
Short Note: Letters of Agnes Stobo

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The witness and history of the cluster of fragmented Anti-Burgher congregations, outside the Original Secession Church set up in 1842, has been described in previous articles.¹ This short note discusses the correspondence of a prominent woman, Agnes Macleod née Stobo, from one of these congregations – that of Rev. James Wright of Lauriston Street. Her letter to the Free Church leader Thomas Guthrie, D.D. (1803–1873) is given in full in an appendix. Many of the ‘last Anti-Burghers’ were either descended from her or connected to her by marriage, and her correspondence sheds light, not only on the spirituality and ecclesiastical sensibilities of this ‘mother in Israel’, but also on perceptions that must have been common throughout the grouping.

1. Agnes Stobo (1791–1848)

Agnes Stobo was almost certainly the woman of that name – the daughter of Thomas Stobo – mentioned in the baptismal register for the parish of Greenlaw, Berwickshire, as baptised on 1st July 1791.² She died on 25th March 1848 at the early age of 56, according to the St Cuthbert’s parish register of deaths.³ Her father Thomas outlived her, dying aged 90 the following year. He was descended from a Covenanter John Stobo, and an account of his own religious experiences was published immediately after his death.⁴ Agnes’ husband John Macleod was born about 1790 and was a native of Dunvegan and a cousin of the famous Rev. Roderick Macleod, Snizort. He was a journeyman joiner and presumably came to Edinburgh for work. They had eight children, the second of whom was born in Forres about 1817, but latterly they lived in Edinburgh at

¹ A. MacWhirter, ‘The Last Anti-Burghers: a footnote to Secession history’, *Scottish Reformation Society Historical Journal (SRSHJ)*, Vol. 4 (2014), pp. 275-340 (with additional material); N. Campbell, ‘Rev. James Wright of Infirmary Street and Lauriston Street, Edinburgh’, *SRSHJ*, Vol. 5 (2015), pp. 145-209; N. Campbell and D. Somerset, ‘A note on James Wright and Andrew Lambie’, *SRSHJ*, Vol. 6 (2016), pp. 247-257; N. Campbell, ‘Walter Macleod: a wise penman’, *SRSHJ*, Vol. 7 (2017), pp. 271-281; N. Campbell, ‘Walter Macleod: missionary in France (1855–6)’, *SRSHJ*, Vol. 8 (2018), pp. 185-195.

² National Records of Scotland. Old Parish Registers, Births 743/10 124, p. 124.

³ National Records of Scotland. Old Parish Registers, Deaths 685/2 610, p. 161, St Cuthbert’s. The 1841 census gives Agnes’s age as 45, but the ages in that are approximate; see footnote 6.

⁴ *The Religious History and Experience of Thomas Stobo, tailor* (Edinburgh: James Cowan, 1849), 48 pages. Thomas was born in 1758, married to Isabella Bone (b. 18th August 1764) in 1781, and had twelve children by her.

69 Clerk Street. John outlived Agnes by many years and died on 2nd October 1870, aged 80, at 112 St Leonard's Street.⁵

The children of John and Agnes were as follows. (1) Isabella Macleod born about 1815. She married John Taylor and died in Canada in 1841. (2) Agnes Macleod born about 1817 in Forres. She married Archibald Simpson and had a daughter Jessie Simpson who was the wife of her first cousin William Scott (see below). (3) Margaret Macleod born about 1819. (4) Jessie Macleod born about 1821 in Edinburgh. She married Alexander William Scott and had sons Walter Scott, who was ultimately a minister in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and William Scott, who was born in England about 1847 and married his cousin Jessie Simpson (above). William was one of the 'last Anti-Burgher' ministers. (5) Thomas Macleod. (6) William Macleod. (7) James Macleod born about 1829 in Edinburgh. He married Eliza Arnot and had a daughter Agnes Macleod who was the wife of Henry Paton, another of the 'last Anti-Burgher' ministers. (8) Walter Macleod, born about 1832 in Edinburgh.⁶ Walter was another of the 'last Anti-Burgher' ministers. It was Walter who transcribed his mother's letters and wrote a preface to the transcript, with a view to publication.⁷ He gave the notebook the title "Gleanings" from My Mother's Correspondence, etc.⁸

