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# The Last Anti-Burghers: A Footnote to Secession History

ARCHIBALD MACWHIRTER

**EDITORS' PREFACE:** The following paper first appeared in the *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, Vol. 8 (1944), pp. 244-291. It is reprinted here by kind permission of Professor James Kirk, editor of the *Records* at the time when permission was sought. The editors are in possession of additional material on some of the people and topics touched on in this paper, but it was felt that in order to set this new material in context it would be necessary to refer frequently to this present paper which has become somewhat inaccessible. Rather than re-telling the highly complicated story that it relates, it seemed easier therefore to republish the paper exactly as MacWhirter wrote it, but with a few editorial footnotes which are enclosed in square brackets.<sup>1</sup> One longer addition has been relegated to an appendix; and in a second appendix we conclude the history of the one Anti-Burgher congregation still in existence when MacWhirter wrote. It is hoped in subsequent papers to give further information about James Wright, Walter Macleod,<sup>2</sup> William Scott, and the Henry Patons, father and son (DV).

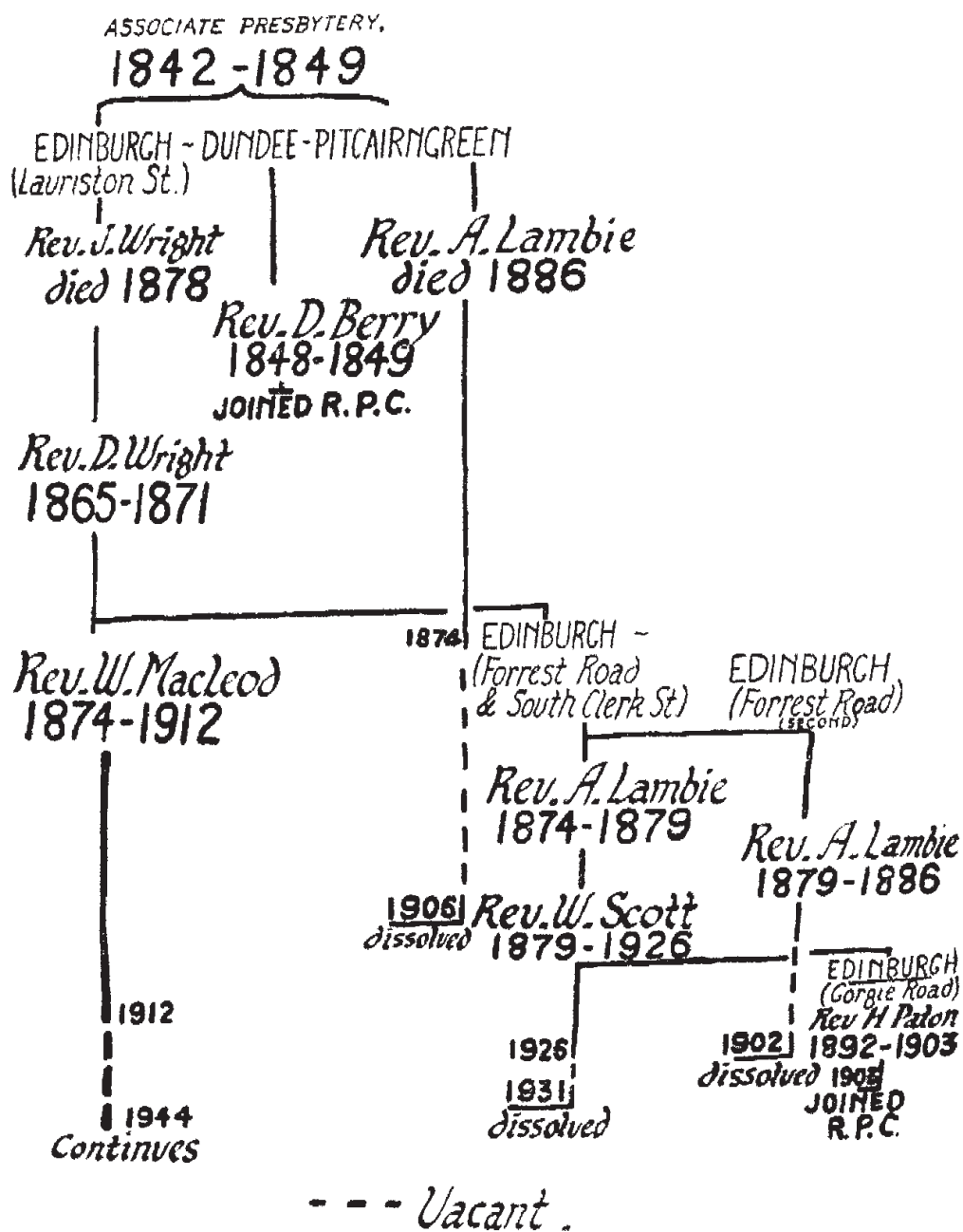
NORMAN CAMPBELL and  
DOUGLAS SOMERSET (eds.).

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<sup>1</sup> [Archibald MacWhirter, principal sheriff-clerk depute of Fife at Kirkcaldy, died in 1968. Raised in Glasgow, he was appointed sheriff-clerk depute of Orkney at Kirkwall in November 1949 and first-class depute at Kirkcaldy in 1953. A past president of the Sheriff Courts Officials' Association, MacWhirter was survived by his wife and a son. *Glasgow Herald*, 4th May 1968, p. 5.]

<sup>2</sup> [MacWhirter spelt the name as "McLeod" but we have altered this to the way in which Walter Macleod invariably spelt his own name, e.g. in his will.]

# The Last Anti-Burghers



## I

Future students of Scottish denominational history may find themselves perplexed by entries in Scottish directories and almanacs published after the year 1842 of a few congregations mainly in Edinburgh, listed as “Original Secession Church – not in connection with the Synod”. The purpose of this paper is to account for the existence of these, and to trace their history which brings to light many remarkable features in the realm of presbyterial government in the absence of a presbytery, division, and loyalty to testimony and principles to a degree unthought of amongst present day Churchmen.<sup>3</sup>

In his excellent book *Annals and Statistics of the Original Secession Church* (1886) Rev. D. Scott very briefly mentions the movement which forms the subject of this paper. He limits himself, however, to its inception, while it is now proposed to deal more with its subsequent history. Full use has been made of Mr. Scott’s list of authorities on the subject; which he contented himself with recording, making no effort to reproduce their contents. Rev. D. Scott was connected in his early days with Lauriston Street O.S. Church, Edinburgh, which may account for a number of references in his book to that congregation and its ministers. I have traced a number of other publications of dates prior to the *Annals*; and several which appeared later. As most of those connected with the different sections into which the last Anti-Burghers split have now passed away, the writer felt that the time had come to collect from the last survivors as much information as possible, and to commit the result to paper. Moreover, many of the publications are now very rare, and as time goes on will become more so. Research has unearthed copies of nearly all the printed papers; unfortunately, in practically no case was access to written records secured.

## II

To members of this Society<sup>4</sup> familiar with the family tree of Secession History, no explanation of the term “Anti-Burgher” should be necessary.

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<sup>3</sup> [MacWhirter was intrigued by small religious groupings. He published papers on “Lesser known Church Law cases”, “The Church of the New Jerusalem in Scotland”, “Unitarianism in Scotland”, and “The early days of Independentism and Congregationalism in the northern islands of Scotland”, all in the *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, Vols 11.2, 12.3, 13.2, and 16.1 respectively; and on “Separations and Unions in the Church of Scotland” in *Orkney Miscellany*, Vol. 3 (1956), pp. 26-33.]

<sup>4</sup> [The paper was read to a meeting of the Scottish Church History Society in New College, Edinburgh; see *The Scotsman*, 2nd March 1944, p. 6.]

For the sake of completeness, however, I will briefly recall the origin of the term, and of the groups known respectively as Burgher and Anti-Burgher.

It will be recalled that the Secession *from* the Church of Scotland took place in the year 1733, and that the Secession Synod (or Associate Synod as it was officially known) had, at its meeting in 1745 a question raised which was, two years later, to arrest much of its promise by dividing the membership, after wordy duel and acrimonious dispute.

The question agitating the Synod arose out of the Burgess Oath exacted in the towns of Edinburgh, Glasgow and Perth, where applicants for enrolment as Burgesses were required *inter alia* to declare:

Here I protest before God and your Lordships, that I profess and allow with my heart the true religion presently professed within this realm and authorised by the laws thereof. I shall abide thereat, and defend the same to my life's end, renouncing the Roman religion called Papistry.

The dispute in the Secession Synod hinged round the interpretation of "The True Religion presently professed within this Realm". Did the clause carry with it the approval of the existing Establishment with all its doctrinal errors and violations of Constitution; or did it simply bind the person taking the oath to an approval of the true religion without committing him to an approval of the particular manner in which it was professed in Scotland?

The question directly concerned but a few Seceders in the cities mentioned, and none at all outside these towns. The Party having no profound objection to the oath were popularly called Burghers; the objectors were known as Anti-Burghers. The question finally split the Associate Synod into two different bodies in April, 1747, both claiming the name, "Associate Synod"; to the public, however, they remained "Burghers" and "Anti-Burghers".<sup>5</sup>

### III

It is not necessary for the purposes of this paper to give any detailed account of the subsequent divisions which took place in both Synods mainly on the question of the duties of the civil magistrate in matters of

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<sup>5</sup> [The Burghers eventually retained the title Associate Synod with the Anti-Burghers becoming the *General* Associate Synod.]



religion. But in 1820, when the two larger bodies of the “New Lights” among the Burghers and Anti-Burghers had united in the United Secession Church, three smaller groups remained, two of them Anti-Burgher and one Burgher. In 1827 the two Anti-Burgher groups, i.e., the Synod of Protestors<sup>6</sup> and The Constitutional Associate Presbytery<sup>7</sup> united to form the Associate Synod of Original Seceders. Twelve years later in 1839 the Burgher group<sup>8</sup> decided by a majority to attach their congregations to the Church of Scotland Presbyteries within whose bounds they were situated, but a small minority of ministers and congregations continued the existence of the body. From 1839 till 1842 this remnant Synod was engaged in negotiating a Union with the Associate Synod of Original Seceders. Such a course had been foreshadowed by conferences previously engaged in by these Synods or their predecessors first, for several years prior to 1820, and secondly in 1832, but the old question of the Burgess Oath proved a stumbling block in the way of the projected union on each occasion, as a strong conservative party on the Anti-Burgher side insisted that the Burghers should acknowledge plainly the sinfulness of Seceders swearing the Burgess Oath, a concession which the Burgher side declined to make. The Burgess Oath had been a dead letter for years and had been completely abolished as far back as 1819. (Act of 3rd and 4th William IV, cap. 76/36.)

In September 1841, a basis of union was prepared and was published early the following year. This included resolutions concerning the Burgess Oath, Communion, Practical Religion and Covenanting. It was agreed further by the Synod of Original Seceders that if the Negotiation with the Original Burghers should be successful and a union effected, the question in the Formula regarding the Burgess Oath should be dropped.

On 12th January, 1842, when the Original Secession Synod finally agreed to unite with the remnant Burgher Synod on this published basis,

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<sup>6</sup> [The Synod of Protesters left the General Associate Synod in April 1820 having tabled a Protest against the plan to which MacWhirter has just referred, namely to join the General Associate Synod with the Associate Synod, a plan which was consummated in September of that year; D. Scott, *Annals and Statistics of the Original Secession Church* (Edinburgh, 1886), p. 102.]

<sup>7</sup> [The Constitutional Associate Presbytery was formed in 1806 by Thomas M'Crie (1772-1835) and three other ministers. They maintained that the General Associate Synod had materially changed its stance on the duty of the civil magistrate to support the cause of Christ, and on the duty of covenanting; Scott, *Annals and Statistics of the Original Secession Church*, p. 81.]

<sup>8</sup> [Scott, *Annals and Statistics of the Original Secession Church*, pp. 59, 63-76.]

Rev. James Wright, of Infirmary Street Church, Edinburgh, and Rev. Andrew Lambie, Pitcairngreen, entered their dissent; and on 17th May following they left the Synod, declined its authority, and thereafter constituted themselves along with William Snodgrass, Ruling Elder, from Mr. Wright's congregation, "The Associate Presbytery of Original Seceders".<sup>9</sup> Both ministers published addresses to their congregation on the matter.<sup>10</sup> Mr. Wright's runs to seventeen very closely printed pages, and commences with a full history of the Burgess Oath controversy in which he says: "The case stands thus: On the one hand the Testimony of Original Seceders rests on the decision, which pointedly condemns the swearing of this oath, as both sinful and at variance with our covenants; on the other hand the Burghers . . . solemnly declare, 'They will rather perish as a body' than subscribe to such a condemnation. The plain question then is, can the Testimony of the Original Seceders be the same in the united body, and with the articles inserted in it, as it is now – has it not, as interpreted by these articles, undergone an essential and material change? And how can these two parties unite by solemnly swearing the Covenants on such terms? There have seldom, if indeed ever, in the history of religious Unions been such Italian and Roman Stratagems. . . . It has been urged by those who had paid little or no attention to this controversy that the abolition of the Burgess Oath by the legislature sets at rest the whole question – no mistake can be greater than this." The pamphlet by Rev. Andrew Lambie of Pitcairngreen is less ambitious and in his the appeal is more to Scriptural authority.

The Declinature read and given in by Messrs. Lambie and Wright to the Associate Synod of Original Seceders was a document of some length and is printed in full in Mr. Scott's *Annals and Statistics* and, stated very briefly, it claimed that the Associate Synod of Original Seceders, by agreeing to the articles as exhibiting their plan of union with the Synod of Original Burghers had materially dropped the whole Secession Testimony.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Annals and Statistics of the Original Secession Church* (Scott), 1886.

<sup>10</sup> "Address to the Associate Congregation, Infirmary Street, on the Projected Union", by Rev. James Wright, Edinburgh, 1842.

<sup>11</sup> [Scott, *Annals and Statistics of the Original Secession Church*, pp. 135-8. Lambie and Wright complained that the 1842 union rendered the Original Seceder Church unconstitutional and schismatic, involved it in the sin of the Burghers, and represented a retreat from historic attainments. They claimed that the Synod had encouraged the evangelicals in the Established Church to stay within her pale rather than come over to the Secession cause, and they complained of a lack of action over pre-1842 Original Seceders listening to preachers of other denominations.]

Mr. Wright's decision to withdraw from the Associate Synod of Original Seceders caused a breach in his congregation which occurred on 4th April 1842, a minority including two elders deciding to adhere to their former Synod; this section, after meeting in the School of Arts, Adam Square, and in the Merchants' Hall, Hunter Square, built a church in Adam Square, and called Rev. Archd. Brown to be their minister. The majority, however, remained with Mr. Wright, and no breach seems to have occurred in Mr. Lambie's congregation at Pitcairngreen.

A third congregation was that of Dundee, an off-shoot of the Constitutional Church in that town. Apparently the Associate Presbytery's sympathisers there were congregated from the breach, as the Presbytery met at Dundee as early as 22nd December 1842, for an "Act of Public Fast" was published there on that date.

It is possible that had other ministers supported Messrs. Lambie and Wright ("The Two Witnesses" as they were popularly called) further congregations might have been formed, as a paragraph in *Faiths of the World*, a voluminous dictionary of religions and sects by Rev. James Gardner (A. Fullarton & Co.), published about 1855, stated: "One congregation of Original Seceders in Edinburgh, under the ministry of Rev. James Wright, with not a few adherents in various parts of the country, disclaims all connection with those who adhere to the Testimony of 1842 claiming in the principles they avow to represent the First Seceders."<sup>12</sup>

Very extensive enquiry on my part has failed to disclose the whereabouts (if still existing) of the written records of this Presbytery – with one notable exception to be later referred to and which throws light on the Court's ultimate fate.

Various printed "Acts" and "Reasons for Fasts" were published by the Presbytery during the brief course of its existence. One of these in my possession, "Address by the Associate Presbytery of Original Seceders to the people under their inspection", dated from Dundee, 11th November 1844, is of ten pages and is signed by Mr. Wright as Presbytery Clerk. Coming shortly after the Disruption, a portion of this is taken up with

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<sup>12</sup> [The majority of those entering the union of 1842 eventually joined the Free Church in 1852; one of the main proponents of this second union being Dr. Thomas M'Crie (1797-1875), son of the minister who had helped to form the Constitutional Associate Presbytery in 1806; see *The Scotsman*, 1st May 1852, p. 4. A minority of Original Seceders refused to enter the 1852 union; their ecclesiastical descendants, with a few exceptions, joined the Church of Scotland in 1956.]

criticism of the Free Church Assembly decision of that year, "That they had come to the conclusion, that it was not expedient for the Church to issue a Testimony at all". It also states, "With regard to the Synod with which we were lately connected, it is to be considered that that Synod cannot be viewed as any longer existing". Other printed causes of fasting, dated December 1847 and December 1848, appeared.

