



Hugh's News

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POSSIBLE 2022 RELAUNCH FOR WRITING COMPETITION

From the Writing Competition Committee

We are excited to share the news that the writing competition will continue in 2022! It will be a re-envisioned project, with a new name and new format. We aim to broaden its appeal and scope to reach a much wider audience.



*Larissa Reid, organiser and
judges' chair*

These changes have been on the horizon for a few years. Having spent many hours tirelessly promoting the project, and seeing the wonderful fruits of creativity it bore, we've come to recognise the core of what inspires our writers: Scotland's geology and landscapes. Our re-envisioned competition will therefore break from being tied to any single historical figure or place, and reflect the broader inspiration drawn from the rocks, landscapes and rich tapestry of cultures in Scotland.

The last Hugh Miller Writing Competition was completed just over one year ago – and what a difficult year it has been since! We carried out the judging and awards online, due to Covid-19 sweeping the country. In summer 2020 our founding partner, the Scottish Geodiversity Forum, dissolved. A new independent Competition Committee was formed to explore the best way to take the project forward, but it was a struggle for us to plan for the future through multiple lockdowns and associated difficulties. Coronavirus has had a profound impact on all of us, but things are finally starting to look brighter.

The Hugh Miller Writing Competition began in 2015, and it has been a source of great joy, interest and pride for all involved. The quality and range of entries and winning

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Miller "anti-racist" - an alternative view

We present here the first in a major two-part series comprising a comprehensive review of Miller's writing on this issue by Ralph O'Connor, Professor in the Literature and Culture of Britain, Ireland and Iceland at the University of Aberdeen, and author of the magnum opus, *The Earth on Show*.

The Friends management committee unanimously agreed to commission Professor O'Connor, who is one of our members, to undertake a follow up examining the issues first raised in a previous article by Martin Gostwick, "Degraded Races, Hopelessly Lost," published in *Hugh's News* No 46, November 2020.

For this piece, we received a surprise donation of £5,000 from an anonymous donor, "prompted by your article on Hugh Miller's views on race... which I thought was both very forthright and balanced." The donor said that he was "particularly interested in both the 1843 Disruption and the 'Send Back the Money' Campaign as examples of movements where high, but sometimes apparently conflicting, moral principles were involved."

The committee concluded after considerable media interest that further research and a more considered assessment of Miller's views were required. Ralph O'Connor's scholarly analyses deserve the widest circulation.



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pieces over the past six years have been breath-taking – and three of our winners have subsequently written books for major publishers, indicating that we successfully identified and nurtured emerging writing talent. We produced the Conversations in Stone anthology, and many beautiful pieces of writing created for our competition now have lives of their own. We introduced Miller to larger numbers of people than would otherwise have found him. We have also left a positive mark on the field of geology with this venture, and made lots of great contacts in the sciences as well as the creative arts.

In our newly envisioned venture, the Writing Competition Committee would very much like to retain our links to interested parties. Our new competition will honour the brilliant foundations already laid in the last six years, and build on them to create something streamlined and resilient – and hopefully 'Covid-proof'!

Although the new competition will no longer be Miller's in name, we will continue to help people find 'Old Red' – and many other inspirational Scottish writers – in our new venture. The Competition Committee are thrilled to be working on this reinvigorated project, and we hope you are as excited about its future as we are!

We will share more details – including the new name – when we have them, but in the meantime we welcome volunteers to help get the new project off the ground. If you'd like to be involved, or to get in touch with the Writing Committee, please contact us via: elsapancirol@gmail.com



Two fossil hunters lead a search for specimens in the pavement outside the National Museum of Scotland, while leading a competition party on a tour of Miller's Edinburgh, 18 June 2018. Left, Tom Chalmers, research explorer in the University of Edinburgh's geosciences faculty and with him is Dr Al McGowan, Hills o' Fame mountain guide.



Winners and judges at the first ceremony in Cromarty. They are pictured outside the Birthplace Cottage: Left to right: Simon Cuthbert (judge); Mackie Robbie; Jane Verburg; Michael Davenport (in glasses); Lara Reid (judges' chair); Jim Gilchrist; Justin Sales; Elizabeth Pickett; Kenny Taylor (judge); Jim Mackintosh



Three special guests at the second prize-giving ceremony in the Scottish Poetry Library. Left, our Chairman, Bob Davidson MBE, centre Katy Robinson, National Trust for Scotland, right Elsa Panciroli, one of the panel's judges.

Mackintosh is chosen makar

One of our favourite poets, Jim Mackintosh, helped put the year of 2020, in his words a "vacuum of nothingness" behind, when he celebrated at the start of 2021 with his selection as the Federation of Scottish Writers' (FSW) makar. The Federation is a body whose membership is open to all those in our country who wield the pen in any genre. Each year they nominate a scribe and a poet from their ranks.

He gave us a tour round his poetic endeavours, especially his work for the Hamish Matters Festival which last year celebrated the centenary of Perthshire-born Hamish Henderson, poet, songwriter and founding father of the Scottish folk music renaissance. He brought to the Zoom audience Hamish's image reproduced in fabric on a hillside at the Spittal of Glenshee, 175 metres tall. The festival showed how music, poetry and art can come together on a grand scale.

He talked also about Perthshire's Ceteran Ecomuseum, with its open-air poetry walk, and his devotion to football, which led him to a stint as St Johnstone FC's poet-in residence, and speaker at many meetings bringing back memories of the national game. "Poetry has been around football for 100 years," he said.



Jim Mackintosh

FHM'S PROUD SUPPORT ROLE

By the Editor

The Friends can justly be proud of our part in the preceding competition's overall success, both in funding and promoting the event, and particularly for several members' prize-winning entries to the three HMWC rounds held between 2015 and 2020.

Their essays and poems were directly inspired by Miller's own story. One calls to mind Jane Verburg's elegiac roaming of Cromarty with Hugh at her shoulder, and Larissa Reid's impactful interview with Robert Macfarlane on the magic of his *Old Red Sandstone*. There were the pæans to his most famous fossil find *Pterichthyodes milleri* from Jim Mackintosh and Michael Davenport. Joyce Gilbert and Simon Cuthbert described *Voyaging with Hugh* in the *Betsey's* wake. Michael Taylor entertained with the Editor's competitive spirit at his *Palace of Printing*, and Bob Davidson marvelled at his brilliance with metaphor in *Rambles of a Geologist*. Elsa Panciroli in *Fossils of the Mind* returned from her own researches on Skye literally riding with Hugh for company at the close of his *Betsey* odyssey. Alison Seller mourned with Hugh and Lydia for the loss of their first-born Eliza in *Deep Absence*.

Many other writers, some already previously published, some just beginning brought vivid word pictures to the feast. Some were about landscape, some about a particular feature of it, some had the strongest sense of place and time; others were more autobiographical. Two memorable prize-givings and readings will stay in the memory, the first in Cromarty in 2015, enlivened by the discovery of an extraordinary Devonian fossil fish, *Cheirolepis*, on the beach, and the second at the Scottish Poetry Library, followed by a tour of Miller's Edinburgh. And no one who was there will forget the launch of the competition's sparkling anthology, *Conversations in Stone*, at the Kelvingrove Museum in the midst of the "Dippy" dinosaur exhibition.

That sparkling volume compiled by the indefatigable Larissa Reid and her team is still available to order from us. The greatest tribute to the outgoing competition can be found there, Alex Woodcock's moving *No Ordinary Prize*. Cromarty's doors will always remain open to all talented writers wishing to encounter Hugh Miller's Legacy at close hand.

The Friends have already thanked HMWC's organisers for their splendid initiative, and wish the successor committee every success with the new venture, with the assurance of our continued support.



The Friends of Hugh Miller banner "flies" at all our public events. It was handwoven and stitched for us by the Cromarty Crafters Group.



Montage of the *Conversations in Stone* launch at Kelvingrove Museum

CORRECTION

In the article *Degraded Races, Hopelessly Lost* (*Hugh's News* No 46, November 2020) two *Witness* articles were conflated into one in error. The satirical take on the women's rights movement appeared in December 1844, and did not refer to Frederick Douglass, since he had not yet joined that campaign. The report of the Salisbury Crags incident was published in May 1846. The Editor's apologies.

He has also been asked to point out that the Biblical Eden was not placed by believers in Europe and Miller never claimed that it was. Traditionally it lay in Asia.

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ELIZA'S PATH RAIL IS ON THE WAY

At last the eagerly anticipated completion of this very special project is in sight, with hopes that can be up and ready for an opening some time in the high summer for public enjoyment and use. As Hugh's News went to press, contractor Sam Barlow, Mooreworks bespoke blacksmith, had just sent off the decorative baluster and rails for galvanising to an Elgin firm.

Here the rails are seen in their "raw" state, back from production and lying in Sam's Lairg, Sutherland workshop. You can also see the approved design for the balusters with their beautiful dog rose motif. The balusters will feature at three metre intervals along the 16 metre rail. We have also approved the lettering in a Times Bold font for the St Regulus Burial Ground signage, to be placed at the lower curved section at roadside, where a QR code will also be fitted enabling online access to a guide to the ground's setting, history and rich cultural heritage, to be placed on The Friends' website. The galvanised steel will receive a black paint finish. Then the path ground works will be carried out by Martin Gill of Avoch and made ready for the rail's fitting. All progress is of course subject to Covid restrictions.



St Regulus burial ground, Eliza's grave in the foreground, on the right.



The section shown is due to be sited at the lower, roadside end.



The path as it is now

Our management committee has enthusiastically welcomed the progress so far. Comments have ranged from "lovely design," to "such a worthwhile project," and "it's really exciting it's actually going to happen at last." We anticipate holding an informal ceremony for donors and representatives of the Cromarty community. **Provisional date, Sunday, September 12th, 2.00pm.** Numbers will have to be limited, not only because of COVID but the relatively small spaces involved. Invitees will be notified by email.

