

Ness Bank Congregation

1787 - 1937

An Historical Note

Archive Note:

This document transcribes the booklet published in 1937 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Ness Bank Congregation. It details the Church's history from the original Anti-Burgher Seceders of 1787 up to the re-union with the Established Church of Scotland in 1929. It was researched and written by my uncle, James Edward Scott (1882-1954) whose father, Roderick Hugh Gallie Scott (1842-1906), was the youngest son of the Church's first minister, the Rev Dr James Scott (1791-1875) and his wife, Isabella Rose (1801-1876). The original booklet has been scanned and converted into a digital file, reformatted in A4 using Arial font, with minor typographical corrections.

Jim Scott (Great-grandson of the Rev James Scott) - Feb 2021

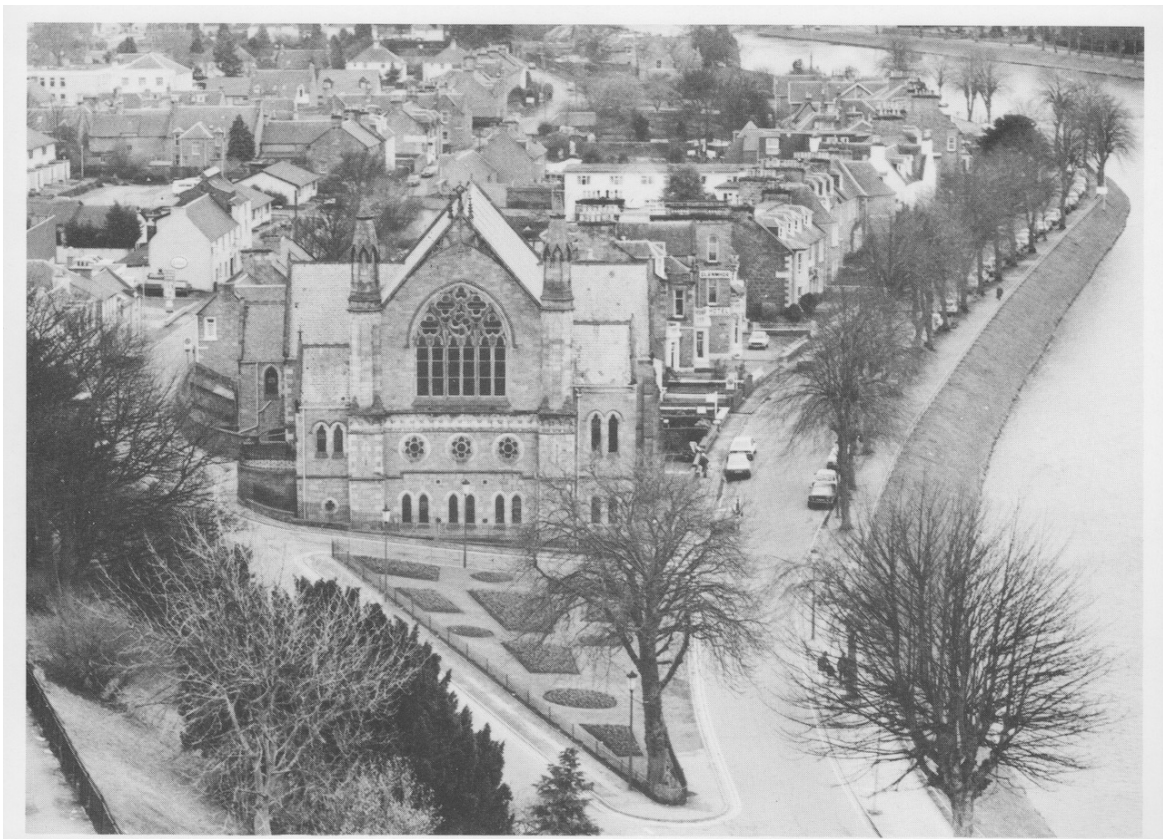
Foreword

By Reverend James Wright, MA

A congregation like Ness Bank is in particular need of such an account of its story as we have here. Our buildings, finely equipped, commodious and beautiful, are yet modern, and do not embody, as some do, the past of the Congregation. If we are to be kept in touch with our past, it must be through the printed page.

We are fortunate in having at our service a man singularly gifted for the task of historian. Mr James E. Scott, M.A., I.C.S., is a grandson of Dr Scott, to whose ministry, under God, we owe the survival of our household of faith. He has therefore had filial piety to inspire him in this work, to sustain him in most laborious and painstaking research, and make it a labour of love. His wide knowledge of the world has made it possible for him to see the Church of his Fathers in perspective, and to set it against a broad background. The result now in your hands lays us under an obligation to him which we can never repay, but which we all - Congregation, Session and Minister - most gratefully acknowledge.