Agnes and her family worshipped in the congregation of Rev. Thomas M'Crie (senior)⁹ until his death in 1835.¹⁰ Presumably they continued in the Davie Street congregation under the ministry of his son Thomas M'Crie (junior) until the union of 1842. From what she says in her letter to Thomas Guthrie, it appears that Agnes objected to the failure of the Burgher section of the 1842 union to acknowledge their sin in the Burgess Oath controversy a century earlier. She must, therefore, have joined James Wright's Infirmary

⁵ National Records of Scotland, Statutory Registers, Deaths 685/5 611.

⁶ The entry for the family in the 1841 census states that Agnes and her husband John were aged 45 and 50 respectively. Living with them were daughters Agnes (aged 25), Margaret (20), Jessie (20), Thomas (apprentice tailor), William (15, apprentice book-binder), James (12, apprentice cabinetmaker). National Records of Scotland. Census 1841 685/02 011/00 009.

⁷ The letters were intended to have been printed for private circulation, but this never happened; see *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 12, no. 12, April 1908, p. 476; Vol. 21, no. 1, May 1916, p. 19.

⁸ The notebook – hereafter MS *Gleanings* – measures 17 cm by 10 cm and has a dark green hardback cover with unlined pages numbered by hand up to p. 189, although the text finishes on p. 155.

⁹ Dr Thomas M'Crie (1772–1835) is best known today for his *Life of John Knox* (1812). He was minister of the Davie Street, Edinburgh, congregation of the Constitutional Associate Presbytery Church. The congregation had been forced to relinquish their Potterrow building in 1809. In 1827 the two Anti-Burgher groups, i.e., the Synod of Protestors and the Constitutional Associate Presbytery united to form the Associate Synod of Original Seceders. M'Crie (senior) did not live to see the 1842 union of the last-named body, including his congregation, with a Burgher fragment. This was the union to which Rev. James Wright and his followers at Infirmary Street objected. See D. Scott (ed.), *Annals and Statistics of the Original Secession Church: till its disruption and union with the Free Church of Scotland in 1852* (Edinburgh, 1886), pp. 324, 529–536.

¹⁰ Agnes' daughter Jessie 'remembered hearing the last sermon he [M'Crie] preached, on the Sabbath previous to his death (1835), from the text, "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire" (Matt. iii. 12).' *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 12, p. 476.

St/Lauriston St congregation at that juncture, presumably with her family. It was a step that was to be of great significance for the subsequent history of the grouping.

2. The preface

The preface in MS *Gleanings* was written by Walter Macleod and runs from page 2 to page 5. It is dated January 1850. In it, Walter expressed regret that he and his siblings had not made better use of the time that they had with their mother. He wrote:

She could speak upon religious subjects with an eloquence and faithfulness, that often made me wonder; and in my ignorance I sometimes thought she would get herself laughed at for talking so much and so earnestly about religion. I was not then aware that the friendship of the world is enmity with God...

She might have showed us more of the good things that God had given to her; but we discouraged her by displaying our disrespect for those truths she loved so well to rehearse.¹¹

Walter maintained that when believers wrote to each other there should be ‘news’ of a spiritual nature to share:

Have they nothing to say of the state of their souls? Have they no news from the heavenly country – no sweet discovery, made among the hidden treasures of the Word, to tell of? Have they no precious word of reproof, exhortation or comfort to transmit for the good of their correspondents’ soul? My mother seldom, if ever, allowed a letter to go without some of these good things.¹²

Walter commended his mother’s use of ‘simple’ and ‘Scriptural’ expressions that were ‘consequently true and valuable’. This was in sharp contrast to a genre of religious letters ‘wherein the writers indulge in fanciful and ornamental expressions, produced by a sickening sentimentalism; but whose pages are altogether void of the distinguishing marks of vital godliness.’¹³

Walter also dropped an intriguing hint that Agnes was preparing an autobiographical work. ‘If my mother had been spared for some time longer, she might have written an account of the Lord’s wonderful mercy to her soul, as I know she had a book prepared for this purpose; but it pleased God to call her home to the rest that remaineth for all His people, and for which she longed so ardently.’¹⁴ Walter does not, however, indicate what the nature of the book was, e.g. a notebook, or what progress she had made toward completion.

