulged in, was calculated to make men knaves”.<sup>183</sup> Andrew Gray, the minister of the West Church in Perth and a co-Presbyter of John Milne, expressed his concurrence with the motion.

At this stage a new and rather surprising element entered into the discussion at the instigation of William Nixon of Montrose,<sup>184</sup> who in a few years time would be an ardent supporter of James Begg in opposing the union of the Free Church with the United Presbyterians. Nixon, who was nicknamed “the lion of Montrose”,<sup>185</sup> had little sympathy for the ecclesiastical policy of Candlish and Buchanan, and might have been thought of as a possible supporter of Anderson. He interjected into the debate the view that “he could not shake off from his mind the conviction that there was a tinge of insanity in Mr. Anderson’s nature, which very essentially affected the character and merits of the case”.<sup>186</sup> Somewhat consternated by Nixon’s observations, Sir Henry Wellwood Moncreiff,<sup>187</sup> who had succeeded to the baronetcy the previous year, exclaimed that “this was not the proper time to enter into consideration of the observation made by Mr. Nixon”. Robert Buchanan was also quick

<sup>183</sup> *Aberdeen Herald*, *ibid.*

<sup>184</sup> William Nixon, DD (1803-1900), was born in Camlachie, Glasgow. He studied at Glasgow University and was ordained in 1831 by the Presbytery of Chirnside as minister of Hexham, Northumberland. He was translated two years later to St. John’s, Montrose. He left the Church of Scotland at the Disruption and signed the Act of Separation and Deed of Demission. His congregation, along with both Parker’s and Anderson’s, were among the few Church of Scotland congregations that retained their church building at the Disruption. He was Moderator of the General Assembly in 1868. In 1850 Nixon became joint-editor with William Wilson and James Lumsden of the *Free Church Missionary Record*, an arrangement which continued until 1853. In 1863 he succeeded Robert Candlish in the convenership of the Education Committee. See *AFCS*, Vol. 1, p. 284.

<sup>185</sup> Alexander Stewart and J. Kennedy Cameron, *The Free Church of Scotland 1843-1900: A vindication* (Edinburgh, 1910), p. 31.

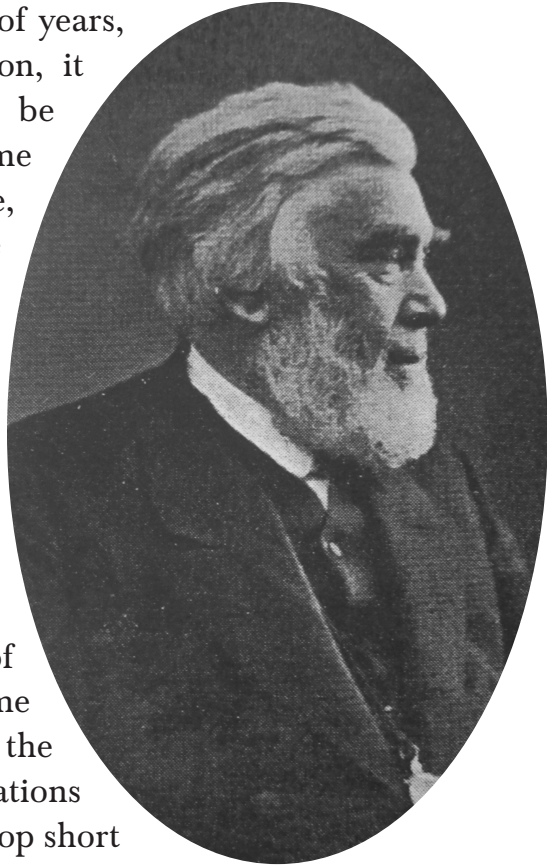
<sup>186</sup> *Aberdeen Herald*, 21st August 1852. This notion was taken up by Robert Rainy in his section of William Cunningham’s biography when commenting on Anderson’s case. He writes: “. . . the party concerned [Rainy does not name Anderson], of whom it is charitable to think that his egotism either began with or ended in some measure of insanity,” James Mackenzie and Robert Rainy, *Life of William Cunningham, DD* (London, 1871), pp. 389-390.

<sup>187</sup> Sir Henry Moncreiff became one of the Principal Clerks of the General Assembly three years later in 1855. The *Annals of the Free Church of Scotland* makes the following observation with respect to him: “Sir Henry’s hereditary and acquired talents marked him out as an authority on Church Law,” *AFCS*, Vol. 1, p. 274.

to add “that, from the experience of years, and intercourse with Mr. Anderson, it was his opinion that it would be altogether unwarrantable to assume the notion of insanity in this case, or that there was anything to take from his accountability to God and man”.<sup>188</sup>

Robert Candlish, who was an accomplished ecclesiastic, was concerned both by Anderson’s absence and by Nixon’s interjection. He then observed, “were it not for the absence of Mr. Anderson, and for the peculiarity of temperament which has now become morbid from his own conceit, and the fostering of that conceit by the adulations of flattering friends, he could not stop short of proposing deposition from the office of the ministry. He could not, however, go beyond giving Mr.

Anderson a *locus penitentæ* (place of repentance), as he believed Mr. Anderson to be responsible for his conduct, notwithstanding that peculiarity of temperament to which he had referred.”<sup>189</sup> Accordingly, Candlish proposed that they suspend Anderson *sine die* from the office and functions of the ministry and dissolve his pastoral tie with the congregation of John Knox’s Church, declaring it vacant; that the Commission instruct the Presbytery of Glasgow that if, at any of their meetings before April 1853, Anderson should appear and intimate his willingness to submit to the censures of the Church, the Presbytery should report the matter to the Assembly, in order that the Assembly might take such steps as might to them seem fit. If, alternatively, Anderson did not appear and express his willingness to submit to the censures of the Church before the next ordinary meeting of the Presbytery of Glasgow in April 1853, the Presbytery should be



*William Nixon, the Free Church minister of Montrose.*

<sup>188</sup> *Aberdeen Herald*, 21st August 1852.

<sup>189</sup> *ibid.*

instructed at once to complete the transaction by pronouncing the sentence of deposition.

After Candlish had tabled his motion there was a prolonged discussion that led to his significantly changing what he had proposed. He agreed to modify that part of his motion that dealt with deposition by instructing the Presbytery to report, not to the 1853 May General Assembly, but to the Commission in March 1853. The Presbytery would now be required to report to the Commission as to whether Anderson had submitted to the discipline of the Church, in order that they might then resume consideration of the case, and deal with it as they might see fit. The motion as altered by Candlish was agreed unanimously.<sup>190</sup> This significantly modified final decision was undoubtedly a softening of Candlish's original intentions and was probably a result of William Nixon's intervention. One also suspects that, due to Anderson's absence from the proceedings against him, there was a distinct reluctance on Candlish's part to proceed with the discipline called for in the libel, namely deposition from the ministry.

#### **IV. BETWEEN THE MEETINGS OF THE FREE CHURCH COMMISSION**

##### **1. John Knox's Tabernacle, Glasgow**

In addition to Anderson's view that his people needed to be tested with regard to their principles, there seems to have been two further factors behind the delay in his resuming his ministry in Glasgow. He details these factors in several letters to John Bayne, written whilst he was in Aberdeen following his stay in Strathpeffer. "I am advised not to resume my ministry in Glasgow till the Free Church Courts have completed their work, and an attempt has been made by our people to retain our church. The Title Deeds give it to those who hold by 'The Westminster Confession of Faith, and the principles of non-intrusion and spiritual independence'. We have, therefore, a good right to it, and the Free Church cannot take it but by an act of spoliation such as were condemned in the Establishment."<sup>191</sup> Anderson enlarges on this in a further letter to Bayne five days later. "By referring to one of my

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<sup>190</sup> *ibid.*, and *AGAFCS*, 1853, pp. 70-71.

<sup>191</sup> *Letters to John Bayne*, letter dated 26th July 1852, p. 38.



former letters you will see that I was averse to appear publicly until I had done so in Glasgow, and among my own people. I find this cannot be before the 15th of August, and I shall give you the reason. We are strongly advised<sup>192</sup> to try and keep our church, as by the Title Deeds we think we have a right to do. But the time for claiming it seems to be after the Commission meets. Now this is on the 11th of August. I have left it to the Congregation to decide whether they should attempt to retain the church or not and daily expect to know what is their resolution.<sup>193</sup> In the meantime they have been looking at a Hall, if they have not already secured it for our accommodation. But this could not be ready before the 15th. . . . When I have once broken the ice in Glasgow among my own people, I shall be free to go everywhere preaching the word. . . . I dare not look at the newspaper, and have to avoid publicity.”<sup>194</sup>

Anderson was in Inverkip, on the Clyde, when the 11th August meeting of the Commission took place. On their way from Bridge of Allan to Inverkip the Andersons called in at Glasgow for a few hours where he met some of his people. Writing in his diary whilst he was at Inverkip, Anderson records this short first meeting for almost ten weeks with members of his old congregation in these terms: “We left Bridge of Allan at half past 10 o’clock, but did not reach Glasgow till one. I found some of my people waiting for me at the train, and received from them all a very hearty welcome. I went with them to see the hall they have fitted up, and was greatly taken with it and admired the activity and good taste they had displayed. We then drove to the steamer for this place.”<sup>195</sup> The seceders from John Knox’s Free Church had secured a meeting place and had begun meeting for public worship in the Railway Hall in Bridge Street.<sup>196</sup> Doubtless the main organizer behind this

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<sup>192</sup> Who gave this advice regarding a claim on the property is not clear, nor is it clear why he was advised not to resume preaching in Glasgow until after the Commission met – the matter is not elaborated on in the extant documentation. It may have been advice from friends or, alternatively, formal legal advice.

<sup>193</sup> From the available documentation, it does not appear that Anderson’s supporters made an attempt to retain the John Knox’s building, though they seem to have been in a significant majority. For the later history of John Knox’s Free Church, see Ian R. Macdonald, *Glasgow’s Gaelic Churches: Highland Religion in an Urban Setting, 1690-1995* (Edinburgh, 1995), p. 18; and *AFCS*, Vol. 2, p. 94.

<sup>194</sup> *Letters to John Bayne*, letter dated 31st July 1852, pp. 39-42.

<sup>195</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 257.

<sup>196</sup> See H. B. Pitt (ed.), *Life and Sermons of the late Rev. J. R. Anderson, Minister of the Gospel, Glasgow, 1834-1859* (2 vols., Glasgow and Trowbridge, Vol. 1, 1934, Vol. 2 undated), Vol. 1, p. 13; Vol. 2, pp. 15-16; and *The Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 22, p. 290.

move was his elder, Joseph Anderson. Clearly, his supporters were pleased with the new meeting place. They were very eager to show Anderson the hall, even though his stay in Glasgow, on his way to Inverkip, was only for a few hours.