In dealing with the congregations under the inspection of the Presbytery, I shall place them in this order – Dundee, Pitcairngreen, Edinburgh (Lauriston Street).

#### IV DUNDEE

The little Dundee congregation met in Peter Street Hall and had one elder in the person of Mr. John Jack, Harbourmaster.<sup>13</sup> Mr. Scott tells us they first were supplied by Mr. Thomas Callander, a Probationer, who joined the Secession from another denomination in 1833, became Town Missionary at Ayr, and adhered to Messrs. Wright and Lambie at the breach nine years later. His stay here was apparently short, and he afterwards joined the Baptist denomination.

The little company was greatly distressed for lack of money; as on 8th February 1847, at a meeting of the Session of Lauriston Street Church, Edinburgh, on the laying before the meeting by the Moderator of a communication from "our brethren at Dundee", it was agreed that a public collection be made on their behalf. A similar request was mentioned at a meeting of the Lauriston Street Session on 20th September following, and was "meantime deferred", although the following month a collection for their assistance was taken up at Pitcairngreen. In 1848 the congregation was under the charge of the Rev. David Berry, but it is not clear whether he was ordained over this congregation or at large, as witness an extract from "The Scottish Presbyterian" of date June 1850 when in reference to Mr. Berry it is stated, "He was ordained to the holy ministry, and laboured in Dundee, although not as the pastor of the people to whom he ministered there". Mr. Berry received his theological instruction from Mr. Wright, and I am afraid the late Dr. Couper erred in associating him with the O.S. Synod. Apparently the financial position did not improve with the introduction

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<sup>13</sup> *Minutes*, Reformed Presbytery of Edinburgh.

of Mr. Berry to the pulpit, for on 6th May 1849, we again learn that at a meeting of the Session of Lauriston Street Church the Moderator stated that at the recent meeting of Presbytery, it was agreed that aid be given at present to our brethren at Dundee, in the way of a collection on Sabbath next.

Meanwhile, at Dundee, things had taken a new turn, for on 18th July 1849, we learn from a minute of the Reformed Presbytery of Edinburgh that “Rev. David Berry, minister of the congregation of Original Seceders in Dundee, and Mr. John Jack, ruling elder, appeared before the Presbytery as representatives appointed by the congregation and laid on the table an Application and Petition from the minister and congregation expressing approbation of the principles of the Reformed Presbyterian Church – requesting admission into her communion – and stating that they had already intimated their resignation of connection with the Associate Presbytery of Original Seceders”. The Presbytery felt gratified by the tenor of the application and a committee was appointed to prepare the case for the consideration of a future meeting of Presbytery. Four days later at a meeting of Lauriston Street Session it was minuted that “as the Moderator – Rev. James Wright – purposed going at this time to assist at the Sacramental occasion at Pitcairngreen, a conversation took place, as to his calling upon the members of the Dundee Congregation previously . . . to converse with them, it being reported that they proposed casting off their public profession in adhering to the Testimony of another church”. This visit on 31st July 1849, to the representatives of the people at Dundee, took the form of a meeting of Presbytery, at which Rev. David Berry and Mr. Jack were present, and was an historic one in the Court’s history, as out of it arose the incident which led to the separation of Mr. Lambie from Mr. Wright, a full account of which will be given when we deal with the congregation of Pitcairngreen. Through the diligence of Mr. John Macleod, Session Clerk at Lauriston Street Church, I have a copy of the Minute of Presbytery of this important occasion, which has been extracted from the Minutes of Session of date 20th August 1849; where it was engrossed to lie *in retentis*.

#### DRAFT OF MINUTES TAKEN AT DUNDEE

31st July, 1849. The Associate Presbytery of Original Seceders met and was constituted by Mr. James Wright, Moderator. Mr. Berry being present and required to make any statement he wished said,

in explaining the resignation, that it was want of money that led him and the people to enquire into Cameronianism, and besides the ill usage of brethren in not giving them pecuniary aid, and that upon examining "Cameronianism" he was convinced that he was not leaving the cause he had hitherto held in joining the Cameronians, quoting proof from page 55 of the Testimony, First Edition, where mention is made of others professing the same adherence to the Standards of the Church of Scotland, and the same regard to the Reformation as themselves, and that it is to be desired that a dispassionate examination of the really subsisting grounds of difference should lead to their co-operating in the advancement of the common cause. The weakness and unfairness of this being pointed out on his being asked to explain the above statement in accordance with the 11th Question of the Formula, which bound him as a Seceder to oppose Cameronianism, he failed to give anything like satisfaction.

On Mr. Jack asking leave to give his mind, which was readily granted, he proceeded freely to admit that it was the want of money, and ill usage by some Deacons in Edinburgh Congregation in not granting immediate pecuniary supply to a petition to that effect, and that had that petition been answered at the time by money, instead of the written promise sent to them, "That when some pressing Congregational arrangements were concluded they would convey them from £10 to £15" – the present step would not have been taken.

The Presbytery were sorry to hear Mr. Berry and Mr. Jack contradict themselves, in at one time saying, both Associations held the same cause, and at another arguing on behalf of views held in Nairn's Reasons of Dissent, and besides this they contradicted each other. John Jack said they owned the present Government (civil) in all lawful commands, and when it was stated that that is Secederism, he replied that he would carry these Seceder views into the Cameronian body, which statement of owning the present Civil Government being opposed by Mr. Berry, he was asked to explain what Cameronianism was, to which he replied, he did not come here to be examined.

The Dundee congregation were not to be diverted from their change of front by this examination, and on 26th September 1849, they



were visited by the Committee of the Reformed Presbytery of Edinburgh who entered into a lengthy conversation with Mr. Berry and eight of his congregation – an indication of their fewness – when the Committee were much satisfied with the answers given and the views expressed by these individuals. The Presbytery accordingly agreed on 3rd October following to accept the congregation into the Reformed Presbyterian Church.<sup>14</sup>

As there was already in existence a small Reformed Presbyterian Church in Dundee, which, however, was in a state of severe financial embarrassment, it was agreed that they cease to meet as a congregation and individually become members of Mr. Berry's congregation. At the same meeting the Clerk reported that he had written Rev. Mr. Lambie of Pitcairngreen, Clerk to the Associate Presbytery, requesting a statement of Mr. Berry's licence, ordination, and ministerial standing; and that no answer had been received; an indication of Mr. Lambie's disownment of the Presbytery, as will be fully recounted in the next chapter. Mr. Berry, however, laid on the table printed Causes of Fasting, dated 1847 and 1848, in which his name appeared as Clerk of Presbytery, and attestations of his licence and ordination by elders and others who had been present when these transactions took place.

On 9th May 1850, the Reformed Presbyterian Synod, after hearing the report of a Committee appointed to converse with Mr. Berry, recommended that Mr. Berry be received as an ordained minister, and that he be placed on the list of probationers. Two days later the Presbytery of Edinburgh received him into the Church in terms of the above recommendations.<sup>15</sup>

The Associate (Anti-Burgher) Congregation of Dundee, after its union with the Reformed Presbyterian Church, passed into the Free Church in 1876, United Free Church in 1900, and Church of Scotland in 1929. It is now known as Martyrs' Church of Scotland.

Mr. Berry later held charges in the Reformed Presbyterian Synod at Wick, and in the Free Church of Scotland at Graham Street, Airdrie. He died in London on 2nd April 1887.<sup>16</sup> His son, David Anderson Berry, who greatly distinguished himself in the medical world, instituted a "David Berry Trust" in memory of his father, which is administered by the Royal Historical Society, London, and substantial prizes are at present being offered by them for a paper on Scottish History.

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<sup>14</sup> *Minutes*, Reformed Presbytery of Edinburgh.

<sup>15</sup> *Minutes*, Reformed Presbytery of Edinburgh.

<sup>16</sup> *The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland* (W. J. Couper), 1925.



## V

## PITCAIRNGREEN

The congregation to which Rev. Andrew Lambie ministered originated on 27th June 1797, when 62 members of the North Church, Perth (Anti-Burgher), petitioned to be disjoined for the formation of a new congregation. The reason behind this demand was the erection of public works in the locality, which is within the parish of Redgorton and 4½ miles from Perth. It remains today a peaceful and picturesque village, and, at the time of the erection of the Anti-Burgher Church in 1798, a Burgher Church was also being completed within a few hundred yards. The Anti-Burgher Church was erected to seat 300, and was situated beside the manse, which still stands, being the only two-storeyed house on the side of the village facing the road to Perth. The earlier ministers were: (1) John Brown, Ordained 25th June 1800; the Presbytery Minute of whose ordination is the first minute in the "Session Book belonging to the Associate Anti-Burgher congregation, Pitcairngreen". Deposed 8th September, 1802; (2) William Beath, Ordained 1st November 1803. Together with his congregation he joined the Synod of Protestors in 1820. Died in Edinburgh, 22nd May 1827, after a stroke the previous day, which first manifested itself while he was preaching in Professor Paxton's Church, Infirmary Street, Edinburgh – a circumstance interesting on account of the later connection between Pitcairngreen and Infirmary Street congregations.

Mr. Lambie, who came from Auchinleck, was ordained as Mr. Beath's successor on 29th April 1829. In 1838, Dr. Small tells us, the communicants were above 120, and the ordinary income between £70 and £80 a year.<sup>17</sup> Following the formation of the Associate Presbytery by Messrs. Wright, Snodgrass and Lambie in 1842, Mr. Lambie returned to Pitcairngreen, and at a meeting of his Session, held on 25th June, they agreed "to adhere to the testimony and the Formula as they stand without the alteration made by the Synod of the Original Seceders in the late union with the Burgher Synod".<sup>18</sup> Later that year it was agreed that Andrew Young, a former elder of the Perth Original Secession Church,

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<sup>17</sup> [A separate survey to Dr. Small's, completed in March 1838, showed that attendances at Pitcairngreen varied from 80 in the winter months to 140, with 120 communicants on the roll. People from four parishes belonged to Mr. Lambie's congregation. A Sabbath school of about 20 children was associated with it. *Sixth Report by the Commissioners of Religious Instruction, Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1838), Appendix, pp. 198-9.]

<sup>18</sup> "Session Book Belonging to the Associate Anti-Burgher Congregation. Pitcairngreen."

but “now with us” should become a member of Session. In 1844, Janet Miller applied for admission, but her case was delayed until she had read all the testimony. Janet apparently did so, for the following year she was duly admitted. On 3rd March 1846, a member, “who had left at the union of 1842”, applied for re-admission. It was decided she be admitted, but, “we should be on the watch lest it be understood we would admit those who were as well pleased with the testimony in its altered state as in its entire state”.

On 2nd June 1846, a conversation took place regarding the duty of covenanting: this led to the solemn renewal of the Covenants of our Ancestors which was proceeded with in the usual form at Pitcairngreen on 23rd July 1846. Those present included Revs. Lambie and Wright; Mr. David Berry, Preacher; John Jack, Elder, Dundee; and Thomas Brown, Elder, Edinburgh. The bond was also subscribed by eight men and twenty women; showing the decline which had been in progress in the congregation since their withdrawal from the Synod. A gazeteer issued about 1850 gives the average attendance as twenty-five.

On 20th January 1850, Mr. Lambie publicly intimated his withdrawment from intercourse and correspondence with Rev. Mr. Wright of Edinburgh.<sup>19</sup> As this marked the end of the last Presbytery of Anti-Burghers, properly constituted, the facts of the separation may be given at some length from Mr. Lambie’s pamphlet, *Address to the Associate Congregation of Original Seceders at Pitcairngreen showing the reason of withdrawment from Communion with the Rev. James Wright, Edinburgh* (Perth: Charles Paton, 1851).

From this publication it appears that prior to the meeting of Presbytery at Dundee, when Rev. David Berry and the Dundee elder were interviewed regarding their withdrawal, the Dundee congregation had intimated to the Clerk that “Owing to the state of their funds, the extinction of all hope of being able to go on in their present position, they resign connection with the Presbytery”. Mr. Berry, at the same time, wrote that he was leaving the Presbytery for “Reasons similar, as well as being desirous of continuing in the exercise of the ministerial office with which he had been invested”. At the meeting of Presbytery in question held at Dundee, Mr. Berry complained that a representation had gone abroad that he and the people at Dundee had left owing to the state of their funds which he denied, but admitted that it was the state of the

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<sup>19</sup> “Session Book Belonging to the Associate Anti-Burgher Congregation. Pitcairngreen.”

funds or want of money which led him to inquire into the principles of the body to which he looked, and he represented himself as being influenced in part to take the step from the views that resulted from this inquiry. Mr. Wright, apparently, resisted his first assertion insisting that it was want of funds, and regard to certain occurrences, rather than considerations of principle, that might be judged to have influenced him.

Mr. Lambie, as Clerk, minuted and read Mr. Berry's statement. But in a minute drawn up in preference to the Clerk's draft, Mr. Berry's denial of want of money being the proper reason was omitted, and to this Mr. Lambie submitted.

At the next meeting of Presbytery held in October there was put into the minutes a judicial declaration concerning Mr. Berry that he had "acknowledged that he took the step under the influence of pecuniary considerations"; to this Mr. Lambie signified uncertainty as to whether it was correctly expressed, but did not press his difficulty. He next Sabbath intimated, "according to a regulation of the. Reformed Church of Scotland", the Deed of Presbytery, which declared Mr. Berry not in visible fellowship with the Church of Christ, and "stated something like what was in the deed represented as an aggravation of the offence; this was because he considered there was something relating to money in the reasons, offensive and aggravating, as was generally judged among us". Soon after the meeting of Presbytery Mr. Berry received notice of the deed, and straightway instructed Mr. Lambie, as Clerk of the Presbytery, to inform those concerned he had resolved to see what redress could be had by law if this clause were not erased from the minutes, and requesting an answer within three weeks. Mr. Lambie, on re-examining the minute, felt it to be unfairly expressed, and wrote to Mr. Wright suggesting an alteration. On the same day, however, he received from Mr. Wright an open letter, written with the concurrence of elders, addressed to Mr. Berry, assuring him that "we must appear in our defence at any civil bar whether lie may be pleased to drag us", which Mr. Lambie was desired to sign as clerk; this, however, he could "by no means do".

A meeting of Presbytery was called for Edinburgh the following week on account of Mr. Lambie's dissatisfaction, when he proposed that something be substituted for the offending words of the clause.

Three days of intense disagreement ensued between the two ministerial members of the Court, while the only elder present apparently did his best to effect a compromise agreeable to both. Motion and counter-motion were made to amend the clause of the Deed

complained of, or to explain it in the manner of altering the statement that Mr. Berry had retired from the Presbytery for pecuniary reasons. As illustrative of the warmth of the discussions it is recorded that on the first two days no prayer was offered at the close of the sederunts. Finally, an explanatory motion was adopted in relation to Mr. Berry's explanation, as was a motion agreeing that all record of the dispute be taken from the minutes, and it was agreed to send a copy of the former motion to Mr. Berry.

On afterwards reflecting, Mr. Lambie felt that the Presbytery was involved in something of a scandal "as deliberately owning, when brought under review, what was really a misrepresentation". To quote Mr. Lambie's pamphlet: "An important question then with the writer was, how could he clear himself ecclesiastically? Had he been alone implicated he could have been cleared by personally condemning the procedure; but the brother by whom chiefly he had been thus implicated being in the same reproach; he would have been implicated still as long as the brother was not cleared. To aim at personally persuading Mr. Wright still seemed preposterous. . . . Nothing appeared left, in duty to any party, but to withdraw."

In a number of minor grievances Mr. Lambie held towards Mr. Wright which are given vent to in his pamphlet, it is interesting to learn that in the spring of 1849 the two ministers had quarrelled over the question of lifting the bread before setting it apart from a common to a holy use in the Lord's Supper, which quarrel had led to Mr. Wright's refusing to assist at the Pitcairngreen Sacrament, calling the matter in dispute a "question about meats". This was, of course, the same point as resulted in the forming of the "Lifter" Presbytery composed of Seceders from the Anti-Burghers 67 years earlier.

Mr. Wright made a number of efforts to persuade Mr. Lambie to return to the Presbytery. He offered, if Mr. Lambie's conscience was aggrieved about it, to strike the clause out for ever. Later, he, as Moderator of Presbytery, called a meeting for Pitcairngreen, but Mr. Lambie wrote in reply that he could not acknowledge his right to do so. Mr. Wright, however, came to Pitcairngreen in March 1850 to endeavour to heal the breach, when he found that two members of Mr. Lambie's Session made common cause with him on the matter of the dispute. Some trouble had been experienced in the latter Court during the early part of that month; when Mr. Lambie, as admitted in his pamphlet, on one occasion refused to constitute the Session when requested, and on

another occasion at a meeting of the Court refused to put a series of questions bearing on the healing of his dispute with Mr. Wright.