Walter was perhaps sixteen when his mother died, and was around eighteen when he wrote this preface in January 1850. He later dated his conversion to December 1852, nearly three years afterwards, but he was evidently already much exercised about the things of religion.¹⁵ His mother’s death must have been a great loss to him. His admiration for his mother’s religion

¹¹ MS *Gleanings*, pp. 2-3.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 3.

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁵ Campbell, ‘Walter Macleod: missionary in France (1855–6)’, pp. 186-187.



The entrance to the lane off Lauriston Street, Edinburgh which led to the church where Agnes and John Macleod's family were to play a major role.

suggests that he was still attending the Lauriston Street congregation, and his first employment seems to have been as a teacher in Canongate Parochial School.¹⁶ Sometime later, however, before July 1855 he was teaching at a school near Plean House, south of Stirling. The Governor of Simpson's Asylum near Plean was Ebenezer Johnston (1796–1864) who had been ordained to the ministry in the *quoad sacra* chapel connected with the Asylum in 1839, and had joined the Free Church at the Disruption of 1843. Johnston continued to conduct Free Church services in the chapel until 1860. His preaching was described as 'massive and elaborate', and it was presumably here that Walter became attached to the Free Church.¹⁷ At the end of 1855 Walter commenced as a Free Church missionary at Landernau, Brittany, and it was not until his return in 1856 that he rejoined the Lauriston Street congregation, becoming a communicant member in April 1857.¹⁸ He seems, therefore, to have had a period of uncertainty over Secession principles during the mid-1850s.

3. Family letters

There are fifty-two letters in total in the notebook. Fifty are from Agnes to her family;¹⁹ one is a reply from her daughter Isabella;²⁰ while another is from Agnes to Dr Thomas Guthrie.²¹ The first transcribed letter is headed 1837 and is to her daughter Isabella and Isabella's husband John Taylor.²² A letter dated 8th March 1848 is described as her last by Walter in a header.²³

The correspondence reveals a number of sad events among her family. Her daughter Jessie, and Jessie's husband Alexander Scott,²⁴ had the sad duty

¹⁶ MacWhirter, 'The Last Anti-Burghers: a footnote to Secession history', p. 299.

¹⁷ William Gifford, *Memorials of the Life and Work of the Rev. William Johnston, with a Critique* (Edinburgh, 1876), pp. 4-5.

¹⁸ Campbell, 'Walter Macleod: missionary in France (1855-6)', pp. 187, 195. MacWhirter rather gives the impression that it was only after his return from France that Walter Macleod became connected with the Lauriston Street congregation, but this cannot be correct, 'The Last Anti-Burghers: a footnote to Secession history', p. 299.

¹⁹ In her letters to her family, Agnes signs herself 'Agnes Stobo'.