The Andersons stayed in Inverkip on this occasion for just four days, for what appears to have been a holiday, before returning to Glasgow for him to resume his ministry. His children were already on holiday in Inverkip and he records with joy the family reunion, “The children were all on the beach to receive us and gave us a right hearty welcome – and had so many things to say”.<sup>197</sup> The following day was one of rest and relaxation; he writes: “I rested a good while on the sofa and thus revived and resumed my pen. I went out in a small boat with my family”; then later in the day he adds, “I went out again in the small boat after dinner and remained for a little while, but was driven in by a heavy thunder-shower.” Undaunted, Anderson was again out in the small boat with his children the following day, using his description, “to take recreation”.<sup>198</sup> In this we see a rather different picture of Anderson than is usually given – that of an intense, severe, and opinionated minister – here we see him as a loving father enjoying a time of relaxation with his children, the children it should be noted, of his first wife Martha Freer whom he still missed acutely.

However, in a similar way to his stay in Strathpeffer, the first visit to Inverkip was not all relaxation; the events swirling round him would not permit even a short period of rest. No sooner was he back from the seashore than he records, “We heard that the Commission of the Free Church had referred the matter of the so-called libel to the next General Assembly<sup>199</sup> – a proof I take it that they are afraid and know not very well what to do with the case!”. Then he adds, concerned over its effect on his supporters, “I fear it may prove a sharp trial of the attachment of friends, but we shall see”.<sup>200</sup> The following day he read a newspaper report of the meeting of the Commission and records a doubt that had arisen in his mind: “I was sharply tried as to my warrant to go

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<sup>197</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 257.

<sup>198</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 258-259.

<sup>199</sup> Anderson was incorrect in thinking that the case was to be referred to the General Assembly. Candlish had at first suggested that the case might be referred to the General Assembly if Anderson was willing to submit to church censure. He then changed his motion to remit the case to the March meeting of the Commission to bring the matter to a conclusion. See *Aberdeen Herald*, 21st August 1852.

<sup>200</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 260.

on administering ordinances (on account no doubt of the Commission suspending him *sine die*), but referred it to the Advocate, and had hope that I would get deliverance in due time.” He then adds: “My eye caught a sentence of Robert Elder of Rothesay to the effect that the suspension *sine die* and dissolution of the pastoral tie was scarcely a sufficient punishment!! I always thought and said that this sanctimonious section would be the bitterest, and so it has turned out.”<sup>201</sup> This comment by Robert Elder must have been a matter of some pain to Anderson as he was the successor in Rothesay to his close friend Peter MacBride. In the first part of this paper we noted that Anderson had preached at Rothesay following MacBride’s death in 1846. In addition, Robert Elder had been included in the select group of ministers that were invited to assist Anderson at communion seasons at John Knox’s.<sup>202</sup> Anderson had also assisted at the communion at St. Paul’s Free Church, Edinburgh, in April 1845, where Elder was the minister prior to his translation to Rothesay in 1847.<sup>203</sup> Anderson was clearly hurt by the comment of one he considered a friend. He concludes in his diary: “I went out in the boat and remained a long time for the benefit of the fresh air. I carried a weight of care and sorrow upon my heart, but never for one moment does the wish arise that I were still in the Free Church. I believe it will ere long be seen more clearly than even at present that what my enemies have meant for evil has been to me a very great mercy. I expected, however, that patience will be severely tried.”<sup>204</sup>

Anderson returned to Glasgow on either 13th or 14th of August 1852 in order to resume his ministry to the seceders from John Knox’s that were meeting in the Railway Hall. He preached for the first time in that building on Sabbath 15th August 1852. This would be the scene of

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<sup>201</sup> *ibid.*, p. 261.

<sup>202</sup> Robert Elder, DD (1808-1892), assisted at the John Knox’s October communion in 1848. Notes of his preaching are in one of the forty-eight (not forty-seven as stated in *SRSJ*, Vol. 4, pp. 162-163, n. 88) volumes, largely of Anderson’s sermons, in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland Library in Glasgow. The sermon by Elder on Hebrews 11:6 is recorded in the Renton series of transcriptions, Vol. 10, pp. 414-427.

<sup>203</sup> A transcript of Anderson’s discourse at the St. Paul’s communion is in a small unnumbered volume of his sermons in the Free Presbyterian Library. His text was “Behold the judge standeth before the door” (James 5:9). Interestingly, the volume in question has the name in front of Mrs. Anderson, 27 Abbotsford Place, Glasgow, which was the address at which the Andersons lived. As the sermon was preached before Martha Freer’s death, it seems very probable that it had been transcribed by his first wife. The very full and easily readable transcript is in the same distinctive hand as the name in the front of the volume.

<sup>204</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 261.

his Glasgow ministry until the congregation opened the John Knox's Kirk of Scotland Tabernacle on the corner of Margaret and South Stirling Street in the Gorbals district of Glasgow on 11th May 1856, a building capable of seating five hundred and fifty people.<sup>205</sup> Anderson preached in the afternoon of his first Sabbath in the Railway Hall from the same text as he had on his final Sabbath in John Knox's on 23rd May 1852. On both occasions he expounded Psalm 50:15: "And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."<sup>206</sup> With respect to his first day back in Glasgow, Anderson writes: "The place was crowded and very very hot but I got through in mercy. I felt liberty and strength in reading the Psalm I first gave out. In the first prayer too the solemnity was so great that at one place I thought there were symptoms of a general melting. I was carried thro' the Lecture without offence and never alluded to what the Free Church had done, nor to our new position, but sought to go on as tho' no change had happened. I was a good deal exhausted between the services and could get no light and no access so that I was cast down. But it was a good afternoon. We had the baptism of five children and I had freedom in the service. I resumed my text Psalm 50:15, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble', etc. I had more sensible liberty than in the forenoon and but for the excessive heat which oppressed both preacher and hearers I should have had a good day. But I was dreadfully exhausted and was hardly able to walk home, and was revived only by a great deal of wine."<sup>207</sup>

Anderson announced in the pulpit that his office-bearers, both elders and deacons, should meet with him the following day. It was clearly

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<sup>205</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. 6, 1856, p. 133. See also the final issue of Anderson's magazine, the *Alarm*, June 1856, pp. 279-281. On the seating capacity, see the maps from the Mitchell Library on the last page of the reprinted version of A. E. Alexander, *Beauty for Ashes: The lives of two godly women* (Inverness, 2003).

<sup>206</sup> Two copies of both these sermons are amongst the transcribed sermons of Anderson in the Free Presbyterian Library. The original transcriptions are in the Renton series of transcriptions, Vol. 16, pp. 94-119 for the last sermon in John Knox's and Vol. 16, pp. 165-192 for the first in the Railway Hall. A copy of the two sermons from the Renton series is in Vol. 18, of what I have termed the numbered series of transcriptions. After Anderson died in 1859 his office-bearers read his sermons to the congregation. As the original Renton series are in a hand that is rather difficult to read, it seems probable that specific sermons were copied out so that they could more easily be read aloud. The numbered series indicates the order in which the sermons were read to the congregation. Many volumes of the Renton series are now missing, so the numbered series is not a duplicate, but contains copies of sermons of which the original transcriptions are now missing or lost. The two Psalm 50:15 sermons in the numbered series are in Vol. 18, pp. 117-149 for last sermon in John Knox's and pp. 150-166 for the first sermon in the Railway Hall.

<sup>207</sup> *Anderson's Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, pp. 263-264.

a pleasant meeting, as Anderson observed regarding the gathering, “I never saw such affection”. They talked over a number of matters and decided that the name of the congregation should be John Knox’s Tabernacle.<sup>208</sup> Though Anderson took the services in the Railway Hall the two remaining Sabbaths in August and the first Sabbath of September, he spent practically the whole of August, with exception of Saturday and the Sabbath, in Inverkip. Whilst he undoubtedly viewed this as a period of holiday, he preached at mid-week meetings at the Independent Chapel in Inverkip. The meetings were from the beginning well attended and by early September he was reporting attendances that were double those at the beginning. Anderson was clearly encouraged by these attempts at outreach, and asserts, “I trust good will prove to have been done. To Him be all the glory to whom it is due. Let ministers rail on if so be I get poor sinners in the Gospel net brought to the Saviour.” Almost a fortnight later he adds, “I heard encouraging accounts of the meetings here, and perhaps impressions have been made which will not soon pass away. I long to preach Christ everywhere, but feel peculiarly dependent upon Him to open great and effectual doors and to restrain adversaries.”<sup>209</sup>

On Saturday 21st August, when the Andersons were back in Glasgow, Robert Ness of Aberdeen came to their home for dinner. They talked together for some considerable time and Anderson observes that “as before, I found him very acute and decided in his judgment of things”.<sup>210</sup> Ness had attended the meetings of the Commission of the Free Church General Assembly as a member of the public when Anderson’s case was dealt with. He doubtless gave Anderson a detailed account of what he had witnessed. The comprehensive pamphlet that has often been referenced in both parts of this paper, *The Case of the Rev. Jonathan R. Anderson*, printed in Glasgow in 1852, which quotes extensively from both Press reports and Presbytery minutes, was published anonymously. The pamphlet appears to have been produced by a person identified simply as “G”, as this excerpt from Anderson’s diary on 21st September 1852 indicates: “The enemy will be furious, but

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<sup>208</sup> *ibid.*, p. 265.

<sup>209</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 273, 281, 283.

<sup>210</sup> *ibid.*, p. 270. That Robert Ness thought highly of both Anderson and the Parkers of Aberdeen is indicated in the names that he gave to two of his sons. A boy born in 1852 was named Jonathan Anderson Ness, whilst another son, who became a successful barrister in London having previously practised for a considerable time in Japan, was named Gavin Parker Ness. See *Aberdeen Journal*, 29th August 1888.

he seems so already and G . . . has published the case in a pamphlet with remarks most hostile. But he will proceed no further, and his folly will be made manifest to all men.”<sup>211</sup> From this entry it is clear that Anderson knew the identity of the author and was aware that it had been published. This then explains another observation Ness had made to Anderson. Ness had seen “G” at the meeting of the Commission and had spoken to him in a way “that made the poor creature tremble”.<sup>212</sup> Ness was also indignant at a Dr. McK. Again the name has been deleted from the typescript of Anderson’s diary.<sup>213</sup> Ness thought the threats of Dr. McK, a pretended friend, worse than the blows of open enemies.

## 2. The Aberdeen Tabernacle

In a letter to John Bayne of Dunblane, written on 31st August 1852, Anderson outlined his plans for the month of September. “I intend, if the Lord permit, to go north on Monday next, the 6th September. The little Church in Aberdeen will then be ready for us, and is to be opened on the following Sabbath. I am quite willing, if you wish it, to take Dunblane in my way, and give what I may get there, or at Kinbuck on Monday evening.”<sup>214</sup> Three days later, after arriving home from Inverkip at seven in the evening, Anderson had a meeting with his elders an hour later. He told them of his plan to leave Glasgow on the following Monday and return for a period to Aberdeen. The Glasgow elders were far from pleased with the news that he was leaving them again after being back in his pulpit for just four Sabbaths. The diary entry reveals Anderson’s assessment of his elders’ disappointment: “We talked over several matters. I see that it will cost some a pull to let me go to Aberdeen – but this just shows the need they have to be weaned from their looking at their own things, and not at the things of others. Oh, that my ways were

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<sup>211</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 303.

