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PREFACE.

This booklet is designed to tell the story of Abbeygreen Church, its ministers and people, since the congregation was formed in 1843. The early records have been lost, but other sources have yielded the material for this account. It is fitting that its appearance should coincide with the opening of the new suite of halls, the largest scheme the congregation has undertaken since the building of the church and manse. The writing of it has been a labour of love to me, for I cannot forget that I was privileged to share the inheritance of the Fathers of Abbeygreen.

My thanks are due to Dr. Mitchell Hunter, of New College Library, Edinburgh. for giving me access to the Parker MSS., to the staff of the Mitchell Library, Glasgow, for helping me in my search through newspaper and magazine files, and to Mr. Walker, the minister, for his interest in my task.

J. L. C.

Dennistoun, Glasgow, May, 1933.

Electronic version produced by Dr Richard Martin Abbeygreen Church, Lesmahagow, June 2011.

Introduction.

A PLAIN but substantial building, with no pretension to architectural beauty, Abbeygreen Church stands on a knoll overlooking the Nethan. It is one of the landmarks of the village of Lesmahagow, one of the first to catch the eye of the traveller as he approaches from the south.

You enter the gateway, and climb the brae to the church. If you have walked three, four or five miles on a hot summer day to worship, you may help yourself to a draught of clear, cold water from the well behind the manse. That well and the old pump which preceded it have always struck me as a symbol of the simplicity of the people who, for four generations, have come regularly to the sanctuary. The deacons at the plate-and the beadle, too-give you a hearty welcome.

The interior is plain, yet bright and cheerful. It is flooded with light from large, clear windows. The high and strait pulpit above the organ manual is almost overshadowed by the galleries which go round three sides of the building. Beneath the pulpit is the choir area and the organist's seat. The single room behind the church, which served for nearly ninety years as a combined vestry, session-house and hall, has disappeared, and in its place a modem suite of rooms has been built.

Such is the dear, old, familiar building - the Abbeygreen Church of today - and the purpose of this narrative is to tell the story of the people who have worshipped within its walls since our fathers followed Dr. Parker out of the Establishment to form the Free Kirk of Lesmahagow. Changed days have come, and the Free Kirk as such has ceased to exist, so far as the parish is concerned. In 1900 if became part of a new combination, the United Free Church of Scotland. Again, after the obstacles had been removed, it was merged by the Reunion of 1929 into the comprehensive ecclesiastical organisation of the Church of Scotland.

While Abbeygreen congregation has gone into these unions with enthusiasm, the church has retained its distinctive and separate existence. Its testimony remains, because its members cherish kindly and tender memories of the saintly people who laid its foundations in 1843. While these memories are still fresh it may be fitting to tell the story of Abbeygreen. It is not that there is anything of extraordinary importance to tell; it may prove a chronicle of humble and obscure men and women. But this at least may be said for them - this church and its testimony were as the breath of life to them. They loved its walls, and it stands for a staunch, reverent and sincere religious life throughout the passing years. Yet it has a special interest in the fact that the story of Abbeygreen is characteristic and representative of the larger story of the struggles and progress of the Church in Scotland. In that larger history we have general principles and picturesque incidents; in the story of Abbeygreen we have the practical illustrations of these principles and the reflections of these incidents.

The story of Abbeygreen is a by-way in Scottish Church History into which we may enter together and cull a few flowers of gracious reminiscence. We shall find stern old Cameronians, Burghers, and Free Churchmen sitting round the Communion Table. To relate the story of the transitions which brought them

under one roof is, in reality, to give an account of the religious progress of the Scottish people from the signing of the National Covenant until the present day.

The Historical Background

ALTHOUGH Abbeygreen Church has its roots in the Disruption, we must go back two centuries to trace the movement which led to its establishment.

It is not difficult to realise what Lesmahagow was like in the seventeenth century. A few houses snuggled round the old Reformation Church on the Priory site, and rude farm houses were dotted about the countryside. They were occupied by a God-fearing people who loved their Church, and were ready to die in defence of its principles. Almost to a man the parishioners took arms against the king when the Stuarts tried to force Episcopacy on Scotland. They marched to Rullion Green, they helped to drive the dragoons from Drumclog, and they suffered defeat at Bothwell Brig. Some fell fighting, some were executed, some were banished, and some became fugitives.

Even after the Revolution Settlement which ended the persecution, the Cameronians, who had renewed the Covenants at Logan House after the rout at Bothwell, maintained their distinctive principles, refusing to adhere to the Presbyterianism of the National Church as by law established. There were a few Cameronians in Lesmahagow. They held frequent meetings, but they had no minister until the Rev. John McMillan of Galloway assumed the leadership. By the middle of the eighteenth century these people had three or four ministers who travelled from place to place. In 1763, the Rev. John Fairley was settled in Ponfeigh, where the second Cameronian Church was built. He continued field-preachings, and often held conventicles at spots associated with the Covenanters. His successor, the Rev. John Milwain, continued these meetings in Lesmahagow parish.

From the Reformation the Scottish people had been taught to believe that they were entitled to have some say in the choice of their ministers. King William, at the Revolution, acknowledged this right which the Stuarts had denied. Then, like a bolt from the blue, Parliament, in 1712, restored Patronage, admitting the right of the landowner to present a pastor to a vacant church.

Popular sentiment was against this Act. A deputation was sent to London to oppose its proposals. They made a strong case, but Parliament ignored their representations. Here was the origin of the dissensions which led to the three great secessions in the Church of Scotland - secessions which were due, not to theological deviations, but to differences on points of procedure.

Still, the Scottish Church was not without its theological controversies.It was about this time that there was a drift throughout the Church towards an easiergoing theology than had hitherto prevailed. This drift was accelerated by the political and ecclesiastical developments which resulted from the Patronage troubles. Popular rights were being ignored; patrons were becoming bolder. By 1731 the issue was approaching a crisis. The Moderate Party in the Assembly of

that year proposed that the call should come from heritors and elders. The presbyteries rejected it, and in the debate which followed Ebenezer Erskine asked: "What difference does a piece of land make between man and man in the affairs of Christ's kingdom? We are told that "God bath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith.' It is not said that He bath chosen the heritors of this world as we have done; but the poor of this world. And if they be heirs of the kingdom, I wish to know by what warrant they are stripped of the privileges of the kindgom."

This democratic protest was unheeded. The Assembly ruled that the call was to be limited to heritors and elders or town council and elders. But Erskine was not to be beaten. He preached an epoch-making sermon to the synod of Perth and Stirling, in which he maintained that the "call of the Church lies in the free choice and election of the Christian people." He was censured by the synod, and he appealed to the Assembly of 1733. At this meeting he reiterated the principle, and with three companions refused to stop preaching it. They were suspended from the ministry, and ejected from their parishes. That was the origin of the Secession Church. These ministers formed themselves into a presbytery, and found many sympathisers.