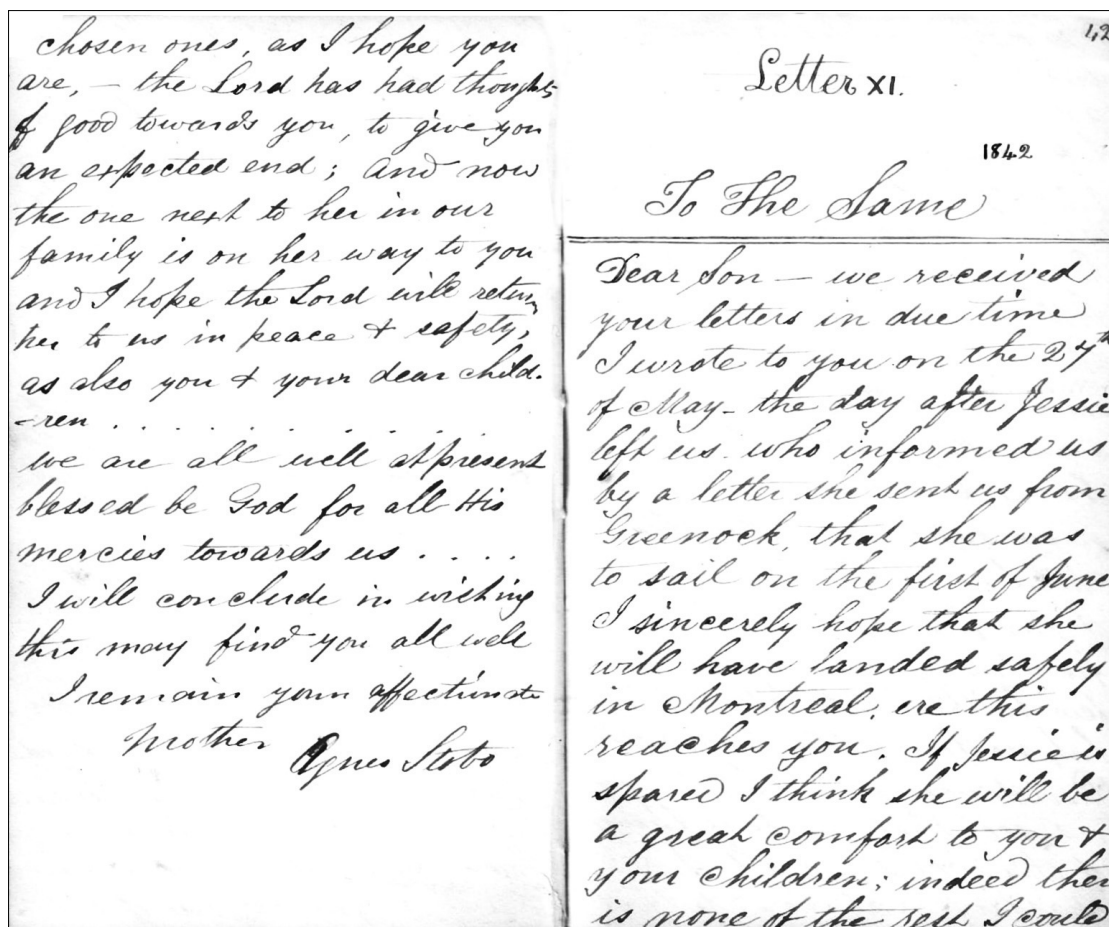
²⁰ MS *Gleanings*, pp. 103-107.

²¹ *ibid.*, pp. 141-150.

²² *ibid.*, pp. 6-9.

²³ *ibid.*, p. 136.

²⁴ Alexander William Scott was born in Banff in December 1814. Old Parish Registers, Births 147/00 0050 0071. He died on 17th November 1887. He had been an accountant in



A page from Agnes Macleod née Stobo's letters as they were transcribed by her son Walter Macleod.

of burying a child in Canada. Their son, Sandy, had died on 8th July 1844 having become ill the previous day.²⁵ He was buried in Three Rivers, near Montreal.²⁶ Sandy's remains were laid to rest beside those of his aunt Isabella who had died around November 1841.²⁷

An insight into Agnes Stobo's spirituality is to be found in a letter of 1842 to John Taylor in which she speaks of her heart being 'overwhelmed with grief' arising from fear that she would be 'separated from a holy and just God because of my grievous sins and transgressions' and because of the 'enmity' that she found remaining in her heart against God and his ways. She added that she was 'looking death in the face every day'. She continued: '...death, without assurance of our interest in Christ is very fearful indeed but happy are they truly, who can go to God as their father and friend in Christ Jesus. My heart's desire is that we may all meet in that blessed abode, where we will never need to part more.'²⁸

the army and a paymaster's clerk. Statutory Register Deaths, 685/5 930. Jessie died on 11th December, 1907, aged 87. *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 12, p. 476.