<sup>212</sup> *ibid.*, p. 270. It is not possible at this juncture to identify who G was; it is very unlikely to have been James Gibson, the Presbytery Clerk. I doubt that even Robert Ness would have made the redoubtable Gibson to tremble.

<sup>213</sup> An accurate identity of the Dr. McK cannot be made. If it was, as is most likely, a Free Church minister, there are six possibilities as follows: Alexander Mackay, LLD, of Rhynie, Aberdeenshire; George Mackay, DD, of Rafford; George Mackay, DD, of Inverness North; Mackintosh Mackay, LLD, of Dunoon; Alexander Mackenzie, DD, of Nairn; and Charles Calder Mackintosh, DD, then of Tain. Considering the apparently friendly letter of Mackintosh Mackay to Anderson, referred to earlier, he seems to be the most likely identification.

<sup>214</sup> *Letters to John Bayne*, letter dated 31st August 1852, pp. 42-43.

directed so that I may give no offence to Jew or Gentile or the Church of God! I shall need all my wisdom and my people will need all the moderation.”<sup>215</sup> On the Sabbath afternoon before leaving he preached from the same text as he had taken the previous Sabbath afternoon, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37).<sup>216</sup>

Anderson left Glasgow alone at four on Monday afternoon. His wife was sorrowful at his parting; he kissed her and the children and left for Bridge of Allan with the intention of preaching in Dunblane. His letter to John Bayne had arrived late and he expected there would be few at the meeting. In the event that was not the case; the meeting was well attended and besides preaching on that Monday evening he baptised a child of one of his supporters. Anderson, writing of the gathering, observes: “My friend Mr. John Bayne seemed to feel the ordinance. Oh, that the blessing may follow word and sacrament for spiritual good! The mouths of gainsayers are stopped. We had a happy evening here, and I felt refreshed in spirit.” The following day he was still reflecting on the gathering, “I slept very soundly, and woke somewhat refreshed and still enjoying the savour of last night’s meeting”.<sup>217</sup>

Before leaving Bridge of Allan Anderson wrote a long pastoral letter to his Glasgow congregation, who were clearly rather sad at his departure. It was a stirring appeal to maintain their testimony and was highly critical of what he saw as Free Church arrogance. He wrote in these terms:

My dear friends, – I think we have abundant cause of thanksgiving that we have been permitted publicly to continue the testimony, which, for a series of years, we have raised on behalf of the truth which is unto salvation. . . . In our *new* position, with our *old* principles, it behoves us to consider what we are called to do. A banner has been put into our hands – not by a body of men that take to themselves the name of *The Church*; and under this name arrogate to themselves the power to do what seems unto them good in their own sight; and when any man dares to question the equity of their judgment, and the rightness of their procedure, hold him guilty of contumacy, and brand him as exercising a self-constituted ministry. . . . We have received a banner, as we humbly venture to believe, from the only King and Head of the Church; and we have received it, with the charge to display it on behalf of the truth. For men have no right

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<sup>215</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 284.

<sup>216</sup> Both sermons are in the manuscript volumes in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland Library. They are in the Renton series, Vol. 16, pp. 193-212, 212-228.

<sup>217</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 287.

to take away what they have no power to give. I did not receive my ministry from the Free Church – the brethren who hold office as deacons and elders amongst us, did not receive their office from it – the people of God that belong to our community did not receive their membership from it. . . . The language Free Church ministers dare to use is in the spirit and import of Romish and Puseyite priests; and the whole turns upon a delusive and perverse abuse of the word, Church. . . . I hold, that if we have any status in the Church of God as office-bearers, members and adherents, we have it by His grace, for the sake of His Son, according to His Word. Now no body of men whatever can deprive us of that status, except they receive authority from the Lord Jesus Christ, the ruler of the Church. . . . The ministers of the Free Church, and especially the little conclave that heads it, or rather the individual that heads it, these say that they have a commission of this kind. But where is it, whose seal does it bear, and by what evidence is it supported?

After further detailed criticism of the principal men in the Free Church and particularly Robert Candlish, whom he regarded as the leader of that body, he concludes the pastoral letter with a rallying call to his Glasgow congregation, and particularly to any waverers to stand by the work at the Tabernacle:

Why keep away from ministrations, which, as you all are ready to testify, are the same as they ever were? Why turn their back on a congregation which has lost nothing by its change of position; Why absent themselves from meetings, which, I suppose, you all feel, are as much as you can bear in weight, and solemnity, and power? Why roam like a poor bird over the waste of waters when the humble ark of plain gospel truth is open to receive them? “Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return ye backsliding children.”<sup>218</sup>

Anderson reached Aberdeen between six and seven in the evening and had a warm reception from Susan Parker and her family. After a time of prayer he went with the Parkers to see the former St. John’s Episcopal Church in Golden Square, which Anderson now called “the Tabernacle”. He observed with some pleasure in his diary, “How beautiful it looks: quite like a little palace. But I tried to remember that its glory must lie in His gracious presence who fills heaven and earth.”<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> The whole letter is in *Letters on the Free Church*, pp. 59-65. The citations are from pp. 59-60, 63, and 65.

<sup>219</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 288. Ness must have arranged for extensive repairs to be undertaken on the building. Alexander Gammie, in his brief account of the St. John’s congregation, notes, “In 1847 it was found that the fabric of the chapel in Golden Square



However, the commitment of the friends in Aberdeen was a matter of concern: he notes, “I was downcast and sad about friends here, who seem to have been shaken in their resolution”. Anderson had also heard that Ness had proposed that the Tabernacle would be open for worship only when Anderson was present in Aberdeen. This was a matter of concern to him and the day after he arrived he went to see Ness and had “all my cogitations explained”. It seems that Ness had resiled from this proposal. He noted in contrast to some of the others in Aberdeen, “I was glad to find *he* stands firm”. Indeed the following day, after a drive out with Ness, he says, “I saw much in his character to admire. How wonderful, that in my exile, I should have such friends to maintain His cause.” After speaking with Jane Watt, Susan Parker’s sister, Anderson notes: “She seems to me to be the soundest of our little company. . . . I was quite revived by our conversation and was glad I had it.” Yet a day later we find him writing, “I feel very lonely: no friend on earth that is out and out”.<sup>220</sup>

The Aberdeen Tabernacle was opened for worship for the first time on Thursday 9th September 1852, when a well attended prayer meeting was held. Public worship on the Sabbath commenced on 12th September. Speaking of the first morning service, Anderson observes that though “the little church was not filled yet we had double the number that attended at the Terrace”.<sup>221</sup> Three services were held during the day and though this was, both for him and his supporters in Aberdeen, a rather momentous occasion, Anderson felt he was somewhat straitened in preaching. The evening service was the best attended of the three.<sup>222</sup> The cause in Aberdeen was, however, a matter of concern to Anderson. The day after the first Sabbath services he writes: “The prospect here is very dark: friends are waxing shy and fear arises that it may come to nothing. . . . A nice letter from my people. I ought to be thankful I have them and that they are so firm. . . . I found Miss Watt a warm staunch friend yet perplexed what to do for want of

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had become so decayed as to be almost beyond repair”, *The Churches of Aberdeen*, p. 295. That comprehensive repairs were undertaken at what must have been a considerable expense would appear to indicate Ness’s commitment to Anderson’s witness.

<sup>220</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 290-292.

<sup>221</sup> *ibid.*, p. 293. The Terrace is a reference to Susan Parker’s home – 52 Skene Terrace, Aberdeen.

<sup>222</sup> *ibid.*, p. 294. It is to be regretted that there seems to be hardly any account of Anderson’s sermons in Aberdeen. Virtually all the sermons (almost eight hundred, although some are duplicated) in the volumes in the Free Presbyterian Library are from his Glasgow ministry.

a minister.”<sup>223</sup> His main concern was the need for someone to take the services in Aberdeen for the majority of the time when he was in Glasgow. He writes somewhat anxiously in his diary: “How is the public worship of God to be kept up?”<sup>224</sup> Robert Ness’s original intention of having separate services only when Anderson was in Aberdeen raised the question of where his followers should attend when he was not there. For his Aberdeen friends to attend Free Church services when he was in Glasgow would, in Anderson’s view, have undermined his testimony against the corruptions in the Free Church.

Whilst he was in Aberdeen his Glasgow congregation was never far from his mind and, though the maintenance of public worship there was not an issue, due to the presence of like-minded office-bearers, he was nonetheless not dilatory in sending them pastoral letters in his absence to strengthen their resolve in maintaining their separate testimony. On the Tuesday after the Aberdeen Tabernacle was opened, he sent them two letters; one was an account of the opening of the former St. John’s and the other a pastoral letter to be read at the prayer meeting.<sup>225</sup> Doubtless the waverers in Aberdeen were before his mind, as the pastoral letter to Glasgow is a trenchant document re-stating and justifying the need for separation from the Free Church. In it he gives examples of the preaching taking place in that body which was to him a matter of the utmost concern. After stating that, in his view, less than a decade after the Disruption, “the Spirit of God is, to a fearful extent, taken away from the present generation of both ministers and people”, and that we “hardly ever hear of sinners shaken in their security, moved to concern about the salvation of their souls, and constrained by heartfelt alarm to cry out, ‘What must we do to be saved?’”, he then goes on to detail what he considers to be the spiritual blindness of the Free Church ministry who in their conceit believe themselves to be “the most enlightened race of ministers the country ever possessed”.<sup>226</sup> Anderson’s conclusion is

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<sup>223</sup> *ibid.*, p. 294. Anderson was also cast down at the poor attendance at the prayer meetings in the intervening week. *ibid.*, pp. 298-299.

<sup>224</sup> *ibid.*, p. 295.

<sup>225</sup> Whilst the pastoral letter has been preserved in *Letters on the Free Church*, pp. 65-73, the letter describing what he calls “the work here last Sabbath” is regrettably now lost. It would have been most instructive to have Anderson’s own account of the opening of the church in Aberdeen. Anderson wrote to John Bayne on the Monday after the first Sabbath services in the Aberdeen Tabernacle but the letter contains no more historical detail than what is included in his diary.

<sup>226</sup> *Letters on the Free Church*, pp. 66, 68.

inevitable: “We do not have anything in common with those from whom we have separated, and this some of their leaders had begun to summarise. For what they call light we call darkness; what they call gospel, we call ‘we know not what’; what they call spiritual, we call carnal; what they call the church, we call a worldly society; what they call a court of Christ’s house, we call despotism; what they call freedom, we call bondage. To unite with such men is impossible, as much as to join light with darkness, truth and falsehood, Christ and Belial. I am satisfied that our safety lay in flight; and the more we know of that from which we have fled, the more shall we see ground for thankfulness to Him who brought us out; and in doing so, ‘led the blind by a way that they knew not, and by paths which they had not known’.”<sup>227</sup>

Anderson stayed in Aberdeen for a further Sabbath before returning to Glasgow. The week proved to be somewhat of a trial to him on three counts. The first was a matter that would recur many times in the next year; it was the uncertainty of Susan Parker on whether she would fully commit herself to Anderson’s testimony and cut her ties entirely with the Free Church. Within a week Anderson writes, “Mrs. Parker came out with her *church* notions. She wished to worship in *the church* and absurdly enough quoted the words, ‘I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world!’” Then the next day, “I had a nice chat with Mrs. Parker who seems to be returning to her former light and cordiality.”<sup>228</sup> Then just four days later, as he was leaving for Glasgow, he observes, “I feel very anxious about Mrs. Parker. Her manner is much changed and I fear lest it should appear that, as she says, she has been dragged through the religious world. I am astounded at people like her finding pleas for open enemies and persecutors. But these are awful times.”<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> *ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>228</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, pp. 297, 298. The emphasis is Anderson’s.