FESTIVE POETIC FARE IS A RARE TREAT

As congenial evenings as could possibly take place online were two "geopoetical ceilidhs," held just before and just after Christmas 2020, which raised the spirits of the poets and audience taking part at the end of that dismal year. Hosted and organised by Angus Miller, chair of the Scottish Geology Trust, from his "raised beach in Leith," the following brief account is taken from performances at both events. Norrie Bissell, Scottish Centre for Geopoetics, spoke of his life's journey from Glasgow to the Argyll island of Luing, as he read from his published works, including, naturally enough, reflections on *Slate*. Norma Allen became fascinated with geology while training to be a tourist guide, and wrote lines on the Geology Trust's "51 Best Places", and in light-hearted vein, *Oor granite Janet* and pieces on Unst and the Isle of Eigg. Larissa Reid, chair of the former Hugh Miller Writing Competition, (HMWC) introduced prize-winning poets, published in the anthology *Conversations in Stone*, such as Gillian Dawson with the *Last King of Scotland*. She also treated us to her fascination with creatures born of rock in Norse mythology, such as *Will o' the Wisp*, and *Order in chaos*. Some readings were illuminated by images as dramatic and beautiful as many of the lines. Alison Cohen's Loch Lomond images drew the breath away round her *Highland Boundary Fault, Balmaha*. Artist and poet Rachel Tennant mounted stunning paintings on Assynt, with the *Roof of the World*, and other pieces. Martin Gostwick showed the late Professor Nigel Trewin holding a giant fossil, *Homostius milleri* as he read from Hugh Miller's own account of the creature. Competition prize-winner, Mike Davenport, showed why most poems are best read aloud with his moving *Pterichthyodes milleri*. Another HMWC prize-winner, Justin Sales, gave us extracts from his epic *Rohmer's Gap and Winterfold*, from a trip up Lochnagar. MC Angus Miller referenced *James Hutton: Founder of Modern Geology* co-authored by Alan McKirdy, and recited *Theory of the Earth* by the late makar Edwin Morgan, and this was nicely complemented by Jim Mackintosh

with *Hutton's Bones*. Jim also pulled out *A full hand of bananas* from his *Flipstones* volume which Angus Miller described as "a new perspective for measuring mountains" with its descriptions of how many bananas it took him to reach the various peaks of Glencoe.

MG



A printed copy of this edition of Hugh's News is available, price £5 (inc. P&P), from the Secretary

BACKING FOR *VESTIGE* - "FOSSIL MYSTERY" FILM



After a Zoom meeting with the producer, Scarborough-based Lewis Coates of Static Flow Productions, the Friends management committee unanimously agreed to sponsor this palæontology short film and seek a key role for Hugh Miller in the plot.

It was good of Lewis to agree to come and explain the film in more detail than in his synopsis email. We were recommended to him for possible support by the Palæontological Association (PalAss) and after our discussion, we voted £1,000 sponsorship, plus £500 for the Miller role Lewis agreed to recommend to his team.

The Friends will be named in the credits, and after it has received first showings at various festivals round Britain this summer, we will be given a copy of the film and permission to show it ourselves to audiences as part of our outreach educational activity.

The plot is based round a teenage boy (of around 14 or 15 named Lucas finding a mysterious fossil in a cave on the coast near his Yorkshire home. Lewis told us:

"We think geology and palæontology are very mysterious subjects. Trying to put pieces of a puzzle together and not being quite sure what you will find at the end. To create this tone for the film, we will be creating a very moody and eerie story as Lucas searches for answers to both the origin of the fossil, but also if it's connected to the disappearance of his father. The fossil is enchanting to Lucas, magical, but equally unnerving - it feels so out of this world and alien to him."

He added: "We will achieve this by haunting sound design and moody visuals. The film will be an adventure mystery with science-fiction elements. There will be suspenseful moments throughout as Lucas begins to uncover new things and a reveal at the end that the fossil belongs to a new undiscovered creature."

Regarding Miller's role, we suggested that Lucas could be seen and heard reading from *The Old Red Sandstone*, especially the key phrase "Learn to make a right use of your eyes." Lewis responded: "I will certainly speak to my team about including the quote. I think it certainly fits our narrative in terms of the discovery aspect. We will be having Lucas researching through books about fossil hunting in his bedroom, so (he could be) reading a copy of *The Old Red Sandstone* and reading that quote. This could also happen at an important point in the film where Lucas needs to 'make a right use of [his] eyes' so therefore the quote is a driving force to his discovery."

We hope and trust Lucas and his team do incorporate this proposed reference in the finished product, since it perfectly fits the narrative as he says himself.

MILLER - DICK LINKS REVIVED THROUGH SAXON COLLECTION



Robert Dick, the Thurso baker

A revival of the links between geological collaborators Hugh Miller and the Thurso naturalist Robert Dick is in prospect with plans to help establish an exhibition of the fossil collection by Dick's greatest Caithness champion, the late Jack Saxon (1924-2005).

Our chairman, and noted palaeontologist Bob Davidson MBE has responded to a request from Castlehill Heritage Centre to write a support letter for a grant application to enable the showcasing of Saxon's fossil collection of Caithness fishes. Bob will also give personal help in evaluating the collection and Saxon's legacy for visitors from the public as well as the scientific community.

The heritage centre is in Castletown, often referred to as the "flagstone village" because of the production there over centuries of high quality paving and construction stone. The centre, a restored and converted 17thC farm steading, was opened in 2007.

Jack Saxon came to Thurso to take up a post at the Dounreay fast reactor in 1959. He founded the Caithness Field Club in 1966, the centenary of Robert Dick's death. He set about restoring Dick's collection in Thurso public museum, and was its honorary curator for several years. Surviving specimens of Dick's fossils and herbarium were subsequently incorporated into a new museum, Caithness Horizons, opened in 2008, but it sadly closed because of financial difficulties in 2019. It is now in the care of High Life Highland, the culture offshoot of Highland Council.

Mr Saxon was the author of a noted work, *The Fossil Fishes of Caithness*, from which a brilliantly illustrated leaflet was produced, which our own Hugh Miller Museum among other visitor centres distributed to the public for many years.

Mr Saxon was the author of a noted work, *The Fossil Fishes of Caithness*, from which a brilliantly illustrated leaflet was produced, which our own Hugh Miller Museum among other visitor centres distributed to the public for many years.

Bob Davidson's support letter states: "Jack Saxon was a renowned fossil fish collector with an international reputation and received visits from the highly respected palaeontologists Prof Stanley Westoll, (UK 1912-1995), Prof Alfred Romer (USA 1894-1973) and Dr Alex Richie (Australia) and the collection also contains important overseas specimens, presumably obtained by trading specimens

"Moreover, Saxon presents a connection back to Victorian scientists as a predecessor of his was geologist and botanist Robert Dick of Thurso (1811-1866) who collected in the same localities as Saxon would later. Dick, in turn, was a colleague of Hugh Miller, of Cromarty, geologist, folklorist and editor (1802-1856) the figure to which the organization that I represent is dedicated. Jack was therefore part of a historical and scientific continuum which continues today."

We will keep our readers posted on the progress of this important collaboration of contemporary North of Scotland fossil collectors, which could prove as useful to science as was the co-working of Miller and Robert Dick.



Jack explains fossils to some young enthusiasts.



Jack Saxon and his friend Cyril Digby-Grant pose with a poster of the Orcadian basin fish. Both photos courtesy of Jack's son Roger.

HUGH MILLER: RACIST OR ANTI-RACIST?

Part 1: slavery, the Clearances and Frederick Douglass

Ralph O'Connor, University of Aberdeen¹

In September 1847, hammer and notebook in hand, Hugh Miller left Edinburgh for a holiday in his native Northeast. As autumn set in, he tramped up the dramatic ravine of the river Auldgrande (Allt Graad) on the skirts of Ben Wyvis.² After some happy hours scrambling in the local boulder-clay, Miller went to



Frederick Douglass in 1848. Daguerreotype by unknown artist, Albert Cook Myers Collection, Chester County Historical Society (Wikimedia Commons).

stay at the house of the Free Church minister at Alness. There he met a seven-year-old Parsi girl from Bombay named Buchubai Hormazdji, who made a vivid impression on him. A year later he described her in the newspaper which he edited, the *Witness*.³ Miller had never travelled beyond Britain, and rarely beyond Scotland, so had met rather few non-white individuals from outside Europe. Here, then, we may expect to see how he viewed people of different skin colour, ethnicity and culture of origin – in Victorian terms, other races.



Hugh Miller in 1843. Calotype by David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson, National Galleries Scotland (Creative Commons licence).

It has recently been suggested that racism and white supremacy played a role in Miller's views.⁴ The notion that certain races are inferior

to others is basic to current understandings of 'racism' (in UK English usage), along with hatred of or discrimination against people based on their race.⁵ It has been proposed that Miller's formerly liberal opinions 'hardened' later in life, hence certain disparaging descriptions of nomadic peoples in Miller's *Testimony of the Rocks* (1857).⁶ But racial prejudice has also been suggested as contributing to his stance during the mid-1840s controversy on American slavery which pitted him against the Black abolitionist Frederick Douglass.⁷ In between, in 1848, Miller used his account of little Buchubai to launch one of his many assaults on racism. The timing makes no sense if his opinions had already shifted towards racism.

A closer look is called for. This article and its sequel explore Miller's thinking on race issues, first focusing on the 1840s, then (in the sequel) on the 1850s, to give him a proper hearing, place his views in context, and identify patterns and changes over time.

There is no shortage of evidence. During this period the *Witness* published hundreds of articles and reports, many by him, touching on these matters.⁸ This study is based on about 200 of these articles. Where possible, I disentangle Miller's consciously articulated views from casual use of language and concepts common to all educated thought in his time and place. Miller was not immune to the mental habit of racial and cultural stereotyping, sometimes in disparaging ways. Everybody shared that habit to differing degrees, even icons of Black anti-racism like Douglass.⁹ What matters more is what Miller and Douglass *did* with (and without) those stereotypes. I will argue that, within his environment, Miller remained consistently anti-racist. He never stopped challenging the racist assumptions that, by the 1840s, were coming to dominate British culture.