²⁵ MS *Gleanings*, p. 79.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 80.

²⁷ Agnes received a letter from Isabella's husband John Taylor on 2nd December 1841 intimating Isabella's death. MS *Gleanings*, p. 28.

²⁸ MS *Gleanings*, pp. 59-60.

On another occasion she reflected on the impact of health and its absence on people's concern about their souls.²⁹ 'Health is a great blessing if we improve it for God's glory, for our own good and the good of others', she wrote. She observes, however, how ready people are 'in health and prosperity to forget both God and ourselves'. Trouble and affliction had often been 'the means of hedging up our way with thorns, so that we cannot find the comfort in the sinful pleasures of this world that we might have had, if in health.' She goes on to state that 'upon serious reflection' there was no true satisfaction in these pleasures, for 'all is vanity and vexation of spirit'.³⁰

A desire to maintain discernment at the same time as courtesy led her to advise her daughter Isabella (still in Scotland at that stage) to beware of companions who lacked clarity about the errors of the Roman Catholic Church.³¹ This advice was tendered in two letters dated 1837. A friend called Mrs Hogg had attended a service at the Roman Catholic chapel where a baptismal service had taken place. This was to accompany their mutual friend, a Sergeant Coateley. She wrote that she had no doubt that Mrs Hogg was 'a very decent, sober woman and of good morals' but that she could not be 'a very strict adherent to the principles of the Church of Scotland, or she would not have stretched out her arm to help either man or woman in their infidelity or unbelief ... I am grieved to the heart to think that people of good understanding in matters of religion should be so far left to themselves, as to countenance idolaters in their way of worship, be they ever so kind and good relations.'³² In a further letter, Agnes acknowledged that Mrs Hogg 'went in the simplicity of her heart' but if she studied the Bible more closely and was taught by the Holy Spirit she 'would be made to see that she had done wrong'. She acknowledged, too, that Sergeant Coateley seemed to be 'a man of a kind and friendly disposition' and had written to Isabella and her husband when they were in trouble.³³

4. Letter to Thomas Guthrie

Agnes' letter to Dr Thomas Guthrie, is a tilt at a public figure best remembered today for his social concern in providing practical support to the poor. Guthrie also played a major role in the creation of the Free Church of Scotland in 1843, opposing the Patronage system and after the Disruption raising money by itinerant campaigning for the building of manses. He took up the Temperance cause but his effort to ameliorate the grinding living conditions of the urban poor was his main achievement. This was best represented by his system of Ragged Schools. This fed, educated and trained young people for work.³⁴ The schools were described by a recent writer as 'instrumental in rescuing thousands of destitute children from a life of poverty and abuse'.³⁵

²⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

³⁰ The words are from the Scripture in Ecclesiastes 1:14.

³¹ *MS Gleanings*, pp. 9-16.

³² *ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

³³ *ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

³⁴ N.M. de S. Cameron (ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 381-382.

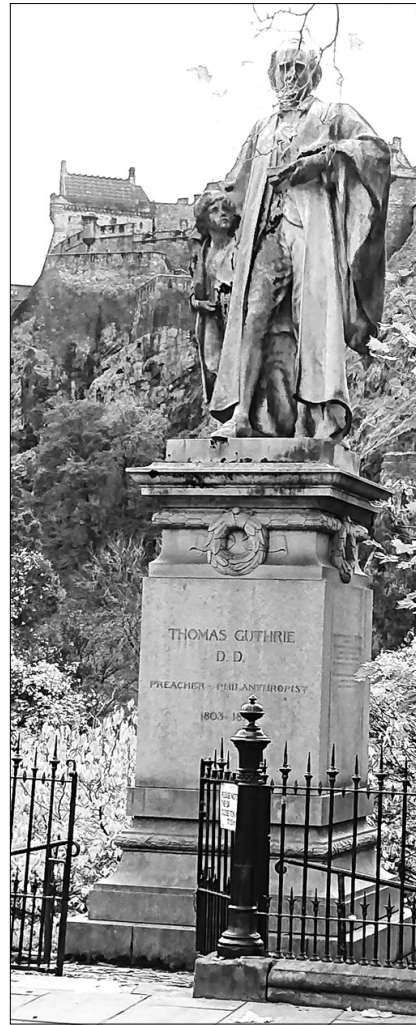
³⁵ Andrew J. Murray, *A Mission of Mercy, The Life and legacy of Dr Thomas Guthrie* (n.p. n.d.), p. 3.