This difference between Mr. Lambie and his Session culminated at a Sacramental Fast Day, 7th March 1850, when the minister, having constituted the session with prayer for the distribution of tokens, an elder instead of coming forward to take his place agreeable to the end of the meeting, read a "Protest against the Lord's Supper being dispensed because all the members of the Presbytery had acknowledged and did still acknowledge that they were at one in the public profession, they therefore should not this day be divided". The paper was signed by two elders and a large proportion of the congregation.

Thereafter Mr. Wright and the disaffected elders made one further effort at conciliation, but without avail, and the ministers held no further intercourse during the remainder of their lives. In the writings of Dr. Small and Rev. Mr. Scott, Mr. Wright is shown as the stronger influence who persuaded Mr. Lambie in their religious transactions: from particulars above given, however, and from Mr. Lambie's subsequent history, he appears to have been, while undoubtedly sincere, a man with a distinctly individualistic outlook on matters of church policy. His separation from Mr. Wright was probably the outcome of a long gathering spirit of disagreement on both sides.

Pitcairngreen congregation apparently lost a fair proportion of members at this time, and when the session next met on Monday 1st April, only one elder, James Clark, took his seat with the Moderator. Another elder was shortly afterwards ordained.

There is evidence that the congregation was now being sued for debts due to some of their former brethren; and on the last Sabbath in October 1853, Public Worship was held in the Church for the last time; the building was soon afterwards removed, the stones being used to erect a number of cottages still forming part of the village.

Mr. Lambie now left for Glasgow where for a period of seven years he acted as a private teacher of English at 29 Cumberland Street, residing in turn at St. Vincent Street, Abbotsford Place, Crown Street, and Warwick Street. There is no evidence of his having preached while in Glasgow.

During this period Mr. Lambie visited his former flock quarterly, when services were conducted in Almondbank School House. In 1861, however, he became persuaded that he should not have left the former congregation, and also expressed his regret for "having taken part at

length in disposing of the property which had been set apart for the public cause of God in this place". He, therefore, returned to his people, and on the last Sabbath of May, 1861, public worship was recommenced at Ruthven Castle, and was continued regularly thereafter until 25th May 1862, when the congregation removed to a combined church and school house which Mr. Lambie had purchased and extended at Bridgeton of Almondbank. One elder remained of the former Session, and met with Mr. Lambie when the Session was constituted on 8th July 1861 – the first time since October 1853.<sup>20</sup>

Mr. Lambie and his daughter now commenced a school which met in the new premises, the minister teaching the boys and his daughter the girls. Tributes have been paid to the minister's efficiency in this capacity, and his dual role of minister and dominie is also recalled in the local rhyme still current:

The minister, the dominie, and Mr. Andrew Lamb  
Went to pull pears where three pears hang.  
Each pulled a pear,  
Yet two still were there.

The significance, of course, being that the minister, the dominie and Mr. Andrew Lamb were one and the same person.

On 6th September 1870, the Session met and agreed that it be recorded in the minutes "That this Associate Session of a Remnant of Original Seceders was constituted on 1st April 1850, and continues to be constituted in a way of testifying against making light of untruthfulness in a clause of an Act of the Associate Presbytery of Original Seceders passed in October, 1849".

At the same meeting it was agreed that the congregation renew our National vows, and this was proceeded with at Bridgeton on 9th March 1871, when the Bond for renewing our Solemn Covenants adopted by the Associate Synod of Original Seceders in 1828 was renewed and subscribed by the minister, an elder, and eleven women.

About this time, Mr. Lambie published a document remarkable as coming from one who had objected to any altering of the testimony at the Union of 1842. This was an "Appendix" to the Testimony of 1827, "Shewing the manner in which the Testimony emitted by the Associate Synod of Original Seceders is held in more agreeableness to its title-page

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<sup>20</sup> "Session Book Belonging to the Associate Anti-Burgher Congregation. Pitcairngreen."



by the Remnant of Original Seceders". This appendix was "Agreed on by the Associate Session of Bridgeton (Almondbank)", and the publication was, apparently, advertised in the Press with a statement that the "Appendix" was "Not properly an addition to the Testimony", a somewhat ambiguous statement when it is considered that persons subsequently applying for admission to the Almondbank communion had to state their acceptance of the Testimony of 1827 in the manner stated in the Appendix, which contains a few pages of suggested amendments to the original wording of the "Testimony".<sup>21</sup>

A new and surprising development was now impending in Mr. Lambie's career, for early in 1874 he received an invitation to go as Minister in charge of a party who had seceded from Rev. J. Wright's ministry in Edinburgh; whither he removed apparently in the latter part of that year. On 10th May 1874, it had been declared from the Almondbank pulpit that the Session at that place was now in Communion with the Associate Session of the Congregation presently meeting at Forrest Road, Edinburgh, both holding to the Testimony in the manner stated in the Appendix; and on 23rd November 1875, a day of Thanksgiving was observed by the congregation particularly on this account.

After his removal to Edinburgh, Mr. Lambie visited Almondbank for some eight weeks every summer, as well as on occasional dates throughout the year. For the edification of the congregation there he posted a sermon to them weekly during his absence which was read to his adherents by an elder.

On 12th July 1876, a new elder, David Henry, was elected by the Session, "With the understood consent of the other members of the congregation".

On 26th July 1879, the Almondbank Session was constituted by Mr. Andrew Lambie when Charles Martin of the Forrest Road, Edinburgh, congregation took part with him, and on account of "David Henry, the elder in this place, having gone aside with the party at Edinburgh" whom Mr. Lambie had left on 22nd April 1879, it was agreed to hold a meeting of the congregation to elect an elder and two deacons. George Henry was elected Elder and John McEwan and Alexander Robertson were elected Deacons, and all were Ordained to

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<sup>21</sup> [The advertisement referred to by MacWhirter is probably that in *The Scotsman*, 14th October 1874, p. 7. This was, in fact, advertising the second edition of the *Appendix*, mentioned below.]



office at Forrest Road, Edinburgh, on 23rd October 1879. It may be said that the elder and members who “went aside” at this time became connected with the United Original Secession congregation at Perth.

The last time Mr. Lambie ministered at Pitcairngreen was when he conducted a Communion Service at New Year 1886. After his death on 23rd May following, sermons were read to the remaining members by Alexander Galletly Robertson, except for two summer months annually, until 1898, when they were read by Mr. Charles Martin of Forrest Road Congregation, Edinburgh. The attendance varied in the last years from 9 to 22, dependent on the season: a lady then in attendance writes: “My father and mother and eight of a family (all ages, pram too) walked from Perth (4½ miles) every Sunday winter and summer. I never heard any disturbance caused by the young ones in the church even although they were only babies, and my father used to say we never got a cold even although we walked through snow all the way. Our Perth neighbours were amused that there was not a church in Perth good enough for us, and no doubt we thought we were the only right ones. My father never entered another church after joining Mr. Lambie’s in 1871 till his death in 1912. He was a staunch Seceder.”

The meeting house was finally closed in 1906 owing to the death at the age of 83 of Sarah Galletly, the Beadle, who had first entered Mr. Lambie’s service as a maid in 1843. She was a “Worthy” and is said to play a part in S. R. Crockett’s story, *The Lilac Sunbonnet*. She is buried in the same grave as Mr. Lambie in Redgorton Churchyard.

Mr. Lambie’s memory I find still fresh and greatly respected in Pitcairngreen. He is said to have wandered much in the district lost in meditation, and Dr. Small tells of seeing him at the window of his humble manse – which was part of the school-cum-church, “Bending over a book which my friend suggested was probably the Hebrew Bible – his close companion”. The little church still stands, having been converted to a dwelling house.

The token of this congregation reads:

“Pitcairngreen” – and on the reverse:

“Mr. Lambie            1829.”

After the dispute between Mr. Lambie and the Forrest Road, Edinburgh, congregation in 1879, Rev. William Scott of Edinburgh preached occasionally to his supporters at Pitcairngreen until as late as 1892; he also conducted at least one marriage ceremony in that place.



*Rev. George Paxton, D.D. (1762-1837),  
to whom Rev. James Wright acted  
as colleague and successor at the  
Infirmary Street congregation.  
Those who supported Mr. Wright's  
opposition to the 1842 union built the  
Lauriston Street church in 1844*

## VI EDINBURGH CONGREGATION

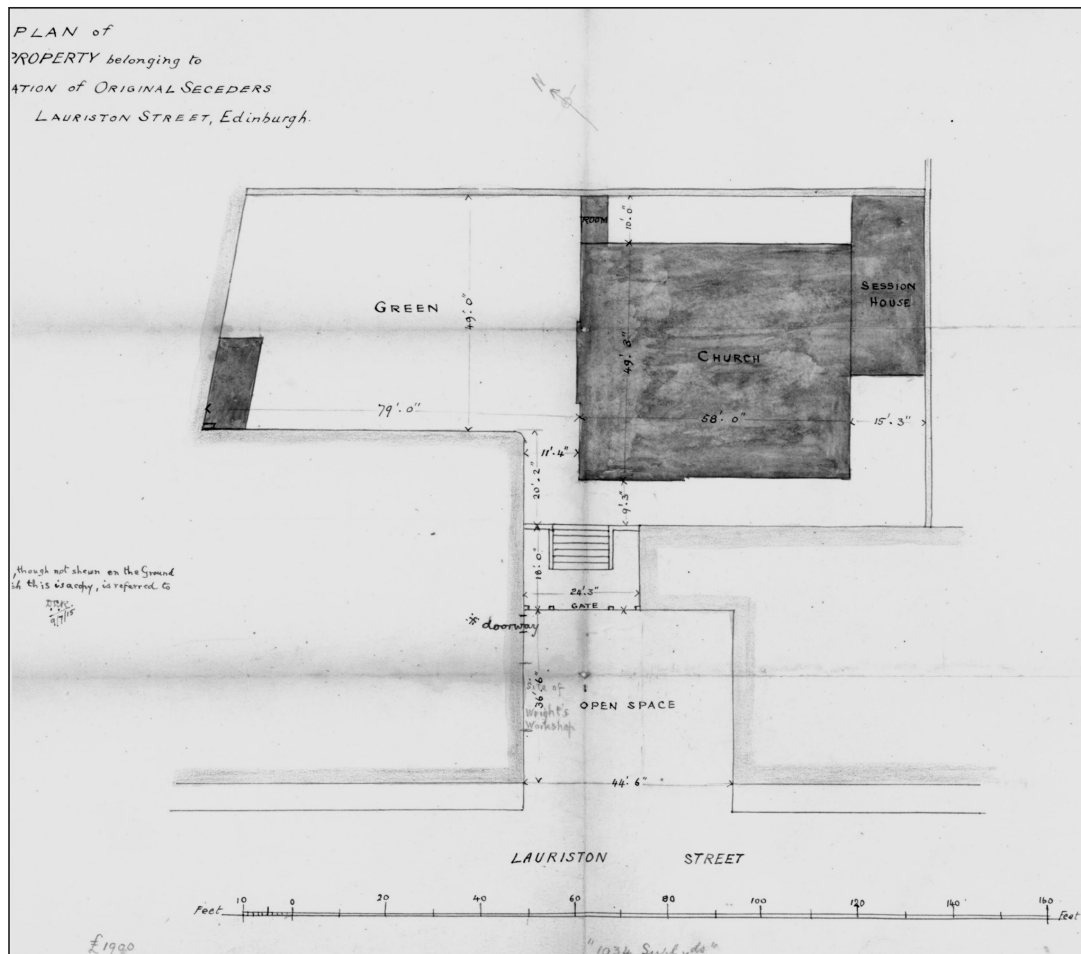
The third and largest congregation forming the Associate (Anti-Burgher) Presbytery in 1842 was that in Infirmary Street, Edinburgh. This congregation emerged as a result of the union in 1820 between the Associate (Burgher) and General Associate (Anti-Burgher) New Light Synods, when sixteen protesting members of various congregations invited Rev. George Paxton, Professor of Theology to the latter Synod, to preach and take them under his pastoral care. This he did, the first place of meeting, which was rented, being the former Gaelic Chapel in Castle Wynd, but later there was built a Church in Infirmary Street to seat 980 which accommodation was frequently

overtaxed owing to the reputation of the Professor as a Preacher. The union of the Constitutional Presbytery and the Synod of Protestors was consummated within its walls in 1827, and the testimony of the united body so formed approved, to which this congregation has continued to adhere until today.

On 8th July 1834, Rev. James Wright, of Coupar Angus, was elected Colleague and Successor to Professor Paxton. The call was signed by 385 members and 68 adherents, indicative of the strength of Infirmary Street Church at this time. Professor Paxton died on 9th April 1837, and is buried in St. Cuthbert's Churchyard.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> [Wright's sermon on the death of Paxton, preached on Sabbath 16th April 1837, survives. Taking Acts 13:35 as his text, Wright commented: "What saint has not in his removal lost a friend . . . you are laid under obligations that will affect you when he and you and we all shall meet together. His death is certainly calculated to strike you with as much force as that living tide of eloquence which oft fell from his lip upon your ears." MS Sermon Notes in possession of the editors, April 1837 to March 1839.]



*An undated plan of the grounds and property of the church at 25 Lauriston Street, Edinburgh. The building was set back from the street and measured 50 yards by 49.3 yards. A small session house to its side, and a grassy area, also occupied the site.*

As previously stated the vast majority of the congregation remained with Mr. Wright at the breach in 1842 and Infirmary Street church was sold the following year, that of the Disruption, to the Free Church Tolbooth Congregation. After a period of worship in the Free Masons' Hall, Niddry Street, they removed in Autumn 1844, to their present Church in Lauriston Street, built that year to seat 700. By the title deeds, this building is secured to the members who adhere to and maintain the Testimony of 1827.<sup>23</sup>

In 1845, Covenant Renovation was engaged in under Messrs. Wright and Lambie when 110 members subscribed the bond.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *Annals and Statistics* (Scott).

<sup>24</sup> Lauriston Street Session Records.



*The congregation ministered to by Revs. James Wright and Walter Macleod worshipped at a church they had built at 25 Lauriston Street in 1844. Sold in the 1950s, the site is now (2014) the back garden of the Portsburgh Court student accommodation block. The small building and tree in the middle of the picture show where the front gable of the church stood.*

During the seven years following their retirement from the Synod, i.e. until 1849, Messrs. Wright and Lambie assisted each other at Communion Seasons. After Mr. Lambie's withdrawal, Mr. Wright and his successor conducted these arduous times of Fast Day, Preparatory, Action and Thanksgiving Services single-handed.

From Mr. Lambie's withdrawal, it may here be stated, Mr. Wright declined to admit the extinction of the Associate Presbytery and continued to appoint an elder to act with him in a Presbyterial capacity, and this custom was continued by the Rev. Walter Macleod. This is the body referred to as the "Associate Presbytery" in the remainder of the current chapter.<sup>25</sup>

In the winter months each year, commencing in 1850, Mr. Wright delivered his courses of Sabbath evening lectures on Prophetic Subjects. Being an excellent Orator and employing dramatic gesture these

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<sup>25</sup> Communicated by Mr. John Macleod.



attracted crowds which filled Lauriston Street Church. The lectures were later published in book form, and received favourable notices from the Press of that day.

In addition, for eight years, from December 1857, Mr. Wright published a small monthly periodical, *The Ark*, which will amply repay study today to such as are interested in the cause of the Second Reformation, as well as providing historical students of the period with a source for studying the conservative attitude to the happenings of that time. Latterly it enjoyed some circulation furth of Scotland and was increased in size.<sup>26</sup> A list of Mr. Wright's other publications is given in Scott's *Annals of the Original Secession Church*.

In 1865 the congregation presented a unanimous call to the Associate Presbytery addressed to Mr. Duncan Wright, a son of Rev. James Wright, to become colleague and successor to the latter, signed by about 200 persons, and this being sustained, he was ordained and inducted on 26th October, 1865. In 1869 Rev. Duncan Wright requested leave of absence on the grounds of ill-health supported by two medical certificates, and undertook a voyage to Australia. Two years later he returned, but declined to resume ministerial functions for reasons given to the Presbytery, but not made public, and he was allowed to resign his colleagueship. He remained, however, in membership of Lauriston Street Church till his death.<sup>27</sup>

In the following years certain charges were made against Rev. James Wright, now again sole pastor, on account of which, it was alleged, persons were withdrawing from the congregation.<sup>28</sup> This culminated on 27th September 1873, in the addressing of a letter to Mr. Wright signed by ten members of Session. "Under a sincere desire for the honour and purity of the Church," they pressed on the minister the urgent necessity of taking such steps as should at once lead to an immediate discovery of the truth. On 2nd October following Mr. Wright replied that without prejudice of his Presbyterian rights, being in providence the only ordained minister of the Original Secession Church, he had no objection

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<sup>26</sup> [*The Ark* ran for at least ten years, the latest issue that we have seen being that of June 1868. It increased in size from eight to twelve pages in January 1867.]