Buchubai Hormazdji and racial difference

Miller was intrigued to hear how Buchubai had ended up in Ross-shire: she was as much a wanderer as the Ice Age erratic boulders he had contemplated in the nearby ravine. Her father, Hormazdji Pestonji, was a Parsi (Zoroastrian) convert to Christianity in Bombay. His wife's family had been so angry

at his conversion that they had taken his wife and baby daughter away from him and married his wife to another man. Eventually he had regained custody of Buchubai, and to ensure her safety, placed her formally in the care of a lady to whom she had become attached: Maria Mitchell, daughter of Miller's friend Alexander Flyter (minister of Alness) and wife of the Free Church missionary John Murray Mitchell. In 1847, Maria was visiting her family in Ross-shire, accompanied by Buchubai.¹⁰ When Miller arrived, Buchubai monopolized him, showing him her toys, her 'rich eastern dresses', and an emerald 'set in the oriental fashion' for her tiara.¹¹

Was Buchubai, then, an exotic specimen of a race too inferior to govern themselves? Miller swiftly undercuts any such reactions. White (male) British readers are pointedly reminded that their ancestors were as barbarous as hers:

I found her exceedingly like little girls at home, save that she seemed more than ordinarily observant and intelligent, – a consequence, mayhap, of that early development, physical and mental, which characterizes her race. She submitted to me, too, when I had got very much into her confidence, a letter she had written to her papa from Strathpeffer, which was to be sent him by the next Indian mail. And as it may serve to show that the style of little girls whose fathers were fire-worshippers for three thousand years and more, differs in no perceptible quality from the style of little girls whose fathers in considerably less than three thousand were Pagans, Papists, and Protestants by turns, besides passing through the various intermediate forms of belief, – I must, after pledging the reader to strict secrecy, submit it to his perusal.

'My dearest Papa, – I hope you are quite well. I am visiting mamma at present at Strathpeffer. She is much better now than when she was travelling There are a great many at water here for sick people to drink out of. The smell of the water is not at all nice. I sometimes drink it. Give my dearest love to Narsion Skishadre, and tell her that I will write to her. – Dearest papa,' &c.

It was a simple thought, which it required no reach of mind whatever to grasp; and yet an hour spent with little Buchubai made it tell upon me more powerfully than ever before, that there is in reality but one human nature on the face of the earth.

The strangeness of these Parsi names to an English-speaking reader, Miller continues, invites the mistaken assumption that the people themselves are more different from 'us' than they really are:

I suspect we are misled by associations of this kind, when we descant on the peculiarities of race as interposing insurmountable barriers to the progress of improvement, physical or mental. We overlook, amid the diversities of form, colour, and language, the specific identity of the human family.

Miller explodes the widely-held delusion that racial attributes were, in themselves, barriers to education and civilization. Progress is colour-blind.

He then turns to his area's most blatant injustice, the Highland Clearances, which by Miller's time were supported by racism:

The Celt, for instance, wants, it is said, those powers of sustained application which so remarkably distinguish the Saxon; and so we agree on the expediency of getting rid of our poor Highlanders by expatriation as soon as possible, and of converting their country into sheep-walks and hunting-parks.

This was a familiar protest. From the mid-1840s, even when caught up in the slavery controversy, Miller repeatedly denounced the lairds' greed and racism, the press's coverage and the government's inertia.¹² Miller retorted that 'Saxons', if placed in the same circumstances as the Highland 'Celts', would have done just as badly. As with Black people in America, what was blamed on racial inferiority was really caused by unequal opportunities. Rather than exiling Highlanders and devastating townships, said Miller, small injections of capital should be made for Highlanders to work their crofts more effectively, giving them a chance to demonstrate the 'powers of sustained application' that they allegedly lacked. It has been suggested that Miller's views of the Clearances softened in the 1850s:¹³ by then his cause had been taken up by other, more radical voices, and the *Witness's* attention was drawn more to international affairs. In fact, Miller never stopped condemning the lairds' 'unjust and selfish' insistence on 'this

system of social extermination', or championing equality of opportunity, even after both he and more radical campaigners had given up hope of persuading the lairds to relent.¹⁴

Given Miller's differences with Douglass (discussed below), it deserves emphasizing that they both contributed to the same anti-racist crusade promoting equality of opportunity. Both agreed that the same abilities were latent in people of any race. Both condemned those who justified the enslavement of Black people on the basis of an alleged inferiority which slaveholders had created by enslaving them. As I will show in the sequel, Miller consistently viewed degradation as something inflicted by sinful people, rather than inherent in the natural order. In 1840 he argued that 'slavery ... brutalizes those whom it oppresses', but that this was no justification for keeping them enslaved. The slaveholder hypocritically 'treats men as if they were unfit for liberty, and then renders them in reality unfit for it'. They must be freed nonetheless: 'set him free, and, as happened to the king of Babylon of old, the beast's heart will leave him, and the heart of the man return.'¹⁵

In one of his earliest Scottish speeches, in Dundee in 1846, Douglass too condemned slaveholders' hypocrisy:

They brutalized and degraded them, and then referred to their brutality and degradation as marks of their unfitness for a state of freedom. Even if this were true, it should ... be an inducement to aid and assist them to raise themselves in the scale of human beings ...

The slaveholder's favourite defence was 'the allegation that the Negro was of an inferior race'. On the contrary, said Douglas: 'put the negro in the same position as the white man, he would rise to the same scale of civilization and cultivated intellect.'¹⁶ For both men, the 'scale of civilization' was not a static hierarchy of races. It was a ladder which humans of any race could climb through education and self-help – if allowed. If people of one race happened to be higher up the scale, this did not make them superior, just luckier – and, as Miller warned, nothing lasts forever.

Miller concludes his reflections on Buchubai Hormazdji by dismantling the racist notion of permanent behavioural patterns associated with certain races, such as the Celt's alleged lack of 'sustained application'. Only place the individual in conditions conducive to mental cultivation, says Miller, and these deficiencies will vanish, just as they had been absent from the family of Adam and Eve, whence all human 'varieties' had sprung:

It would be surely well to have philosophy enough to remember what, simply through the exercise of a wise faith, the Christian missionary never forgets, that the peculiarities of race are not specific and ineradicable, but mere induced habits and idiosyncrasies engrafted on the stock of a common nature by accidents of circumstance or development; and that, as they have been wrought into the original tissue through the protracted operation of one set of causes, the operation of another and different set, wisely and perseveringly directed, could scarce fail to unravel and work them out again. They form no part of the inherent design of man's nature, but have merely stuck to it in its transmissive passage downwards, and require to be brushed off. There was a time, some four thousand years ago, when Celt and Saxon were represented by but one man and his wife, with their children and their children's wives; and some sixteen or seventeen centuries earlier, all the varieties of the species, – Caucasian and Negro, Mongolian and Malay, – lay close packed up in the world's single family. In short, Buchubai's amusing prattle proved to me this evening no bad commentary on St Paul's sublime enunciation to the Athenians, that God has 'made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth.'

This is the nub of Miller's view of race, which he held until he died. There is no hierarchy of inferior or superior races, just humans created in God's image, developing variously 'induced habits', good or bad, over many generations. This is a profoundly anti-racist conception of human variety.

Mention of the 'missionary' underlines Miller's paternalism, more striking to the modern reader than to Miller's contemporaries. For all his anti-racism, he voices the unapologetic conviction of Victorian evangelicals that Protestantism was superior to other religions, and a more effective civilizing influence. Religion aside, even the most ardent white abolitionists and advocates of racial equality worked from the assumption that their Western principles of morality, civilization and reform were the best available, at least in theory.¹⁷ But not all Victorian humanitarian endeavour was a byproduct of empire-building.



1875 map showing David Livingstone's missionary travels in Africa. From J. E. Chambliss, *The Life and Labors of David Livingstone* (1875), opposite p. 804 (Wikimedia Commons)

The perceived duty to help less fortunate peoples to 'improve' was not always tied to political subjugation, and those peoples were not automatically perceived as inherently inferior or discriminated against. Victorian philanthropy, paternalism, imperialism and racism were not all the same thing; the distinctions are just as important as what could (in all too many cases) bind them together.

Evangelicals believed their faith to be best and wished to spread it, but this need not make them imperialists or racists. Miller was well aware of the risk of arrogance, asking of himself, 'Is self-righteousness the besetting infirmity of the religious man?'¹⁸ But Protestantism was – or should be – an antidote to smugness, because nobody could claim to be truly righteous in themselves. Everybody needed God's saving grace, not just supposedly savage heathen. This was not a racist or imperialist conviction, but fundamentally egalitarian. The core article of faith – that God had become human and had died to save humans – was 'a truth equally receivable by at once the humblest and the loftiest intellects'.¹⁹ Hence the missionary enterprise.

Miller's support for evangelical missions is a constant feature of the *Witness*. One of the very last pieces he is thought to have written, which was rolling off the press on the morning that his corpse was found in his study, celebrated the return of the explorer-missionary David Livingstone to his native Scotland. It is hard for us to disentangle Livingstone's philanthropic motivations, and his mostly sympathetic accounts of the African peoples he encountered, from the exploitation and conquest that followed in his wake. But Miller, like Livingstone, was highly critical of these abuses, and blamed colonialism: 'It is to the indelible disgrace of Europe that for three centuries its intercourse with Africa was only to degrade the character and blight the happiness of its inhabitants' through enslavement. Miller hoped that Christianity, combined with (fair) trade, would eventually make amends for 'the long ages of oppression and wrong' inflicted on them.²⁰

The idea that peoples of other races and creeds needed rescuing by white Protestants – or better still, converted members of their own races – was deeply paternalistic. But Miller did not take the common next step of assuming that his was a superior race. He viewed Hormazdji Pestonji's former faith, Zoroastrianism, as inferior, but this did not make its *proponents* inferior. Like Livingstone, Miller was careful not to dismiss all other faiths as mindless. He highlighted occasions when non-Christian commentators showed insight superior to that of his countrymen. He paraphrased a perceptive summary of the Disruption and its effects by the Bengali newspaper *Sambad Prabhakar* to show that the 'heathen' themselves could 'cry shame' upon the Church of Scotland. Here, too, Miller discusses the challenges faced by missionaries in India by praising the intelligence of 'the philosophical Brahmins, – men of singularly acute minds, who to the long-derived metaphysics of their own country, add, in not a few instances, the metaphysics of Hume and Voltaire.'²¹ There is no doubt whose side Miller is on; but, as in his combats with Hume himself, he makes no assumptions of the opponent's inferiority. Elsewhere, Miller holds up even the cosmogonic origin-legends of New Zealand and Tonga – associated with barbarism by Victorian readers – as evidence that the capacity for reasoning about long-past causes from disparate, fragmentary evidence was not unique to Western science.²² Who would expect such reflections in an article on the Establishment's injustice to a Free Church minister, or a review of Patrick Duff's *Geology of Moray*? The desire to give due credit shines out from the most unlikely pages of the *Witness*, even if this never produces anything remotely like cultural relativism.