Agnes' letter makes no reference to his philanthropic energies and achievements but instead focuses on what she saw as errors of ecclesiastical judgement by him and other Free Church leaders. She excoriates the lack of apology for having remained under the system of Patronage while campaigning against it, and she questions Dr Candlish's loyalty to the subordinate standards of his Church.³⁶

She also criticises Guthrie for allowing ministers of unclear doctrine from other denominations to occupy his pulpit, particularly those of the Secession, who in her view had abandoned Scriptural principles. She appears to refer to the Original Secession Church, set up in 1842 but not joined by Mr Wright and his supporters.³⁷ This denomination had been formed by the merger of conservative wings of the Burgher and Anti-Burgher sub-denominations. Guthrie was to go further than courting the Original Secession. By the end of his life he came to 'virtually accept the Voluntarism of the United Presbyterians. While praiseworthy in principle, he moved to believing that in practice the Establishment Principle led to the government dominating the church.'³⁸

Guthrie's sons stated:

Theoretically he never abandoned the belief, that circumstances may exist in which it is lawful and expedient for a Church to receive endowment from the State. 'I have no objection,' he said in 1862, 'to join the Established Church in point of principle. I believe our successors won't hold the high establishment principle that we do; but I am to carry it with me to the grave.' At the same time he frankly avowed a change in his views as to the value and desirableness of a State connection. 'As to the duty of the State to bestow, and of the Church to receive, endowments' (to use his own words in 1872), 'that is a matter of opinion. I had an opinion once on that subject. It is very much modified now, to say the least of it; and the only thing I am sorry about is, that I cannot declare myself an out and-out Voluntary, and see if they (the opponents of union with the United Presbyterian Church) would turn me out of the Church on that account!'³⁹



The statue in Princes Street, Edinburgh, in memory of Dr Thomas Guthrie, social reform campaigner and Free Church leader.

³⁶ MS *Gleanings*, p. 146.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

³⁸ *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, p. 382.

³⁹ David K. Guthrie and Charles K. Guthrie, *Autobiography of Thomas Guthrie, D.D. and Memoir* (Detroit, 1878), pp. 727-728.

Agnes also questions Guthrie's claims that the Free Church had faced persecution. It is not clear which use of the term 'persecution' was being referred to by Agnes. Guthrie had seen the decision of the civil court in the second Auchterarder case (9th August 1842) as being an example of persecution. His view of it was that 'in certain circumstances, the Courts of the Church were liable to be coerced by the penalties of law in the performance of their spiritual duties'. In a letter to a colleague at the time he added: 'Some of us entertain very decided opinions about the unlawfulness of the Church continuing in connection with a State which insists on Erastian conditions, and draws the sword of persecution against the reclaiming Church'.⁴⁰ Guthrie had also predicted persecution aimed at compelling ministers who came out in 1843 to leave not only their manses but their districts. 'Endeavours were made by certain land-owners in these localities to stamp out what they regarded as an obnoxious sect. Attempting to make the rights of property overbear the rights of conscience, all offers to purchase sites at their market price, for either churches or manses, were, on certain estates, peremptorily refused.' A campaign eventually led to Parliament setting up in 1847 a Select Committee to examine the situation of continued refusal by landlords to provide sites. Guthrie gave evidence to the Committee.⁴¹

Given Guthrie's heart for the poor and practical sympathy for them, it is important to note that Agnes Stobo's critical letter never takes issue with his practical Christianity. It is clear as the following extract shows, that she was appalled by the destitution around her in Edinburgh.