<sup>27</sup> Lauriston Street Session Minutes.

<sup>28</sup> [For a more detailed discussion of this case, see Appendix I. After the split, the office-bearers who supported Wright issued a printed 3-page account of their version of events under the title, *Statement regarding the recent separation from the Original Secession Church, Lauriston Street. (Printed for the use of the Congregation.)* (n.p., n.d.). We supplement MacWhirter's account in the next few pages with some details from this.]

to accompanying any aged and experienced member of their number to his accusers so as to give and receive explanations that might allay suspicion. This not being considered satisfactory by the ten members of Session, on the ground that the charges existed in writing as distinct from mere suspicion, they intimated to Mr. Wright that until he emerged from the painful position in which he was placed, they could not act as a Session with him as Moderator.

At a meeting of Session subsequently held Mr. Wright tendered a solemn oath denying the charges laid against him.<sup>29</sup> It was then stated by Mr. Wright's supporters that "As an oath putteth an end to all strife, and Mr. Wright having denied all knowledge as to the things laid to his charge, we were not in a position to take further steps in regard to him".<sup>30</sup> The complainers, however, were not prepared to let the matter rest here, particularly as Mr. Wright subsequently stated that the parties making the allegation were not to be dealt with as slanderers, and is alleged to have admitted they had grounds for what they said. (*Appendix, containing notes on the Testimony, 1827, and a plain Statement of Facts shewing the cause of the separation from Mr. James Wright, Minister of Lauriston Street Congregation, by a majority of the members of his Session and a considerable number of the congregation*, a pamphlet dated Edinburgh, 28th May 1874, 32 pp., published by the party withdrawing at this time, at p. 27.)

On 1st December a paper was sent to Mr. Wright, signatures to which had been received by a committee, "Suggested and requested by several members of the Congregation". This was a request to Mr. Wright to resign his ministerial duties in the event of his not clearing himself of the *fama*.<sup>31</sup> It was stated in the document that of say, sixty-four visited, fifty-four had given their names, this first number being "about half the congregation". To quote the pamphlet mentioned above, which is not, of

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<sup>29</sup> [This meeting of Session was on 10th November. Three meetings had been held in the previous month, and also the Communion; and it had appeared that the issue had been resolved. The main agitator among the elders, who revived the accusations on 10th November, was James Macleod, the brother of Walter Macleod; see *Statement regarding the recent separation*, pp. 1-2.]

<sup>30</sup> [It was not only Wright's supporters who quoted Hebrews 6:16, "an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife", but also Charles Martin, one of his principal opponents; *Statement regarding the recent separation*, p. 2.]

<sup>31</sup> [According to Wright's supporters, the Kirk Session meeting of 1st December was amicable, and one item of business was deferred until the next meeting in February, on a motion of James Macleod, seconded by Walter Macleod. It seems, therefore, that Wright's supporters were unaware of the paper that had been given to him; *Statement regarding the recent separation*, p. 3.]

course, an independent document, “All peace being now at an end, and little else heard from the pulpit but discourses in self-defence, a declaration and protest was drawn up, and, there being no other way of obtaining a hearing, it was agreed that the same should be read at the foot of the pulpit steps in presence of the congregation after divine services were over”, which was accordingly done on the afternoon of Sabbath 14th December 1873, this including the following sentences: “Because in a mysterious providence the Church being so reduced we have no competent court for the trial of our Pastor, and having taken all the means warranted, by the Word of God and our standards, either to bring the matter to a favourable issue or persuade him to resign. And whereas (the charges against Mr. Wright) are a source of stumbling to many and have been the means of thinning our numbers from year to year therefore, we office-bearers and numbers of the said Lauriston Original Secession Church, in retiring from under the ministry of the said James Wright as our only alternative we now do disclaim all imputations of rending the Church but leave the responsibility of that upon our said pastor.”<sup>32</sup> This document bore the signatures of two elders, two deacons, and two members. The protestors and their followers then left to form the Forrest Road Original Secession Congregation. It may be added that three elders adhered to Mr. Wright at this time.<sup>33</sup>

Shortly after this breach, a second colleague to Mr. Wright was called in the person of Mr. Walter Macleod, who had been licensed to preach by the Associate Presbytery on 16th October 1871. Mr. Macleod had been a teacher in Canongate Parochial School and later, being connected with the Free Church of Scotland, acted as their missionary and schoolmaster to an English Speaking Community at Landernan, Normandy. Returning to Scotland, he attended Lauriston Street Church, became convinced of the correctness of Mr. Wright’s doctrinal and denominational standpoint, and commenced studies for the ministry. On a memorial presented to the Associate Presbytery by a deputation of the congregation, it was agreed to give him a call, which was accepted on 13th April 1874, and he was ordained on 23rd April 1874.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> [The paper was read by Charles Martin. Wright’s supporters said that they had no idea that matters were still festering or that this paper was about to be read; see *Statement regarding the recent separation*, p. 3.]

<sup>33</sup> Lauriston Street Session Minutes. [The three elders who adhered to Wright were Peter Purves, James Macgregor, and Walter Macleod, and they were supported by two deacons.]

<sup>34</sup> Lauriston Street Session Minutes.



As Mr. Macleod was the last of those receiving his theological training at the hands of Rev. James Wright, it is perhaps fit to record a brief note on the Divinity Hall which Mr. Wright conducted and a list of the students who attended, which I have not seen recorded in any other work. The system of tuition took the form of a series of lectures on the scriptural doctrines and the manner of treating them.

STUDENTS	Dates of Attending Edinburgh University
Rev. David Berry, later of Dundee	1840-41, 1843-45
Rev. Duncan Wright, of Lauriston Street Church	1856-63
Rev. Walter Macleod, of Lauriston Street Church	1860-63
Rev. William Scott, later of South Clerk Street Church, Edinburgh	Ending 1880
Rev. Henry Paton, later of Gorgie Road Associate Original Secession Church	Grad. M.A. 1880
Andrew Ritchie, of Lauriston Street Church, licensed as a Preacher on 22nd June, 1863: Suspended	1865

It impossible at this date to give the years when the above students attended for training. It is known that these lectures were also attended by hearers from the congregation.

About 1860 an endeavour was made to secure a hall where the students could conduct a mission. After mention in the Session Minutes from time to time the project was allowed to drop.

In 1862, Rev. John Tyndal, a Free Church Probationer, whose upbringing had been in the Original Burgher Synod which entered the Church of Scotland in 1839, and who had “come out” at the Disruption, became attached to the Associate Presbytery, and occasionally occupied the Lauriston Street pulpit. He was dissatisfied at the call presented to Rev. Duncan Wright, and, on 19th October 1868, he was excluded from membership. He then preached in a hall for a time to a small number of supporters, and in 1873, joined those who then separated from Rev. Mr. Wright. About eight years later he was admitted to the United Original Secession Church and was employed as a salaried preacher to the vacant charges in that denomination.

Mr. Wright died at Edinburgh on 24th February 1878, a year earlier than stated in Scott's *Annals*, in the 76th year of his age and 49th of his ministry.<sup>35</sup> He is buried in St. Cuthbert's Churchyard.<sup>36</sup> From his writings he was obviously a man of marked ability, and the isolation and disaffection which marked his later years are thus the more to be regretted. Descendants of Mr. Wright are still in Membership of the congregation.

In 1883 Mr. Macleod published in manuscript form to the congregation a refutation of the charges levelled against Mr. Wright ten years earlier.<sup>37</sup> It may be added that one elder and one deacon seceding in 1873 afterwards returned, and that Mr. Wright's ministry was remembered tenderly and thankfully by the disaffected party at the breach on the occasion of a meeting held on 19th November 1879, in South Clerk Street Church.<sup>38</sup>

Rev. Walter Macleod enjoyed a peaceful ministry lasting for 34 years after the decease of Mr. Wright. He delivered special lectures referring to the Franchise, The Peace Conference at the Hague, and the Union of the Churches in 1900. For many years he conducted three diets of worship every Sabbath, and at his evening services, when dealing with matters of Scottish Church History, a frequent auditor was Dr. Hay Fleming, the well-known historian.

An important incident during Mr. Macleod's ministry was the re-issuing in 1896 of an edition of the (Anti-Burgher) Testimony of 1827 (Edinburgh, Richard Cameron, 1896). To quote the foreword: "This reprint of the testimony is issued by the Session of the Original Secession Church, Lauriston Street, Edinburgh, constituted in the way of maintaining the principles therein witnessed for . . . it is not surprising that these doctrines are by the majority practically disowned. This, however, does not affect their truth, nor lessen the obligation of those

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<sup>35</sup> [MacWhirter's date for Wright's death is as on the death certificate, but this gives his age as 74, implying that he was in his 75th year when he died; see Scotland's People, Statutory Deaths 685/01 0257.]

<sup>36</sup> [The gravestone is an upright monument of grey granite on the mid-west wall. "In memory of the Rev. James Wright, Original Secession Church, Lauriston St, Edinburgh, died 24th February 1879, aged 75 years." See John Challenor Covington Smith, *Monumental Inscriptions in St Cuthbert's Churchyard, Edinburgh, Newer Portion* (Scottish Record Society, Vol. 51, Edinburgh, 1919), entry 884.]

<sup>37</sup> Communicated by Mr. John Macleod. [See Appendix I.]

<sup>38</sup> South Clerk Street Records – Notes by Rev. H. Paton, M.A.

who have professed them. Desertion, on however large a scale, does not make a good cause bad.”<sup>39</sup>

Mr. Macleod died, much regretted by his congregation, at Edinburgh on 12th October 1912, in the 81st year of his age and 41st year of his ministry.<sup>40</sup> He is buried in Newington Cemetery. He left a Paper, drawn up by himself in expectation of his death, containing considerations for the church and her members on the occasion of their being deprived of a minister, and admonishing them faithfully to adhere to their profession and to be diligent and prayerful in attending on all Services till the Lord gave them another pastor after his own heart.<sup>41</sup> This paper was read after the ordinary services on the second Sabbath after his death and was received by the congregation with much appreciation.

Mr. Macleod was author of (1) *John Brown of Priesthill*, a Booklet for the Young in the “Scottish Martyrs Series”, published in 1858; (2) *The Synod and the West Kirk Images*, a pamphlet reviewing the proceedings of the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale concerning a petition praying for the removal of certain images and decorations of a popish character in the West Kirk of Edinburgh commonly called St. Cuthbert’s Church. This is signed “A Friend of the Church”, and is dated, “Edinburgh, 15th November 1906”; (3) A number of articles in *The Ark*, the periodical previously referred to.

Although a fund was raised to encourage any young man who inclined towards the ministry, Mr. Macleod has had no successor in the pulpit in Lauriston Street, and no communion services have been held since his death, nor has any minister occupied the pulpit. Two diets of worship have, however, been maintained since 1912, and these are now held at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. At first, after Rev. Walter Macleod’s death, several elders shared the duties of preaching, but they are now

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<sup>39</sup> [The original edition of 1827 was reissued in 1829 and 1839. A revised fourth edition appeared in 1842 at the time of the union with the Burghers, with a fifth edition in 1844, a seventh in 1862, and an eighth in 1887. The 1896 edition rejected the changes of 1842 and reverted to the 1827 wording in every case. The editors have in their possession John Macleod’s copy of the 1844 edition which he had carefully collated with the 1896 edition. Unsold copies of the 1896 edition may presently be purchased from James A. Dickson, bookseller, Kilsyth.]

<sup>40</sup> [The correct date for his death is 16th October 1912; see death certificate, Scotland’s People, Statutory Deaths 685/06 0759; death notice in *The Scotsman*, 17th October 1912, p. 12.]

<sup>41</sup> [“Considerations for professors of the faith – in an evil time, when few, and it may be without the benefit of an ordained ministry for a while,” 5 pp., typescript.]

entirely undertaken by Mr. John Macleod, Session Clerk, son of the last minister. Several accessions have taken place since the death of Rev. Walter Macleod.<sup>42</sup>

Despite the long vacancy, the spreading of the town, and many other difficulties, a congregation of some twenty-five continues to attend at the Church, when the service is surely more in keeping with that of early seceders than in any other place of worship now existing. The Praise, led by a Precentor, usually consists at each service of three portions selected from one psalm. In summer months a Church History class is conducted in midweek when lectures by Rev. J. Wright, Rev. W. Macleod, and Mr. John Macleod are read by the latter. This activity dates back to the days of Mr. Wright and is intended for and attended by young and old, the attendance usually exceeding a dozen.

Shortly before this war the area in which their Church is situated was earmarked for demolition, and a prospect arose of the congregation being removed to other premises. On a plebiscite, the people were found to be divided regarding the suitability of a building site offered in recompense of their present church, and the outbreak of war delayed for the present the necessity of a decision. There exists, therefore, a chance that yet a new place of worship may be built and occupied by the congregation, which might have far-reaching effects on their prospects of survival. Lauriston Street Church can claim a long Secession pedigree, and the Congregation's record of having existed for 95 years, independent of any properly constituted court superior to their Kirk Session, is unique in the annals of Scottish Church History.

Elders are now ordained on behalf of the Session by Mr. John Macleod, and the last question (No. XII) of the Formula remains unaltered as it has stood since drafted by the First Anti-Burghers at the Split of 1747:

Do you acknowledge and promise subjection to the Session of this Congregation as presently constituted in a way of testifying against the sinful management of the prevailing party in the Synod at some of the first diets of their meeting at Edinburgh in April, 1747: And do you approve of, and purpose to adhere to, and maintain, the said testimony, in your station and capacity; and do you approve of, and purpose to adhere to, and maintain the Sentence

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<sup>42</sup> Communicated by Mr. John Macleod.

of Synod in April, 1746, concerning the religious clause of some burgess oaths, and that in opposition to all tenets and practices to the contrary?

This question is now in use in no other congregation.

The Token of this congregation reads \_  
 “Associate Congregation” 1821

and on the reverse side \_  
 “Geo. Paxton, Minister, Edinburgh.”

## VII

### **FORREST ROAD ORIGINAL SECESSION CHURCH (LATER SOUTH CLERK STREET ORIGINAL SECESSION CHURCH AND ITS OFF-SHOOTS)**

Those withdrawing from Lauriston Street Church after 14th December 1873, convened the following and subsequent Sabbaths in the Oddfellows’ Hall, Forrest Road. Apparently, immediately after their secession from Mr. Wright’s ministry, they got into communication with Rev. Andrew Lambie of Pitcairngreen, who had now been out of communion with their former pastor for almost a quarter of a century. Several conferences followed between Mr. Lambie and the former Lauriston Street Office-Bearers, and he and they finally expressed agreement in (a) holding the Associate (Anti-Burgher) Testimony of 1827 in the manner declared in the notes agreed on by the Associate Session of Bridgeton, Almond Bank (formerly of Pitcairngreen); (b) that they approved of the withdrawal of the Pitcairngreen Congregation from Communion with Rev. James Wright of Edinburgh in 1850 on the grounds stated in these notes. The Edinburgh office-bearers therefore called on Mr. Lambie “As minister to remnant of Original Seceders” to constitute themselves as a Session, with him as Moderator for the time.<sup>43</sup> Mr. Lambie thus became minister-in-charge of the congregation and soon afterwards removed to Edinburgh, visiting Pitcairngreen frequently to continue his duties there.<sup>44</sup> In his absence from Edinburgh prayer meetings were conducted by the elders. An important incident in the

<sup>43</sup> “*Appendix*, Containing Notes on The Testimony of 1827”, previously quoted.

<sup>44</sup> [A newspaper advertisement for services in March 1874 still listed him as “Mr. Andrew Lambie, Minister of the Gospel, Almond bank”, *The Scotsman*, 21st March 1874, p. 1.]