The Free Church and American slavery

We now move back in time to a more problematic set of interactions between Miller and a person of colour, still fresh in his memory when he met Buchubai Hormazdji. In the mid-1840s Miller and the leaders of the Free Church were embroiled in a bitter war of words with the renowned Black abolitionist, the formerly enslaved Frederick Douglass. Throughout 1846, Douglass was the star speaker in an abolitionist campaign to shame the fledgling Church into returning donations from Presbyterian churches in the American South, whose congregations included slaveholders. The donations resulted from an 1844 American fundraising mission initiated by the Free Church's charismatic leader Thomas Chalmers.²³ Southern churches donated £3000 or so: perhaps just over half a million pounds in today's money.

From the start, protests were lodged both within the Free Church and by radical abolitionist groups. Stern letters from leading white American abolitionists, such as Lewis Tappan and William Lloyd Garrison, were followed by Garrison and Douglass crossing the Atlantic to campaign in person, joining their even more radical countryman Henry Clarke Wright (who probably coined the slogan 'Send Back the

Money'), and the English abolitionist George Thompson.²⁴ Douglass attracted most attention. In numerous speeches to thousands of Scots, he mocked and condemned what he saw as the Free Church's hypocrisy and cupidity in refusing to return the money. He depicted the church's leaders as no better than man-stealers. With an unparalleled sense of theatre, Douglass electrified audiences by asking them to imagine the guilty ministers or, better still, their daughters, flogged within an inch of their lives or sold on the auction block.

Douglass's success in stirring up a mass public outcry amplified the scorn already directed at the Free Church by other denominations which had disapproved of the Disruption, and tensions emerged within the Free Church itself. Supporters of its leaders' position had no reason to feel friendly towards Douglass. The uproar caused by his campaign subsided only in the spring of 1847, when Douglass returned to America and the beleaguered Chalmers died. The *Witness* was the Edinburgh newspaper most closely aligned with the Free Church, so Miller was embroiled from an early stage. The *Witness* repeatedly defended the church's leaders against their critics. It has recently been suggested that 'racial prejudice' played a role in Miller's stance on 'the wrong side'.²⁵ To judge whether this is likely, it is necessary to explore where both sides were coming from.

The first question is: why did the Free Church's leaders not return the money? Douglass pointed to the Church's desperate need for funds. To a loudly cheering Paisley audience, he said: 'I tell you why he does it. He's got the bawbees' (i.e. halfpennies).²⁶ Yet material self-interest cannot have been the reason, as historians of the campaign acknowledge. That £3000 was less than 1% of the funds raised by the Free Church in its first financial year.²⁷ One would imagine that even the narrowest concerns about reputational damage would lead to a speedy refund.

But more than money was at stake. The money was a public manifestation of the Free Church's ties of Christian fellowship with donor churches. To return it, as radical abolitionists hoped, would suspend that fellowship and send the strongest possible signal of what we would call 'zero tolerance'. British abolitionists had advocated excommunication as a tactic since 1840 when the World Anti-Slavery Convention resolved in London that Christian churches should excommunicate slaveholders.²⁸ In this context, both sides viewed sending the money back as equivalent to a sentence of excommunication. This strategy appealed to radical American abolitionists, as it isolated slaveholders and apologists from moral support. Douglass told a London audience,

I want the slaveholder surrounded, as by a wall of anti-slavery fire I want him to feel that he has no sympathy in England, Scotland, or Ireland; that he has none in Canada, none in Mexico, none among the poor wild Indians; that the voice of the civilized, aye, and savage world is against him. I would have condemnation blaze down upon him in every direction, till, stunned and overwhelmed with shame and confusion, he is compelled to let go the grasp he holds upon the persons of his victims, and restore them to their long-lost rights.²⁹

These were stirring words, inspiring in their moral clarity (but note the casual use of the distinction between 'civilized' and 'savage' peoples). That wall of fire was visibly breached by the Free Church's £3000.

But there was more than one way to be an anti-slavery activist in the 1840s. 'Abolitionist' was the term generally used



Thomas Chalmers, c. 1845. Calotype by David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Wikimedia Commons).



Radical abolitionists William Lloyd Garrison and George Thompson, pictured with Wendell Phillips, c. 1850-1851. Daguerreotype by Southworth & Hawes, Boston, held in Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library (Wikimedia Commons)

in the States since 1830 for proponents of immediate emancipation (Miller called them 'ultra-abolitionists' or 'extreme abolitionists'; I refer to them as 'radical'). Confusingly, the term was used in Britain at this time to designate the gradualist approach that had come to be favoured by William Wilberforce, which in the 1830s had succeeded in abolishing slavery in the British dominions. Yet in the 1840s, American slavery was still on the rise. Radical abolitionists' advocacy of immediate, uncompensated emancipation struck Miller and others in the Free Church as unachievable, since slaveholders had much more power within their individual States than British governors had over their colonies.

The British solution was hardly ideal. As Miller recognized, the twenty million pounds paid to slaveholders, via the 1837 Slave Compensation Act, was 'a sore expense to the people' (British taxpayers finished paying off the debt in 2015). Worse, nothing was paid to the formerly enslaved: 'we would fain have seen a percentage of the rendered compensation transferred from the slave's master to the slave himself'. Yet it was 'the best measure practicable in the circumstances'.³⁰ Even the most uncompromising Black American abolitionist in Scotland, the formerly enslaved Moses Roper, saw the Compensation Act as a mechanism to 'purchase the freedom of the slaves', calling it 'the noblest act of national generosity' in history, despite its tacit acknowledgement that an enslaved person was 'property'.³¹ Roper did not urge the Free Church to return donations from Southern churches.³²

By the time Douglass arrived, the Free Church's leaders had already articulated their own anti-slavery approach, with which most of its clergy agreed. This was to maintain constructive dialogue with those implicated in the system of slavery, rather than shutting them out through public denunciation or excommunication. As Miller put it in his first major editorial on the subject, 'Our influence with our brethren ... may very much depend on our regarding them as such ... the best possible ground on which we can base our anti-slavery arguments and expostulations with them is the ground of our common Christianity.'³³

As Miller realized, the American challenge was much greater than that faced by Wilberforce and Clarkson. The American economy was more dependent on slavery than the British, and many American slaveholders were exercising their constitutional freedom to embed slavery in state law. In Miller's view, this made it even more crucial to maintain a dialogue. Earlier in the nineteenth century, moderate forms of abolitionism had been on the rise in some Southern states. But more recently, Northern radical abolitionists had attempted to educate the Southern public about slavery by denouncing slaveholders. That strategy backfired, as it stiffened Southern pro-slavery sentiment. Pro-slavery legislation was toughened, and Southern anti-slavery activism declined or went underground.³⁴

This was not the end of the story. At the time, though, the radical abolitionists' zero-tolerance strategy did not necessarily seem the obvious way to achieve emancipation. The setbacks of the 1830s split American abolitionists. Garrison and his associates, then including Douglass, favoured continuing the campaign of oppositional denunciation, dissolving the political union between North and South (Garrison's slogan 'No union with slaveholders') and, ultimately, condemning the American Constitution itself and disengaging from strategic political action.³⁵ Even some radical American abolitionists feared that Garrison's method of alienating slaveholders with a barrage of 'fiery zeal against slavery' would be counter-productive.³⁶

Miller was dismayed by the radical abolitionists' refusal to pursue incremental success through compromise. In the 1844 presidential elections, the hardline pro-slavery Democrat James Polk opposed the moderate anti-slavery Whig Henry Clay. Abolitionists usually voted Whig, but in the new polarized climate they rejected Clay's compromises, voting for a more radical third candidate and splitting the otherwise majority vote against Polk.³⁷ Polk's victory was widely seen in Britain as a 'triumph of slavery over abolition'.³⁸ Miller acidly remarked of the abolitionists, 'Since *their* question [emancipation] was not to be taken up in their own way, they declined mingling in the conflict at all', and with the annexation of Texas as a new slaveholding state (which Clay had opposed) 'the sufferings of the slave, and the power of the slave-master, bid fair, in consequence, to be doubled in the States.'³⁹

Historians are still debating how effective Garrison's approach was. For his Scottish contemporaries, there seemed reason to believe that it was having the opposite effect from its noble intentions. Miller warned that, if radical abolitionists continued like this, emancipation would come only through 'devastation and blood ... a terrible war'.⁴⁰ That is what eventually happened, but Miller and the Free Church leaders could not know this. There still seemed time to hasten the end of slavery peacefully by following Wilberforce rather than Garrison.⁴¹ Thus, in his first leading article on the subject, Miller rebuked the

radical abolitionists for doing 'more mischief than good by their exertions', at the same time as he condemned the 'selfish cupidity' of slaveholders that blinded them to the evil of their actions.⁴²

From its own anti-slavery perspective, then, the Free Church and its allies preferred to maintain dialogue and fellowship with the American churches, and thus with slaveholders, to hasten the end of slavery. Nor was their stated desire for friendly exhortation a cloak for doing nothing, as critics alleged. Since 1840, Miller had condemned American Protestant churches which defended 'the enormities of negro slavery' and excluded Black people because of 'an unnatural and surely most illiberal detestation of the Ethiopian'.⁴³ The Free Church's delegates on the 1844 fundraising campaign were frustrated by their American colleagues' apathy on this subject, and told them so. George Lewis, the delegate who travelled most widely in the South, was shocked by his host churches' complicity in slavery: he was generally forbidden from addressing this topic in public, but privately left his hosts in no doubt as to where their duty lay. His *Impressions of America*, published early in 1845, denounced the 'sin' of slavery and the 'extreme timidity and slowness' of Presbyterian churchmen in opposing it. Among other measures, he recommended that all churches in America should refuse to allow any slaveholder to bear office (e.g. as bishop or elder) to set an example to the community.⁴⁴ Lewis emphasized that his criticisms were intended in friendship, as friends ought to 'provoke each other' to 'good works'.⁴⁵

