

AUSTRALIAN JOINT COPYING PROJECT

FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

Records, 1851-54

Reel M1194

**National Library of Scotland
George IV Bridge
Edinburgh EH1 1EW**

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State Library of New South Wales**

Filmed: 1981

HISTORICAL NOTE

The Free Church of Scotland was formed in 1843, following several years of controversy within the Church of Scotland. Led by Thomas Chalmers, Evangelicals attacked the patronage system, which allowed landowners to select ministers, and called for the separation of church and state in Scotland. About 450 ministers left the Church of Scotland and set about building new churches, schools and manses throughout the country. A Sustentation Fund was created, to which Free Church congregations contributed according to their means, and each minister received an equal dividend. In 1900 the majority of Free Church congregations joined with the United Presbyterian Church to form the United Free Church of Scotland.

The Free Church set up a Colonial Committee in 1843 and it encouraged dissenting ministers to migrate to India, Canada, Australia and other colonies. The convenor of the committee from 1848 to 1855 was John Bonar (1799-1863). Bonar, who came from a family of ministers, was educated at the University of Edinburgh and was ordained in 1846. He was the minister of the Renfield Street Free Church in Glasgow from 1848 to 1855. He was the leading advocate for extending the influence of the Free Church to the colonies. In 1849 Bonar reported that in the previous year missionaries and teachers had been sent to Australia, New Zealand, the West Indies, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and the Mediterranean.

The 1843 Disruption led to debates among Presbyterians in Australia over their relationship with the Established Church in Scotland. In 1846 the Australian Synod resolved to retain their links, which led to three ministers breaking away and forming the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. In Port Phillip a Free Presbyterian Synod was created in 1848, while Free Church presbyteries were set up in Tasmania (1853) and South Australia (1854). The original seceders were soon joined by a number of Free Church immigrants, including John Gardner (1850), William Nicolson (1851), Adam Cairns (1853) and Alexander McIntyre (1853). In time, most of the Australian Free Churches merged with United Presbyterian Churches, forming the Presbyterian Church of Victoria (1859), Presbyterian Church of New South Wales (1865) and Presbyterian Church of South Australia (1865). However, in each of these colonies Free Church congregations continued to exist and in 1913 they united to form the Free Presbyterian Church of Australia.

Most of the Scottish settlers who arrived in New Zealand belonged to the Free Church. In 1848 Dunedin was founded by Thomas Burns and William Cargill as a Free Church settlement and Presbyterian influence on the development of Otago was very strong. The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in New Zealand was formed in 1893.

Note: Other records of the Free Church of Scotland can be found in the archives of the Church of Scotland at the National Library of Scotland. Selections from these records were filmed by the Australian Joint Copying Project on reels M1551-56 and M1864-76.

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Reel M1194

National Library of Scotland

Acc. 4633

Letters from Australia and New Zealand to Rev. John Bonar, convenor of the Colonial Committee of the Free Church of Scotland, January 1851-November 1854. (455ff)

The letters, including copies and extracts, are in a bound volume and are arranged chronologically. There is an index at the beginning of the volume.

The Australian correspondents include Andrew Allan (Sydney), Archibald Bonar (Melbourne), Thomas Brown (Hobart), William Buyers (Sydney), Rev. Adam Cairns (Melbourne), Rev. Archibald Cameron (Sydney), Rev. George Divorty (Melbourne), Rev. James Forbes (Melbourne), Rev. John Gardner (Adelaide), Rev. Thomas Hastie (Buninyong, Victoria), Rev. William Henderson (Williamstown, Victoria), Rev. John Hume (Melbourne), George Hutton (Hobart), Rev. John Lillie (Melbourne), Rev. James Lindsay (Launceston), David McConnell (Brisbane), D. McDonald (Geelong), Rev. William McIntyre (East Maitland), Rev. George Mackie (Kiama), J.H. McLachlan (Geelong), Hugh McLeod (Sydney), Lachlan McLeod (Melbourne), Rev. Walter McLeod (Sydney), Rev. Andrew Maxwell (Melbourne), Rev. John Miller (Melbourne), Rev. William Miller (Melbourne), Rev. William Nicolson (Hobart), Rev. Arthur Paul (Sydney), Edward Rennie (Sydney), Rev. Alexander Salmon (Sydney), Rev. Arthur Sherriff (Clarence Town, NSW), Rev. Patrick Simpson (Lauriston, Victoria), James Smith (Melbourne), Rev. John Tait (Geelong) and George Young (Adelaide).

The New Zealand correspondents include James A. Blyth (Wellington), Rev. David Bruce (Auckland), Rev. Thomas Burns (Dunedin), Capt. William Cargill (Dunedin), Archibald Clark (Auckland), D.J. Clauders (Nelson), Rev. William Dron (Hutt River), Thomas Gorrie (Auckland), John McGlashan (Otago), Peter McQuimish (New Plymouth), Rev. John Moir (Wellington), Rev. Thomas Nicholson (Nelson), W. Purdie (Dunedin), D. Sclanders (Nelson) and Rev. William Will (Dunedin).

Other correspondents include Rev. John Bonar (Glasgow), writing to Rev. John Lillie (Hobart), and Stephen Walcott and John Walpole of the Colonial Land and Emigration Office in London. The latter wrote to Bonar about the appointment of schoolmasters on emigrant ships.

In addition to letters, there are extracts from minutes of presbyteries, a completed questionnaire, and a few printed items, including reports on the Presbyterian Church in Auckland and Otago.