*Oddfellows' Hall on Forrest Road, Edinburgh, rooms in which were used for services by those who left Lauriston Street congregation in 1873 and those in turn who left that group in 1879 before settling in South Clerk Street.*

history of this congregation was the solemn renewal of the Covenants at Forrest Road on 28th October 1875, at half-yearly Fast Day when, after Mr. Lambie had conducted Divine Service in the forenoon, preaching from Acts xi, 23, the Covenanting was proceeded with in the afternoon, the bond being subscribed by fifty-five persons in all.<sup>45</sup>

Until 1876, the association between the congregation and Mr. Lambie was of a happy nature. Commencing in that year, however, an unfortunate dispute arose between minister and people on a point which can now only be regarded as an unimportant one. This was the objection taken by Mr. Lambie to the holding of Congregational Meetings to discuss the affairs of the church; which assemblies he decried as savouring of rebellion, treachery, apostacy, innovation, a violation of scripture, independency in bud and principle, and finally declared them to be, "Sinful, both root and branch of them". On this question a pamphlet, *Reformation Principles Vindicated, or a defence of congregational meetings and the Position of the Remnant of Original Seceders pointed out by their Appendix to the 1827 Testimony*, by William Scott (afterwards minister of the congregation) (Edinburgh, James Gemmell, 1878), was published on behalf of those opposed to Mr. Lambie in the first part of which the author in scholarly fashion traced the history of these gatherings from the days of *The First Book of Discipline*. This is really an excellent historical study, and one can only regret the devoting of the author's talents to an unimportant end, judged by modern standards. In the second part, he expresses doubts as to the competency of the Notes to the Testimony of 1827 drawn up by the Almondbank Session as being an act outwith the jurisdiction of a Kirk Session, a feeling which was, apparently, growing amongst the Forrest Road Congregation. Here Mr. Scott says: "The designation we have taken is that of a remnant. We have no courts superior to a Kirk Session. Nevertheless, if we keep the attainments we have inherited, we are the Church of God, and his witnessing people." To the first part, Mr. Lambie replied in an undated pamphlet entitled *Letter to Remnant of Original Seceders* (Edinburgh, James Gemmell).<sup>46</sup> Mr. Scott later published a duplicated paper replying to a statement from the pulpit by Mr. Lambie on the subject on 5th January, 1879. These

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<sup>45</sup> [A description of the service and of the terms of the Covenant is given in *The Scotsman*, 29th October 1875, p. 4.]

<sup>46</sup> [The pamphlet was indeed undated, but the letter of which it consisted bears the date June 1879, and was therefore subsequent to the division of 22nd April 1879, to which it referred.]



matters were debated at many meetings of Session, and finally at one of these held on 22nd April 1879, Mr. Lambie intimated his resignation; his subsequent history and that of his followers being told later. In fairness, however, I may say that the foregoing paragraph is drawn up from sources unsympathetic to Mr. Lambie: whose supporters alleged that the root of the trouble was his refusal to ordain Mr. Scott single-handed.

Shortly after, an opportunity arose for the acquisition by the congregation of a building eminently suited to their purposes which had an earlier Secession history. Here the congregation of Rev. Archibald Brown had worshipped from 1871 until the minister became incapacitated in 1878. At first, the proposal made was that this and the Forrest Road congregation unite, but the two small groups found that the question of the Burgess Oath stood in the way of union; the former Forrest Road congregation demanding that Mr. Brown's people first admit that the swearing of the Burgess Oath had been sinful. This they refused to do. However, in the summer of 1879 the Forrest Road Congregation moved as tenants to these premises, which are rather unique, being situated at the rear of an ordinary Edinburgh tenement No. 52 (formerly 36) South Clerk Street, access being gained by an ordinary entry, and the actual church or hall being situated on the garden ground behind. The size is 42 feet long by 20 feet broad, making it a very suitable meeting house for a small congregation, seating being provided for 150 persons.<sup>47</sup>

Soon afterwards, it was agreed that Mr. William Scott deliver trial discourses with a view to a call being made out to him to become minister of the congregation. After three of these had been delivered, at a meeting of the congregation held on 19th November 1879, Mr. Scott was called on the motion of Mr. James Paton, Elder.<sup>48</sup>

Mr. Scott, like them, came originally from Lauriston Street Congregation. He at first was reluctant to accept the call, his uncertain health, which later became manifest, perhaps being the reason. In face of the congregation, however, he was solemnly charged by the elders not to hold back, and finally intimated his acceptance, undertaking the charge of the congregation accompanied by fasting and prayer on the part of the people. Mr. Scott, of course, did not receive Ordination, and was focused

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<sup>47</sup> Closed Record: *Anderson and Others v. Lyon and Others*.

<sup>48</sup> Notes by Rev. Henry Paton, M.A.

later in a newspaper correspondence of having “vaulted irregularly into the pulpit”.<sup>49</sup>

On 19th March 1880, a “Declaratory Statement” was published (duplicated) by the Session on the subject of Mr. Lambie’s “Appendix to the Testimony of 1827”. This matter had been under discussion by them at two sederunts, and the Court found that the Appendix was “Informal both in form and. design, that it had never been judicially enacted, and consequently can be of no force nor authority or standing in the Church”. They also called on the members of the congregation to “Mourn over the above steps of defection, as they themselves desire to do, and to implore forgiveness of their sin” in countenancing the publication from 1874 until that date.

In 1881, this congregation became the possessors of an excellent library – the gift of Mr. John Angus, senior elder. The printed catalogue, comprising Biblical and Biographical works, Commentaries, Histories, Sermons, and Pamphlets, runs to 27 pages.<sup>50</sup>

South Clerk Street Session issued certain printed addresses and acts to the congregation under their charge. An address, dated 26th July 1883, was issued “To endeavour to stir up the people to a right impression of the Fast which they have appointed”. Included in a “Flood of errors in doctrine” noted are the restoration of St. Giles Cathedral, the apeing by the established Church of the Episcopalian bodies, the bringing of the inventions of men into the sanctuary, and the bringing of religion to ridicule by such organisations as the Salvation Army. An “Act for a congregational Fast”, published on 22nd January 1888, is framed in a sombre note: “God has recently been diminishing our already small number by death. Beside the deaths . . . there has been a large amount of sickness in the congregation.” Regret is also expressed that the young showed no disposition to take the place of the fathers in the church. A second Act for a Fast, dated 6th February 1900, refers with gratitude to the “Attempts at faithfulness to God . . . made upon the part of several ministers and a considerable body of the people of the Free Church of Scotland in lifting up the banner of truth and a testimony against error in many particulars”. This also states, “(God) has given us to be reduced in number by death and defection until we are now in number very few,

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<sup>49</sup> *Christian Leader*, December 1883, January 1884.

<sup>50</sup> [William Scott, *Catalogue of the Library of the Associate Congregation of Original Seceders* (Edinburgh, 1881). John Angus lived at Kirkliston and worked, according to the library bookplates, as a mill-wright at Rosyth.]



*The tenement in which Rev. William Scott – pastor to the South Clerk Street congregation – lived at Dalkeith Road, Edinburgh. The door to his flat, No. 263 Dalkeith Road, is in the middle left of the picture.*

while He has not been adding to our number”. The membership was then about 20.

The peace of this congregation was again disturbed, however, within a few years of Mr. Scott’s Settlement and its promise arrested in unhappy fashion. As early as 1885 complaint was made at a meeting of office-bearers regarding the unpunctuality of the commencement of Sabbath services; these, it was alleged, frequently started an average of three-quarters of an hour late. The reason for this was the feeble and uncertain health of Mr. Scott, the Minister. Five years later, in March, 1890, no improvement having been made, a deacon presented a paper on the subject to the Session, but believing the representation of matters in the congregation would induce the Session to take the matter up, he withdrew it. Another year passing without change, however, he again presented his paper. The petitioner stated *inter alia* that on account of the tedious waiting, the congregation actually viewed with regret and dismay the occasional appearance of any strangers in their midst. The petition resulted in some disaffection and threatened an immediate disruption of the congregation. Consequently the petitioner again withdrew his paper

on the understanding that improvement would be accomplished within the ensuing year.

As time passed with no improvement yet resulting, a number of members resolved to make a further representation on the matter to the session stating: "The protracted waitings are most trying to flesh and blood, and the apparent helplessness of reformation renders the position wellnigh unendurable. The ordinances are in a great measure rendered ineffectual; the benefits of the Sabbath lost, and spiritual life almost destroyed . . . and unless a speedy remedy be applied the result will be the upbreking and dispersion of the congregation."

The reply of the Session to this representation is dated 8th January 1892, and included the following passages: "The Session desire to remind the subscribers that any failure in keeping these hours, so far as the minister is concerned, is due to God's afflicting hand being upon him, and through him on the congregation. The Court feel that the congregation is liable to overlook the fact that the affliction is a congregational one, and that it calls the people, and the congregation as such, to search and see why God is thus dealing with them. . . . They in the meantime recommend the subscribers of the representation to exercise a little more patience, when they think that in a short time, in God's good providence, better things in this respect may emerge."

This reply is said to have been the work of the minister himself.

The Representers being much dissatisfied with the Session's reply lodged a further representation at some length on the subject, from which one paragraph may be quoted: "But, further, the representers cannot but be of the opinion that had the Session been really desirous to find a remedy, they had not so far to seek for such a remedy. They feel bound to remind them that on the last occasion the congregation was left without a minister, the Session then acknowledged as a divine mercy that in the providence of God, not only our present Pastor, but at least one other young man in the Congregation were so far advanced with studies as to be eligible for a call to the ministry. After the selection of our present Pastor, the other still continued to be and still is connected with the congregation." The young man referred to was Mr. Henry Paton, whom we meet next under the heading of "Associate Congregation of Original Seceders, Gorgie Road". This representation was returned unanswered, and, as a consequence, to quote, *THE TRUE CAUSE of the separation from the Kirk Session of Original Seceders worshipping at 36 South Clerk Street, Edinburgh, which took place on 17th April 1892*, a 16 pp. pamphlet

printed by the Darien Press, Bristo Place, Edinburgh, from which these particulars are reproduced, “(as) the congregation was divided against itself . . . with no immediate hope of the restoration of amicable relations, in the interests of the public cause and also to secure the edification of their own souls and the souls of those intrusted to them in the use of such ordinances as God might give them”, a protest signed by four members was read in front of the pulpit on 17th April 1892, after which the protestors and their supporters withdrew to found a new Congregation.

The loss of these members weakened greatly the South Clerk Street cause, which congregation is understood never to have exceeded a membership of thirty-five. In 1912 the average attendance was twelve; in that year, however, a few persons who had been aggrieved with the attitude adopted by the United Original Secession Synod to the Deceased Wife’s Sister Act in 1910 left Victoria Terrace United Original Secession Church for South Clerk Street. They did not long remain in membership, however, and in the last years only some half-dozen members remained. Mr. Scott died at Edinburgh on 1st January 1926, in the 79th year of his age and 46th of his ministry, and is buried in Newington Cemetery. To the last his health rendered punctual commencement of the services uncertain. His published writings comprise only the pamphlet and *Remarks* referred to earlier, but for several years he assisted Sir William Fraser in the preparation of his *Family Histories*. Some who were not his supporters recall him as a sound evangelical preacher. His brother, Rev. Walter Scott, who died in 1916, was minister to the Free Presbyterian Groups in Ontario.<sup>51</sup>

Until 1912 the congregation in maintaining its testimony against any innovation in worship continued the custom of “reading the line” in psalmody, although latterly two lines were read together instead of one. The old custom was then abolished, this surely being the last non-Gaelic congregation in Scotland to adhere to it.<sup>52</sup>

After Mr. Scott’s death the few remaining members held Sabbath afternoon Devotional meetings for a period of about five years in a house in Warrender Park Road. At the dissolution the library, previously referred to, was handed over to the Edinburgh Free

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<sup>51</sup> *History of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland*, Glasgow, 1933; and Communication by Mr. A. W. Dickson, Edinburgh.

<sup>52</sup> Communicated by Messrs. James A. Macleod and A. W. Dickson.



Presbyterian congregation.<sup>53</sup> The Church building was previously sold on 31st May 1926, to a congregation of Jews, but is now occupied as an Evangelical Church.

The Communion token of this congregation reads –

“Associate Congregation of Original Seceders”

and on the reverse –

“Edinburgh, 1880. Wm. Scott.”

## VIII

### (Second) FORREST ROAD ORIGINAL SECESSION CHURCH

“Mr. Lambie intends to preach if the Lord will on Thursday as usual in the Oddfellows’ Hall under the same banner.” This notice was issued to a number of members of the Forrest Road Congregation by Charles Martin, late Session Clerk to that congregation, on the evening of 22nd April 1879, after Mr. Lambie had separated from his late Session, and for a short time, until the former congregation removed to their new abode at South Clerk Street, the two sections met in different rooms under the same roof.<sup>54</sup>

Mr. Scott in his *Annals* gives the attendance on 9th January 1882, as “probably 20”. One member of session, in addition to Mr. Martin, who was Mr. Lambie’s son-in-law, adhered to the minister, who was now growing old. On 23rd October 1879, George Lebrun was ordained an elder, and John Horn a deacon; the ordinations being carried out at a meeting of Session between the diets of worship on that date, a Fast Day.<sup>55</sup>

Mr. Lambie continued to minister to his small number of adherents in Edinburgh, as well as the remnant in Pitcairngreen, till his death in Edinburgh on 23rd May 1886, in the 87th year of his age and

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<sup>53</sup> Communicated by Mr. James A. Macleod. [The library was dispersed in the 1980s, some of it to the Free Presbyterian Church library in Glasgow.]

<sup>54</sup> Note by Rev. Henry Paton, M.A.

<sup>55</sup> Session Book belonging to the Associate Anti-Burgher congregation, Pitcairngreen. [George Lebrun had left Wright and Macleod at the 1873 split but he subsequently returned to that congregation; see the typescript “Observations upon certain Papers and Proceedings in reference to the Congregation of Original Secession, Lauriston St, Edinburgh” (hereafter “Observations”), p. 37, and footnote 98 below. For details of the document “Observations”, see footnote 71.]

58th of his ministry. He is buried in Redgorton Churchyard. As well as his published works mentioned, he was the author of *The Bible, the Worlds Age; The Old Paths; Divisive Courses* (Perth, C. G. Sidey, 1867).

The Forrest Road group did not altogether cease with his death. So late as 1898 the survivors, now numbering on occasions up to 16, but usually about 6, continued to meet, when the services were conducted by Mr. Charles Martin, in whose house they met from 1898, after the group left Forrest Road. Mr. Martin, who was a librarian in Edinburgh University, died late in 1902, and the remaining adherents, principally members of his family, then joined other communions.

At Communion Services this congregation used Pitcairngreen tokens. The records were destroyed some years ago.<sup>56</sup>

## IX

### ASSOCIATE CONGREGATION OF ORIGINAL SECEDERS (GORGIE ROAD)

When the Protestors of 1892 withdrew from South Clerk Street Church they foregathered on the succeeding Sabbaths in the Oddfellows' Hall, Forrest Road, where for a period of six months a prayer meeting was conducted, sermons and discourses being read from orthodox preachers. Endeavours were made during this period to heal the breach with their former brethren, but without avail; they then published the pamphlet, *The True cause of the Separation from the Kirk-Session of Original Seceders worshipping at 36 South Clerk Street, Edinburgh*, previously referred to. Herein a full narrative of the protestors' conduct is given, and the papers framed by them printed in full. It was now felt that, when they had the means of obtaining public ordinances, they should no longer continue to meet in the fashion first adopted. Accordingly, at a meeting held on 23rd November 1892, they requested one of their number, Mr. Henry Paton, M.A., who had studied at Edinburgh University at the request of the South Clerk Street Congregation, and who had attended the theological lectures conducted by the Rev. James Wright, all with a view to entering the work of the ministry, to deliver trial discourses for a number of Sabbaths. These were sustained, and on 11th January 1893, a call was placed in his hands reading: "We, the undersigned members and adherents of the Associate Congregation of Original Seceders, presently

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<sup>56</sup> Communicated by Miss I. H. Martin, M.A., Edinburgh.

worshipping in the Oddfellows' Hall, Forrest Road, Edinburgh, being presently destitute of a pastor . . . and considering that though on account of the sinful defections of these times we are destitute of lawful church courts to which we can apply for the provision of a Pastor in the ordinary way, we are notwithstanding fully warranted by scripture and the practice of the church in former times when in like circumstances to call one to be our Pastor." The names of one elder and eight members were appended. Mr. Paton accepted the call, and on 29th January 1893, dispensed ordinances for the first time. At a congregational meeting held on 1st February two elders and a deacon were chosen and the regular Presbyterian procedure followed regarding edict election and ordination.<sup>57</sup> There were thus in Edinburgh now four daughter congregations of Lauriston Street Anti-Burgher Church – one in connection with the U.O.S. Synod and three Independent Anti-Burgher congregations; three Anti-Burgher ministers – Messrs. Macleod, Paton, and Scott – labouring in the city. In addition, the Pitcairngreen Remnant survived. In July 1893, Mr. Paton issued an address, *To the Members and Adherents of the Original Secession Church in Edinburgh* (10 pp.). This pamphlet was an appeal to the various congregations of Seceders to enter on a Conference or Conferences with a view to healing the unhappy divisions existing among them. "Amidst the ecclesiastical anarchy and confusion which prevail on all hands (the author wrote) the Secession is silent as the grave. She dare not uplift the voice lest it should return with the echo of mockery and ridicule. Truth to say, Brethren, our divisions are at once our sin, our reproach, and our weakness." No tangible result arose from this appeal, but Mr. Paton's congregation made a further effort in December 1894, by the publication of a *Letter to Original Seceders in Edinburgh, upon their divided condition* (4 pp.) to promote a conference of these isolated congregations with a view to removing the causes of the dissensions between them; this also had a fruitless reception.