<sup>229</sup> *ibid.*, p. 303. On the same day he records: “I wrote to Mr. Ness giving him permission to publish the pamphlet. Oh, that testimony may be given to it in its resurrection from the dead. The enemy will be furious . . . ,” *ibid.* This appears to be a reference to Anderson’s giving Ness permission to publish his pamphlet about the Glasgow Presbytery that had caused such offence and a copy of which he had reluctantly handed in to the General Assembly. The pamphlet, as we have noted, was entitled *A Reply to the Speeches delivered in the Free Presbytery of Glasgow, in the case of elders of Knox’s Session, on Wednesday, the 11th February, 1852*. However, a later reference in his diary makes it clear that Ness did not publish the critical pamphlet in September 1852. Writing on 21st February 1853, Anderson records a plea made to him by a group in his Glasgow congregation, “A deputation came to ask that I would publish the ‘Reply to the Minister’s Speeches’, but I thought it should not be done unless some marked occasion for it arose”. *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 3, 1853, p. 57.

The second matter that concerned Anderson, in the week between the two Sabbaths when he was supplying the Aberdeen Tabernacle, was the result of four letters from Glasgow – one from his wife, another from William Anderson, the Session clerk in the Glasgow Tabernacle, and two from members of the congregation. Regarding the letter from his wife, he notes: “A letter from home vexed me that people should be so selfish and presumptuous. In another form it is just the old spirit of dictating what the ministry ought to be. I need truly to be wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove.”<sup>230</sup> The letter from his Session clerk struck a similar note, telling him that a number of people in his Glasgow congregation were unhappy at his being away from them so soon after he had resumed his ministry among them. His rather terse assessment was, “some of my people are unaccustomed to the yoke and ill-prepared to bear privations”.<sup>231</sup> The first of the two letters from the congregation, written by a young man, was somewhat different; the letter itself was an encouragement to Anderson and this seems to imply his correspondent had come under concern for his soul. He had, however, informed him that “we had still in our camp murmurers and complainers” who were disposed to wrest Anderson’s words. The other letter from a member of the congregation was in a similar vein and, commenting on it, Anderson writes, “I see that the enemy has been busy among them spreading false reports and tempting to false interpretations”.<sup>232</sup> These manifestations of unrest in Glasgow, along with what appeared to be less than full commitment in Aberdeen, were understandably concerns that drove Anderson to his knees in prayer. The third matter is something we shall notice more fully later in this paper: his wife had written to him informing him that all his office-bearers had been summoned to appear before the John Knox’s Free Church Session to answer for “holding services at the hours of divine service, and otherwise following divisive courses”.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> *ibid.*, p. 298.

<sup>231</sup> *ibid.*, p. 302.

<sup>232</sup> *ibid.*, p. 300.

<sup>233</sup> *ibid.*, p. 299. An earlier letter from his wife had informed him of the activity of John McKechnie. Apparently the young preacher, after being a confidant of Anderson, had gone to Robert Buchanan “to ingratiate himself”. Anderson’s comment is illuminating: “The Bishop [Buchanan] told him to appear at the Presbytery to be set right,” to which he adds, “but it is not known whether he complied! I said what are we come to: wilt thou make a full end! The low sneaking spirit to which this poor lad is left, who was wont to say, ‘I may perish for my sin, but I shall never perish by modern religion for I utterly despise it’, and yet he is laying himself at the feet of one of its Apostles,” *ibid.*, p. 297.

There were larger congregations in the Aberdeen Tabernacle on Anderson's second Sabbath in the city. From his report of the day we learn that the former St. John's Episcopal Church had a gallery. Describing the afternoon service, when he seems to have been preaching from the tenth chapter of John's gospel, Anderson writes: "I was in my element in the sermon, especially when opening up the character of the sheep and the interest which Christ claims in them. The congregation rather larger, tho' some in the front gallery did not return and an old gentleman walked out when I spoke of the scarcity of the preached word. I took no notice of it, but went on."<sup>234</sup>

Anderson left Aberdeen the following day, Monday 20th September 1852, and from Bridge of Allan wrote a further pastoral letter to his Glasgow congregation. The letter is the last in the series of nine pastoral letters that were published by him in a one-hundred-and-four page book, *The Free Church of Scotland: Her Character and Proceedings in a Series of Letters* (which we have cited as *Letters on the Free Church*).<sup>235</sup> As Anderson penned this letter he was conscious that it might prove unpopular, as he notes in his diary: "I wrote my weekly letter to my people. I had unusual difficulty executing it and was half afraid to send it. But what I wrote I sent and tho' unpalatable it may prove a word in season."<sup>236</sup> It is probable that Anderson's unpalatable letter was a result of the complaints from Glasgow that had come to his attention whilst he was in Aberdeen; it may also indicate that he was still uncertain about the place and the nature of his future ministry. The opening paragraphs of a rather lengthy letter are as follows:

My Dear Friends – I have accomplished my task in Aberdeen – a little church has been opened with some solemnity, and thus a testimony raised in favour of pure truth, in opposition to what is corrupt and

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<sup>234</sup> *ibid.*, p. 302.

<sup>235</sup> Though *The Free Church of Scotland: Her Character and Proceedings in a Series of Letters* is dated on the title-page 1853, it is clear from both *Anderson's Diary* and his *Letters to John Bayne* that he received the copies from the printers in late November 1852 and began to distribute them in earnest the following week. Anderson informed Bayne in a letter dated 30th November 1852, "The *Letters* are ready; the book is double the size of *Warning to Ministers* and must be sold at one shilling. Let me know how many copies you would like, and I shall bring the parcel with me on Wednesday. We shall issue no *Tract* for a month, so that the *Letters* may take its place," *Letters to John Bayne*, pp. 55-56. For the background to Anderson's essay, *Warning to Ministers*, see *SRSHJ*, Vol. 4, p. 159. Anderson's *Tracts* were printed versions of some of his sermons in the form of a small eight-page booklet. The first tract was published in January 1851. From that date a tract seems to have been published, at least for a time, on a monthly basis.

<sup>236</sup> *Anderson's Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 304.

worthless. I trust, too, that some here have been helped forward in their journey to the celestial city; and perhaps it has been put into the heart of others to say of the people of God, “We will go with you, for we have heard that God is in the midst of you”.

I have come thus far on my way home, and expect to preach at different points in this neighbourhood, this evening, tomorrow and Thursday; and, if the Lord will, go to Glasgow on Friday, in the hope of being with you on Sabbath. I am concerned to leave you, even for a single day, without those services which you seem to prize so much, and from which you, no doubt, expect to reap solid advantage. And were I my own master, did it depend on my choice, I need not hesitate long what course to take. But I am only a servant, and must abide the commands of Him who has our times in His hand, and who orders all things after the counsel of His will. I am, as yet, unable to decide what I ought to do, whether to confine my labours to Glasgow, and my own flock, or to extend them to others of His people, in different parts of the country, who eagerly long for them. I know, and have always said, that you have the first and chief claim upon me. But in what view? Is it to look to your own edification and comfort alone, or is it to be helpful to others that are your brethren, that sympathise with you in your struggles, and are ready to cast in their lot with you.

I must say, I am strongly inclined to take the latter view; and yet if the former can be shown to be the will of God, I shall at once and cheerfully bow, and spend the little time that now remain[s] to me, in instructing, and warning, and building you up in the faith.<sup>237</sup>

Anderson then takes head-on their complaints about his leaving them so soon after he had resumed his ministry in Glasgow:

But wherever you go, if you meet with persons of spiritual discernment, the complaint is loud and bitter, that food to the immortal soul is scarcely to be obtained. The complaint is brought to our ears with the touching request, “Come over and help us”.

Now, I ask, what reply are we to make to this request? I hope there are none in our society that would in cold blood repel it, and say, in the spirit of Cain, “Am I my brother’s keeper?”. If there be any such, they have mistaken their place; they are not of us, and ought not to continue with us; and if they do not get a better spirit, they will not long remain where they are, but go where selfishness will be allowed to reign without check or disturbance.

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<sup>237</sup> *Letters on the Free Church*, pp. 73-74.

But there may be some who will say, “We would willingly send a preacher to you if we had such; nay, we would consent that our minister should be with you for a time, if we had one to fill his place”. Now, there is nothing in this out of the common course; it is what any people might do, and what they could do without a sacrifice. But, O remember that we live in a time such as we have never seen, and the ordinary rules will not apply, and ordinary modes of acting will not suffice! We must look, not upon our own things, but every man on the things of others.<sup>238</sup>

### **3. John Knox's Free Church and Anderson's Glasgow office-bearers**

Anderson remained in Bridge of Allan until Friday 24th September 1852, taking services in Dunblane for three successive evenings<sup>239</sup> before returning to Glasgow on the Friday afternoon. No sooner was he back home than he had to assist his office-bearers in responding to a citation for them to appear before the John Knox's Kirk Session. We noted earlier that at the first meeting of the John Knox's Session, after Anderson had been suspended from his ministerial functions, held on 12th June 1852, the Session received letters of resignation from four deacons who were clearly supporters of Anderson; James Davidson, Peter Doig, John Anderson, and William Dewar. It was resolved unanimously that the resignations should lie on the table for future consideration.<sup>240</sup> Two months later the John Knox's Session received a further notice of resignation from another Anderson supporter, William Anderson, resigning from his position as Session Clerk and handing in the minute book and various other items associated with that office. As far as William Anderson was concerned his resignation was from both from the office of Session Clerk and as an elder. However, it appears that the Knox's Session only considered the resignation to be from the office of Session Clerk and that he was still retaining his position as an elder. Accordingly, the resignation as Session Clerk was accepted.<sup>241</sup>

The next meeting of the Knox's Session was on 10th September 1852, the Friday before Anderson opened the Aberdeen Tabernacle on

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<sup>238</sup> *ibid.*, 74-75.

<sup>239</sup> Anderson notes in his diary that the numbers attending his preaching in Dunblane were “at least double the number that were there before and some solemnity prevailed”, *Anderson's Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 305.

<sup>240</sup> *John Knox's Minutes*, meeting of 12th June 1852, p. 189.