The formation of the Associate Synod by the Seceders preserved Evangelical religion in a time of Moderatism and religious laxity throughout the Scottish Church. A Praying Society was formed in Lesmahagow. This body acceded to the Associate Presbytery, and for some time Lesmahagow and Lanark formed one congregation, but not until 1741 is there any mention of a preacher being appointed to either place. In September, 1743, the Lesmahagow Seceders sought union with East Kilbride for the purpose of calling a minister. From that year onwards sermons were occasionally preached in the parish by a Seceding minister.

In 1747 the Associate Synod split into separate factions known as Burghers and Anti-Burghers. The difference arose out of the burgess oath in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Perth. For some years after that division Lesmahagow was a Burgher preaching station. Burgher congregations were formed later at Lanark and Stonehouse, and Lesmahagow families adhering to this branch of the Secession found the rights of membership within comparatively easy reach. In April, 1805, a number of people in Lesmahagow petitioned the Burgher Presbytery of Glasgow for a settled minister. No probationers were available, and nothing was done. A Burgher congregation was, however, constituted about ten years later.

Meanwhile, within the Church of Scotland the supremacy of the Moderate Party becomes more marked. Patronage difficulties and dissensions accumulated. Between 1740 and 1750 more than fifty cases of disputed settlement came before the Church courts, and soldiers were called in to help at enforced settlements where local feeling ran high. Following such a settlement at Inverkeithing, the Rev. Thomas Gillespie, who had refused to take part in the service, was summarily deposed from his charge at Carnock. He accepted the deposition, but continued preaching in the fields in summer. When the Assembly refused to take him back he formed a Kirk Session at Dunfermline. In 1761 he

and two others, with three elders, formed themselves into a Presbytery of Relief "for the relief of Christians oppressed in their Christian privileges." In this way was inaugurated the second Secession.

The Assembly of the Church of Scotland had now become high-handed and arbitrary in its procedure, considering rather the legal rights of the patron and its own ecclesiastical authority and ignoring and overriding the rights of congregations. There was a lowering of the spiritual temperature of the Church, and many passed to one or other of the seceding churches. The standard of Relief was planted in Strathaven in 1777, and thither many went from Lesmahagow until they had a church of their own.

The Relief Church Presbytery of Hamilton made Lesmahagow a preaching station in 1835, and two years later a Relief Church was built. No sooner had this decision been made than a number of ministers connected with the Establishment arrived in the parish to arrest the progress of the cause of Relief. These efforts were in vain. The people had counted the cost, and resolved to abide by the Relief Synod.

The Rev. Alexander Lindsay was called to the Relief Church in the village. He was ordained in May, 1838, and remained minister for seven years. Under his care Sabbath Schools were started in Lesmahagow, Kirkmuirhill and Auchenheath. He resigned his charge in 1845, and two years later applied through the Presbytery of Paisley for admission to the Free Church. His son, who was born in Lesmahagow, was Principal T. M. Lindsay of the Free Church College in Glasgow, while his grandson, Professor A. D. Lindsay, is now Master of Balliol College, Oxford.

The Rev. Alexander Lindsay's successor in the Relief Church was the Rev. Robert Cordiner who arrived in 1847. Two months after his ordination Mr. Cordiner was present at the first meeting of the united Synods of the United Secession and Relief Churches in Edinburgh. At that meeting these two churches merged their denominational names, and became one, under the designation of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

Mr. Cordiner was minister of the U.P. Church until1894. His colleague and successor was the Rev. John Lewars, whose ministry was a short one. He was released from Lesmahagow in 1900 on accepting a call to Kirkcaldy. In that year also the movement for the union of the United Presbyterian and Free Churches of Scotland was brought to a happy issue. Henceforth the united Church is known as the United Free Church of Scotland. That union did not affect either of the two churches in the village. Each remained a separate unit.

Meanwhile, a Burgher congregation had been formed in Lesmahagow in 1816. They had no minister of their own until 1820, when the Rev. William Logan was ordained. He remained in the charge for more than twenty years.

Down in the Vale of Clyde a United Secession Church was founded in 1830. The early ministers of this congregation did not remain long in the district, but the Rev. John Weir, who was called in 1849, was pastor until 1875. His successor was the Rev. John Pringle, who for more than a quarter of a century lived and worked

in the orchard country. After him came the Rev. John Oliver, and on his departure for Arbirlot in 1916 the two United Free Churches in the village of Crossford were united under the Rev. Alexander Sutherland, M.A., the present minister.

By 1830 a change had come over the Church of Scotland. The era of Moderatism was passing, and the Evangelical revival was breaking under the leadership of Dr. Thomas Chalmers. The Church of Scotland was in the throes of the Ten Years' Conflict.

Friendly feelings existed between the Church of Scotland and the Burghers. The former was fighting to rid itself of the abuse of Patronage, and as the fight in the General Assembly grew more strenuous and the controversy more acute, the Associate Burgher Synod resolved to give its weight to the Evangelical leaders by union. After five years of negotiation the union was consummated in 1839. Of the twenty nine Burgher ministers absorbed by the Church of Scotland, the Rev. William Logan was one.

After he joined the Church of Scotland, Mr. Logan was elected a minister of the parish, but the patron, the Duke of Hamilton, declined to present him. His congregation held together, and continued to worship in their own building which occupied the site of the Jubilee Hall. Adhering to the principles of the Erskines, it is not surprising to find him one of the ministers who "came out" at the Disruption.

Towards the end of 1842, when it became clear that reforms were unlikely and the only way in which progress was possible was by leaving the Establishment, ministers from all parts of Scotland assembled in Edinburgh. After that meeting Dr. Andrew Boreland Parker, who had come from Barr- head to Lesmahagow in 1839, and who had attended the Convocation, summoned a general meeting of the parishioners so that he could discuss the situation with them. He outlined the steps deemed necessary to form a Free Presbyterian Church in Scotland.

Of that meeting, which was held on December 20, 1842, the anniversary of the death of David Steel of Skellyhill, Dr. Parker has left a record, in which he states: "The meeting was peculiarly solemn. From the commencement to the close the deepest attention prevailed. Many were in tears, and when we joined in singing 'Pray that Jerusalem may have peace and felicity,' etc., it seemed that associations of many years were awakened and the spirit of the olden time brought back again. Numbers pressed forward to subscribe their adherence to the resolution of the Convocation and to declare their determination of making common cause with the faithful ministers."

When the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland met in Edinburgh in the following May, 474 ministers "came out to form the glorious Free Church of Scotland that has done so much to maintain progress in the country."