When it was apparent no reunion was likely, the congregation contemplated for a time the erection of a church, but owing to high building costs this plan was abandoned. An opportunity arose, however, for the acquisition by them of a Free Church Mission Hall situated in Gorgie Road. After renovation the building was opened as a church on 21st November 1897, when Mr. Paton conducted three diets of worship, public intimation being made in the Press and by handbills distributed

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<sup>57</sup> Communicated by Mr. Henry M. Paton.

in the district. At this stage of the congregation's history the membership had risen to 21, and eleven children were baptised in the period ending 1903. Many activities, in addition to the regular Sabbath services, were conducted to cater for young and old. Amongst the former an aggressive work was undertaken including the formation of a Sabbath School attended by fifty children. A Bible Class, Prayer Meeting, and Psalmody Class were the chief agencies amongst the adult members and adherents. An interesting point regarding the church building was the fact that it was the last church opened in connection with the Secession, and may remain so for all time.

The next milestone in the congregation's history resulted from a visit paid by Mr. Paton as a delegate to the famous Psalm Singers' Conference held in Belfast in 1902. There he made the acquaintance of the late Dr. Kerr of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, whom he invited to come to Edinburgh to address the Gorgie Road Congregation on the distinctive tenets of the Reformed Presbyterian and Original Secession Churches. Dr. Kerr fulfilled this mission on 6th September 1902. Resulting from his visit a petition to the Reformed Presbyteries of Glasgow and Edinburgh was drawn up on 26th of the same month, craving, on behalf of Mr. Paton's Congregation, admission to the Reformed Presbyterian Church, the same destination, it will be remembered, to which Rev. David Berry and his congregation found their way over half a century earlier.

At a special meeting of the Joint Presbyteries held at Glasgow on 17th October, Rev. Mr. Paton and two elders presented the application. The Court expressed its pleasure at the petition, and appointed a committee to meet the members of the congregation, with the result that a "Thoroughly satisfactory report" was presented at the following meeting of the Presbyteries. The case finally came before the Reformed Presbyterian Synod on 12th May 1903, in Nicholson Street Church, Glasgow. The decision of the Court in approving of the petition is interesting in relation to the fact that Mr. Paton had never received ordination.

"On Synod's taking up the matter of the petition from the Associate Congregation of Original Seceders, Edinburgh, it was moved by Rev. J. P. Struthers, seconded by Mr. John McDonald, and agreed to, that we resolve to receive and admit the said congregation into full communion and fellowship with the Church. . . . The Synod wishes to place on record the fact that Mr. Paton was not ordained on his taking at

the unanimous request and call of the people the pastoral care of the congregation. Such ordination was impossible in the circumstances as there was no presbytery with which the congregation had any connection. The minister and congregation were not and are not chargeable with any lawful neglect of Presbyterian order . . . in exceptional circumstances and times, as at the period of the Reformation, men have been asked to undertake the ministration of Word and Sacraments when ordination was impossible. The Synod therefore willingly recognises the position of Mr. Paton as a minister of the Gospel of Christ, and cordially sustains and endorses the action of his people and himself.”<sup>58</sup> A Commission of Synod was then appointed to proceed with the admission of the minister and congregation into the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

The Commission duly met with Mr. Paton and his congregation in Gorgie Road Church on Friday 22nd May 1903, when the Moderator and other members of the Commission gave the right hand of fellowship to Mr. Paton and the office-bearers and members of Gorgie Road Church and admitted them to full communion with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

The membership of the congregation, however, never rose much over 21, and owing to a variety of causes, including withdrawals and lack of support from the Reformed Presbyterians in Edinburgh district, it was decided early in 1907 to close the church, and in March of that year the building was sold to the Baptists, the last services being held on the 24th of that month. It is now occupied as a War Memorial Hall, but much altered.<sup>59</sup> No formal dissolution of the congregation ever took place, and Rev. Mr. Paton and members of his family betook themselves to Loanhead Reformed Presbyterian Church.

After the admission to the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Gorgie Road congregation, Mr. Paton took a full share of the duties incumbent on Synod members, acting amongst other appointments as Moderator of Synod and Moderator of the Joint Presbyteries. Following the closing of the Edinburgh church he frequently supplied vacant Reformed Presbyterian pulpits. Mr. Paton also represented the Reformed Presbyterian Church at their American Synod in Chicago in

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<sup>58</sup> Reformed Presbyterian Synod Minutes.

<sup>59</sup> [The building at 338 Gorgie Road is today (2014) used as a community centre, leased to a local management committee by its owners, the Edinburgh City Council.]



May 1909, and attended the Pan-Presbyterian Council at New York in June; while in September 1911, he was their representative at the Pan-Presbyterian Council in Buda-Pesth. In the world of Scots letters he has left many monuments, to mention only a few, his editorship of *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, *The Lyon in Mourning*, *The Baptismal Register of Rev. John McMillan*, *Greyfriars Interments*, and numerous other historical works.

He also acted as Inspector and Reporter for Scotland of the Royal Commission on Historical MSS, and like Rev. Wm. Scott assisted Sir William Fraser in the preparation of his Family Histories for several years.

Mr. Paton died at Peebles as recently as 25th February 1942, in the 88th year of his age and 49th of his ministry. Until a year previous to his death he retained his connection with the Reformed Presbyterian Synod. A son, Mr. Henry M. Paton, it is interesting to note, retains the Secession connection of his family and acts as Convener of the Original Secession Synod's Mutual Assistance Fund Committee.

The token struck by Gorgie Road Congregation bears the inscription:

“Original  
Secession  
Church  
GORGIE”

and on the reverse:

“Christ's  
Crown  
and  
COVENANT  
1893.”

The records of Gorgie Road Church are now in the possession of Mr. Henry M. Paton.

## X

### A LEGAL ACTION

There falls to be noticed an interesting legal action in which certain of the later Anti-Burghers were concerned. This is a “Reported Case” and is known to lawyers as *Anderson's Trustees v. Scott*, 1914, S.C., at page 942.

To understand the case, we must cast our minds back to the formation of the United Original Secession Synod in 1842. It will be recalled that of Mr. Wright's congregation in Edinburgh, a number adhered to the Synod. These formed a congregation and built a church in Adam Square, Edinburgh. On 24th May 1843, Rev. Archd. Brown was inducted as Pastor; while a devout and generous man, he proved a thorn in the flesh to the Synod on account of his attitude towards a decision of that Court to permit the formation of Sabbath Schools in their congregations. Mr. Brown regarded this decision as an encroachment on the function of office-bearers and heads of families as instructors of the young, and contended that the innovation had no scriptural authority. These views he vigorously expressed in a pamphlet, *Revival of Family Worship in opposition to the Sabbath School System* (1857), which finally led to his suspension by the Synod on 26th May 1858. It is not too much to say that the various representations, appeals, overtures, and finally libels ensuing out of Mr. Brown's attitude on this question may have seriously retarded the initial growth of the Minority United Original Secession Synod after the union of the Majority with the Free Church in 1852, as for the 3 years prior to his suspension, the matter was discussed at no less than 39 sederunts of the Synod – in many instances no other business being dealt with – necessitating frequent sittings of the Court, causing great weariness, trial, and expense to the members intent on the consolidation and improvement of the position of that church.

After his suspension, Mr. Brown's congregation sub-divided; part adhered to him, and part formed what is now Victoria Terrace United Original Secession Church. In 1870 the church in Adam Square was sold to Edinburgh Improvement Commissioners: Mr. Brown and his supporters now purchased for the sum of £1,100 the church in South Clerk Street previously referred to as being occupied by Mr. Scott's congregation, a house above which (used for a manse) being included in the price. About 1876 Mr. Brown became incapacitated through ill-health, and for two years afterwards services were conducted by lay-members. On 28th July 1878, the church was finally closed, the membership having declined to five men and eight women. An endeavour was made to sell the property, but without success. Mr. Brown died 5th February 1879.

The property was then let by the trustees of Mr. Brown's congregation; the tenant of the church or hall being Mr. Scott's congregation formerly of Forrest Road, who obtained occupancy for a



*A sign for the former Victoria Terrace Original Secession church in Edinburgh, an offshoot of those in Rev. James Wright's congregation who disagreed with his stance of separation from the union of 1842. The descendants of the original Victoria Terrace congregation themselves refused to join the union of 1956 with the Church of Scotland. The building later became the Boys' Brigade offices and is now a Quaker meeting-house.*

rent of £30 per annum, reduced by degrees to £16. Finally, only one trustee qualified to act survived, Mr. Henry Anderson. This faithful steward continued to ingather monies due to the trust, and, at his death, on 7th May 1912, his trustees found that he held Deposit Receipts totalling in value £592 19s and also the property previously described for behoof of the long defunct congregation of Mr. Brown.

In these circumstances, a multiplepinding was raised to determine who was beneficially entitled to these assets, and claims were lodged by (1) The United Original Secession Synod; (2) The South Clerk Street Congregation; (3) The Lauriston Street Congregation; (4) The Crown, who argued that the Trust had failed, and the money should fall to them as *ultimus haeres*.

On 24th June 1913, the Lord Ordinary (Cullen), after considering the relation of the various congregations to that of Mr. Brown, pronounced an interlocutor in favour of the Crown, holding that

the trust purpose had been fulfilled. He stated in reference to the other claimants:

If one considers how real and vital such differences in belief or opinion as marked Mr. Brown's isolated congregation to the persons who share them, it seems to me manifest that now to devote the funds raised by that congregation for their support to the benefit of those from whom they differed, and by whom they were ostracised, would be doing signal violence to the intention of the makers of the Trust.

South Clerk Street congregation reclaimed, and the case was again heard for three days before the First Division of the Court of Session. On 15th July 1914, the opinion of the Court was delivered by Lord Skerrington who stated that neither the United Original Secession Synod, South Clerk Street Congregation or Lauriston Street Congregation could identify themselves with the congregation which was the beneficial owner of the trust property forming the fund *in medio*. It appeared to the Court, however, that the Victoria Terrace United Original Secession Congregation, which it will be recalled, sprang from Mr. Brown's congregation, should be given an opportunity of lodging a claim. They accordingly repelled the claim of the Crown and remitted the case back to the Lord Ordinary.

The action was later settled by a Joint Minute which sustained the Victoria Terrace Congregation's claim, and repelled those of the remaining claimants to the action; but all parties were found entitled to their expenses out of the fund *in medio*. It may be stated that Victoria Terrace Church dealt generously with the others, and the South Clerk Street Congregation was left in possession of the church building until its dissolution.

## XI CONCLUSION

In concluding this account of the last Anti-Burghers many features present themselves to us concerning them – not all confined either to the debit or credit side of their account.

On the debit side it must be agreed that they were contentious to a degree and very ready to perceive the mote in the eye of their brothers. They also exhibited a common symptom of small bodies – ecclesiastical or political – in their many splits or secessions. It has occurred to me on

hearing of the dissensions and divisions that perhaps too many of the members for the peace of the Church had some little legal training which facilitated their framing Church Court papers.

On the credit side, however, must be entered their sincerity of purpose and loyalty to ideals and testimonies in a day when these things were already losing their popular appeal. The personal financial sacrifices of the members I know to have been very considerable, and this fact is more obvious when one thinks of groups of some thirty persons maintaining a place of worship with the incidental expenses involved. It is greatly to the credit of those who were their ministers that they cheerfully undertook all their clerical duties in addition to the necessity of earning a living at some secular task, the latter taking the form of literary work or historical research. From their published writings, all the ministers exhibited literary abilities proving their scholarship which, had they been prepared to abandon their distinctive principles and accept a more popular religious code, might have won them positions of some distinction in a larger body. To give some idea of the monetary value of their settlements in the ministry, I may say that Mr. Scott's stipend in the better days of South Clerk Street church was £45, that, at the beginning of this century another minister was in receipt of £26; and that Mr. Lambie never once received his full stipend during all his years at Pitcairngreen.

Despite this all the ministers, as will have been noted, lived to ripe old ages and, it is to be hoped, were kept from worry regarding material goods in their latter years. They certainly inspired deep loyalty and affection in the hearts of some of their followers, still living to mourn their passing.

The last Anti-Burghers conserved in their small groups many of the features of churches of a by-gone era. I have spoken of the continuance of reading "The Line" at South Clerk Street; it may be added that Mr. Scott wore till the end an old-fashioned ministerial white tie in the pulpit. The various renewals of the National Covenants recorded were later than those of any other denomination in Scotland. I have found on inquiry that Lauriston Street Church, the sole survivor, now allows the right of women to vote at congregational meetings, so that the old order of a sole right in the male to vote has probably passed for good in all Scottish Presbyterian Communion, although the vote was confined to men until the end in Mr. Scott's congregation, where women were not even permitted to speak at these gatherings.



I have referred to the financial sacrifices of the members, but they made sacrifices in other senses. Thus John Angus, an elder in Lauriston Street and later of South Clerk Street in the eighties of last century, walked to and from Kirkliston to Edinburgh, 16 miles in all, every Sabbath; a member of the former congregation from Culross crossed the Forth by sailing boat frequently, while a couple in attendance at South Clerk Street used to come from Burntisland on Saturday and stay over the week-end to ensure their attendance. Today we may smile at such tenacity of purpose; but have we in our generation replaced this quality with anything that is better?

There must also be noted the abilities both literary and in the conduct of worship of the elders of fifty years ago, whose understanding of their Church's standpoint was the result of research in the writings of the Secession fathers and in early church documents in which, I am sure, their successors in most denominations today are deficient. The facility with which members of Session could fill the pulpit in the absence of a minister represents another feature of the office-bearers of long ago which is inherited by few to-day.

This present paper has revealed the adaptation of Church procedure to many exceptional circumstances, and the resorting to expedients to overcome constitutional difficulties which may offend purists in Presbyterian law. When a body becomes so small as to be technically of doubtful legal constitution, the question arises should the end be sacrificed for a slavish regard to legal precedent? The last Anti-Burghers, as shown in this paper, on several occasions answered this question in the negative.

To the last Anti-Burghers of Lauriston Street, Edinburgh, a word of friendly encouragement must be directed: they have kept the faith; surely such faithful witness and contending cannot have been all in vain.

## XII

A great many people have assisted me in the preparation of this paper, and to them I must present my acknowledgments. In particular the following (in alphabetical order) are deserving of thanks for the immense trouble taken to search for documents and to answer queries:

Mr. John Macleod, Session Clerk of Lauriston Street Church, Edinburgh, and Mr. Henry M. Paton, Curator of Historical Manuscripts, H.M. Register House, Edinburgh.

The others are:

Mr. A. W. Dickson, Edinburgh.

Rev. J. Howe, Original Secession Manse, Dundee.

The Misses Harley, Edinburgh.

Rev. W. J. Moffett, B.A., Reformed Presbyterian Manse, Airdrie.

Miss I. H. Martin, M.A., Edinburgh.

Mr. Martin, Bridgeton, Almondbank.

Rev. N. McIntyre, Free Presbyterian Church, Edinburgh.

Mr. James A. Macleod (last surviving member of South Clerk  
Street Church, Edinburgh).

The Librarian, Sandeman Library, Perth.

Mrs. Logie, Huntingtowerfield, Perth.

The Registrar, Edinburgh University.

Mr. Young, Elder, Martyr's Church, Dundee.

## **APPENDIX I**

### **THE LAURISTON STREET DIVISION OF 1873**

AS described by MacWhirter, in 1873 a substantial group of people raised objections to Mr. Wright's conduct as minister of the Lauriston Street congregation, and separated in December of that year to form the Forrest Road congregation. This appendix adds some detail to MacWhirter's account of the separation, and summarizes the response of Rev. Walter Macleod to the position of those leaving Lauriston Street. Of particular interest is Macleod's attempt to grapple with the problem of disciplining a minister in a Presbyterian manner when the hierarchy of Church courts is reduced to a single Kirk Session.