Similar 'friendly', yet strong, criticisms came from Robert Candlish and William Cunningham, the architects of the Free Church's considered position. The Americans bridled at such criticism from the start,⁴⁶ but the pressure was maintained. At the General Assembly in May 1846, Cunningham spent more time criticizing American churchmen for apathy than condemning radical abolitionists for extremism.⁴⁷ Douglass (who was present) misrepresented Cunningham's speech as being pro-slavery, as have some modern commentators.⁴⁸ Miller advocated civil disobedience in states whose laws forbade Black people even the basic Christian right of literacy. Addressing the Americans directly, he declared: 'This unjust law,— ministers of the Gospel in America! — it is your duty to break', just as the Free Church ministers had broken with the 'iniquitous decisions' of their government in the Disruption and given up their often comfortable livings. Miller used as leverage the Free Church's refusal to give in to Garrisonian pressure:

Nor is it the love of lucre that now prompts them to recognise you as not unworthy of their fellowship. They have sacrificed many thousand pounds for conscience' sake, and it would ill become their character ... to sacrifice conscience now for a bribe of a few dollars They call upon you, as Christian brethren, to take your stand in the post of duty⁴⁹

There were also moral reasons for favouring friendly admonition over excommunication. One was a risk of hypocrisy. During the campaign against slavery in Britain, only recently ended, abolitionist clergymen had not generally excluded slaveholders from Christian fellowship, let alone their churches. It would seem a bit rich for them to take the moral high ground now. More seriously, it seemed evident that slavery, once embedded in a society, could not be removed easily by individual actions. In this sense it was an evil of much greater magnitude than habitual drunkenness or fornication, which were among the sins listed by St Paul as deserving excommunication. This was slippery ground, but Chalmers, Candlish and Cunningham felt bound to consider the situation in all its complexity.

Chalmers had articulated the principle of 'organic' or 'social' sin: an evil embedded in the structure of a society, like original sin itself. Slavery, for Chalmers, was one such evil.⁵⁰ Free Southerners could not escape from implication in slavery. As the American missionary Cyrus Kingsbury put it, 'If we want a horse shod, a slave must do it. If we stop for the night at a public house, a slave must take care of our horse and cook our food.'⁵¹ Worse still, laws in several Southern States imposed draconian penalties for speaking out in any way against slavery. Some states banned the freeing of enslaved people. Even when permitted, a freed person had to leave the state, sometimes the country, violating the Christian imperative of not splitting Black families.⁵² Candlish



George Lewis, Free Church delegate to the USA, in the 1840s. Calotype by David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson, National Galleries Scotland (Creative Commons licence).

and others cited cases where someone might inherit enslaved people through no fault of their own, and be unable to free them without involving them in far worse hardship: it would be unjust to excommunicate people in this position.⁵³ Moreover, the North, like the post-abolition United Kingdom, relied on plantation-grown cotton, sugar, rice and tobacco. Some products might be sourced from elsewhere, as encouraged in the *Witness*, but plantation-grown cotton was virtually unavoidable. For Chalmers and his colleagues, this made the sin of slavery systemic: 'an indication of the state of slaveholding societies rather than of the character of slaveholders', as Molly Oshatz explains it.⁵⁴ Its removal needed reform from the ground up, which would not be helped by loudly blaming every individual connected to the system.

The radical abolitionists were having none of this. They were repelled by the concept of 'social' sin: if the slavery system was sinful, then all involved were equally guilty. They did not accept the option of dialogue with slaveholders, or with churches that did not exclude slaveholders. They allowed only two positions: immediate, unconditional emancipation, or support for slavery. Proponents of anything else were little better than slaveholders. Of course, Wilberforce and his allies were not portrayed in this way, at least not on this side of the Atlantic. Douglass flattered audiences in Britain and Ireland by reminding them of their love of freedom and their achievement of abolition.⁵⁵ Yet he referred to Free Church leaders' comparable brand of abolitionism as 'apologizing for and upholding the doctrine of slavery'.⁵⁶

Before we condemn Miller and the Free Church's leaders, we might compare debates on personal versus collective responsibility today, regarding issues such as fossil fuel dependence and social inequality. Are public-awareness campaigns more likely to bring about real change if they seek to shame all beneficiaries from such systems, or if they try to bring both sides to the table? The answer depends on the context. From a mid-1840s vantage-point, neither the Garrisonian position nor that of the Free Church leaders was self-evidently wrong.

Douglass was not interested in bringing the Free Church to a negotiating table.⁵⁷ This was not from lack of tact: he was exceptionally skilled at winning over audiences.⁵⁸ He could easily have sought alliances with vociferous abolitionists among leading Free Church clergy, such as Candlish, or for that matter George Lewis in Dundee. Douglass knew Lewis's book; he quoted from it, recommending it for its faithful portrayal of the evils of slavery and for its anti-racist endorsement of the intellectual abilities of Black people.⁵⁹ Dundee was, in fact, one of Douglass's first stops in Scotland.⁶⁰ But instead of seeking out Lewis privately, he went in all guns blazing:

there stands up in the midst a Church calling itself free! free! free! – (great cheering) – calling itself the Free Church, presenting itself both at home and abroad, arrogantly and egotistically, as the great representative of the people of Scotland. Does the Free Church represent your views on the question of slavery? (Cries of no! no!) I am glad to hear it. They claim to be the model, the impersonation, the life, the soul of Christianity in this country. Well, with all these influences, and with their exceedingly tender consciences – (laughter) ... they leave their homes and go to the United States, and strike hands in good Christian fellowship with men whose hands are full of blood

Douglass then named and shamed Lewis for taking slaveholders' money: 'Let him come here and defend himself.' Some audience members hissed: Lewis was respected in Dundee. Nothing abashed, Douglass remarked that Lewis had 'very wisely' stayed away, so as not to 'attract attention to his character'.⁶¹

In a slightly later speech in Dundee, Douglass went further. Declaring his 'unutterable loathing' for Lewis, he impersonated Lewis talking to Douglass's former master Thomas Auld. In this fictional scenario Douglass imagined himself as an enslaved boy auctioned by Auld to raise a donation for the Free Church:

Well, 500 dollars are bid. Oh, how brother Lewis' eyes twinkle! (Laughter.) The auctioneer continues – 'This is not half the value of the negro His master has no desire to get rid of him, but only wants to get a little money to aid the cause of religious freedom in Scotland.' (Laughter.) Another flame of light from brother Lewis' eyes. 600 dollars are bid. Once, twice, thrice, is said by the auctioneer, and I am sold for 600 dollars

They then devote the money thus obtained to building these Free Churches; and brother

Lewis daringly stands up here in Scotland and makes light of it. (Tremendous cheering.)

That man must be hardened indeed that could do such a thing. Disgorge the plunder! (Cheering.) Disgorge the plunder! (Continued cheering.)⁶²

It was brilliant theatre, and the audience loved it.⁶³ But, given that Douglass knew of Lewis's sincere and active repugnance for slavery, the level of conscious misrepresentation of Lewis's views is striking. Performances like this were hardly likely to bring Free Church leaders over to Douglass's point of view.

Miller suspected that the American campaigners did not actually want the Free Church to cooperate, despite their claims. Otherwise, given the known differences between the two camps, the Americans would surely have begun by seeking 'an interview in private with the leaders of that other party', using 'reasonable explanation and fair argument' to bring around 'those whose aid they solicit'. Instead,

the parties in question have acted as if they dreaded above all things that their attempt should succeed Without affording an hour's space for explanation or deliberation, they dragged her [the Free Church] before the tribunal of the public, and endeavoured to make judgment go against her, by applying to her the vilest epithets, and loading her with the coarsest abuse.⁶⁴

Douglass himself acknowledged that negotiation was not his priority. When asked (in Dundee) why he did not first negotiate personally with the Free Church, Douglass retorted 'that the force of public opinion was a much more powerful argument with such gentlemen than any he could use' and that 'Public opinion would yet compel them to send it back.'⁶⁵ So long as the Free Church maintained fellowship with the Southern churches, the 'wall of anti-slavery fire' intended for the slaveholders themselves must widen to encircle them, too – hence the barrage of abuse. Keeping that wall of fire alight was ultimately more important than ensuring that the money would be sent back. Whether by accident or design, Douglass's methods made it inconceivable that the money would be returned.

The radical abolitionists' attacks were joined by opponents of the Free Church who had no special interest in slavery, but who found Douglass's campaign useful as anti-Free Kirk ammunition. In the ensuing paper war, condemnations of the Free Church sometimes outweighed condemnations of slavery itself.⁶⁶ It did not help that only evangelical bodies – the Free Church and the Evangelical Alliance – were targeted, or that members of other churches that had received slaveholders' money (and not returned it) were among those denouncing the Free Church.⁶⁷ When added to the absence of any negotiating strategy, suspicions naturally arose of an anti-evangelical agenda.⁶⁸ Nor did it help that Garrison and Wright had elsewhere attacked evangelical views, and taken up radical positions, on subjects such as the Sabbath, the authority of Scripture and the Church, the legitimacy of governments and women's rights.⁶⁹ Periodicals defending the Free Church inevitably brought these issues to the fore. The resulting mêlée did no great credit to either side, but we can now stand back and appreciate the principles which led the Garrisonians and the Free Church leaders to hold firm in their opposing positions.