On the Sunday before leaving for that Assembly Dr. Parker, who had been giving a series of addresses on the Old Testament, finished his exposition of the Book of Genesis, and on May 28, the last occasion on which he preached in the Parish Church, after the Assembly, he stated that he had intended that day to begin the exposition of the Book of Exodus, but the Lord had provided other work for him,

and was calling on him to make a practical exodus, and depart from the thraldom of Egypt - the Establishment. To quote his words:- "I took a brief review of God's providential dealings towards our Church in the controversy in which she had been engaged. I added that while, by the help of God, desirous to adhere to all the vows and obligations under which I had come at my ordination . . . and maintaining firmly all the standards and principles of the Church of Scotland, I could no longer continue in connection with an Establishment which had virtually denied the kingly office of Christ, and submitted its spiritual jurisdiction to the control of Caesar."

On abandoning the Establishment, Dr. Parker was accompanied by five of his seven elders and eight hundred com-municants, of whom fifty were farmers in the parish. James Dykes of Ladehead, then eighty seven years of age, was the senior member of the Session.

In this way the Free Church of Lesmahagow came into being.

The Beginnings of Abbeygreen.

IT seems almost incredible that any landowner should have imagined it to be possible that he could stop the advance of a great religious movement by intimidation. That idea was entertained by most of the heritors in this parish. It pleased them to believe that the Disruption was a hasty step, of which the Free Churchmen would speedily repent, and that if firmness were displayed the people would find their way back to the Church of Scotland.

William Weir of Muirsland, one of the outgoing elders, who was more than seventy and not very well at the time, was pressed to remain in the Establishment on the ground that he could not have long to live - in fact, he died in 1845. He replied:- "It's never too late to do weel. I canna remain in the house when my Master is shut out."

A few days before the Disruption one of the heritors met a working man who was the proprietor of a tenement in the village, and said to him:- "Peter, if you join these Free Church folks you will lose your house - all will be taken from you to pay law expenses."

The plain working man was somewhat disconcerted by this appeal to his fears, and forthwith mentioned the subject to his wife who had a firmer faith. She encouraged her husband, and said:- "Never mind, Peter, just say to the gentleman, better lose our house than lose our souls."

One landowner told the farmers on his estate that it would be to their advantage to have nothing to do with the Free Church. Another hinted to his tenants that if they joined the new party they would get no more tiles for draining.

Intimidation did not end there. A young domestic servant who wanted to become a member of the new congregation was told by her master that if she did he would not allow her to be absent from her work for an hour.

Added to this, there were hints about the loss of favour and employment and rumours regarding the ruinous expense to which adherents of the Free Church would be exposed. Propaganda continued after the break, and many went about saying that there was little difference between the two churches. One Lesmahagow woman, a warm advocate of the Establishment, called on one of the Free Kirk elders soon after the Assembly of 1844. She said that both Assemblies had got on well; she saw no difference between them. That was too much for the elder. He thought there was a difference. "When any difficulty arose in the old Assembly," he replied, "they referred to Lord Aberdeen's Act to see what it said, but in the Free Assembly they referred to the Word of God." It is not surprising that the woman left the house abruptly.

Wives and daughters were as strong in their allegiance to the Free Church as husbands and sons. Dr. Parker paid a striking tribute to his wife who, he said, "felt not less strongly than myself the importance of the principles involved in our great controversy, and was equally prepared to face the consequences which a firm adherence to them might occasion, whether as respected our own temporal condition or the wordly prospects of our young children."

In a letter Mrs. Parker wrote to a friend before the family had to leave the manse she said:- "So far as I can judge . . . the Church in her present struggles is doing no more than her duty to her Head; and I trust she may be strengthened to go boldly forward . . . No doubt the sword of power is against her, and, to all human appearances, about to fall on her; but that is no reason why any of her faithful ministers should swerve from the principles for which their fathers suffered . . . I trust you will give me credit for being sincere in what I say . . . No one values more than I do my present comforts, and few are less qualified for making sacrifices and enduring hardships, and sometimes my very heart is sore when I look at my dear children; but I trust that God in His providence may prepare a place for us - a sphere of duty where my dearest husband may exercise those gifts with which God has endowed him."

A little later she wrote:-

"Every day that passes only shows more clearly the necessity there is for leaving the Establishment. Oh! I hope it may issue in the purification of the Church and the enlargement of our Redeemer's kingdom. We cannot look forward to be here now (I mean, in this house) much beyond May, and we are looking out for another . . . I am expecting my aunt and sister next week, to take farewell of the manse."

Dr. Parker had difficulty in finding a suitable house. He was offered one in Crossford, and leased it for a year. It was smaller than it was represented to be, and he told the man who had persuaded him to take it that he would not occupy it under any circumstances. The man sought to hold him to the lease, and Dr. Parker appealed to the sheriff who upheld his action in repudiating the agreement. Subsequently, another house was found at Netherfauldhouse, where frequently on the Sabbath evenings in the summer of 1843 Dr. Parker preached in a field near his house for the benefit of the people of Douglas parish. These services were attended by hundreds from the surrounding countryside, and in Douglas an interest was awakened in the Free Church cause, which continued to

increase until a congregation was formed in Douglas, a church built, the charge sanctioned, and the people of that district had a minister of their own.

Happily, the summer of 1843 was a good one. A place of worship could not be provided at once for the Lesmahagow congregation. The North Church, where Mr. Logan preached to his own flock, was too small. Besides, that congregation accused Dr. Parker and his followers of seeking to deprive them of their property and of trying to have Mr. Logan removed from his charge. Church headquarters rightly held that Lesmahagow was too small to have two Free Church ministers while so many congregations elsewhere had none. Accordingly, Mr. Logan was translated to Sanquhar.

Meanwhile the Free Church members met for worship in the open air, in a field placed at their disposal by Dr. Frame who had, however, elected to follow the example of the Rev. Thomas Burns, the minister of the second charge, and remain within the Establishment. Sunday after Sunday the people met on the sloping ground near the muttonhole. Of this field Dr. Parker said:-

"It was admirably adapted for the object, having a gentle slope and being surrounded on three sides by trees which afforded partial shelter. Many a happy Sabbath we spent here under the open canopy of Heaven, and here also was dispensed on the first occasion after the Disruption the holy ordinance of the Lord's Supper, with circumstances of peculiar solemnity, which many, I believe, will remember to their dying hour. On the green grass was the table spread and all around were the congregation gathered, some on chairs or rustic seats which they had brought, others on the bare ground."

That service lasted six-and-a-half hours, and after an interval of an hour, was followed by a thanksgiving service.