#### **1. Congregational decline in 1873**

None of Wright's sermons from late 1873 are extant,<sup>60</sup> but notes survive for two sermons of Walter Macleod's, both on the same text, Isaiah 64:7, and preached on the Thursday of the communion in October 1873. From these sermons it is clear that there had been a decline in congregational vitality in the months prior to the split. In the first sermon, Macleod compared the Church in Scotland to Israel in Isaiah's day, and suggested that the neglect of God's worship confessed in Isaiah 64:7 was relevant to the current time.<sup>61</sup> This sin showed itself in the neglect of public worship, family worship, private prayer, and fellowship meetings (i.e. meetings for prayer and discussion of Christian experience). Macleod felt that these especially were badly neglected: "But what is the true state of matters with us?" he asked. "We have the merest handful of a fellowship meeting; but a dribblet even of our small and diminishing number."<sup>62</sup>

Macleod went on to suggest that those who were healthy enough to attend the prayer meetings but did not do so were meeting "brethren where they should not be" and that this would not be of benefit. "There is a fellowship for gossip, grievously common in this day," he continued. "Those who avoid Christian fellowship, are most prone to be tempted to indulge in idle gossip; so that instead of feeding on the verities of

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<sup>60</sup> On Sabbath 14th December 1873, Wright was preaching on 1 John 2:1. Walter Macleod had the sermon notes in his possession in the 1890s but they cannot now be found. See "Observations", p. 32.

<sup>61</sup> MS Sermon 1 on Isaiah 64:7, 1873, 20 pp. Transcribed 1918.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*, p. 12.

Christian experience, they become addicted to devouring the characters of brethren and acquire a capacity to search out iniquities – to make a perfect search as for hid treasure; instead of searching Scripture and their own hearts, for that which might avert the fall of a brother, by mutual interchange of experience in the things of God. The fellowship of prayer and converse on the Word gives an occasion to discern the gifts, graces and excellences of each other; but elsewhere we can see only their faults and defects.”<sup>63</sup>

In the same sermon Macleod argued that private prayer was also being neglected and that apostasy “begins at the closet door by neglecting this duty”. He stated: “. . . there is too much reason to fear that the manifest neglect of public ordinances, of fellowship meetings and family worship, arises from the neglect of secret prayer to God. He that never, or only seldom, meets with God at the Throne of Grace is a most dangerous professor; he cannot be expected to have a good heart to the church, when it is not right towards God. At enmity with the maker of the family, he cannot sincerely love the children. Many a mischief in the church may be traced back to a neglect of secret prayer. He is a hypocrite who belongs to the church and neglects this exercise.”<sup>64</sup>

In the second sermon on the same verse, Macleod focussed on the need for earnest prayer that the Most High would not leave them: “Shall we let Him go from us by removing our candlestick, without a struggle! Are there no Jacobs among us to wrestle with God? And to prevail with Him to cause His face to shine upon us, that we may have peace. Are we to be wrestling against each other, instead of with God for the common cause?”<sup>65</sup>

## **2. The sequence of events, statements, and pamphlets**

Just before the benediction at the end of the afternoon service on Sabbath 14th December 1873, a “Declaration and Protest” was read by Charles Martin at the foot of the Lauriston Street pulpit on behalf of those who were about to leave the congregation. In a statement from the pulpit the following Sabbath, Wright said that those leaving had, by doing so, “formally denuded themselves of office and declared themselves excommunicated . . . [and] by their own act inflicted self-

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<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>65</sup> MS Sermon 2 on Isaiah 64:7, 1873, 24 pp. Transcribed 1918. Quotation on p. 23.

deposition from office". Nevertheless, he stated that "a wide door of friendly readmission into the Covenanted Church of God is left open to any who, upon serious and prayerful reflection discover that they have misunderstood the objectives of these Protestors, as not a few of such have already done and returned to duty".<sup>66</sup> Wright's supporters soon afterwards published a short pamphlet (referred to in footnotes to the main article) explaining their version of events.<sup>67</sup>

Meanwhile those leaving had engaged in speedy negotiations with Rev. Andrew Lambie, which culminated in a meeting on 14th January 1874 at which Lambie constituted the new Forrest Road Kirk Session. The first step of the ensuing Kirk Session was to adopt a "Declaration" endorsing Lambie's revision of the 1827 Testimony.<sup>68</sup> In the following May, the Lambie supporters published their main pamphlet against Wright outlining their stance and their reasons for leaving.<sup>69</sup> The next year, the Forrest Road congregation renewed the Covenants by swearing and subscribing to a Bond on Thursday 28th October 1875. Among other things, the Bond referred to their complaint against their former minister.<sup>70</sup>

The response of Wright's supporters to the *Appendix* and the *Plain Statement* was to issue a brief statement of "Some of the errors of those who in 1873 deserted from their sworn principles". This probably dates

<sup>66</sup> MS "Public Statement from the Pulpit, this 21st of Decr 1873" (single page).

<sup>67</sup> *Statement regarding the recent separation from the Original Secession Church, Lauriston Street* (see footnote 28 ff.).

<sup>68</sup> For the "Declaration", see "Observations", pp. 6, 8 (where a variant date of 19th January is given for the adoption of the "Declaration"). We have not seen the "Declaration".

<sup>69</sup> *Appendix, containing Notes on the Testimony, 1827, and a Plain Statement of Facts shewing the cause of the separation from Mr. James Wright, Minister of Lauriston Street Congregation, by a majority of the members of his Session and a considerable number of the congregation* (Edinburgh and Perth, 1874), 32 pp. The first part of this publication, occupying 14 pages, consists of the *Notes: Shewing the manner in which the Testimony emitted by the Associate Synod of Original Seceders in 1827 is held in more agreeableness to its title-page by the Remnant of Original Seceders*. This was the second edition of this *Appendix* and bears the name of "Charles Martin, Session-Clerk" of the Forrest Road congregation. The second part of the publication was *The Plain Statement of Facts* (hereafter *Plain Statement*). According to Walter Macleod, Andrew Elliot of Edinburgh refused to publish the pamphlet, and Ogle & Murray of Edinburgh and David Wood of Perth would sell it only on condition that they were free from legal action, "Observations", p. 29. The full publication cost 6d but the *Plain Statement* could be had separately for 3d. We have been unable to locate a copy of the *Plain Statement* and our quotations are taken from MacWhirter.

<sup>70</sup> Unidentified newspaper article, "Renewal of the Covenants In Edinburgh". This Bond stated that they regarded "as a matter of humiliation . . . the sin of countenancing the ministrations of one under the scandal of . . . immorality [i.e. James Wright]".



from 1874 and was written, almost certainly, by Walter Macleod. It does not appear to have been published. We describe some of its contents below. As MacWhirter mentions, a much fuller response to the *Appendix* and the *Plain Statement* was circulated to the Lauriston Street congregation in 1883 in manuscript form by Walter Macleod, who by this time was their minister. We have not seen the 1883 document but we have in a later document entitled “Observations upon certain Papers and Proceedings in reference to the Congregation of Original Secession, Lauriston St, Edinburgh”, which must be a revision of the 1883 one.<sup>71</sup> The “Observations” are undated, but in their surviving form they cannot be earlier than the late 1890s.<sup>72</sup> The tone of the “Observations” is calm and generally persuasive, though it is hard to agree with the view that those who left Lauriston Street were guilty of “apostacy” in so doing.<sup>73</sup>

The first part of the “Observations” is a brief answer to the *Appendix*. The conduct of Wright during the 1850 breach with Lambie is defended, and attention is drawn to the sin and folly of committing oneself by solemn oath to a Testimony, as Lambie had done with the 1827 Testimony, and then publishing more than twenty objections against it. Was not this “after vows to make enquiry” (Proverbs 20:25)? The folly of those who had so hastily embraced Lambie’s *Appendix* in 1874, only to desert and denounce it in 1879, is similarly characterised.

The larger part of the “Observations”, however, relates to the *Plain Statement* in which Macleod finds both serious errors of fact and also errors of judgement in deserting Wright’s ministry on wholly inadequate grounds (these latter errors had been more fully discussed in the earlier document “Some of the Errors”). To these we now turn.

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<sup>71</sup> MS “Observations upon certain Papers and Proceedings in reference to the Congregation of Original Secession, Lauriston St, Edinburgh”, 37 pp., from which we have already quoted several times. This document is a typescript with handwritten corrections. It is incomplete, but perhaps missing only a page or two at the end.

<sup>72</sup> The inadequate revision of the “Observations” betrays the various stages of its development. At first the 1874 *Appendix* is described as “a recent print” (p. 2), but then those who left Wright are said to have “lately repudiated both the *Appendix* and its author” (p. 6), which happened in 1879-80. Later still, reference is made to a time “about twenty years after their departure”, i.e. about 1893 (p. 25). On p. 37, in describing their subsequent history, it says that “ministers have been made, and again unmade, and others have made themselves ministers by self-ordination”. It is difficult to identify any ministers who were “unmade” but perhaps the closing of the Gorgie Reformed Presbyterian congregation in 1907 was in mind.

<sup>73</sup> “Observations”, p. 10.

### 3. Alleged errors in the *Plain Statement*

The first error of fact that Walter Macleod found in the *Plain Statement* was the assertion that various conversations with Mr. Wright had taken place “between the minister and his session”, implying that they had occurred during constituted meetings of the Kirk Session. This was not the case because Macleod had not been present at these occasions, despite being both an elder and the Session clerk.<sup>74</sup>

The next group of alleged errors, which occupy a large part of the “Observations”, relate to people who left the congregation in the late 1860s. The *Plain Statement* claimed that endeavours at Kirk Session level to find out these people’s reasons for departure had been “discouraged”. Walter Macleod responded that James Wright had given “many a kindly hint” to his office-bearers “to watch for souls as those who most give account”, and he dismissed as “innuendo” the suggestion that Wright had tried to stifle investigation. At one stage Macleod writes: “I most solemnly affirm that there never was on the part of the Moderator any word or hint of discouragement from going after, and enquiring into, cases of desertion.”<sup>75</sup> To clinch the point, he sets out to examine what was known about each person who had left.

An early section of the *Plain Statement* had emphasised the view that female members had been especially liable to leave the congregation. Macleod responded by underlining his own close knowledge of these matters. He had both been requested to, and had volunteered to visit “absent or recusant members”; this because he had more time than the other office-bearers.<sup>76</sup> The different receptions Macleod received from five of the women had included their rejecting his right to ask, giving explanations such as their intention of leaving the city, finding fault with the Testimony, and being irritated at alleged malevolent whispering by others in the congregation. One widow, with her family, left the congregation unhappy at what she termed “the haste” with which one of the elders was about to marry his second wife.<sup>77</sup>

The year 1868, in particular, had seen several members part company with the Lauriston Street congregation. The first was a

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<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 9, 14, 18.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, p. 16.

member who was visited by two of the elders in January of that year. As well as believing that the congregation's position on the Burgess oath was "hair-splitting", the man had said there was another "personal matter" which he would not explain except before the Session. He had been invited to meet them but did not turn up at the appointed time. Macleod makes the point that the elders who alleged in the *Plain Statement* that the investigation of departing members had been discouraged had in fact been party to the decision not to pursue this case in January 1868.<sup>78</sup> Exactly the same was true regarding the Session's decision to remove "John Tyndell, preacher" from membership in autumn 1868.<sup>79</sup> The *Plain Statement* objected that this step was unjust, and yet the people complaining had been members of the Session which had been unanimous in the act of discipline.<sup>80</sup> Tyndell had found fault with the preaching of Mr. Wright's colleague and successor, his son Duncan Wright, to the point of accusing him of heresy. Another case, in December 1868, was that of an elder, John Drummond, who withdrew from the congregation complaining of the procedure followed in electing Duncan Wright and in "the order of the maintenance" of his ministry. Drummond refused an offer to meet with the Session to elaborate on his complaint.<sup>81</sup>

Having dealt with these matters, the "Observations" move on to the principal accusation against James Wright which was that he had been guilty of immorality. On this the *Plain Statement* used guarded language. Indeed one of Walter Macleod's complaints was that, throughout the case, there had been a reluctance to make the accusation explicit.<sup>82</sup> None of the elders, other than his own brother James, had spoken to him about it. On that occasion James Macleod had referred to allegations that Mr. Wright was guilty in a previous scandal involving a young woman's pregnancy. On Walter Macleod then putting this to the woman she had "indignantly declared" that it was a "vile falsehood". Macleod stated that two years previously the young woman had been publicly rebuked. She refused to name the father of the child but then told her own father that he was a "lad" who "resided in Leith; the young man in question had helped pay for the child's maintenance". Macleod

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<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>79</sup> *Plain Statement*, pp. 30-31. Quoted in "Observations", p. 10.

<sup>80</sup> "Observations", pp. 10-14.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 20-1.

stated that other elders knew about this and yet then “had the malignity to attempt to make the minister the real culprit”.<sup>83</sup>

According to Walter Macleod, there had been only one attempt to bring the *fama* before the Kirk Session, and on that occasion James Wright had “with the solemnity of a declaration ‘before God’ denied the charges”.<sup>84</sup> In this solemn denial, the accusers had seemed to acquiesce. However, as with much of the division, Wright’s accusers viewed events differently. For example, the *Plain Statement* implied that a shaking of hands at the communion season a few days later was simply a temporary truce until the sacramental season was past. Walter Macleod, however, saw it as being permanent. On the Thursday (Fast Day) of the communions, three accusers confessed in the morning that they “had sinned” by involvement with the claims; that evening the whole Session shook hands with James Wright after James Macleod made a “brief statement that the services of the day had impressed them with a sense of their having acted wrongfully, or disorderly (or words to the same effect)”.<sup>85</sup> In his statement from the pulpit on 21st December 1873, James Wright affirmed that the leaders of the protesters had “acknowledged their mistake as to their procedure in this affair” on three occasions.<sup>86</sup>

#### **4. The circumstances of an isolated Kirk Session**

One of the reasons given for leaving, by those doing so, was that “in a mysterious providence the Church [is] so reduced” that there was “no competent court for the trial of our Pastor”.<sup>87</sup> This was an assertion that Walter Macleod strongly repudiated.

It was a consequence of Mr. Lambie’s breach with James Wright that there was no longer a quorate Presbytery. Although Mr. Wright claimed that the Presbytery of 1842 continued to exist, others doubted this assertion, and in their understanding there was only the Lauriston

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<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 21-2. Another allegation made verbally to Walter Macleod had been that James Wright was known to visit Macleod on a Saturday night in a drunken state. This was strongly denied by Walter Macleod who underlined Wright’s capability on these occasions of conducting family worship and conversing at length on Scripture, Christian experience, and providence without “any token at all of drink or intemperance”, *ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>86</sup> “Public Statement from the Pulpit, this 21st of Decr 1873.”

<sup>87</sup> “Declaration and Protest” read by Charles Martin on 14th December 1873, quoted by MacWhirter above. We have not seen this document.

Street Kirk Session. As is normal in Presbyterianism, Rev. James Wright, as pastor of the congregation, was Moderator of the Kirk Session. However, there appears to have been a feeling on the part of some of his opponents that this gave him undue power. One person had told a deputation of elders who urged him to make his complaint at a formal meeting of the Kirk Session “that he would not come before the Session, as he knew he would not get justice there owing to a certain influence”.<sup>88</sup>

Even more significant was the fact that, in ordinary circumstances, a minister is not answerable for discipline to his Kirk Session but only to his Presbytery. Wright’s opponents maintained that there was no way of bringing a libel against him because there was no court competent to hear the case. In the *Plain Statement* they said, “we had no more authority to put the Moderator under oath, than we had to put him on his trial”.<sup>89</sup> Macleod, however, strongly rejected this line of thinking which he described as “the capital flaw in the whole business”. He argued that “the idea that a church court has not power to try its own members . . . is utterly foreign to the law of the church. It is popery: for it puts the ordinary presiding officer above the law as if he could commit no transgression, or, committing it, could not be called to account for it.” Furthermore, he continued: “whereas they regarded it as unlawful to present a libel to the church court, they saw nothing wrong in printing it, and presenting it to the world, to the irresponsible multitude who could neither know the facts nor sift them, nor adjudicate upon them!”<sup>90</sup>

A more detailed response to the claim that the Moderator of the Kirk Session could not be challenged because there was no court competent to hear the case came in Macleod’s earlier document, “Some of the errors of those, who, in 1873 deserted from their sworn principles”.<sup>91</sup> This charged the Forrest Road leadership with going against Scripture, the standards of the Reformed Church of Scotland, and the Original Secession Testimony by their separating from the congregation over an alleged personal offence. It also accused them of violating the common principles of law and justice in the Church or society, in that they had “never judicially proved” their allegation

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<sup>88</sup> “Observations”, p. 12.

<sup>89</sup> *Plain Statement*, p. 27; cited in “Observations”, p. 28.

<sup>90</sup> “Observations”, pp. 28-29.