<sup>241</sup> *ibid.*, p. 191, meeting of 28th August 1852.

the Sabbath. At this meeting they took up again the resignation of the deacons that were Anderson supporters; to the original four names a further two had sent in letters of resignation: James Jamieson and Peter Millar. In addition, George Renton<sup>242</sup> had also sent in a letter of resignation. Renton was one of the elders that had been appointed after the ten elders had demitted their office whilst Anderson was still the minister of John Knox's. In the assessment of the John Knox's Free Church Session, these men were "reported to be following divisive courses in attending the ministry of Mr. J. R. Anderson". In addition, it was reported to the Session that the elder, Joseph Anderson, had "conducted in a separate place, divine service on Sabbath to a portion of Knox's congregation, and otherwise to be following divisive courses and attending the ministry of the Rev. Jonathan Rankin [*sic*] Anderson, now under sentence of suspension of the Commission of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland". The response of the John Knox's Session was to cite all of them to a meeting the following Friday at 8 o'clock in the evening when, "their resignations would be considered and dealt with according to the laws of the Church". The Session then instructed "the church officer to cite all the aforementioned parties to compare".<sup>243</sup>

Anderson was in Aberdeen on the day they were cited to appear for the first time. He noted in his diary for that day: "A letter from home told me that all my office bearers are summoned to appear before Knox's Session for holding meetings at the hours of divine service and otherwise following divisive courses. I rejoiced at this new display of Anti-Christian power on the part of the Free Church. I felt the Lord will fight for me, and I shall hold my peace."<sup>244</sup> The 17th September arrived, the Session was constituted, and the church officer reported that he had duly cited all the parties "personally at their own dwelling houses", yet no one appeared except Peter Millar.

Millar's letter was read in connection with his resignation as a deacon. In response he made it very clear that he had never adhered to Mr. Anderson, and after deliberation expressed his willingness to withdraw his resignation. Needless to add, the Knox's Session "received

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<sup>242</sup> Renton was an ardent supporter of Anderson and appears to have remained an elder in John Knox's Tabernacle for the remainder of his life. As we have noted, either Renton himself, or someone on his behalf, took extensive notes of Anderson's preaching from just after the Disruption.

<sup>243</sup> *John Knox's Minutes*, meeting of 10th September 1852, pp. 193-194.

<sup>244</sup> *Anderson's Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 299.



this intimation with great satisfaction and expressed their regret that they had been under a mistake in believing he had adhered to the ministry of Mr. Anderson at any time since his suspension by the Commission of Assembly". They then agreed to cite the elders and deacons who had failed to appear a second time on Saturday 2nd October at 8 o'clock in the evening and instructed the church officer to put that into effect.<sup>245</sup>

On his return from Aberdeen, Anderson arranged a meeting of the Session for the following Tuesday, 28th September 1852. In open defiance of the sentence pronounced on Anderson by the Free Church Commission, of suspension *sine die* from the office and functions of the ministry, their first business was to appoint the date when Anderson would administer the Lord's Supper for the first time in John Knox's Tabernacle. The deacons then joined the Session and discussed the citation they had received to appear before the Free Church Session. They were unanimous in their view that they should quite simply take no notice of it.<sup>246</sup> Accordingly, they did not appear on 2nd October. This resulted in their being cited to appear for a third time a week later on 9th October 1852. At that meeting, James Davidson, one of Anderson's deacons, appeared before the Knox's Session and was asked if he still adhered to his resignation of the office of deacon in connection with the Free Church of Scotland, to which he replied, "That he was not here to acknowledge the authority of this court". He was then asked quite bluntly, presumably by James Gibson, the Interim Moderator, "Did he acknowledge the authority of this court?", to which he defiantly replied that he did not. As none of the other elders or deacons had appeared, the Session's decision was to suspend Joseph Anderson and George Renton from the office of the eldership and the five deacons from the office of the diaconate. They then agreed to report their judgment to the Glasgow Presbytery for further advice and decision.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> *John Knox's Minutes*, meeting of 17th September 1852, pp. 195-196.

<sup>246</sup> *Anderson's Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 312.

<sup>247</sup> See *John Knox's Minutes*, meeting of 9th October 1852, pp. 198-199. At this meeting a requisition was presented to the Session that they call a congregational meeting to consider the propriety of requesting the ten demitting elders to return to the congregation. The proposal was approved and a meeting was held on 11th October. Anderson heard the outcome two days later when he observes, "A stormy meeting in Knox's to vote back the ten elders. I was told some were so disgusted they took away their Bibles!", *Anderson's Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 330.

#### 4. Five months of concern and perplexity

When Anderson returned to Glasgow in late September 1852 after the opening of the Aberdeen Tabernacle, the crucial March 1853 meeting of the Commission of the Free Church General Assembly was still five months away. This was the meeting at which the Glasgow Presbytery had to give in a report informing the Commission whether or not Anderson had submitted to discipline. For Anderson these months were a period of perplexity. He was still unclear as to what course he should take regarding his future ministry, and in addition to this there were several other matters that burdened him and were major concerns.

##### *(a) Perplexity over his future ministry*

It would be quite wrong to think Anderson lacked opportunities with respect to the exercise of his preaching ministry. There were groups of people in many parts of Scotland that both appreciated his preaching and were in broad agreement with him on his assessment of the state of the Free Church. Besides the Tabernacles in both Glasgow and Aberdeen, there was a cluster of support for him around Dunblane, where his main defender was his correspondent, John Bayne. In addition to holding services in Dunblane, he also addressed meetings in Bridge of Allan, Braco, and Kinbuck. There was also strong support for him in Robert Rainy's congregation in Huntly, north-west of Aberdeen, and in Caithness.<sup>248</sup> In December 1852 Anderson was cheered by how the Caithness people were reacting to the Free Church discipline case against him: "I had accounts of the state of things in Caithness and was astonished at the interest which appears to have been felt in our case by all the godly people there, and the disapprobation shown to good ministers for remaining silent."<sup>249</sup> Then almost a fortnight later he adds, "I learned from a Caithness man that my friends in the country are the very pick of the people".<sup>250</sup>

Between October 1852 and the beginning of March 1853 Anderson made a further seven visits to Aberdeen, on each occasion staying for approximately a week. He encapsulates his perplexity in

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<sup>248</sup> During the summer of 1854 Anderson made two visits to Caithness when he preached in Thurso, Wick, Castletown, and Dunbeath. H. B. Pitt printed portions of Anderson's diary covering these two preaching tours in *Life and Sermons of the late Rev. J. R. Anderson*, Vol. 2, pp. 30-47.

<sup>249</sup> *Anderson's Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 400.

<sup>250</sup> *ibid.*, p. 413.

his diary on 6th October 1852: “I lay for a short time in the easy chair after breakfast much perplexed what course I ought to take in the ministry – whether I ought to settle down in Glasgow or take frequent excursions especially to the North.”<sup>251</sup>

Yet the thought of leaving Glasgow pained him; writing in Aberdeen six weeks later he observes: “A morning of deep sorrow – waves and billows passing over me. I had frequent recourse to prayer, but my smart was not eased. I thought I might be forced to leave Glasgow and my heart was ready to faint within me at the prospect, and I sought to put it away. I thought of all that had passed there, and was deeply afflicted.”<sup>252</sup> Besides calls to preach elsewhere, it seems that the pressure of the congregation in Glasgow was affecting his health and that this was a factor in his thought that he may need to leave that city.<sup>253</sup> Adding to Anderson’s uncertainty with respect to where he should exercise his ministry were the insistent calls from Aberdeen to occupy their Tabernacle pulpit more frequently. Writing again on 6th October 1852, the same day that he detailed his perplexity, he received a letter from Aberdeen trying to persuade him to supply them for two Sabbaths a month. He responded by telling them, in a letter the next day, of his difficulty in “deciding what his duty was at present”. To which he added, “The Lord will guide. Let us wait patiently upon Him.”<sup>254</sup> However, the calls from Aberdeen were unrelenting; after supplying there for a Sabbath at the end of October 1852, on the following Tuesday he met with some friends in the congregation who told him, “that some are inquiring as they go from the Tabernacle – is he not coming to Aberdeen altogether?”<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> *ibid.*, p. 321.

<sup>252</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 374-375.

<sup>253</sup> In a further diary record written whilst in Aberdeen on 9th December 1852 he notes, “I felt quite relieved from the pressure and agitation that prey upon me while in Glasgow and feel as if my health may compel me to leave it altogether: but I must wait patiently on the Lord”, *ibid.*, p. 396. Additional diary references in the period before the March Commission to Anderson’s perplexity over where he should exercise his ministry are *ibid.*, p. 384, and Vol. 3, p. 54.

<sup>254</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp. 321, 322-323.

<sup>255</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 353-354. A similar inquiry is recorded in his diary whilst in Aberdeen on 24th January 1853. “A stranger came to see me who had been hearing, and wished to know if I was coming to Aberdeen for good,” *ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 27.

***(b) Perplexity over the commitment of the Aberdeen congregation***

Adding to Anderson's uncertainty was the contrast between Glasgow and Aberdeen. The Glasgow congregation seemed totally one with him regarding his testimony against the Free Church. However, he was less than certain that this was the case with respect to the Aberdeen congregation. The Glasgow congregation was resolute; after a series of visits to their homes in December 1852 he writes: "I . . . was encouraged to find them steadfast in the fiery trial through which they are made to pass. I am unworthy to lead such a band of witnesses."<sup>256</sup> The office-bearers in John Knox's Free Church were clearly trying to woo some in his Glasgow congregation away from him; an account of one such attempt is given in his diary for 27th December 1852: "I visited one of my poor people and was deeply interested in the account she gave me of a conversation she had with one of Knox's deacons that called, evidently with a view to gain her over to the Free Church. But she was too many for him and was able to meet his calumnies at all points, and sent him away not very much satisfied with his call."<sup>257</sup>

In sharp contrast to this woman in Glasgow was the wavering from time to time of Susan Parker and others in the Aberdeen congregation. Though on occasions she seemed one with him, this was not always the case. He writes concerning her in March 1853: "I was sharply tried by hearing Mrs. Parker at her old rotten plea that the Church has always been as the Free Church is now! The very same thing would have kept her in the Establishment, and perhaps she may land there before all is done."<sup>258</sup> Again six days later he laments: "I had another brush with Mrs. Parker last night, and had to warn and expostulate with considerable sharpness. She seems to be one of the most stiff and obstinate beings I ever had to deal with, and yet at times she talks as if she were round, and then she is back where she was."<sup>259</sup>

Whilst the Aberdeen congregation appreciated Anderson's preaching and were fond of him as a person, they seem to have been less than totally committed to his views of the Free Church. Samuel Grant, the Free Church minister that had succeeded Gavin Parker at

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<sup>256</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 394.

<sup>257</sup> *ibid.*, p. 417.

<sup>258</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 66.

<sup>259</sup> *ibid.*, p. 73.