One Sunday, towards the end of August, the weather changed, and rain became so heavy that the open-air service had to be abandoned. The congregation adjourned to Mr. Logan's church, which was unoccupied that day, and concluded the service there.

"My Bible," wrote Dr. Parker, "was spotted and injured in the part which happened to be open for exposition - the Epistle to the Galatians. These spots cannot be effaced, they will continue as long as the Bible lasts, a memorial of the day. On showing them to one of my elders, he remarked, 'They are scars in an honourable warfare.'"

Difficulty was experienced in finding a site for a church and manse. Eventually, Mr. James Brown, younger of Auchlochan, who conducted the negotiations with the Duke of Hamilton, obtained the ground on which the buildings now stand. The field on which they were built is said to have afforded pasture to the horses of Claverhouse while his company lodged a night at the neighbouring farm of Milton soon after the Battle of Bothwell Brig.

No time was lost in starting work on the church which was finished early in 1844. On February 15 of that year it was opened free of debt and without aid from the Central Fund. The church, which was built to a plan sent by the Building

Committee from Edinburgh, cost about £800 and contained 960 sittings. The farmer members carted the freestone from Auchenheath Quarry, then worked by Mr. Cadzow, of Hallhill, a member of the congregation, who supplied the material free. The rubble was gathered on Greystone Hill. The manse was ready some months later; it cost £700, and was designed by Mr. William Gale, of Glasgow.

Every member contributed a share of the cost, and some friends from outside the parish gave handsome donations. The latter included a friend in Ayrshire who gave £5; William Campbell, Esq., of Glasgow, £10; Alexander Gillespie, jun., Esq., of London, £21; Mrs. Gillespie, £5 5s.; and John Brown, Esq., of Rothesay, £50. When the church was complete the congregation found themselves short of £200 of the cost. Mr. John Symington, a Glasgow merchant, supplied the deficiency, and, in addition, fitted up the pulpit. One interesting, if unusual, decoration was the dove which was placed above the pulpit, and which now rests on a corner of the organ. It was the gift of Mr. Cadzow. This instance of the dove, the emblem of the United Presbyterian Church, finding a place in a Free Church is surely unique - an omen of the union half a century later.

The opening took place on the Fast Day in February. The forenoon service was conducted by the Rev. John Jaffray, of Edinburgh, who preached from a text in Isaiah xxxiii., 22. Dr. Parker occupied the pulpit in the afternoon, and took his text from Psalm xxvi., 8. On both occasions the church was crowded, and the collections amounted to more than £32.

The Free Church undertook to preserve the continuity of all the institutions which had been carried on by the Church of Scotland. This was no small task. Had it been undertaken when faith was feebler, it would have been faced with serious misgivings. But the leaders were not mere dreamers, and from the first every Free Church member was taught to contribute to the support of the whole Church.

Education was an important branch of the Church's work. In Lesmahagow a large room was rented for a schoolroom, and Mr. John Rodger was appointed teacher. This room was used for eight years, after which a house and school were built on Peasehill.

The parish is a large one, and to do the work thoroughly new elders and deacons had to be elected. The original session consisted of Dr. Parker and the following five elders:-

James Dykes, aged eighty-seven, of Ladehead. John Walker, aged eighty-four, of Trows. James Thomson, aged eighty-two, of Kilbank. James McGhie, aged sixty-three, of Moatyett. William Weir, aged seventy-three, of Muirsland. In May, 1844, twelve new elders were ordained, having been previously elected by the congregation. They were:-

John Brown, farmer, Auchrobert.
James Brown, merchant, Lesmahagow.
George Brown, retired farmer, Old Birkwood.
Andrew Dykes, farmer, Bent.
John Fairie, farmer, Woodside.
William Hamilton, farmer, Draffan.
John Lean, heritor, Greystone.
James Peat, farmer, Skellyhill.
James Scott, shoemaker, Lesmahagow.
Thomas Steele, farmer, Bankend.
Thomas Watson, farmer, Coalburn.
William Watson, farmer, Mayfield.

The parish was divided into twelve districts. Each was under an elder for spiritual superintendence and under a deacon or an elder acting as a deacon for financial arrangements. Every deacon had charge of a number of collectors who visited the members once a month.

The Kirk Session met monthly, and the Deacons' Court did likewise. There was also a monthly missionary meeting of the congregation. Weekly prayer and fellowship meetings were held in various parts of the parish, and six Sabbath Schools were established - one, the Central School, met in the Church; the other five at Netherton, Coalburn, Auchenheath, Bent and Draffan, were superintended by the eiders who lived in the neighbourhood. The Central School was supervised by Mr. John Rodger, the teacher of the day school.

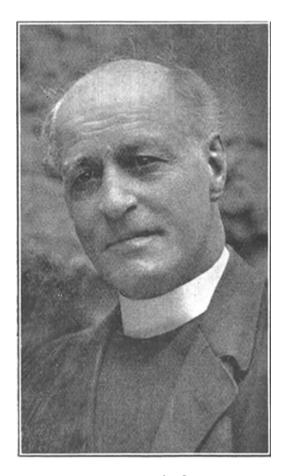
Twelve deacons were appointed about the same time. Of these only six took office. The following were ordained in June, 1844:-

William Broket, farmer, Bellishole.
David McGhie, bookseller, Lesmahagow.
William Ritchie, shoe maker, Trows.
Robert Semple, farmer, Kypeside.
Gavin Scott, farmer, Underbank.
John Scott, farmer, Auchnotroch.

Meanwhile there was dissension in the North Church. The congregation could not agree on a successor to Mr. Logan. The Free Presbytery of Lanark, which, at its first meeting in June, 1843, consisted of the Rev. William Logan (moderator), the Rev. A. B. Parker, and the Rev. Thomas Stark, of Lanark, and an elder from each congregation, decided to preach the charge vacant, and strove for the union of the two congregations in the parish. Most of the members of the North Church would have nothing to do with union. They told the presbytery that they need not trouble to preach the charge vacant as the majority of its membership had



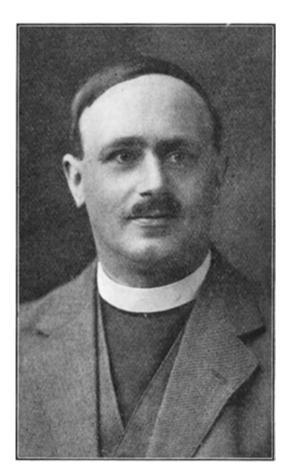
Rev. Dr. A. B. Parker



Rev. James A. Gray



Rev. James Laing, M.A.