<sup>91</sup> MS “Some of the errors of those, who, in 1873 deserted from their sworn principles”, 5 pp. (hereafter “Some of the errors”).



or dealt with it “in accordance with the order appointed by the Lord Jesus”.<sup>92</sup>

Macleod argued that the Forrest Road group had “without any warrant at all, added a new law never before heard of in the Church, and never sanctioned by a single precedent in history, namely, that a minister is above the law and cannot be judicially tried for his personal misdemeanours”. As for their reason, i.e. that “it was incompetent for the Session to adjudicate upon the alleged faults of the minister, who was also Moderator of the Session”, he said that there was no sanction for this “theory” in the Bible, Church law, “or any law”. He added:

Is it so that any mortal is exempt from the application of the law to which himself hath sworn subjection? The very idea is monstrous. The minister, in this case, was sworn to Presbytery as of divine right. How then could he be above trial by Presbyters? The Session proper is a court of Presbyters, and as is well known the title presbyter just means Elder. In this view, and it is the only Scriptural view, every one of these Presbyters has the same judicial place and power and for sitting in judgement and voting. To assume that any one of them is incapable of being tried by the court involves the subversion of the fundamental law of presbytery, that is, the equality or parity of all presbyters in judicial action. The notion that the Moderator is superior to the Court is the very notion on which Prelacy was foisted on the Church of Scotland. . . . The Court or Session, has authority to try, and to judge any member of Court, when any charge or offence is brought against him, and the Moderator is subject to the same procedure. If you except him, or any other member of the court, you degrade the law by setting a man beyond its pale! You make void the law, you abnegate the functions of the Presbyterial office. In the sphere of the Pulpit, the minister has an additional function, and a peculiar status but in the court he has the same power with the Eldership, of ruling, judging and voting. It would be going too far to assert that even in the Pulpit, he is above the court; for, it is the duty of the Elders officially, to watch and try the doctrine, as it is the duty of all the members of the church to try the spirits. 1 John 4.1.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> “Some of the errors”, pp. 1-2.

<sup>93</sup> “Some of the errors”, pp. 3-4.

## 5. Conclusion

Of all the various splits which occurred in the post-1842 body, the 1873 breach in the Lauriston Street congregation was the most serious. Not only did most of the Kirk Session leave, but the split involved a serious accusation, and the group departing was itself to splinter into three sections.

At one level the split was complicated by various close family links. Walter Macleod's nephew William Scott (son of Walter's sister Agnes) was part of the group which left to form Forrest Road congregation in 1873. Despite having apologised to his uncle for accepting as truth some unspecified accusation against Macleod on the basis of one witness, William Scott a few weeks later gathered names for the petition which called for James Wright's resignation.<sup>94</sup> Walter's brother James, an elder, had quietly told him of the allegations against James Wright.<sup>95</sup> As already recounted, Mr. Tyndell had objected to the way in which Mr. Wright's son Duncan became his colleague and successor. Several of those who left told Walter Macleod they took this step simply because their relatives had done so.<sup>96</sup>

Some of those who left Lauriston Street in 1873 regretted their actions, and were prepared publicly to resile from their departure. This is seen in the case of Alexander Douglas. He had been an elder but in 1873 left with the Forrest Road group. He had subscribed the "Declaration and Protest" of 14th December 1873 and in October 1875 had taken the Bond which incorporated the 1874 *Appendix*. However, in October 1879 he submitted to the discipline of the Lauriston Street Kirk Session in agreeing to be publicly questioned "before the congregation" and to be "rebuked, absolved, and restored to office and privilege". The discipline was administered in front of the congregation because the 1873 Protest had been made publicly.<sup>97</sup> Another elder, George Lebrun, also returned, confessing to having taken up the *fama* against James Wright on hearsay and in the absence of witnesses.<sup>98</sup>

Walter Macleod took the view that those who left in 1873 had sinned heinously and therefore required to repent and come under

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<sup>94</sup> "Observations", pp. 30-31.

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>97</sup> MS "Excerpts from the Session Records of the Congregation of Original Seceders, Lauriston Street, Edinburgh; 20th October 1879", 2 pp.

<sup>98</sup> "Observations", p. 37. Lebrun's return must have been later; see footnote 55 above.

discipline; it was not appropriate to negotiate with them as brethren in good standing. In the paper written for his congregation in the prospect of his death, he warned them against Rev. Henry Paton: "One trained among us but apostate since 1873 has had a watchful eye on the flock, and some years ago attempted to entice some to come within his fangs but without success. More recently he made efforts for a conference with a view to union, but in vain. To parley, even for one hour with such is dangerous. . . . Prayer and watchfulness are necessary to avoid these elements of contention and division, as we have been painfully taught by the outrage of 1873."<sup>99</sup>

Several other factors may have been in play. There seems to have been a degree of credulity on the part of the Forrest Road group, for example in their ready acceptance of Mr. Lambie's account of his separation from Mr. Wright in 1849-50. Perhaps there was also a lack of sensitivity on the part of Revs. Walter Macleod and James Wright about the dilemma facing the protestors of 1873, no matter how wrong their view of the Moderator's immunity from church discipline may have been. We know what Walter Macleod's position was on the subject, but it remains a question whether Mr. Wright would actually have submitted to discipline from the Kirk Session if that had been attempted.

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## **APPENDIX II**

### **THE LAURISTON STREET CONGREGATION AFTER 1944**

AS noted by MacWhirter, in 1944 around twenty-five people continued to meet at Lauriston Street under the leadership of the Session Clerk John Macleod, son of Walter Macleod. This postscript sketches their subsequent history.

#### **1. The continuing influence of Walter Macleod**

The influence of Rev. Walter Macleod remained strong after his death. In later years, it was largely or entirely his sermons that were read to the congregation, and the standards to be maintained were those that he

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<sup>99</sup> "Considerations for professors of the faith – in an evil time, when few, and it may be without the benefit of an ordained ministry for a while," p. 2.

had set.<sup>100</sup> As mentioned in MacWhirter's paper, the prospect of his congregation being without an ordained ministry had led Macleod to prepare a paper with advice on how to respond to such a situation. The congregation was to

beware the least inlet of division . . . it often begins in the way of self-seeking – a notion of superior gifts and abilities which may be the case, for there are diversities of gifts, but that must not be permitted to grow to a breach of unity in mind and conduct. . . . Ambition for superiority is a feeling that is apt to grow out of a vain imagination of self conceit and spiritual pride. . . . There is no assurance of safety from those dangers, but by submitting to the work of the Holy Spirit. . . . He convinces us of our personal demerit, and our weakness apart from his abiding operation preserving us in a humbling sense of our sinful nature, with deep contrition of soul, with a readiness to recognise his gifts as manifest in the prayers and admonitions of brethren, and Charity does not envy because a brother is so endowed but disposes to gratitude to the Giver of all Grace.<sup>101</sup>

As well as seeking unity among the members, Walter Macleod had pondered in 1886 whether a minister could be ordained in the absence of another. He had written:

Holding the necessity of Presbyterian ordination to the office of the preaching ministry . . . one already ordained in that character – one at least – is essential to the act of ordaining another. The non-preaching presbyter I am persuaded from Scripture can join in the act so far as concerns the conveyance instrumentally of the functions of government. Failing then an ordained ministry of the society we belong to, it may be considered whether the case of James Renwick does not furnish a precedent for obtaining ordination from a society professing the Reformed faith, though not of our land, and therefore not guilty of our ecclesiastical and national apostacy.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> James Wright's handwriting was so small that it would have been difficult to have read his sermons without first transcribing them. All the sermons which have dates, indicating that they had been read, are those of Walter Macleod.

<sup>101</sup> "Considerations for professors of the faith – in an evil time, when few, and it may be without the benefit of an ordained ministry for a while," pp. 3-5.

<sup>102</sup> MS note dated 19th September 1886 and initialled "W.M."

It does not appear from the surviving documents that anyone expressed a call to the ministry after 1944, but one wonders what sort of divinity training might have been given had an applicant emerged. It seems unlikely that any outside body would have been seen as acceptable to teach a divinity student.

Whether the congregation had an active Kirk Session after 1944 is not clear. Six elders and five deacons were mentioned in a Session minute dated August 1905.<sup>103</sup> As noted by MacWhirter, there was a functioning Kirk Session in 1912 which recorded its sorrow at Walter Macleod's passing. In 1944, MacWhirter spoke of John Macleod as the "Session Clerk" but he might have been the sole surviving elder. Another elder, Albert Peebles, had died in 1941,<sup>104</sup> and John Macleod himself died in 1949.<sup>105</sup> The Session minutes are not known to be extant.

A high standard was expected from communicant members and it is likely that this continued after 1944. They were expected to give public expression to their "adherence to the Westminster Standards, including the Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, Directory for Public Worship and Form of Church Government, as all parts of the covenanted uniformity attained to be the three kingdoms". In addition, the declaration to which new communicants had to agree stated:

You likewise confess the morality and present seasonableness of public covenanting in obedience to the will of God, and the continued obligation of the National Covenant of Scotland and the Solemn League and Covenant of the three Kingdoms as national vows made to God and from which no created power can absolve them. Also you so far as you have read and understood it, approve of the testimony in our hands as a faithful and seasonable

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<sup>103</sup> MS headed "Lauriston St Session House 7th August 1905".

<sup>104</sup> Albert Peebles died on 19th May 1941 at the age of 78, Scotland's People, Statutory Deaths 685/05 847.

<sup>105</sup> John Macleod, son of Rev. Walter Macleod, was born on 29th October 1873 and died on 1st September 1949 at the age of 75. He had been married twice – to Ann Douglas (died 24th April 1928), and to Agnes Guyer Cockburn (baptised 6th October 1889, married 11th June 1934, died 7th July 1981). He and his second wife were buried in the Comely Bank cemetery in Edinburgh. By his first marriage he had a son, John Norman Macleod, who helped maintain the congregation in later years (see below). See Scotland's People, Statutory Deaths 685/07 0607; Scotland's People, Edinburgh City Council, Comely Bank grave record N-642, 744/00 0493; *The Scotsman*, 3rd September 1949, p. 10; MS "Register of Baptisms of the Associate Synod of Original Seceders, Lauriston St Church, Edinburgh".





*The memorial for Rev. Walter Macleod, Newington Cemetery, Edinburgh.  
Many of the gravestones were deliberately toppled for safety reasons in the 1980s.*

Testimony to the truths of Christ and against the deviations from these truths in former and present times.<sup>106</sup>

New communicants also had to agree to be “subject to the administration” of the Kirk Session, and to read the Bible and pray in private as well as to attend Sabbath and other services. A welcome was then given to the new communicant, with an exhortation to “walk worthy of this high calling” and to avoid bringing “reproach upon the cause of Christ by inconsistency in walk and conversation”.<sup>107</sup>

## **2. The final decline**

It is possible that the drift to other churches seen in Mr. Wright’s time continued after Walter Macleod’s death in 1912. Survivors of the other fragments into which Lauriston Street had broken up did attend other churches as these closed down.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>106</sup> MS form of admission for Isabella Anderson Millar, attested by Mr. Albert Peebles, elder, dated 21st June 1931.

<sup>107</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> For example, Rev. William Scott’s sister Alice Scott attended the Edinburgh congregation of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The esteem in which some of the Edinburgh Secession people were held in other denominations is reflected in the

The slow attrition of the Lauriston Street congregation is seen in falling collections. Although these amounted to £135 in 1946-47, with seat rents taking in £5, this financial situation was not to last.<sup>109</sup> The collections totalled £116 in 1952-53, declining to £107 in the next year.<sup>110</sup> In 1954-55, the church door collections had brought in £89 and seat rents £2, while the various costs associated with the building amounted to only a few pounds; the church officer was being paid a salary of £35. The congregation had £870 in the bank.<sup>111</sup>

Unfortunately no record survives of the group's attitude to the demise in 1956 of the United Original Secession Church, which dated back to the union of 1842 to which Messrs. Lambie and Wright had objected. The larger part of this body had then joined the Free Church in 1852. A minority, however, led by thirteen ministers, declined to join that union, believing that the principle was being lost that Church fellowship required the acknowledging of the obligations of the covenants on succeeding generations. The leading ministers in the minority who opposed the union of 1852 were Revs. John Aitken (Aberdeen), Thomas Manson (Perth), and James Anderson (Carluke). In later years, important ministers in the continuing denomination included Matthew Murray, Robert Morton, and Alexander Smellie. Numerical and doctrinal decline set in rapidly after the First World War and in 1956 the remnant United Original Secession Church joined the Church of Scotland. One congregation – Kilwinning and Saltcoats – joined the Free Church of Scotland instead, while two others, Arbroath and Edinburgh Victoria Terrace, refused to join any denomination and closed down.<sup>112</sup> Several Original Secession people had joined the Free Presbyterian Church prior to 1956.<sup>113</sup>

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article written by Rev. James S. Sinclair on the death of Rev. William Scott's mother, "A Venerable Secession Lady", *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 12 (1907-8), p. 476.

<sup>109</sup> Financial document entitled "19th June 1946-19th June 1947".

<sup>110</sup> "Abstract of Accounts 19th June 1952-19th June 1953" and "Statement of Congregational Account 19th June 1953-19th June 1954."

<sup>111</sup> "Statement of Accounts 19th June 1954 to 19th June 1955."

<sup>112</sup> N. M. de S. Cameron (ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh, 1993), p. 637; *History of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1893-1970* (Inverness, [1973]), p. 247. According to Rev. Sinclair Horne, Edinburgh, the Victoria Terrace congregation was reduced by 1956 to about fifteen elderly people who held a weekly Sabbath afternoon service which he conducted. There was also a United Original Secession congregation in Dundee, for which he took occasional services, which closed down in 1956.

<sup>113</sup> One of these, a Mrs. Matthews, taught in the Glasgow congregation's Sabbath school. See also "The late William Harley, Edinburgh", *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 61 (1956-7), pp. 209-211; "Mrs. L. Harley, *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 79 (1974), pp. 12-13. We are grateful to Mrs. Morag Hymers for assistance on this and several other points.



*The old Protestant Institute, later the Scottish Reformation Society office, on George IV Bridge in Edinburgh, where the last members of the Lauriston Street congregation held services until the mid-1980s.*

At some point after the Second World War, the Lauriston Street congregation moved out of its building and was based at 11 Melbourne Place.<sup>114</sup> This building itself was sold in the mid-1960s with the proceeds being distributed to the members.<sup>115</sup> Services thereafter were held in the hall of the Scottish Reformation Society premises on George IV Bridge.<sup>116</sup> By the mid-1970s the group was sustained financially by

<sup>114</sup> The 1959-1960 "Statement of Accounts" is headed "Original Secession Church, 11 Melbourne Place, Edinburgh". The former church was located at 25 Lauriston Street, set back from the front line of the street. It is now (2014) occupied by the rear section of the Portsburgh Court student accommodation complex, run by the UNITE organisation, which was built around eight years ago on what had previously been an empty site.

<sup>115</sup> The 1965-1966 "Abstract of Accounts" has a line under Income: "Sale of Melbourne Place property £2,925". The June 1966-June 1967 "Abstract of Accounts" has a line under Expenditure: "Value of Melbourne Place disbursed to members £2,925"; and also a line: "Electricity A/c (Melbourne Place) 1:18:6".

<sup>116</sup> "Original Secession Congregation. Abstract of Accounts 20th June 1966-19th June 1967". The rent paid to the Scottish Reformation Society was £39.

interest on their investments and by not having the overheads associated with a building of their own.<sup>117</sup> Old age took its toll and by the early 1980s the congregation was reduced to single figures. John Norman Macleod, son of John Macleod, was the Treasurer. According to Rev. Sinclair Horne, the services were conducted by a Mr. Leggat or Legget, resident in Corstorphine, and they ceased when he was taken ill. The precise date of cessation is unclear but notes in the margins of Rev. Walter Macleod's sermons indicate they were still being read to the remnant of his congregation as late as spring 1986.<sup>118</sup> John Norman Macleod died in 1989.<sup>119</sup> Thus ended the direct line of the Secession after two hundred and fifty years.

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<sup>117</sup> The "Abstract of Accounts" for June 1973-June 1974 shows collections of £30, a rent of £62 paid for use of the Scottish Reformation Society hall, and over £3,000 of funds held. Most of the funds were in a special investment of nearly £2,500, interest on which generated £178.

<sup>118</sup> The last dated sermon is Sabbath 27th April 1986, see "Lectures on Habakkuk delivered 1876 by the Revd Walter Macleod minister of Original Secession Church, Lauriston St, Edinburgh. Volume 2, Book 27".

<sup>119</sup> Born on 31st March 1903, John Norman Macleod died on 3rd August 1989 at the age of 86. He had been married to Robertina Bain, who died on 2nd November 1977, aged 76. The couple had a child, Iain Douglas Macleod, born in 1938, who sadly died in 1941. See Scotland's People, Statutory Deaths 685/01 0367; K. I. Ransome, *Newington Cemetery Monumental Inscriptions, Edinburgh* (Scottish Genealogical Society, Edinburgh, 2005), entry Q.94 (on CD-ROM); "Register of Baptisms of the Associate Synod of Original Seceders, Lauriston St Church, Edinburgh".