Bon-Accord Free Church, died on 14th January 1853.<sup>260</sup> His funeral sermon was preached at Bon-Accord just over a week later at a time when Anderson was supplying in the Aberdeen Tabernacle. Quite a number of the congregation went to Bon-Accord rather than attend Anderson's ministry. He writes regarding that Sabbath, "We had a precious forenoon in the Tabernacle tho' owing as was supposed to Mr. Grant's funeral sermon in Bon-Accord, we had only 40 present".<sup>261</sup> This would, in Anderson's view, show lack of commitment to his testimony with respect to the Free Church. Just over a month later on 3rd March 1853 when he was again in Aberdeen he writes, "I fear that hankering after the flesh-pots of Egypt keeps us low and feeble here".<sup>262</sup> Six days later he writes to Robert Ness in exasperation, "urging him to decide, and to get the friends to decide, whether to leave the Free Church, or stay in it: for I could not go on with them as I had been doing".<sup>263</sup> This ultimatum to Ness was written on the day he had arrived back in Glasgow and after his wife had told him, "that our people will not consent to my going to Aberdeen if the people there stick by the Free Church", to which he added reflectively, "my position is becoming every day more questionable".<sup>264</sup> After almost a week had elapsed and he had received no response he writes: "I was still in distress about Aberdeen. I cannot see my way to go back to them, and fear they will return to the city, and perish in its destruction."<sup>265</sup> Two days after penning these words he received a letter from Susan Parker; we let Anderson himself explain the contents. "I got a letter from Mrs. Parker which filled me with a tumult of joy. For it informed me that they had met at the Tabernacle Sabbath last, and thus by themselves separated from the Free Church. The Lord establish what has been wrought, and provide what is good for his own."<sup>266</sup> Sadly for Anderson, this apparent commitment was not to stand the test of time.

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<sup>260</sup> Robbie & Tennant, *ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>261</sup> *Anderson's Diary*, Vol. 3, 1853, p. 26. This citation is interesting, as it is the only reference I have seen in his diary to the numbers attending at the Aberdeen Tabernacle. Forty was clearly a low attendance.

<sup>262</sup> *ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>263</sup> *ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>264</sup> *ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>265</sup> *ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>266</sup> *ibid.*, p. 82.

***(c) Concern over his scattered flock***

Whilst Anderson could at times be abrasive, and we are told he was not a regular visitor to his people's homes,<sup>267</sup> yet he had a pastor's heart. In the five-month period between his returning to Glasgow, after opening the Aberdeen Tabernacle and the March meeting of the Commission of the Free Church General Assembly, there are at least ten diary entries when he is lamenting his scattered flock who, until the May 1852 General Assembly, had formed his congregation in John Knox's Free Church. From the references it seems that while many had followed him and others had remained in the Free Church, a considerable number were attending a variety of congregations in the Glasgow area. We merely cite three of these references. After returning from opening the Aberdeen Tabernacle, he writes: "I was grieved over my poor scattered flock and, looking on it as the work of the enemy, said, 'Avenge me of mine adversary', and thought, 'Shall not God avenge His own elect that cry day and night to him?'. I then asked what would I do were my enemies in my hand. I would feed and clothe them and send them back to their homes."<sup>268</sup> Three months later, on 24th December 1852, he writes in his diary: "I did not get much done all evening, only I suffered almost continually at the remembrance of my wandering flock. I wonder if their deliverance is drawing on, I am so exercised about them and I meet with several of my people that appear to feel the same way."<sup>269</sup> Within a further few weeks he is lamenting again, "I thought I had got over my griefs about those that have turned away from me, but no: they returned upon me and press very hard". He is so concerned that he visits two such families, "but got little satisfaction, and in the latter was made melancholy by the din and disorder that prevailed. I longed for heaven where there shall be nothing to offend."<sup>270</sup> Yet amidst these trials Anderson was not without encouragements; in a letter to John Bayne he records with thankfulness, "Though the enemy thought to extinguish us, strange to say, nearly as many have sprung up, as those I had before the storm. The bush burns but is not consumed."<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> *Case of J. R. Anderson*, pp. 6-7, f.n.

<sup>268</sup> *Anderson's Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 316.

<sup>269</sup> *ibid.*, p. 413.

<sup>270</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 13.

<sup>271</sup> *Letters to John Bayne*, letter dated 7th October 1852, p. 50.

***(d) Concern over finances***

Although concern about how he would provide for himself and his family is not a major theme in the five months prior to the March 1853 meeting of the Commission, it was clearly an underlying anxiety in Anderson's mind. His father died when he was eleven and the lengthened period he took with his studies seems to indicate he had to fund himself, at least partially, through his University and Divinity courses. It seems, therefore, highly unlikely that he had any financial support or inheritance coming from his own family. However, his first wife, Martha Freer, came from a wealthy Worcester family and it is not improbable that Anderson and his first wife had received support from her parents. Whilst his second wife did not come from as privileged a background as Martha Freer, her father was a corn merchant in Leith and would seem to have been able to assist his daughter if she and her husband were in financial straits.

Besides his own immediate needs, in 1852, Anderson had eight surviving children from his first marriage. We only know the dates on which five of these eight children were born. In 1852 their ages ranged from nine to seventeen. Of the remaining three children it seems likely, from the way they are recorded in Hew Scott's *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanae*,<sup>272</sup> that one was older than seventeen and the remaining two younger than nine. It is clear, therefore, that a very significant financial burden lay on Anderson to provide for his family and see them through their education.

The first reference in his diary to financial matters is on 20th September 1852, almost four months after he had left the Free Church, whilst he was at Bridge of Allan on his way back to Glasgow after the opening of the Aberdeen Tabernacle. The rather brief insert reads: "I had calls from some friends and an offer of money from the church funds, which for the present I refused to take."<sup>273</sup> One possible reason for this refusal was that the Free Church, at that time, paid minister's stipends twice a year, on the Scottish term days, Whitsuntide<sup>274</sup> and

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<sup>272</sup> Hew Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 3, p. 418.

<sup>273</sup> *Anderson's Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, pp. 302-303.

<sup>274</sup> The term day Whitsun was originally based on the feast of Pentecost. However, because the date of Pentecost moves each year, the term day of Whitsun was fixed in Scotland in 1599 as 15th May. The Scottish term days and quarter days are the four divisions of the legal year. They were historically used as the days on which contracts and leases would begin and end, servants would be hired or dismissed, and when rent,

Martinmas. Accordingly, Anderson would have correctly received six month's stipend as a Free Church minister from the Sustentation Fund on 15th May 1852. Financial pressure would only really come on him, and his family, on 11th November (the date of Martinmas) when the second yearly stipend payment would have been made. As he was now a suspended minister, the Sustentation Fund committee sent him an order for £25 in November 1852. This was just less than half of what would have been paid to him had he still been a minister in a charge. Anderson returned the order to Hugh Handyside, a secretary of the Sustentation Fund committee, with the following letter.

Glasgow, 8th November 1852

Sir, – I regret that I am obliged to inform the Sustentation Committee, what they ought themselves to have known, that, in the month of May last, I renounced my connection with the Free Church.

I returned a so-called libel, sent to my house by the Free Presbytery of Glasgow, because I was no longer under their jurisdiction.

I now return to the Sustentation Committee their order for £25, having no title to any share of their emoluments.

I also return the papers that were sent to me, after having taken a copy of *the circular*,<sup>275</sup> for the sake of the instruction which it affords, as to the fears entertained, in high quarters, of the Free Church, and the means suggested to allay those fears – I remain, Sir, yours respectfully.

Jon. R. Anderson<sup>276</sup>

interest on loans, and minister's stipends would become due. The term days were Whitsun and Martinmas. Candlemas and Lammas were the quarter days. In the Free Church stipends were paid on the term days.

<sup>275</sup> Anderson's copying the circular regarding the Sustentation Fund needs some comment. By 1852 the Sustentation Fund was under very considerable pressure due to the growth in the number of ministers to be supported. The matter was the subject of debate in the Free Church for several years in the 1850s and had been dealt with extensively at the 1852 General Assembly. At the Disruption there were 470 ministers and by the mid 1850s the number had grown to 725. According to James Begg, in 1855 only 190 of the 750 Free Church congregations were self-sustaining and able fully to support a minister. This put a huge strain on the Sustentation Fund. Anderson contended that the Free Church was obsessed about the Sustentation Fund. For details of the debate about the issue see David Thorburn, *Historical Review of the Legislation of the Free Church of Scotland on the subject of the Sustentation Fund for the Christian Ministry* (Edinburgh, 1855); *Remarks on the Sustentation Fund of the Free Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1855); James Begg, *Reform in the Free Church* (Edinburgh, 1855).

<sup>276</sup> *Letters on the Free Church*, p. 79.



Commenting on this correspondence with Handyside in his diary, Anderson observes: “A letter from the Sustentation Committee of the Free Church with £25 and a circular marked by the most arrant folly men can commit. Oh, when will they awake to a sight of their condition! I returned the money and other papers to Handyside and wrote a note with it.”<sup>277</sup>

As one might have expected, it was in November when the second part of his annual stipend would have been paid to him that a measure of concern is noted regarding his temporal affairs. Writing in his diary on 16th November 1852 he records this concern: “The enemy labours hard to frighten me by the prospect of poverty and want, but he is the prince of the powers of the air. Oh, for an exercise of faith, for I need it.”<sup>278</sup> Reduced circumstances also led to this observation nine days later: “In our altered circumstances it is good our former servants left us.”<sup>279</sup> The Glasgow congregation realised that provision would need to be made for their minister and, in the first week of December 1852, he notes with some relief, “In conversation . . . with an elder and a deacon I was informed what my poor people mean if possible to do for my provision. I was deeply moved at the tidings and felt rebuked for my unbelief and dejection. I came home lightened in some measure of my burdens.”<sup>280</sup> The Aberdeen congregation was similarly concerned to make some provision for Anderson. They seem to have been ahead of the Glasgow congregation in realizing the need to set up a fund to provide a stipend for Anderson. On 18th November 1852, when he was supplying the Tabernacle in Aberdeen, he records that Mrs. Parker’s sister, Jane Watt, arrived unexpectedly for dinner, and he adds, “She brought £1 to the Sustentation Fund of the Tabernacle from two exercised friends in Dundee, who rejoiced in the testimony that had been raised”.<sup>281</sup> In his first visit to them in the New Year he records that he had learned from Robert Ness, “what made me wonder at the goodness of God respecting money matters, and also the noble effort made by the little band of His people here. The Lord bless them, and reward them for their labour of love.”<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, p. 361.

<sup>278</sup> *ibid.*, p. 370.

<sup>279</sup> *ibid.*, p. 381.

<sup>280</sup> *ibid.*, p. 395.

<sup>281</sup> *ibid.*, p. 373.

<sup>282</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 4.