Rev. John Walker, M.A.

decided to hear a minister of the Reformed Presbytery on the selected day. The minority joined Dr. Parker's congregation, and the majority called the Rev. John W. Macmeekin. They maintained a separate existence until 1869, when, deeply in debt and in arrears of stipend, the congregation was dissolved. Mr. Macmeekin and some of his flock joined the Establishment; others spread themselves over the other churches in the parish. Mr. Macmeekin retained his manse; the church became the village hall

The Free Church grew in membership and status in the ten years following the Disruption. Dr. Parker was a popular pastor and a powerful preacher. His fame spread far and wide, and when Wellpark Church, in the growing district of Dennistoun, was built in 1854 the new congregation invited him to Glasgow. He accepted the call.

After his settlement in Wellpark he paid frequent visits to Lesmahagow, exchanging pulpits with his successor, the Rev. James Laing. In 1864 he began to collect and prepare material for a work which was completed and published, after his death in 1867, by Dr. Thomas Brown, of Edinburgh, under the title "Annals of the Disruption," which contains a record of the experiences of the ministers who left the Establishment and of the early struggles of the new congregations throughout the country.

Dr. Parker was buried in the family grave in Lesmahagow Kirkyard. The funeral service was conducted in the Free Church by the Rev. Mr. Sommerville, of Glasgow, and Mr. Laing. The church was full, and as the cortege moved along the village to the graveyard, the shops were closed and the streets were lined with those who had known him as leader during the Disruption.

A Successful Ministry.

IT is a matter for regret that no records are available for 1855. The church was preached vacant early that year, and more than twelve months elapsed before a successor to Dr. Parker was chosen. The congregation were keen sermon-tasters, and were probably in no hurry to reach a decision. Whatever the reason for delay, their choice was a good one. The Presbytery met at Lesmahagow on March 13, 1856, to moderate in a call to the Rev. James Laing, a probationer; the call was signed by 662 members and adherents. His trials were sustained at a meeting of the Presbytery in Lanark on April 13, 1856, and he was ordained at Abbeygreen on May 16.

The period of his ministry marks the high tide of the prosperity of the parish. The coming of the railway and the development of the coalfield had resulted in a considerable growth of the population. Villages became large communities which began to show a striking individualism; their inhabitants aspired to churches of their own. This Forward Movement began in Crossford and spread to Kirkmuirhill.

There was a United Presbyterian Church in Crossford, but that was not enough. Accordingly at a meeting of the Free Presbytery in Lanark in March, 1867, there

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appeared a deputation from Crossford, where a retired Free Church minister, the Rev. James Manson, had conducted services at Hut-on-Clyde, and appealed for permission to form a Free Church congregation in the village.

The deputation, which consisted of the Rev. James Manson, Alexander Watt, William Forrest and John Cossar, laid on the table a petition in which they asked the Presbytery to allow them to have religious ordinances in connection with the Free Church dispensed in that neighbourhood. That petition, signed by 221 people, was granted. Regular services were held, and in 1871 Mr. John Lees, elder, and Mr. John Cossar, deacon, appeared before the presbytery, and asked that Court for permission to call a minister. Their prayer was answered, and in the same year the Rev. John Mathewson was ordained in Crossford, and was the only minister of the Free Church in the village, union with the older congregation taking place, after his death, in 1916.

About the same time the Free Presbytery of Lanark considered the question of erecting a preaching station at Kirkmuirhill, but decided to do nothing. It was then that the inhabitants of that district appealed to the United Presbyterian Church for leave to form a congregation. A church was opened there on December 20, 1868, and three weeks later the Rev. William Thompson, from Burton-on-Trent., was inducted. He was succeeded by the Rev. John Meiklejohn, M.A., in 1874, and when he left for Australia in 1888 the congregation called the Rev. Robert Kerr, M.A., who was ordained in April of the following year.

These developments meant disjunctions from the other churches in the parish, but, instead of losing in numbers, the membership of Abbeygreen continued to grow. Mr. Laing's preaching attracted the people of the parish, while his amiable and genial character endeared him to his friends. He had a kindly humour combined with a deep and genuine sympathy; he carried about with him a kind of moral and spiritual sunshine. For sixteen years he kept the congregation together by his ability and energy, and in 1872 all were sorry to lose him. He received a call from the Free West Church in Glasgow.

On February 21, 1872, the Presbytery considered the call. The commissioners from Abbeygreen were Major Mosman and Messrs. John Brown, John Scott, Benjamin Carruthers, William Scott and John Tudhope from the Session, and Messrs. Thomas Steele, John McLean, James McQueen, John Harrison, Gavin Scott and William Wilson from the Deacons' Court. The congregation was also represented by Messrs. William Twaddle, John Dalzell, John Brown, jun., Alexander Gillies, James Stodart, Thomas Naismith and John Tudhope. After commissioners from both congregations had addressed the Court, the moderator intimated Mr. Laing's decision to accept the call.

Mr. Laing was honoured by the congregation before he left. On March 4 they met in the church, when Major Brown of Auchlochan presided. The chairman said:-

"Ladies and Gentlemen - I regret that you have not someone to preside on this occasion more capable than I am to do anything like justice to the admirable qualities of the Rev. Mr. Laing as an amiable, pious, zealous, talented and hardworking clergyman. He has preached the gospel among us for so many years and with such hearty earnestness that I have no doubt he has been the means, under

God, of leading many to the Saviour. Mr. Laing's attention to the poor, the sick and the dying has been most indefatigable and beyond all praise. He has kept our congregation so well together by his ability and energy that we feel it to be very sad for us to be deprived of his services. We do not in the slightest degree blame Mr. Laing for the change be has decided to make. We could not do such a thing, seeing that be has served us so laboriously and faithfully during the last sixteen years as the hardest-working minister I ever saw. I am sure he would not have left us had it not been that, by removing to Glasgow, he will be able to procure superior education for his children. We all wish him long life, happiness and prosperity."

Major Brown then handed Mr. Laing a purse with fifty sovereigns for himself and another with nineteen guineas to buy a piece of silver plate for Mrs. Laing.

Mr. Laing thanked the congregation for those and other similar gifts during his ministry, all of which, he said, he had prized and preserved except one which he had found impossible to maintain. This was the horse with which he had been presented soon after he came to the parish, and from which he had been frequently parted during his trips round his people.

Mr. Laing preached his farewell sermon on February 25, 1872. The church was crowded, and at the end of the service he said good-bye to elders, deacons, members and adherents. After two years in Glasgow, Mr. Laing had four years in Bermondsey, London, and returned to Scotland on receiving a call to Stonehouse in 1878.

A number of his sermons have been preserved in pamphlet form, odd copies being found in farmhouses in different parts of the parish and in the villages. They reveal his power as a thinker and preacher and his respect for the Covenanting traditions of Lanarkshire.