This summer has been hard on the labouring classes, provisions have been at a moderate price, but there was no work to be got, so that many have been in great want and misery – pining away for want. Many a sore heart I have had, to see four or five sober-like young men singing on the street for a scanty subsistence. But we have great reason to be thankful, that although we have not had constant work yet we have not been in want of either meat or money. Many were afraid of a late harvest owing to the wet weather in July and part of August; but we have now had several weeks of very fine weather, which is bringing the crops so fast forward that the farmers are coming here from Fife and other places for shearers, and the stockyards are filling fast so that there is an appearance of plenty. How great is the goodness of God to us sinful rebels, who are daily rebelling against Him – nor do we acknowledge His goodness to us. How different are men in places of power who are oppressing the poor on every hand – but woe to them that lay house to house and land to land,⁴² until there be no place for the poor.⁴³

The congregation was aware of the poverty in the country at large. The early 1860s were a time of great poverty and a special collection was made in February 1863 for the destitute in Lancashire and in the Isle of Skye, the money to be equally divided between the two areas.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 375-376.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 403-444, 408-409.

⁴² Agnes appears to be using phrases from Isaiah 5:8 which reads: 'Woe unto them that join house to house, *that* lay field to field, till *there be* no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!'

⁴³ MS *Gleanings*, pp. 71-73.

5. Conclusion

Agnes Stobo's letters illustrate the views of the ordinary hearer in the Lauriston Street church pew. They show the trials of frequent bereavement and widely-scattered families that were so common at that time. Her affectionate correspondence with her son-in-law John Taylor is noteworthy, continuing even after his wife's death. Her letter to Dr Guthrie challenged the policy of cooperation with other churches where doctrinal issues were at stake, and serves to highlight some of the problems that were already apparent in the early Free Church. The preface to the letters by her son Walter Macleod sheds light on his own early spiritual experience and development.

Appendix

To the Revd Dr Guthrie⁴⁴

Sir. Being as I hope a sincere well-wisher for God's glory, cause and interest, as also having a desire for the salvation of men; and knowing that we in this land of Scotland have grievously departed from the Truth as it is in Jesus by breaking the Covenant that our fathers made with God, who said unto us as a land and nation, as a church and people, 'I am the Lord your God' by giving us His laws, His statutes, and His judgements which are contained in His Holy Word of Truth; but we have forsaken His laws and His ordinances now for a long time; and as if all these grievous sins and transgressions had been too little, our Kings and Queens have now for a long time usurped Christ's royal crown and prerogative, those who had the names of ministers did not enter in by the door, but climbed up some other way, so that they became thieves and robbers, and so did spoil the flock of God's heritage; so that God was provoked by our heinous sins and ingratitude to depart away from us, and more especially from the public ordinances; for where is His power or His presence to be seen in them? For the walk and conversation of ministers is not becoming the gospel of Jesus and by maintaining a friendly correspondence with those are enemies to God; who are deceiving the people by many errors and delusions – by holding forth that man has a free-will to do that which is good, so that he partly merits his own salvation, which is just according to the natural man's wish.

I have no desire to enlarge, as I am only an obscure and unlearned person; but this I have to say, that I did rejoice in the noble step you had taken in coming out from that bondage of patronage that you lay under. And after doing so, I expected that you would have made a public acknowledgement of your sins in coming in upon God's heritage not by Christ who is the door, but by those who have no good will to Christ's Kingly Government. But Dr Candlish says it was only in childish innocency that you were under patronage; but I have told you already what you were by entering in that way.⁴⁵ And you Sir

⁴⁴ MS *Gleanings*, pp. 141-150. The letter is undated, but was probably written about the end of 1845.

