



## The Burning Bush—Online article archive

### The Present Struggle for the Gospel in Scotland - Part 1



A report on the split within the Free Church of Scotland which has seen a remnant withdrawing from what was once the Free Church of Scotland and reconstituting itself as The Free Church of Scotland Continuing.

It has not made the headlines in the rest of the United Kingdom and few Christians are aware of the significant series of events that has been unfolding in the land of John Knox. In the past we have referred to the evil utterances of one, Rev. Donald MacLeod, a leading minister in the Free Church of Scotland. Once considered the darling of the Reformed Faith "Intelligentsia" within the United

Kingdom, he lost something of his shine when modernistic trends were discerned within his writings and, equally alarming, accusations of immorality were levelled against him. Attempts made by leading ministers within the Free Church of Scotland to bring charges against MacLeod were hindered and frustrated by MacLeod's supporters who were in the majority within the church. In the end, it was those who sought to maintain the standards of God's Word who were forced to withdraw from the corrupted denomination. This took place in Edinburgh on January 19th, 2000.

The following extracts are taken from the special January Commission of Assembly edition of the "Free Church Foundations," the magazine of the Free Church Defence Association (FCDA)

We trust that this report will stir our readers to pray for those who have taken a stand for the Crown Rights of the Lord Jesus in Scotland and also hearten all who love the cause of truth, that God is still moving His people to adhere faithfully to His cause, irrespective of the cost or the reproach.

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**A description of the final moments before the ministers charged with obstinate refusal to obey the church courts were suspended.**

"Seeing that the 22 Ministers had already effectively been found guilty, and that it was widely circulated both in The Monthly Record (FC magazine) and in the Press that they would finally be suspended sine die, the 22 knew that they would never get back into their pulpits again. Once the May Assembly came, they would be formally put out, but they were effectively out now. What was the point of waiting four months and weakening the pastoral bond between people and pastor? The Commission had already condemned their actions which they were duty bound by Scripture and their ordination vows to pursue. There was no option for the 22 Ministers but to formally decline to recognise the Commission as a valid Court of the Free Church. Despite being shouted at by the Clerk and attempts being made to drown out his voice by the stamping of feet, the Rev J A Gillies (a former Moderator) manfully read a Protest and Declinature.



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It was sad to see the Principal Clerk, Professor J L Mackay, running to the front of the Assembly Hall to switch off Mr Gillies' microphone. When Mr Gillies tried to lay the Protest on the Clerk's table for signing he was physically pushed away from the table by the Principal Clerk. However, the Rev Harry Woods got down on his knees before the Commission, the Rev William Macleod placed his brief case on Mr Woods' back and there all the 22 ministers were able to sign the document. Then having again placed the declinature on the Clerk's table the 22 Ministers, joined by 6 loyal elders who were also Commissioners, left the building.

The Declinature stated: "We, the undersigned, protest against this Commission having reached a finding of relevancy in regard to Libels which are based on matters not condemned by the Word of God or the standards of this Church, and we further protest that, by this action, the Commission have disqualified themselves from being a duly constituted Commission of the General Assembly of this Church; wherefore we, in our name and in behalf of all who may adhere to us hereby decline the jurisdiction of this Commission, declaring that we shall not be bound by any judgements pronounced in regard to us, and that we resolve to meet as a Commission of the General Assembly in a manner consonant with the constitution of the Church and with the Act of Assembly appointing this Commission. And the more effectually to carry out the said resolution, we call upon all members of this Commission who wish to remain loyal to the constitution of the Free Church of Scotland to assemble in the Magdalen Chapel in the Cowgate of Edinburgh at 9.45 pm to continue in a constitutional manner the present sederunt of the Commission".

As the Ministers and Elders left the Assembly Hall they were met by over 200 concerned supporters who spontaneously began singing the forty-sixth Psalm. Together they proceeded to the Magdalen Chapel, notable for its connections with the Scottish Reformation, and which later was used as a mortuary for the Covenanter Martyrs. There, seeing the Moderator's chair was empty, the Rev J A Gillies was called to the Chair to continue the session of the Commission begun in the Free Assembly Hall earlier that evening. It was not a new Assembly, or even a new session of the Commission. It certainly was not the beginning of a new Church. It was the Free Church Commission of Assembly going on with its business, but this time with a desire to adhere faithfully to the Constitution.

Mr Gillies made a formal Statement, and the forty-third Psalm, the Psalm sung at the beginning of the first Free Church Assembly in 1843, was given out. After worship, the business carried on as before. As the Clerk's chairs were also vacant, the Rev John MacLeod (Tartat) was appointed Principal Clerk, and the Rev Graeme Craig (Lochalsh & Glenshiel) Assistant Clerk.

After a brief narrative of events was read, the Declinature, tabled earlier that day was read. Then the Declaration of Reconstitution of the Historic Free Church of Scotland was adopted. After Mr Ferrier had led the Commission in prayer, each Minister and Elder present was solemnly asked if he agreed with its terms, and after acknowledging his agreement, they signed the Declaration. In total 23 Ministers and 18 Elders signed it."



Rev. John Gilles signing the Declaration of Reconstitution of the Free Church of Scotland in the Magdalen Chapel, Edinburgh on 19th January 2000.