A Memorable Half Century.

NEW and modern phase in the chronicles of Abbeygreen is entered at this stage-a phase which is within he recollection of many now living. Mr. Laing's ministry had marked a transition, for during his later years in Lesmahagow there was a gradual relaxing of the old Covenanting conservatism. A dispensation to parents desiring baptism for their children in their own homes was frequently granted by the Session. The young people who helped the precentor with the praise, and who occupied the two front seats in the church, had raised the question of hymns. After considerable agitation a concession was granted, but the metrical psalms remained favourites with the older members for a long time after Mr. Laing's ministry. Instrumental music was out of the question. Prejudices against the use of an organ were not broken down for another thirty years.

When the vacancy occurred the Rev. Mr. White of Carluke was appointed Moderator of the Kirk Session, and the congregation began their search for a minister. Considerable interest was manifested in connection with the election as the church was regarded as one of the most important country charges within

the bounds of the Free Church. A formidable list of candidates was compiled. The congregation selected the following nine:-

The Rev. George Charles, M.A., B.D.

The Rev. John Steel Dykes.

The Rev. Archibald Ferguson.

The Rev. David Hamilton.

The Rev. Neil Patrick Rose.

The Rev. Thomas M. Lindsay, M.A., F.R.S.E.

The Rev. Alexander Marshall, M.A.

The Rev. David Paton, M.A., B.D.

The Rev. James Arthur Gray.

The first of these candidates was heard on April 7, 1872; the others followed on alternate Sundays, and between them were candidates chosen by the Distribution of Probationers Committee at headquarters in Edinburgh. All of them preached on a Sunday except Mr. Gray, who took the services on a Fast Day, July I8. Those sent by Church Headquarters included the Rev. George Reith, the Rev. James Iverach, and the Rev. Hugh Rose. The Rev. T. M. Lindsay was a son of the first Relief Church minister in Lesmahagow and the Rev. John Steel Dykes was a member of the Ladehead family who traced their descent from the daughter of John Steel of Waterhead, who was born in a moss-hag during the Covenanting persecution. Mr. Lindsay became Principal of the Free Church College in Glasgow, Mr. Iverach eventually succeeded to a similar post in Aberdeen and was Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Free Church in 1913, while Mr. (then Dr.) Reith succeeded him in that office in 1914.

At a congregational meeting on July 22 a short leet of four was prepared, and the Revs. James A. Gray, Hugh Rose, George Charles, and John Steel Dykes were invited to preach again. All were probationers, Mr. Gray being assistant in Victoria Free Church, Glasgow. From the first Mr. Gray was the favourite, and in the voting he had a handsome majority; in fact, his poll was four times the combined vote of the other three.

The Free Presbytery of Lanark met in Lesmahagow on November 28 for the ordination of the new minister. The services began at noon, and were presided over by the Rev. Mr. Bain, of Forth. After a sermon from Matthew xiii., 13, and the ordination prayer, Mr. Gray was solemnly set apart for the ministry. Mr. Bain addressed minister and people on their respective duties, and at the service Mr. Gray received a cordial welcome from the congregation as they retired.

Members of the Presbytery and friends dined in the manse in the afternoon, and in a short address Mr. Gray said he was highly honoured in being surrounded by so many friends at the start of his ministry.

"While I am thus honoured," he said, "I feel at the same time burdened with the weight of responsibility laid upon me. An idea used to prevail that the ministerial life was a simple thing, that it was somewhat of a sinecure, that if a gentleman had two sons, one was put upon the estate and the other went into the ministry. A little experience has dispelled that notion. The cares, burdens, and

responsibilities are, indeed, great, and, personally I feel this to be the case, especially on the solemn occasion of my ordination.

"I rejoice to think that I am not to be alone in the work to which I have been called, that I will be surrounded by men of prayer, and, consequently, men of work who will strengthen my hands in the performance of my ministerial duties. In carrying out these, I feel that the greatest end of a Christian minister is not to be an orator, not to be great in words, but to be great in winning souls to Christ, and to do this successfully will be my highest ambition."

Mr. Gray concluded by expressing his gratification at seeing himself surrounded by representatives of every denomination, and by cherishing the hope that the friendly intercourse thus shown would not be dispelled by years, but that they would continue to expound those broad Christian principles which would enable them to join heart and hand in carrying on the Master's work.

At the soiree in the evening the speakers included the Rev. Dr. W. C. Smith, of Glasgow. Major Mosman presented the minister with pulpit gown, cassock, Bible and Psalter, and a purse of sovereigns. Mr. R. H. Sneddon, who had been precentor from 1869, also received a clock, psalmody, and a purse of sovereigns as a mark of respect and esteem.

The Session at that time consisted of Messrs. William Logan Weir (clerk), William Scott, Daniel Thomson, Robert Steele, William Ritchie, John Tudhope, John Scott, John Fairie, William Brown, Benjamin Carruthers, Andrew Dykes, John Brown, William Pate, Thomas Meikle, James Leiper and Robert Pate.

The young minister's gifts as a preacher were speedily recognised, and no one was more welcome than he in all parts of the county to which he had come. The calls on his services became so numerous that his congregation grew anxious; they feared that the city might offer stronger inducements, but he decided to live in the country, and Abbeygreen never regretted his choice. For more than fifty-four years he remained in active service.

He came to the parish at an interesting time. The State had that year decided to take over the schools and be responsible for the secular education of the people. Free Churchmen were not too sure of this change, and in Lesmahagow the congregation were at first determined to continue their own educational machine. The election for the first School Board was held in April, 1873. Mr. Gray was asked to become a candidate; he was elected, and a year later the decision of the Deacons' Court to maintain their congregational school was reversed, and the congregation agreed to let it to the School Board at £10 a year until the public school was enlarged. Thus the building which could accommodate ninety-five pupils and which had been built some years after the Disruption, lost its status as a denominational school.

The relationship between Church and State was once again looming in the background of national politics. Mr. Gray had no doubts about the line he should take. The early meetings of the School Board were held in the vestry of the Parish Church, and the association of educational administration with the Establishment, even to that extent, did not gain his approval. At every meeting be

pressed for a change in the meeting-place, and was not happy until it was secured. In passing it may be noted that the Rev. J. W. Macmeekin, formerly minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the village, was clerk to the School Board. Mr. Gray was joined at the next election by one of his elders, Mr. Benjamin Carruthers, and by the end of that term the routine of business bad been settled and the transition successfully accomplished.

Disestablishment was an important issue in the General Election of 1880. Neither Parliamentary candidate in South Lanark went far enough for the Free Kirk minster. Even Mr. Gladstone's promise did not satisfy him, and Mr. Gray threatened to take the field himself if no other could be found to make this the main issue of the campaign. He did not, however, carry his opposition to that extent, but protested against the indifference of both candidates.