Portrayals of Douglass in the *Witness*: 1840s and later

Some Free Church clergymen and pro-Free Church journalists fought back with crude racial abuse directed personally against Douglass. The Aberdeen *Banner* reviled Douglass's theatrical mimicry 'for which his race is proverbial'; the Glasgow-based *Scottish Guardian* called Douglass a 'semi-savage' and 'chimney sweeper'; the Free Church minister John Macnaughton dismissed him as an 'ignorant runaway slave'; and the *Fife Herald* brutally suggested that it would have been better had Douglass remained enslaved.⁷⁰

To Miller's credit, the *Witness* never stooped to these tactics. Indeed, Douglass is barely mentioned in those editorials that can be confidently attributed to Miller himself. Miller reserved most of his ire for Douglass's white radical-abolitionist colleagues and partisans of other denominations who had joined in the attacks. The *Witness's* criticisms of Douglass are much fewer and briefer, and are largely restricted to reports in a smaller typeface, lacking Miller's distinctive stylistic hallmarks. Miller presumably authorized their inclusion, but the difference is important. The tone of these critical comments varies from overt condemnation ('Mr Douglas's repeated allusions to the prayers of the Alliance were made in a tone of the most revolting mockery') to icy sarcasm: 'Mr Douglas ... afraid lest he should be charged with not being sufficiently courteous, in his own elegant style complimented the members of the Free Church, by informing them that they were a brotherhood of thieves.'⁷¹ Equally typical are reports which simply

mention Douglass's presence or opinions without comment.⁷² Some critical comments about Douglass's speeches occur within reports reprinted from elsewhere, but the racial slurs sometimes indulged therein were never included.

Some *Witness* coverage actively condemned racial discrimination against Douglass or other Black people, as when he was reported speaking out against colour prejudice in the temperance movement.⁷³ The *Witness* also printed a report protesting about Douglass's 'shameful' treatment by the Cunard steamship line on his return voyage, when the Liverpool agent denied Douglass his pre-booked first-class berth. The *Witness* also reprinted the agent's subsequent attempt to defend his conduct (from *The Times*), but it did not print or mention a further letter to *The Times* on 17 April purporting to be from an American Cunard agent, who stated that most white passengers felt 'invincible disgust' at coming 'into close contact with blackamores' and that the Cunard Company could not be blamed for discriminating against Black passengers. Instead of allowing space to these racist reflections, the *Witness* gave the last word to Cunard, reprinting his personal apology to Douglass and his assurance that 'nothing of the kind' would happen again on the Cunard line.⁷⁴ This incident was sympathetically covered in the British press generally, but it is worth noting the *Witness's* participation in this even after the acrimonious slavery-money campaign. Evidently the *Witness's* stance during that campaign had nothing to do with racism on Miller's part.

The worst personal slight that can be dredged up against Douglass from the *Witness* files during the controversy is Miller's alleged 'taunting' of Douglass when caught cutting the words 'Send Back the Money' into the turf below Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh in May 1846.⁷⁵ This, too, is a short report in small type, probably not by Miller but included in the *Witness*. Thompson had urged his audience to carve the slogan 'upon the front of Salisbury Crags', but had they made the attempt, 'the callous and obdurate rock would mock their impotency'.

Mr. Frederick Douglas [sic], however, forgetting that the hills and dales of Scotland are not quite such commons as the prairies of his own native wilds, hit last week upon a simpler expedient for engraving upon the face of our picturesque scenery these notable words, and immediately hied, spade in hand, accompanied by two ladies belonging to the Society of Friends, to a spot in the vicinity of the Queen's Drive ... and began to carve this vulgar cry in graceful characters upon the green sward.

On being reprimanded (hardly 'humiliated' as Pettinger claims), 'the philanthropic man of colour expressed deep contrition for the crime, and here the matter at present rests.'⁷⁶ Pettinger suggests that the geologist Miller (assumed to be the author) 'enjoyed portraying the trio as stupid enough to want to etch the "vulgar cry" in the "obdurate rock" itself before realising that turf might prove more malleable', but the report attributes no such mistake to Douglass.⁷⁷ Nor are his female companions taunted.⁷⁸ Compared to Douglass's speeches, this is rather moderate stuff.



The abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe in 1852, the year that her novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published. Daguerreotype by J. D. Wells, held in Stowe papers, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University (Wikimedia Commons)

Douglass generally disappears from the *Witness* after the 1840s, but Miller did read his second autobiography. Miller found it valuable despite its misrepresenting the Free Church on slaveholders' churches. Two months before his death he quoted it in 'The Ethics of Slave-Having', a blistering attack on American Presbyterian complicity with slavery. Miller's chief target was one Dr. Ross, who used biblical references to argue that slavery was divinely ordained as the most benevolent relation between 'the highest and lowest races of man'.⁷⁹ Ross's logic mirrored that of the clergyman Mr. Titmarsh, a character in *Dred* by the abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe (better known for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*). Miller had just read this fictional exposé of slaveholder ideology, commenting that it was a 'powerful delineation of slavery, in its influence on the character and relations of life' which left him 'feeling rather squeamish about American society', especially its 'pious vindications of slavery, and savage intolerance towards all who seek its abolition'. So he was shocked to discover that Stowe's portrait of Titmarsh's topsy-turvy ethics was based on

reality, not satirical exaggeration.⁸⁰

In 'The Ethics of Slave-Having', Miller authenticates his denunciations of slavery via Stowe's novel and Ross's real-life exegesis, and also the 'recently published autobiography' of 'a liberated slave', Douglass's *My Bondage and My Freedom*. By quoting Ross's laboured Old Testament exegesis of Israelites buying enslaved people under divine approval no matter how they had been acquired, and then Douglass on man-stealing in modern America ('free negroes' caught 'by a pack of ruffians', their papers torn up, then sold back into 'a life of bondage'), Miller shows that Ross's logical conclusion was that it was fine for a Christian slaveholder to buy somebody acquired in this way. This showed 'what a sad state of decomposition the morals of some of the slave-holding Churches have fallen' into. Miller concludes by asking, with another of Stowe's characters: why go to church on Sundays if one was to be fed 'such humbug'?⁸¹

This editorial shows Miller borrowing Douglass's testimony and also drawing on his rhetorical techniques in Scotland: with heavy irony and pointed quotation, he extrapolates a compromising chain of argument about slavery to expose its absurd and morally bankrupt casuistry. Clearly, Miller held no brief for clerical defenders of the system. But there is a larger point here. Like Miller's numerous *Witness* editorials on slavery written before and after the 'Send Back the Money' furore – written with no need to fight the Garrisonians or defend the Free Church against slander – the editorial helps to show that his protestations of anti-slavery conviction during the controversy itself were genuine. Racism played no role in Miller's stance.

Miller can certainly not be accused of neglecting slavery. Even at times when the press of church-political news threatened to overwhelm the pages of the *Witness*, as in its first year, Miller variously wrote, commissioned and excerpted a steady stream of leading articles which advocated the abolition of slavery, and detailed and sympathetic reports of anti-slavery meetings (including those featuring other Black abolitionists, and Garrison and Thompson before they attacked the Free Church), as well as many shorter reports. He even managed to build eloquent abolitionist diatribes into leading articles about the issue he had been hired to concentrate on, namely 'non-intrusion' in the Scottish Church.⁸²

Anti-slavery views were normal for reform-minded periodicals at this period; but it does seem that Miller was especially interested. In nineteenth-century Scottish newspapers, 'the shadow of European events almost hid the American continent from sight' in the 1850s until a diplomatic crisis blew up in April 1856.⁸³ The *Witness* was a major exception, with numerous articles earlier in the 1850s reporting and condemning America's increasingly pro-slavery policies, especially the Fugitive Slave Act and the Nebraska Bill, and drawing an abolitionist lesson from America's relationship with 'despotic' Russia.⁸⁴

As shown above, by the mid-1850s Miller had become increasingly frustrated with the continued inaction of many American churches, and horrified by political developments. He still felt that radical abolitionists bore some responsibility for the continued polarization of American opinion and policy, but his criticism of them was now more muted. By contrast, he intensified his criticisms of the slaveholders themselves and the American government. After recent atrocities by pro-slavery mobs in Kansas, Miller predicted a justifiable rise in abolitionist sentiment, culminating in dissolution of the Union and 'a war between the Northern and Southern States'.⁸⁵ He continued to defend the Free Church's refusal to break fellowship with the American churches; he appealed to that decision to reinforce his stance as America's friend, hoping that his strong 'remonstrances' would then be taken seriously rather than dismissed as malicious.⁸⁶ Miller's anti-slavery views were now so strong that he was beginning to abandon aspects of his old mentor Chalmers's theology. If it was 'a sin for a Briton to have a slave', he argued, it was 'a sin for an American also'.⁸⁷ Fine distinctions between individual and social sin melted away in the light of the Kansas atrocities and looming civil war. Miller had moved closer to radical abolitionism, while Douglass departed from Garrisonianism to a more centrist position. Yet neither man changed his core principles. For Miller, these included opposition to racial discrimination and to the scientific racism that supported it, as I will outline in the sequel-article.

Ultimately, despite their differences, Douglass and Miller were kindred spirits. The Introduction to Douglass's second autobiography illustrates this point vividly. Douglass's friend, the Black physician James McCune Smith, here writes of how the 'equality of man to man is demonstrated by the ease with which black men, scarce one remove from barbarism ... vault into the high places of the most advanced and painfully acquired civilization.' Smith's prime example of Black self-help was Douglass, whose life-story

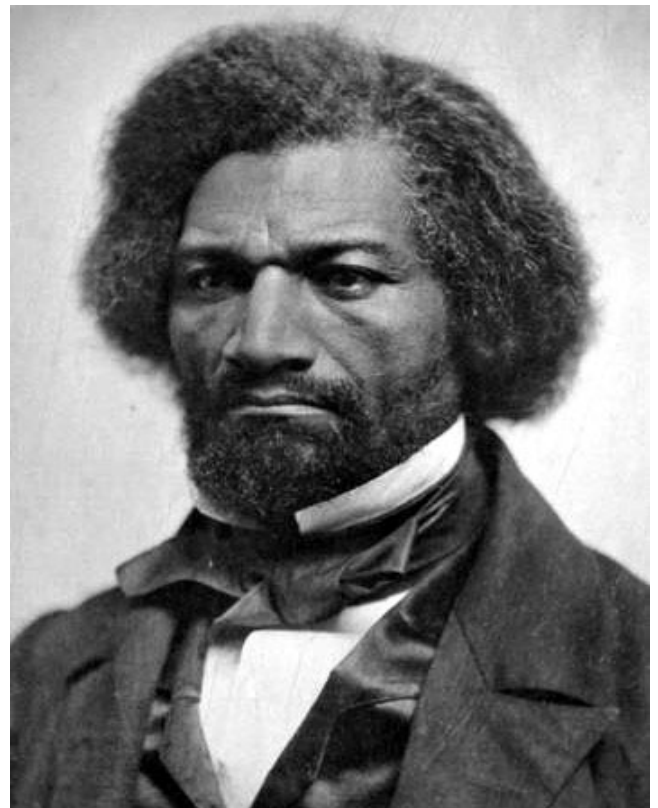
rivalled Miller's own.⁸⁸ Quoting *My Schools and Schoolmasters*, Smith called Douglass's boyhood discovery of the principle of equal rights 'his "first-found Ammonite"'.⁸⁹

Douglass, too, never lost sight of the anti-racist message of equal opportunity and self-help that he shared with Smith and Miller. In one of his most popular speeches, 'Self-Made Men', he declared of 'the negro' that 'In a thousand instances has he verified my theory of self-made men. Give him all the facilities for honest and successful livelihood, and in all honorable avocations receive him as a man among men.'⁹⁰ He then takes his audience through a self-help hall of fame, including icons from both the 'Caucasian' and 'African race'. I leave the final word to him:

Hugh Miller ... was a grand example of the success of persistent devotion, under great difficulties, to work and to the acquisition of knowledge. In a country justly distinguished for its schools and colleges, he, like Robert Burns, Scotia's matchless son of song, was the true child of science, as Burns was of song. He was his own college. The earth was his school and the rocks were his school master. Outside of all the learned institutions of his country, and while employed with his chisel and hammer, as a stone mason, this man gave to the world books ... which are full of inspiration to the truth seeker.⁹¹



Hugh Miller, c. 1854. Albumen print by James Good Tunny, National Galleries Scotland (Creative Commons licence).