***(e) Concern over the discipline of his supporters in Aberdeen***

In Anderson's first visit to supply the Aberdeen pulpit after the Tabernacle had been opened, he was invited to tea at the home of Robert Ness where he met Alexander Milne and his wife. Milne had been elected and ordained as a deacon in Bon-Accord Free Church eight months previously, on 29th February 1852.<sup>283</sup> The Bon-Accord deacon reported to Anderson that on his attending a communion season at another Aberdeen congregation he had been refused a token to sit at the Lord's Table.<sup>284</sup> Then five days later, as Anderson was about to leave for Glasgow at the end of a week of supply, Ness called at Mrs. Parker's to inform him that Samuel Grant, the Bon-Accord minister, had denounced him from the pulpit. Anderson's comment on Grant's behaviour was, "his fulminations are as impotent as those of popish priests". Shortly after Ness left, Alexander Milne appeared at Mrs. Parker's door to inform Anderson that "he was resolved to cast in his lot with me". Doubtless this was, in part at least, due to Grant's outburst against Ness. Milne added that it was one of Anderson's *Tracts* that had first interested him in his ministry and, because he had attended the Aberdeen Tabernacle to hear him, he had been excluded from the Lord's Table in the Free Church. Anderson concludes this narrative by giving his view of Milne, "He seems a sensible, straightforward, decided man".<sup>285</sup> The denouncing of Ness and the excluding of Milne from the Lord's Table were not the only actions taken against them. Both of them were in business and, whilst we are unaware of the nature of Milne's business activities, we know that Ness ran a coach-building company. It appears that both Ness and Milne had been boycotted in their business activities by Free Church customers. In a further supply tour to Aberdeen in January 1853, Anderson details a further conversation with Robert Ness: "I had a visit from Mr. Ness, and learned that some of Mr. Milne's customers had given him up, but he had double the business he ever had – that Mr. Ness himself has found something of the same in his own case."<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> Robbie & Tennant, *ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>284</sup> *Anderson's Diary*, Vol. 2, 1852, pp. 348-349. The congregation cannot be identified with any accuracy. The minister of the congregation in question was a Mr. M. The surname has been removed in Anderson's typed diary. In 1852 this could have been any one of three congregations where the minister's surname began with the letter M. The East Church's minister was J. C. MacPhail, the Holborn Church had W. L. Mitchell as minister and the North Church's minister was J. Murray.

<sup>285</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 354-355.

<sup>286</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 28.

In the conclusion of his book, *The Free Church: Her Character and Proceedings in a Series of Letters*, Anderson comments with some feeling on how his supporters were being treated both in Glasgow and Aberdeen:

For what evil has been committed by my elders and deacons (in Glasgow) that, like culprits they must have a summons served upon them, requiring them to appear before a Free Church court? Is it not allowed to these men, in the exercise of their right of private judgment, quietly to withdraw from a body where they see nothing but confusion and every evil work, and, along with those who hold the same opinions, and adopt the same course, meet together for the worship of God according to his Holy Word? Is the Free Church the mistress of all the churches in this land? Is she to give law to every assembly of the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus? And if men remove from under her control, must they be branded as schismatics? Oh, where is the spirit of the Reformation in this land, once so jealous of the encroachment of church power, if we quietly submit to so manifest an invasion of all that should be dear to us as men and as Christians! What is the good of resisting the Church of Rome, if you succumb to what is in spirit and principle little different?

But further, what evil have office-bearers of the Free Church in Aberdeen committed, that they must be denied admission to the Lord's Table, without so much as having an opportunity given to hear their offence, and to answer for themselves? What evil have both office-bearers and members of the Free Church in that city done, that a conclave of ministers must meet, and, setting at defiance all Presbyterian rule and order, resolve that none who go to hear Mr. Anderson preach shall get tokens of admission to the communion?

The great crime of these several parties and others in different parts of the country is, that they listen to what they know and feel to be the truth of God; and while doing so, experience a power and refreshing which they never do under the most eloquent orators of the Free Church, though on occasions brought from a distance, and putting forth every effort to please the multitude.<sup>287</sup>

Five months of perplexity and concern ended for Anderson with the March meeting of the Commission of the Free Church General Assembly.

## **5. The termination of Anderson's ministry in the Free Church**

At a meeting on 2nd February 1853 the Glasgow Presbytery agreed that they would report to the March Commission that Anderson had not

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<sup>287</sup> *Letters on the Free Church*, pp. 82-83.

submitted to discipline but was still exercising his ministry. The Presbytery minute read as follows: “The Presbytery under the instruction of the Commission of the General Assembly of date the eleventh day of August, Eighteen hundred and Fifty two years, which was read, resolve to report that Mr. Jonathan Ranken Anderson had not submitted to the discipline of the Church, and that it is notorious he has continued in the exercise of his ministry, and they instruct their Clerk to transmit [an] extract of this minute to the Clerks of Assembly to be laid before the Commission at its meeting in March next.”<sup>288</sup> Anderson was quickly aware of this information and observes in his diary for 4th February: “The Free Presbytery seem to have changed their tone – an index perhaps of a change of policy. At their last meeting the leader<sup>289</sup> moved they should simply certify that Mr. Anderson had not submitted to their discipline.”<sup>290</sup>

As Anderson observed, this was quite a dramatic shift of stance by the Presbytery. In the libel they had drawn up it asserted that in the event of the charges against him being proven, as they had been to their satisfaction, then Anderson “ought to be deposed from the office of the Holy Ministry, or to be otherwise censured according to the rules and discipline of the Church and the usage observed in such cases, for the glory of God, the edification of the Church, your own spiritual well-being, and the terror of others holding the same sacred office, not to commit the same or like offence in all time coming”.<sup>291</sup>

The Commission of the General Assembly met on Wednesday 2nd March 1853 in Free St. Luke’s Edinburgh, the church of Alexander Moody-Stuart who was a close friend of John Milne. Parties were called and Robert Buchanan, James Gibson, and Samuel Miller appeared for the Glasgow Presbytery. Anderson was again called, first in the court, and three times at the door, but did not appear. After considering the report from the Presbytery, the Commission agreed to terminate Anderson’s connection with the Free Church. The relevant section of the minute reads: “A report by the Presbytery of Glasgow, transmitted to the Clerks of Assembly, was then read. The Presbytery having stated that they had nothing further to add, – A motion was made and seconded

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<sup>288</sup> *Minutes of the Glasgow Presbytery*, p. 363, meeting of 2nd February 1853.

<sup>289</sup> This is doubtless a reference to Robert Buchanan.

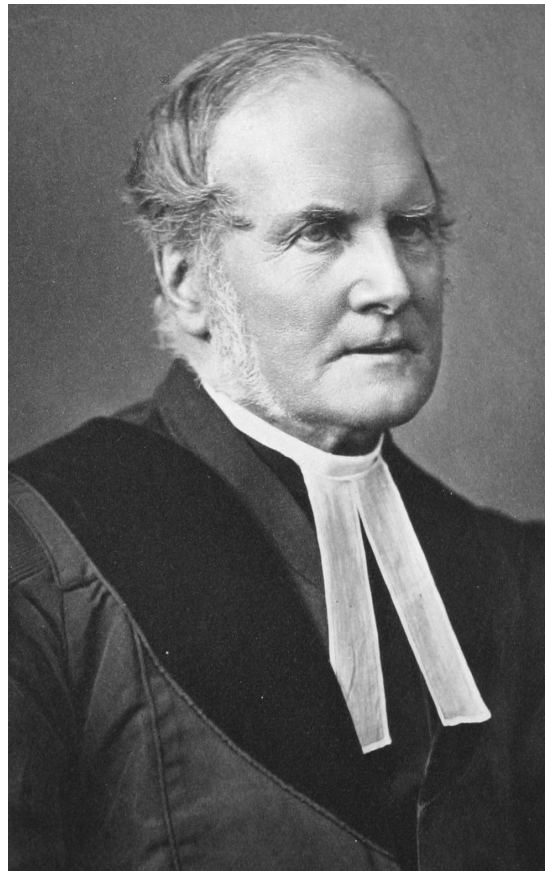
<sup>290</sup> *Anderson’s Diary*, Vol. 3, 1853, p. 39.

<sup>291</sup> *Case of J. R. Anderson*, p. 49.

that Mr. Anderson be declared no longer a minister or member of this Church, which motion being unanimously agreed to, the Commission did, and hereby do, find accordingly. The Commission order extract of this deliverance to be transmitted to the Presbytery of Glasgow.”<sup>292</sup>

On the day that the Commission met, Anderson set out by train for Aberdeen to give the congregation there another week of supply. On the Thursday morning Robert Ness arrived whilst they were having breakfast to inform Anderson that a Free Church minister had told him “that they rue what they had done” in his case.<sup>293</sup> It was not, however, until the Saturday that he heard what action the Commission had taken with respect to his case. His diary records his feelings regarding the decision. “The Commission of the Free Church has met, and just as I calculated, and foretold, they have dismissed me in solemn silence. I am declared no longer a minister, or member of the Free Church. What a deliverance! My soul should boast itself in God.”<sup>294</sup>

As a result of this decision Anderson believed that he had been victorious in his battle with the Free Church. They had not deposed him, the sentence of suspension *sine die* remained, but the case against him had concluded by merely declaring him no longer a Free Church minister – which is exactly what he wanted.<sup>295</sup> In a letter to his friend



*Alexander Moody-Stuart, the minister of Free St. Luke's in Edinburgh, the church in which Anderson's connection with the Free Church was finally terminated.*

<sup>292</sup> *AGAFCS*, 1853, p. 73.

<sup>293</sup> *Anderson's Diary*, Vol. 3, 1853, p. 66.

<sup>294</sup> *ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>295</sup> The second edition of Hew Scott's *Fasti*, Vol. 3, p. 418, seems to be the source of the incorrect statement that Anderson was “suspended *sine die* 2 March 1853, having adopted views inconsistent with the Confession of Faith”. Whatever one's assessment of

John Bayne, written from Aberdeen, five days after the meeting of the Commission, on the Monday after he had been preaching in the Tabernacle in that city, he details his more considered and triumphant view of what had taken place:

The rulers in Jerusalem have at last given up the fight with us, and left the field. I suppose their courage failed them at the last, and after their blustering they dared not strike the blow. But true to their character of Jesuits, they have left the sentence of suspension, as a scarecrow to frighten people away from us. But I believe it will keep away only such as we are better without. We had precious meetings here last week – the truth still like Ezekiel’s waters, rising in purity and majesty. Friends could not but remark that this was the case with us while the Sanhedrin were met in Edinburgh. We had a remarkable day on the Sabbath. In the afternoon the aspect of our little flock was very striking. I thought I had never seen a lovelier spectacle – all riveted, and several heads down – and the word falling like dew quietly and solemnly. But it was thought He kept the best wine until the evening. He is good to them that wait for Him.<sup>296</sup>

The decision of the Commission of the Free Church General Assembly, on 2nd March 1853, brought Jonathan Ranken Anderson’s relationship with the Free Church of Scotland to an end. It is unquestionable that Anderson was a very able and searching preacher. For the next six years, until his early death at the age of fifty-five on 10th January 1859, Anderson’s ministry was largely exercised to his devoted Glasgow congregation with preaching visits to Aberdeen and other places in the Highlands.

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Anderson’s conduct it is totally inaccurate to say he held views contrary to the *Westminster Confession*. The libel against him, as we have seen, made no reference whatever to doctrinal views that were contrary to the Confession. Regrettably, this error is repeated in *AFCS*, Vol. 1, p. 84, and in the biographical notes of the 1984 Banner of Truth edition of W. M. Hetherington, *The Revival of Religion: Addresses by Scottish Evangelical Leaders Delivered in Glasgow in 1840*, p. 445. The biographical notes in that edition formed no part of the original volume but were supplied by the 1984 publisher. Anderson had stated explicitly that he believed the Westminster Standards to be “in entire accordance with the mind of God revealed in the Scriptures”, *Alarm*, pp. 244-246.

<sup>296</sup> *Letters to John Bayne*, letter dated 7th March 1853, pp. 77-78.