In Abbeygreen Church itself things began to move quickly. The growth of Coalbum had resulted in the decision of the Presbytery of Lanark in 1893 to erect an iron church there. At first this was simply a mission station, over which the Rev. Peter Walker, then assistant in Fountainbridge Free Church, Edinburgh, was asked to preside. Two years later the station was raised to a full ministerial charge, and Mr. Walker was ordained as first minister in September, 1895. This development robbed Abbeygreen of many members, but Mr. Gray gave his colleague every encouragement in the work of extending the influence of the Church among the miners.

Mr. Gray celebrated his semi-jubilee in 1897, and three years later he led his congregation into the union with the United Presbyterian Church. There was no opposition to that step, and, as a branch of the United Free Church of Scotland, Abbeygreen took its place in that great army of Christian brethren.

Meanwhile the opposition to instrumental music was worn down, and in 1902 a pipe organ was installed. The late Mr. Andrew Carnegie offered £125 towards the cost. Six years later the church itself was renovated, and it assumed the internal arrangements with which present members and adherents are familiar.

War levied its toll on the congregation, and the Church Roll of Honour from 1914-1919 bears the following names which are recorded on a memorial tablet:-

James Adamson Highland Light Infantry.

John Adamson Royal Scots. William Beattie Royal Scots.

William Brown Highland Light Infantry.

Robert Forsyth Tank Corps.

Thomas Gracie Royal Berks Regiment.

Samuel Hair Scottish Rifles.

William Harrison Seaforth Highlanders. Hugh Mosman Yorkshire Regiment. Archibald McCaskie John Pirrie Gordon Highlanders. John Symington Cameron Highlanders.

Thomas Symington Tank Corps.

Robert Thomson Gordon Highlanders.

Four years after the Armistice Mr. Gray completed fifty years in the ministry, and on November 28, 1922, he was honoured by his congregation. The church was crowded, many friends from outside the parish joining with the members in their tribute to a much-beloved pastor whose life and work had made a deep impression on the community. Mr. and Mrs. Gray, with their family and friends, accompanied Dr. Harrison, the chairman, to the platform. Congratulatory addresses were delivered by ministerial colleagues, and during the evening Mr. Archibald McLean, the father of the Session, handed Mr. Gray a cheque for £250 enclosed in a silver Treasury note case bearing the inscription:-" Presented to the Rev. James A. Gray along with a cheque, on the occasion of his jubilee as minister of Abbeygreen U.F. Church, Lesmahagow, 28th November, 1922." Mrs Murdoch, of Teaths, presented Mrs. Gray with a silver tea service and a charming bouquet. Each of the daughters received a handsome toilet case.

Mr. Gray recalled earlier gifts. Soon after he arrived, he said, he received a chapel cart which lasted many years, and again and again throughout the years he had been shown great kindness. He also mentioned that none of his first Session had survived, and recalled his association with "Dick" Sneddon, the precentor who "had a voice like the voice of many waters" -a great voice.

Four and a half years after he decided to apply for a colleague and successor. When it became known that in April, 1927, he would officiate at his last Communion Service as acting minister of the church. Former members from far and near attended to show their love, reverence and esteem. He retired, with his family, to Lanark, where he died on December 30, 1930, aged eighty-eight. The funeral took place to Lesmahagow.

Many a time during his retirement he looked across the valley that separated him from Abbeygreen, which was ever in his thoughts. His last message to the congregation appeared in the first number of the congregational "Supplement" to Life and Work in April, 1930, when he congratulated his old friends on their continued prosperity under the ministry of his colleague.

* * * *

Never will I forget the rapt interest with which in early youth I listened to Mr. Gray's addresses. That experience was shared by everyone who attended Abbeygreen Church. It was a delight to follow his line of thought when he arranged his arguments as a skilful general does his army, and then bore down upon the foe, whatever it was, with a crushing power and energy that swept all before it until there was not an inch of ground left for the enemy to stand on.

Power-power of argument, power of description, power of appeal, power of indignation, power to convince the understanding, to move the heart, and to control the will-was the prominent characteristic of his public life. It showed itself in all those controversies in which he took part.

He was twenty-nine - he was born in Slamannan in 1843 -when his ministry began. From the first his ability as a preacher and his fidelity as a pastor were universally acknowledged. Not only did he fulfil his arduous pulpit and pastoral

duties, but he bore also an unusually large share of public and ecclesiastical work. His labours were unwearied and his industry was unflagging, yet his zeal had not exhausted itself when at the end of fifty-four years' ministry physical weakness made him retire. The burning and shining light was as bright then as it had ever been, his voice as clear, and his pulpit style as effective.

No one could ever accuse him of being dull, for he was like the Nethan - living water asserting its vitality against all obstacles as it overleaps them. Nothing in his ideas or utterances could ever be called commonplace. An irrepressible power gave his conceptions of common things an uncommon form. When he thought the same things as other men, he ever thought for himself - the thought, the diction, the intonation, and the gesture were equally his own, and might be identified with himself.

All his power, so rich and earnest, so varied and yet so unique as to constitute genius, he devoted to the Christian ministry in Abbeygreen, to the spiritual profit and to the intense and grateful appreciation of his people. His expositions of Scripture, so lucid and often so grand, were not delivered simply to instruct and delight his hearers, but there was ever thrown out the unexpected apostrophe, the individualising appeal. An application so barbed went home with the force, the swiftness of an electric shock. The arrow was sometimes shot at random, but as often with that direct and conscious aim that kept it from missing the mark, and sent it into the very heart.

Diversity conserving unity was a striking feature of his pulpit work, for so fertile was his creative faculty that he could preach the same truths without being accused of sameness, and could repeat them without creating a feeling of monotony.

Mr. Gray's moral nature was keen in its susceptibilities and spontaneous in its demonstrations. His admiration and his reprobation were marked alike by the immediateness of instinct, and were not the result of slowly accumulating forces. His power of scorn was unrivalled, especially when turned against what was selfish or dishonourable. He loathed imposture.

On the other hand, true and godlike works commanded his approval, and won his sympathy. He always showed a brave and generous pity for the victims of injustice. He worshipped liberty with a true heart, and was ever loyal to truth and conscience. He pleaded for principle and never for expediency. He detested compromise. In his keen and scornful denunciation of wrongs he was regardless of opinions or consequences. He was never reluctant to declare his views, and friends and foes alike knew to expect a combative address when he entered the lists.