Frederick Douglass in 1856. Ambrotype by unknown artist, Smithsonian Institution (Wikimedia Commons).

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Endnotes

- 1 I am grateful to David Alston, Martin Gostwick, Colin Guétemme, Jennifer Melville, Hannah-Rose Murray, Clémence O'Connor, Larissa Reid, Maya Schrödl, Michael A. Taylor and the Friends of Hugh Miller generally for assistance and advice. I thank the staff of the Sir Duncan Rice Library, University of Aberdeen, for their support during the pandemic lockdown. Any mistakes or overstatements are my responsibility. Minor corrections were made to this text in November 2021, mostly affecting the terminology of enslavement.
- 2 Timing: Michael A. Taylor, 'Introduction', in Hugh Miller, *The Cruise of the Betsey and Rambles of a Geologist* (Edinburgh, 2003), pp. A11-A62, at pp. A11-12.

- 3 [Miller], 'Rambles of a Geologist ... Chapter Eighth', *Witness*, 8 November 1848, p. 2; [Miller], 'Rambles of a Geologist ... Chapter Ninth', *Witness*, 10 November 1848, p. 2; both reprinted (abridged) in chapter 8 of *Rambles of a Geologist* (Miller, *Cruise of the Betsey*, pp. 351-7).
- 4 Anon., 'Racist Views of Renowned Fossil Hunter Uncovered', BBC Alba, 10 December 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-55258085> (last accessed 7 April 2021); Martin Gostwick, 'Degraded Races, Hopelessly Lost', *Hugh's News*, 46 (November 2020), 11-14, drawing on research by David Alston.
- 5 *Chambers 21st Century Dictionary*, online edition, <https://chambers.co.uk/> (accessed 30 March 2021). For some scholars, the belief that there are distinct races is itself racist, regardless of attitude towards those races. This is unhelpfully broad, especially for the nineteenth century when everyone held that belief, and 'race' was often used (even by scientists) to cover groupings at many different levels, from social class to species.
- 6 Anon., 'Racist Views', quoting David Alston.
- 7 Gostwick, 'Degraded Races', p. 11.
- 8 British Newspaper Archive, www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk (currently all issues of the *Witness* except 1849-51 and 1853, mostly legible). For a list of *Witness* editorials assumed to be by Miller, see Michael Shortland, 'Appendix: A Bibliography of Hugh Miller', in his *Hugh Miller and the Controversies of Victorian Science* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 301-84. However, some may not be by Miller. In this article, I attribute articles to Miller only where justified by later republication under his name or by internal (including stylistic) evidence. I cite other articles by title alone, with no author-name.
- 9 Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London, 1971); Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain 1800-1960* (London, 1982), pp. 2-5; Patrick Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1800-1930* (Ithaca, 2003), pp. 1-5 and 40-1. On Douglass: Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (London, 2016), pp. 165-6 and 195-200.
- 10 J. Murray Mitchell, *In Western India: Recollections of My Early Missionary Life* (Edinburgh, 1899), pp. 97-9.
- 11 [Miller], 'Rambles ... Chapter Ninth' for this and other quotations from the Buchubai story, reprinted almost *verbatim* in Miller, *Cruise of the Betsey*, pp. 354-6. In the original, however, she occupies the limelight, appearing at the start of the article; in the book she is hidden at the end of a chapter.
- 12 Kristina Fenyő, 'Views of the Highlanders and the Clearances in the Scottish Press, 1845-1855: *The Witness* in Context', in *Celebrating the Life and Times of Hugh Miller*, ed. by Lester Borley (Cromarty, 2003), pp. 321-7, and Taylor, 'Introduction', pp. A26-A27.
- 13 Fenyő, 'Views of the Highlanders', p. 326.
- 14 [Hugh Miller], 'Our Deserted Villages', *Witness*, 25 April 1855, p. 2 ('social extermination'); [Hugh Miller], 'The Highlands', 29 September 1855, p. 2; [Hugh Miller], 'The Highlands', 6 October 1855, p. 2 ('unjust and selfish'). On radical journalists' disillusionment, see Fenyő, 'Views of the Highlanders', p. 326.
- 15 [Hugh Miller] 'Moderatism Popular,— Where, and Why', *Witness*, 6 June 1840, p. 2.
- 16 Reports of Douglass's speech, 9 February 1846, in *Dundee Courier* and *Dundee, Perth and Cupar Advertiser*, both 10 February 1846, transcribed by Alasdair Pettinger, www.bulldozia.com/douglass-in-scotland/speaking-engagements/dundee-9-february-1846/#3 (last accessed 23 April 2021).
- 17 Murray, *Advocates of Freedom*, p. 50; also Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes*.
- 18 Miller, *My Schools and Schoolmasters or The Story of My Education*, ed. by James Robertson (Edinburgh, 1993), p. 361.
- 19 Miller, *My Schools*, p. 359.
- 20 [Hugh Miller], 'Dr Livingstone', *Witness*, 24 December 1856, p. 2.
- 21 [Hugh Miller], 'Dr Duff versus Mr Scott', *Witness*, 2 October 1844, p. 2. Alexander Duff was a Presbyterian minister in Calcutta who sided with the Free Church during the Disruption.
- 22 [Hugh Miller], review of *Sketch of the Geology of Moray*, 'Article I', *Witness*, 5 March 1842, p. 2.
- 23 Gostwick, 'Degraded Races', raised this issue. Detailed discussions: C. Duncan Rice, *The Scots Abolitionists, 1833-1861* (Baton Rouge, 1981); R. J. M. Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall: Black Americans in the Atlantic Abolitionist Movement, 1830-1860* (Baton Rouge, 1983), pp. 83-117; Iain Whyte, 'Send Back the Money!' *The Free Church of Scotland and American Slavery* (Cambridge, 2012), Alasdair Pettinger, *Frederick Douglass and Scotland, 1846: Living an Antislavery Life* (Edinburgh, 2019); and Hannah-Rose Murray, *Advocates of Freedom: African American Transatlantic Abolitionism in the British Isles* (Cambridge, 2020), pp. 81-162. Pet-

- tinger and Murray have each produced superb websites displaying and contextualizing Douglass's itinerary and speeches: www.bulldozia.com/douglass-in-scotland/ and <http://frederickdouglassinbritain.com/>
- 24 Pettinger, *Frederick Douglass*, p. 51.
- 25 Gostwick, 'Degraded Races', p. 11.
- 26 Pettinger, *Frederick Douglass*, p. 72.
- 27 Pettinger, *Frederick Douglass*, p. 73.
- 28 Reported in the *Witness*, 20 June 1840, p. 3. See Daniel Ritchie, "'Justice Must Prevail": The Presbyterian Review and Scottish Views of Slavery, 1831-1848', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 69 (2018), 557-84, p. 580.
- 29 Speech at Finsbury Chapel, 12 May 1846, in Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, ed. by Celeste-Marie Bernier (Oxford, 2019), p. 287.
- 30 [Hugh Miller], 'The Slavery Question', *Witness*, 1 January 1845, pp. 2-3, at p. 3.
- 31 *Fife Herald*, 18 June 1846, p. 3, quoted in Murray, *Advocates of Freedom*, p. 71.
- 32 Murray, *Advocates of Freedom*, p. 131.
- 33 [Hugh Miller], 'The Slavery Question', *Witness*, 18 December 1844, p. 2.
- 34 As documented in George Lewis, *Impressions of America and the American Churches* (Edinburgh, 1845), p. 414.
- 35 *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison*, ed. by Walter M. Merrill and Louis Richames, 6 vols (Cambridge, 1971-81), III, 303. On abolitionist schisms, see William H. Pease and Jane H. Pease, 'Antislavery Ambivalence: Immediatism, Expediency, Race', *American Quarterly*, 17.4 (1965), 682-95, p. 684 n. 10; but compare Pettinger, *Frederick Douglass*, pp. 48-50.
- 36 Quoted in Stanley Harrold, *The Abolitionists and the South, 1831-1861* (Lexington, 1995), p. 100.
- 37 Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 688-90.
- 38 'Polk – The Repudiating President', *Witness*, 1 January 1845, p. 4, reprinted from the *National* (quoted); 'The American Presidency', *Witness*, 4 December 1844, p. 1, reprinted from *The Times*.
- 39 [Hugh Miller], 'The Slavery Question Again', *Witness*, 25 December 1844, p. 2.
- 40 [Miller], 'The Slavery Question Again'.
- 41 On the closeness of Chalmers's and Wilberforce's positions, see Ritchie, 'Justice Must Prevail', pp. 562 and 570-1.
- 42 [Miller], 'The Slavery Question' (18 December 1844); similarly [Hugh Miller], 'The *Daily News* and American Slavery', *Witness*, 8 July 1846, p. 3.
- 43 [Hugh Miller], 'The Christian Reformer', *Witness*, 7 October 1840, p. 2.
- 44 Lewis, *Impressions of America*, pp. 97 and 412-19. On Lewis's American conversations, see Whyte, *Send Back the Money*, pp. 22-3.
- 45 Lewis, *Impressions of America*, p. iv.
- 46 Whyte, *Send Back the Money*, pp. 43-51.
- 47 Report of the General Assembly (30 May 1846 session), *Witness*, 2 June 1846, pp. 3-4. These parts of Cunningham's speech are ignored by Whyte, *Send Back the Money*, pp. 62-3.
- 48 Douglass, *My Bondage*, p. 261; Daniel Ritchie, 'Antislavery Orthodoxy: Isaac Nelson and the Free Church of Scotland, c. 1843-65', *Scottish Historical Review*, 94 (2015), 74-99, p. 81 ('essentially proslavery').
- 49 [Miller], 'The Slavery Question Again'. On anti-literacy laws, see Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill, 2005), Appendix.
- 50 Chalmers's position, including his loathing of slavery, is explained in his letter to the *Witness*, 14 May 1845, p. 2.
- 51 Molly Oshatz, 'No Ordinary Sin: Antislavery Protestants and the Discovery of the Social Nature of Morality', *Church History*, 79 (2010), 334-58, p. 348.
- 52 On the laws, see Benjamin Joseph Klebaner, 'American Manumission Laws and the Responsibility for Supporting Slaves', *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 63 (1955), 443-53. On ethical dilemmas around freeing enslaved people, see Ellen Eslinger, 'Liberation in a Rural Context: The Valley of Virginia, 1800-1860', in *Paths to Freedom: Manumission in the Atlantic World*, ed. by Rosemary Brana-Shute and Randy J. Sparks (Columbia, 2009), pp. 363-80, at pp. 366-72.
- 53 General Assembly report, *Witness*, 2 June 1846, pp. 3-4.
- 54 Oshatz, 'No Ordinary Sin', p. 339.
- 55 Murray, *Advocates of Freedom*, p. 71.
- 56 Report of speech in Dundee, 30 January 1846, *Dundee Courier*, 2 February 1846,

