James Lachlan MacLeod, *The Second Disruption: The Free Church in Victorian Scotland and the Origins of the Free Presbyterian Church*. Scottish Historical Review Monograph No. 8. East Linton: Tuckwell, 2000. 277 pp. £20, \$31.95 (US), \$47.95 (CAN)

Fifty years after breaking away from the established Church of Scotland, the Free Church found itself facing a disruption of its own. In 1893 a second, notably smaller, disruption occurred. Yet for the two ministers who left and the lay people who followed them this second disruption was still significant. Indeed, those who left saw themselves as the true heirs of the original founders of the Free Church.

James Lachlan MacLeod devotes a chapter to each of four major themes in order to tell this story. After a brief introduction, MacLeod turns to his first theme, the changing social context within Scotland. While this chapter helps to establish some background, it does not seem crucial to the main arguments of the book. The major arguments are found in the next three chapters: "The Free Church Response to Biblical Criticism and Darwinian Science"; "The Highland-Lowland Divide in the Free Church"; and, "The Declaratory Act of 1892". The approach in all of these chapters is primarily a history of ideas approach, wherein MacLeod traces how the various positions grew further and further apart. His major sources are books, comments from magazines (often on the conservative end of the Free Church), Overtures within the church on specific issues and sermons which all dealt with these issues. For example, in the chapter on the Declaratory Act, the author outlines the history of the Westminster Confession and its place in the church, before then addressing the growing sense by some in the church that their consciences would not allow them to agree or subscribe to all of it. Sources used and quoted from include speeches made at the Assembly, Overtures, sections of R. Mackintosh *The Obsolescence of the Westminster Confession of Faith* (1888) and responses from the conservative church journal *The Signal*. Very helpfully the author includes the full text of the Declaratory Act itself. In the very important chapter on divisions between the

Highlands and the Lowlands, as well as in the discussion of both biblical criticism and evolution, similar sources are used, allowing for the variety of voices from the time to be heard, including a strong presence of those in the more conservative wing of the Free Church.

James MacLeod paints a picture of growing divisions within the Free Church. Advances in Biblical studies were embraced by many and came to be taught by various professors in the Free Church colleges. There was also a strong reaction against these ideas, and MacLeod is careful to stress the various positions taken in these debates. Although less time is spent within the book discussing evolution, MacLeod argues that a similar process occurred in response to Darwin's teachings. As already noted, in the second major section of the book MacLeod discusses the "growing division between the Highland and Lowland congregations of the Free Church," and the role that racial theory and hostility to the Gaelic language played in that division. MacLeod's clear understanding of and articulation of the way in which late Victorian racial theory denigrated the language and culture of the Highlands in contradistinction to that of the Lowlands is crucial to understanding what occurred in 1893. What is noteworthy is how few clergy, despite these divisions, actually ended up leaving the church in 1893 to help found the Free Presbyterian Church. MacLeod argues that lingering memory of the costs of that first disruption and the cost of leaving behind manse and incomes and a highly valued church, when at this time deterrents to many leaving, and encouraged them to rationalize their decision.

The book offers a very thorough, detailed and learned account of the disruption and examines the ideas leading to divisions within the church. MacLeod is correct to stress the variety of causes that led to the disruption, but it would have been helpful to weight them. Which of these factors – changing understandings of the Bible, the ideas of Darwin, racism towards Highlanders, or the specific battles over the Westminster Confession – was most significant? My sense in reading the book is that the growing cultural divide was absolutely fundamental. Notwithstanding, this is an important

book on division within a Christian denomination in the latter nineteenth century. Its thorough approach will help us in doing comparative study beyond Scotland and this one tradition, to the other fragmenting Christian denominations in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Stuart Macdonald
Knox College