His sympathies were liberal beyond most of his time; his whole moral tone was of the highest kind, and by his weight of character, his fearless advocacy of what he believed to be the truth, and his vigorous fidelity in pastoral work, he won himself an influence in the district far beyond the denomination to which he belonged. Though dead, he yet speaks.

* * * *

The Kirk Session during the vacancy in 1927 consisted of Messrs. Samuel Allan, Andrew Murdoch, Alexander Dick, James McGregor, John Steel, James N. Gilmore, James Miller, William B. Fairservice, James Forsyth, Malcolm Livingston, and William Steel, with Mr. James Miller as clerk.

The long and faithful service to the congregation of Miss Kate Fairservice was recognised in 1922, when she was elected to the Deacons' Court, which at the time of the vacancy consisted of six members. The other five were Messrs. William Whyte, Frank Clelland, Walter Dyet, Alexander Kerr, and Alexander Sinclair, jun.

It is interesting to note that other two women had also served in the Deacons' Court. Miss Margaret H. Young and Miss Marion Baird were elected with Miss Fairservice in 1922. They died before the vacancy.

An Extension Scheme.

THE vacancy which followed Mr. Gray's departure was a short one. The Selection Committee nominated the Rev. John Walker, M.A., of the North United Free Church, Coupar Angus, where he had been more than eight years. He was called in August, 1927, and began his ministry in Abbeygreen in October; he was inducted on October 27, and three days later the Rev. Professor Niven introduced him to the pulpit.

Mr. Walker was born in Dunollie Road Manse, Oban, but was brought up in Glasgow, where his father was for many years minister of Bellgrove United Free Church, Dennistoun.

Mr. Walker graduated in Glasgow University, and then went to Canada where he had experience in the Canadian Presbyterian Church. He was there when war broke out and came home to enlist. He saw active service as an officer during the war. Following demobilisation he was appointed assistant to the Rev. Dr. Harper, of Chalmers Church, Alloa, and subsequently acted as locum for a short time in Pollok United Free Church, Glasgow, before accepting a call to Coupar-Angus, where he took a full share of public work.

He set himself with great enthusiasm to his new task in Lesmahagow, and appealed for the support of the congregation. Loyal as ever, the members responded. Ambitious schemes were taken in hand, and, beginning with the repairs to the manse, one after another has been successfully carried through.

A number of gifts added to the beauty of the church and the dignity of the services. Individual Communion Cups were presented by Dr. and Mrs. Harrison, and an oak Communion Table by Mr. and Mrs. T. N. Ballantyne, of Kidderminster. In accordance with the wish of the late Mr. William Stodart, of Hamilton, the sum of £750 was forwarded to the Kirk Session in 1928 - two-thirds to be invested on behalf of aged and indigent members, and one-third for such purpose as the Kirk Session might decide. This bequest and a further gift from Dr. and Mrs. Harrison enabled the Deacons' Court to commute the feu-duty in 1929. This transaction

cost £400, but it secured a permanency of tenure of the church and manse lands, and effected an annual saving of the feu-duty. In the same year the roof of the church was repaired and the furnace-room enlarged and improved, while a Baptismal Bowl and other donations were received from members and friends.

Of greater importance than any domestic event was the Union of the Churches in 1929. Abbeygreen reunited with a reconstituted and reformed Church of Scotland with honour to the principles of the Disruption, the situation having been transformed by the Abolition of Patronage in 1874 and by the Acts of 1921 and 1925, whereby everything—and more—that our fathers fought for was conceded. The causes for separation no longer existed.

Meanwhile the Ladies' Work Party, inspired by Mrs Walker and her faithful helpers, raised money for the necessary repairs, and provided the nucleus of the fund for the new hall and vestry. Plans for a small suite of halls, prepared by Mr. J. N. Gilmore, were approved by the congregation in April, 1931; the cost of the buildings was estimated at £1200. The plans were subsequently revised, and sanctioned by the Presbytery of Lanark and Church Headquarters in Edinburgh. The changes involved an estimated addition to the cost of £300—making a total of £1500.

Applications were made to 5everal available funds for a grant. The Baird Trust promised £300, the Home Mission Committee of the Church £185, and the Ferguson Bequest £120. Abbeygreen was among the first of the old United Free Churches to be promised a grant from the Baird Trust, and also the last to secure a grant from the Home Mission Committee before grants for church halls were discontinued. Accordingly, in the summer of 1932, a decision was made to start building so that the suite of halls might be ready early in the following year, when it was confidently expected that the new building would be fully equipped and opened free of debt.

It said a great deal for the congregation that they were willing to proceed with this scheme during a time of industrial depression, when many in the district were out of work. Members had undoubtedly inherited the faith of the old Free Churchmen who built the church and manse. The General Assembly in 1931 granted permission to sell the congregational property in Peasehill, consisting of the school and teacher's house and to apply the proceeds to the Building Fund.

At the end of 1931 the church lost the services of their first organist. When the organ was installed in 1902 Mr. John Walkinshaw was appointed, and for twenty-nine years he led the praise in the sanctuary. His kindly disposition, never-failing courtesy, and unbounded enthusiasm won for him the friendship of all who knew him.

Mr. Walkinshaw's long service is but one example of the faithfulness of Abbeygreen's servants. Mr. Daniel B. Duncan, the church officer, was born into that office. His grandfather accompanied Dr. Parker out of the Establishment, and became first beadle. His son, the late Mr. William Duncan, followed as "minister's man," and when he died the work fell to Mr. Daniel Duncan, his son. Thus for three generations the office of beadle has been held by members of the one family. More than once, too, when the present officer has been on holiday, his

own son has "taken charge of the minister." That is a record of family service of which any church has reason to be proud.

Everybody loves Dan. He is at the door to welcome strangers and to exchange greetings with members. He is, in a real sense, a pillar of the kirk. "Exiles" who pay an occasional visit are immediately carried back down the years when they see him at the door. He makes one feel that Abbeygreen is the same place--which it is. The family atmosphere has persisted through all the changes.

Mr. Walker has been in Lesmahagow five years, and in that short time he has made history. It has been written in various ways. His earnestness as a preacher, his diligence as a pastor, and his kindness and geniality as a neighbour and friend have won for him the love of his flock.

The church roll is the best evidence of the success of a ministry. That has risen steadily since Mr. Walker was settled in Abbeygreen. The activity of the various agencies is another index. Young people have been attracted, and on them rests the responsibility of carrying the torch handed down by earlier generations. Youth is the heart of a congregation; in this case it is beating steadily. The new buildings are also a shining tribute to the success of his ministry and the enthusiasm of the people.

Mr. Walker's ministry has begun well. The congregation is in a healthy condition, and has in it the elements for doing greater works than it has ever yet attempted. We are too close to its recent achievements to assess them properly, so the story had better be left for another to write in full.

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