- www.bulldozia.com/douglass-in-scotland/speaking-engagements/dundee-30-january-1846/ (all subsequent citations from this website last accessed on 23 April 2021).
- 57 Whyte, *Send Back the Money*, pp. 76 and 82.
- 58 Murray, *Advocates of Freedom*.
- 59 Lewis, *Impressions of America*; reports of Douglass's speech of 9 February 1846, www.bulldozia.com/douglass-in-scotland/speaking-engagements/dundee-9-february-1846/#3.
- 60 Pettinger, *Frederick Douglass*, pp. 52-60; Whyte, *Send Back the Money*, p. 76.
- 61 Report of Douglass's speech, 30 January 1846, *Dundee Courier* (note 56).
- 62 Report of Douglass's speech, 10 March 1846, in the pamphlet *Anti-Slavery Soiree* (Dundee, 1846), <https://www.bulldozia.com/douglass-in-scotland/speaking-engagements/dundee-10-march-1846/>.
- 63 On this performance's theatricality, see Pettinger, *Frederick Douglass*, pp. 55-60.
- 64 [Hugh Miller], 'The *Daily News* and American Slavery', *Witness*, 8 June 1846, p. 3.
- 65 Report of Douglass's speech, 30 January 1846, *Dundee Courier* (note 56).
- 66 Rice, *Scots Abolitionists*.
- 67 [Hugh Miller], 'The Free Church and Her Accusers', *Witness*, 13 May 1846, p. 2.
- 68 [Hugh Miller], 'The *Daily News* and American Slavery', *Witness*, 11 July 1846, p. 2.
- 69 William L. van Deburg, 'William Lloyd Garrison and the "Pro-Slavery Priesthood": The Changing Views of an Evangelical Reformer, 1830-1840', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 43 (1975), 224-37.
- 70 Blackett, *Building an Antislavery Wall*, pp. 95-6; Whyte, 'Send Back the Money!' pp. 76-8; Murray, *Advocates of Freedom*, pp. 115-16.
- 71 'American Agitators', *Witness*, 26 September 1846, p. 3; 30 September 1846, p. 4.
- 72 'Great Anti-Slavery Meeting', *Witness*, 24 January 1846, p. 3; 'American Slavery, the Free Church, and the Evangelical Alliance', *Witness*, 3 October 1846, p. 3; 'American Agitators', *Witness*, 17 October 1846, p. 2.
- 73 'Meeting at Covent Garden Theatre', *Witness*, 12 August 1846, p. 2;
- 74 'Mr Douglass and the British and North American Royal Mail Company', *Witness*, 17 April 1846, p. 2; 'The Case of Frederick Douglass', *Witness*, 21 April 1847, p. 2. On this episode, see Pettinger, *Frederick Douglass*, pp. 245-58; Murray, *Advocates of Freedom*, pp. 153-61. As Pettinger points out, racist discrimination did continue on the Cunard Line.
- 75 Gostwick, 'Degraded Races', p. 12.
- 76 'Send Back the Money', *Witness*, 20 May 1846, p. 2.
- 77 Alasdair Pettinger, 'Scottish-American Graffiti' (2018, updated 2020), www.bulldozia.com/2018/11/13/scottish-american-graffiti/. I am grateful to Martin Gostwick for this reference.
- 78 Unlike Garrison's feminist associates in [Miller], 'The Slavery Question Again'.
- 79 [Hugh Miller], 'The Ethics of Slave-Having', *Witness*, 18 October 1856, p. 2.
- 80 [Hugh Miller], 'America by River and Rail', 27 September 1856, p. 2.
- 81 [Miller], 'The Ethics of Slave-Having'; Douglass, *My Bondage*, p. 197.
- 82 [Miller], 'Moderatism Popular'; [Hugh Miller], 'The Earl of Aberdeen versus the People of Scotland', *Witness*, 17 June 1840, p. 2.
- 83 R. M. W. Cowan, *The Newspaper in Scotland: A Study of Its First Expansion 1815-1860* (Glasgow, 1946), p. 382.
- 84 Examples written by Miller include [Hugh Miller], 'Possible Complications', *Witness*, 27 July 1854, p. 2, and [Hugh Miller], 'American Democracy Sympathising with the Czar', *Witness*, 24 January 1855, pp. 2-3.
- 85 [Hugh Miller], 'America by River and Rail', 27 September 1856, p. 2.
- 86 [Hugh Miller], 'Mr Buchanan's Policy', *Witness*, 9 August 1856, p. 2.
- 87 [Miller], 'Mr Buchanan's Policy'.
- 88 James McCune Smith, 'Introduction', in Douglass, *My Bondage*, pp. 18-33, at pp. 19-20.
- 89 Smith, 'Introduction', p. 20; Miller, *My Schools*, p. 152.
- 90 Frederick Douglass, 'Self-Made Men', 1874 speech to students of the Indian Industrial School, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, typescript in Frederick Douglass papers, Library of Congress <https://www.loc.gov/item/mfd.29002/> (accessed 7 April 2021), p. 16. Douglass gave this speech many times. Its original date is unclear, but its mention of President Lincoln on p. 27 suggests that this version cannot predate 1865.
- 91 Douglass, 'Self-Made Men', pp. 25-7.

HUGH'S PRINTING PROTÉGÉ BECOMES HIS PUBLISHER

*The story of Alexander Strachan or Strahan, publisher of *The Life and Letters of Hugh Miller**

by Michael A Taylor

I am researching Hugh Miller's unusual publishing arrangements, including the frequency with which his firm, Miller & Fairly, printed his books for their Edinburgh publishers before and after his death. The obvious exception is Peter Bayne's family-approved *The Life and Letters of Hugh Miller* (1871), printed in London for Strahan & Co., the London publishing business of Alexander Strahan. So I did some digging in that book, and in Patricia Srebrnik's 1986 biography *Alexander Strahan: Victorian Publisher*, and elsewhere.

Strahan turned out to be the son of a friend of Miller, John Strachan, and his wife Jean Grant. John Strachan was originally a Forres weaver and "artisan poet". His book *Walter and Emma, or A Tale of Bothwell Bridge: with Other Poems* came out in 1829, the same year as Miller's own volume of poems. Strachan and Miller had the same literary patrons, Sir Thomas Dick Lauder and Miss Dunbar of Both, familiar from Miller's autobiographical writings.

The Strachan family had moved to Tain, where John was a sheriff's officer, by the time of Alexander's birth on 16 July 1834 as recorded in the register of the nearby Secession Church congregation at Nigg. He seems to be the Strachan baby whose baptism at a public Secession prayer meeting at Tain upset local adherents of the Church of Scotland. The Strachan family, however, shifted to the Free Church after the Disruption of 1843.

When the young Alexander was of an age to go to work, Miller introduced him to his own publishers, Johnstone & Hunter of Edinburgh, who took him on as an apprentice. It surely helped that John Johnstone was himself a Free Kirk elder, and that the firm produced plenty of religious, ecclesiastical, and improving literature.

Strachan worked for Johnstone & Hunter till its temporary collapse in the mid-1850s, then set up his own Edinburgh publishing business. He anglicised the spelling of his surname to Strahan, moved to London in 1862, and became a major publisher with such authors as Trollope and Tennyson in his stable. Strahan had shifted to the Established kirk but retained his Free Church friends, and his output remained in tune with the Evangelical worldview.

His popular magazine *Good Words* was safe family reading for the devout middle classes, even on the Sabbath. Its articles on a range of subjects included some of the earliest popular writing of the geologist Archibald Geikie, another protégé of Miller's.

No doubt there was more to the *Life and Letters* connection: one wonders about contracts and payments, and Peter Bayne having himself written for Strahan. But one can well see why Strahan might be particularly pleased to publish Miller's biography.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF HUGH MILLER

BY PETER BAYNE, M.A.

TWO VOLUMES. II



STRAHAN & CO. PUBLISHERS

36, LUDGATE HILL, LONDON.

1871.

1.10.0 (1/2. 1871)

*The title-page of *The Life and Letters of Hugh Miller*, showing the imprint of Strahan & Co. of Ludgate Hill, London.*