⁴⁵ On 9th May 1844, Dr Candlish had spoken at the United Secession Synod as part of a Free Church delegation. A newspaper report of his speech described how he asked the Synod to consider the feelings of the Free Church toward the Establishment, different as they were to their own. He asked them also to consider those who had opposed patronage

who seemed to be one of the main stoops of the Free Church, have at different times left your congregation to be taught by men of base principles – to be fed with unwholesome food. Sir, surely you are not ignorant of the fact that the Anti-burghers excommunicated the Burghers, and then, after many years, without either the one or the other acknowledging their sins – for certainly one of them must have been in error – they joined in communion like loving brethren; and ever since they seemed to be given up of God to blindness of mind, and hardness of heart. Yet you have friendly intercourse with them, and allow them to feed your flock, whom you, & every lover of the truth ought to shun; for the Scripture sayeth ‘Come out from among them, my people and be separate, and I will receive you, sayeth the Lord God Almighty’. They by their cunning and hypocrisy wish to alter our famous standards, the Confession of Faith etc. But what, sir, may be their reason, do you think, for this?

Sir, I will give you my mind of it; I think their reason is that God’s laws are too strict & holy for the natural man; it is too heavy a burden for the natural stock of dead works; so that they would fain have something more suitable to their carnal reason. I hear also that Dr Candlish is agreeable that our standards may be altered.⁴⁶ Sir, what shall we say to these things but that we are left to our carnal reason, and are taught by the inventions of men, and are left to grope in the dark at noon day.

Sir, there is another class that you have given great praise to, which has a root and many branches; and which, you say, has done more for the spread of the Gospel than any other class of Christians. Sir, the word Gospel is easily said; but if conditional election and to be in a state of grace today and of damnation tomorrow be gospel, then you have said nothing amiss. I will at this time conclude after giving you a few texts of Scripture, which I think are answerable to the most of you. ‘And the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money, yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? None evil can come upon us. Thus sayeth the Lord concerning the Prophets that make my people err; that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even purpose war against him. Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision, and it shall be dark unto you that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them. Therefore shall Zion for your sakes shall be ploughed as a field. There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst of her; they have devoured souls; her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things; they have put no

before the Disruption: ‘There were these 500 or 600 men, who, under an innocent and childish delusion it might be said, considered that the Established Church was free, and they were pleasing themselves with a dream of liberty’, *The Scotsman*, Wednesday 15th May 1844, p. 4.

⁴⁶ In a speech during an event in July 1843 in Edinburgh to commemorate the bicentenary of the Westminster Assembly, Dr Candlish stated that he would rejoice if there were ‘periodical or yearly meetings’ of ‘the several Evangelical Churches uniting in a protest against prevailing errors, for mutual consultation, for the revision of their several codes of opinion, and for endeavouring to come to a common understanding’; see William Wilson and Robert Rainy, *Memorials of Robert Smith Candlish, D.D.* (Edinburgh, 1880), p. 312. It is not clear if this was the specific instance that Agnes had in mind.

difference between the holy and profane; neither have they showed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my Sabbaths and I am profaned among them.’

Many at this day are crying out for peace, but there is no true peace without holiness. But blessed be God He will always have a remnant on whom He will set His mark; who sigh and cry for all the abominations done in the land. ‘And they that get their souls for a prey, and they that escape of them, shall escape, and shall be on the mountains, like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning everyone for his iniquity.’

There has been a great cry amongst you about being persecuted. But if getting great sums of money both at home and abroad, from all ranks, so that many as it were, give you their last penny, and also to get all men to speak well of you and to run after you – if this be persecution, then it is a new kind of persecution that I never read or heard of before. So that many of you are lifted up with a foolish levity, even at religious meetings. But Sir, remember that you must soon give an account of your stewardship, which will not be a secret trial with shut doors, as Dr Brown’s was, but will be the most public that ever was – even before men and angels.⁴⁷

A lover of the Truth.

⁴⁷ John Brown, D.D. (1784–1858) was professor of Exegetical Theology at the divinity hall of the United Secession Synod; see *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, pp. 100-101. He was libelled on five separate counts of heresy at the July 1845 Synod and acquitted. The atonement controversy and his part in it is analysed in Ian Hamilton, *The Erosion of Calvinist Orthodoxy: Drifting from the Truth in Confessional Scottish Churches* (Christian Focus Publications, 2010).