**APPENDIX**  
**LIBEL OF THE REV. J. R. ANDERSON**  
**BY THE FREE CHURCH PRESBYTERY OF**  
**GLASGOW**<sup>297</sup>

Mr. Jonathan Rankin<sup>298</sup> Anderson, Minister of Knox's Free Church, Glasgow, in the Free Church Presbytery of Glasgow. You are INDICTED and ACCUSED, at the instance of the Free Church Presbytery of Glasgow.

THAT ALBEIT, by the Word of God, and the laws, usage, and discipline of the Free Church of Scotland, the making of slanderous and injurious charges against the public teaching of a brother minister, and against the character of office-bearers in the Church, as also, insidious and dishonourable conduct towards a brother Minister, and especially, while living in friendly intercourse with him;

As, ALSO, Breach of engagement in a manner affecting the character of a brother minister, especially when the engagement is entered into as a condition of arresting proceedings against the party making it;

As, ALSO, Wilful misrepresentation and falsehood;

As, ALSO, Contumacy in refusing obedience to the judicatories of the Church, and especially when such contumacy involves a fleeing from discipline or the obstructing of its exercise;

Are offences of a heinous nature, discreditable to the character and sacred profession of a Minister of the Gospel, contrary to truth and righteousness, most hurtful to the cause of Christ, forbidden by God's Word, contrary to the laws, usage, and discipline of the Church, and deserving of the highest censures of the Church.

YET TRUE IT IS AND OF VERITY, that you the said Jonathan Rankin Anderson are guilty of all, or of one or more of said offences, actor or art in part.

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<sup>297</sup> This libel is reproduced from the *Minutes of the Glasgow Presbytery*, pp. 316-323. A copy of the libel without the list of witnesses is printed in *Case of J. R. Anderson*, pp. 47-49.

<sup>298</sup> Anderson's middle name is spelt here as in the *Minutes of the Glasgow Presbytery*. The correct spelling is Ranken. This is the spelling used by Anderson himself in publications produced in his lifetime. Another variation of the spelling of his middle name in some documents is Rankine.

## I. IN SO FAR AS –

*First*, In a printed pamphlet, entitled, *A Reply to the speeches delivered in the Free Presbytery of Glasgow, in the case of Elders of Knox's Session, on Wednesday. 11th February 1852*, by the Rev. Jonathan Rankin Anderson, Minister of Knox's Church; and of which you the said Jonathan Rankin Anderson, are the Author, and acknowledged yourself to be such, by handing in a copy of the same to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, on the 29th day of May, 1852, or at one or other of the diets of the late Meeting of that Assembly, and of which pamphlet several copies were circulated or distributed by you or under your authority, You did wrongfully and calumniously accuse, John Taylor, George Cowan, Joseph Leitch, John Henry, William Frazer, David Dunlop, Donald Elder, William Ross, John Cuthbertson and Archibald M'Kirby,<sup>299</sup> formerly members of Knox's Session, and still Elders of the Free Church of Scotland, one or more or all of them, of labouring to defeat one of the principal end of the ministry, of committing revengefully an act of bare-faced injustice, in turning a catechist out of his situation without a reason given, and received, and voting a favourite of their own into his place, that he might receive his wages and eat his bread, of throwing up their offices as members of Knox's Session, with the view of forcing their Minister to capitulate, and submit to them, in whatever terms they might dictate, and as being prepared to scatter the flock and blast the ministry of any minister whose congregation they may hereafter join, if they shall hear from his pulpit anything which they may imagine to be levelled at them, and this whether the thing in question be fairly applicable to them or not.

The making of these injurious and slanderous charges being aggravated by the fact, that not only did you take no steps to establish them before any Court of the Church; but that when, on a former occasion, by a disingenuous and unwarranted construction of the terms of their letter of resignation of their offices, in Knox's Session, you attempted, in a minute of Session, of date 23rd December, 1851, to make it appear that the ten foresaid Elders had themselves confessed to charges of a like odious nature. The Free Church Presbytery of Glasgow both repelled the charges, and condemned as "groundless", the construction by which a meaning so false and injurious had been put upon the letter of resignation of the ten foresaid Elders.

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<sup>299</sup> These are the names of the ten demitting Knox elders.



## II. AND IN SO FAR AS –

*Second,* That a short time subsequent to the month of September, 1850, and to the preaching of a certain sermon or sermons in the course of that month, or of the month of August preceding, or of October following, by Rev. John Milne, of Perth, in Knox's Church, you, the said Jonathan Rankin Anderson, did slanderously and injuriously attack the preaching of the said Rev. John Milne, and did labour to persuade others, that he did not preach the pure Gospel, or that he preached another Gospel; and did also, in the pulpit, use language, which was fitted to convey a like slanderous, and injurious impression of the said Rev. John Milne's preaching, to those who heard you, and which actually did lead individuals who were present, when said language was employed, to believe that you meant to convey such an impression to your hearers.

## III. AND IN SO FAR AS –

*Third,* That you, the said Jonathan Rankin Anderson, while professedly holding the opinion that the Reverend John Milne did not preach the pure Gospel, or that he preached another Gospel, did, nevertheless, in the month of September, 1850, or of October following, or of August preceding invite him to occupy your pulpit in your absence; and farther, that while this engagement to occupy your pulpit was subsisting, and immediately before it was fulfilled, and while you were partaking of his hospitality, and living, professedly, in friendly intercourse with him, you did privately take notes in writing, then, or afterwards, respecting him, which, after he had preached in your pulpit, you read to certain individuals then belonging to your Kirk Session, with a view to shake the favourable impression of the said Rev. John Milne's sermon or sermons preached in Knox's Church, which they had taken up, and which sermon or sermons you had not heard, and to bring them to a conviction that he was not or could not be, a sound and faithful preacher of the Gospel.

## IV. AND IN SO FAR AS –

*Fourth,* That you, the said Jonathan Rankin Anderson, when dealt with by your Presbytery in privy censures in the course of the month of April, 1852, in reference to your conduct towards Mr. Milne, as charged in the third Count of this libel; and having, at a meeting of Presbytery, held on the fifth of that month, confessed that you had been guilty of a moral

wrong against him, and having promised to express to him, in writing, your regret for that wrong, and to make him aware, at the same time, of the judgment you entertained of his views of Gospel truth, as then expressed to the Presbytery; and having further promised to furnish the Clerk of the Presbytery with a copy of your letter to the said Rev. John Milne, for the satisfaction of the Presbytery; you have, notwithstanding, broken that engagement, by failing to send such letter, or to place a copy of it in the hands of the Clerk of the Presbytery. And further, that the breaking of this engagement is aggravated by the fact, that it constituted a main part of the avowed condition and ground upon which the Presbytery consented to abstain from communicating with the Free Church Presbytery of Perth, on the subject of your charge against the preaching of the Rev. John Milne, and to take no further steps in that matter.

#### V. AND IN SO FAR AS –

*Fifth*, That you, the said Jonathan Rankin Anderson, have given, in the printed pamphlet specified in the first Count of this libel, an account of what took place at the Meeting of the Free Church Presbytery of Glasgow held on the eighth January, 1851, at which you were present, and at which sentence was pronounced upon your conduct in reference to a certain discourse preached by you in Hope Street Gaelic Church, in the month of November, 1850, or December following, or of October preceding; which is contrary to the truth, and which wilfully and slanderously misrepresents the actual facts of the case. Inasmuch as you affirm, in the foresaid pamphlet, that, on the occasion in question, you withdrew your Defence, and yielded to the sentence of the Presbytery, because you were “overborne by numbers”, and because you felt that your Defence was thrown away upon men who seem far gone in spiritual blindness and delusion respecting spiritual things; and that the sorrow which you expressed was sorrow at finding the “precious truth” contained in your statement in Defence, so contemned by the Presbytery.

WHEREAS, the judgment of the Presbytery pronounced on the said occasion, contained within it your own confession previously made to the Committee of Presbytery, and stated in your own words, that your conduct in the case in question involved an aggravated moral wrong, committed against certain of your brethren, and a declaration also in

your own words, that the sorrow which you then professed to feel was on account of your own misconduct.

VI. AND IN SO FAR AS –

*Sixth*, That you, the said Jonathan Rankin Anderson, have been guilty of contumaciously disobeying the judicatories of this Church, Inasmuch as you refused to surrender to your own Presbytery, and for a time refused to surrender to the General Assembly when ordered so to do, a copy of the pamphlet specified in the first Count of this libel. And further, you contumaciously failed on one or more occasions to compear at the bar of the Assembly when cited to attend, and that in circumstances when no sufficient plea of inability to obey the citation of the General Assembly could be urged. And further, that in order to screen your conduct from judicial investigation, and to obstruct the discipline of the Church, you attempted to renounce your connection with the Free Church of Scotland.

ALL OF WHICH OFFENCES, OR PART THEREOF, being proved against you, the said, Jonathan Rankin Anderson, by the said, Reverend Free Church Presbytery of Glasgow, before which you are to be tried, in terms of your own confession or after habile<sup>300</sup> and competent proof, you, the said, Jonathan Rankin Anderson, ought to be deposed from the office of the Holy Ministry, or to be otherwise censured according to the rules and discipline of the Church and the usage observed in such cases, for the glory of God, the edification of the Church, your own spiritual well-being, and the terror of others holding the same sacred office, not to commit the same or like offence in all time coming.

Signed at Glasgow in name, presence, and by appointment of the Free Church Presbytery of Glasgow this sixteenth day of June eighteen hundred and fifty two years by

(Signed)

Henry Anderson, Moderator  
James Gibson, Clerk

List of witnesses to be adduced by the Presbytery in proving the foregoing libel:

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<sup>300</sup> The *Minutes of the Glasgow Presbytery*, p. 322, has “habile” while the *Case of J. R. Anderson*, p. 49, has the variant spelling “habill”. The word means “suited” or “suitable”.

Rev. William Lauder, Free Church Minister, Strachur.

Mr. Luke Henderson, Elder of Knox's Free Church, now or lately residing in West Street, Gorbals.

James MacFie, Teacher, Elder of Knox's Free Church, Glasgow.

George Newton, Agent of branch of Glasgow Mutual Bank, Glasgow.

George Cowan, lately Elder & Catechist of Knox's Free Church, Glasgow.

John Cuthbertson, lately Elder of Knox's Free Church, Glasgow.

David Dunlop, lately Elder of Knox's Free Church, Glasgow.

John McKechnie, Preacher of the Gospel in connection with the Free Church, now or lately residing in Glasgow.

Rev. John Milne, Free Church Minister, Perth.

FURTHER, there will be adduced, in proof of the foregoing Libel, the following documents.

1. The several minutes of the Free Church Presbytery of Glasgow, and minutes and reports of Committees of said Presbytery, in the case or cases of the Rev. Jonathan Rankin Anderson, of Knox's Free Church.
2. Extract minutes of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, of 1852, in the case of the Rev. Jonathan Rankin Anderson.
3. Copy of printed pamphlet entitled *A Reply to the Speeches delivered in the Free Presbytery of Glasgow, in the case of elders of Knox's Session, on Wednesday, the 11th February, 1852*, by the Rev. J. R. Anderson, minister of Knox's Church.