It should be kept in mind that Mr Scott brings his narrative to an end at the Union of the Churches in 1929. That landmark was his obvious stopping place, but it has precluded reference to many who in recent years have been giving the Congregation service which deserves to be commemorated. Our generation, however, is not likely to forget these, and we may leave it to a future historian to record, for the benefit of those who come after us, the part they played. The purpose of this book is to keep alive the names and achievements of those now becoming remote and in danger of oblivion.



Origins

The historical background from which our congregation emerged may be sketched very briefly. In 1733 Ebenezer Erskine, of Stirling, led a secession from the Established Church of Scotland. The immediate cause was a revolt against the existing law of Patronage, under which ministers were imposed upon congregations by outside authorities without regard for the wishes of the congregation, and often in their despite. At first only four ministers, then eight, formed the new Presbytery; but by 1787 the numbers had increased substantially. In that year the new Church split over the clause in the burgess oath introduced by the Government following the '45. The clause was really aimed at Roman Catholicism, but certain stern spirits saw in the oath an implied acceptance of the Established Church. Those who refused the clause were known as Anti-Burghers, and formed the General Associate Anti-Burgher Synod, as opposed to the Associate Burgher Synod. This division persisted until 1820, by which time the burgess oath had disappeared. In that year the two sections re-united.

Meantime, in 1752, a second secession from the Church of Scotland, headed by Thomas Gillespie of Carnock, and apparently over the same vexed question of forced presentations, had resulted in the formation of the Relief Church. After the Union of Burgher and Anti-Burgher, long discussions took place regarding this Relief Church; but only in 1847 were Burgher, Anti-Burgher, and Relief churches amalgamated to form the "United Presbyterian Church". It was to the Anti-Burgher branch that our congregation belonged.

Formation of Congregation

It is difficult to put one's finger on any specific date, and to say that from that date began the U.P. Congregation in Inverness. From Small's 'History of the Congregations of the U.P. Church' we find that the earliest notice of the Anti-Burgher cause in Inverness is 14th June 1773, when five persons applied to the Synod in Elgin (under which Inverness then fell) for a pulpit supply and sermon. A day's supply was granted, and for the next twelve years, i.e. to 1785, an occasional sermon, in Gaelic, was given them by the Rev. Mr Buchanan, of Nigg, Ross-shire. Shaw in his 'History of the Province of Moray' says, 'This Church originated in the itineracies of the Rev. Mr Buchanan, of Nigg, about 1880'.

The truth is probably that a handful of adherents of the Anti-Burgher persuasion gradually took congregational shape between 1770 and 1780, and depended during those years for religious guidance and help upon an occasional and outside supply, coming mainly from Nigg.

Those were troublous times for the North. The '45 was still a very vivid personal experience to many. Authority was none too firm in the saddle, and any departure from orthodoxy was regarded with suspicion and dislike. We shall see this again as late as 1820, when the congregation attempted to get a place of worship.

1787 has been taken as the date from which our congregational life begins. This rests upon a marginal entry for October 7th 1787, in an old account book for the Methodist Society, Inverness, now with the trustees of the Wesleyan Chapel. This entry runs thus: 'October 7th - The first day of regular preaching by the Seceders at Inverness'. We know from the Presbytery records that on this date Mr Buchanan, of Nigg, preached in Gaelic to the little Anti-Burgher group in Inverness, and 1787 may be accepted as the beginning of our corporate existence.

Certain it is that we as a congregation owe much to Nigg, and though the archives of the Chapelhill Kirk in Nigg throw little light on this early connection, I remember as a boy being told by the Rev. James Macmartin, of Chapelhill, about the bond between the two congregations.

On 30th June, 1788, fourteen members of the Inverness congregation petitioned the Elgin Synod to be received under the inspection of Presbytery, and to receive frequent supply. This was granted, and we have a note by Dr Macgregor, of Pictou, which gives a first glimpse of our congregation. "It is", he says, "small, and most of them very poor. They have promised £20 of stipend, their great dependence for the payment of which is on occasional hearers and the future increase of the congregation".

In August 1788, under the guidance of Mr Howieson, of Howford, near Naim, the first four elders were chosen. These were 'William Grant, taylor; Donald Stuart, weaver; Donald Grant, taylor, all residing in the town of Inverness; and Daniel Rose, miller at King's Mills'. It seems probable that this Donald Stuart, or Stewart, is the same man who was elected senior elder in 1822, when Mr Scott reformed the congregation.

Having got their elders ordained, the congregation at once proceeded to petition for a minister, but the Presbytery, on account of 'the paucity of the numbers adhering to the Judicial Act and Testimony', repeatedly delayed the petition. At last, on 30th November 1790, James McBean was ordained the first minister. He came from Nigg, and held charge of the congregation for twenty years, but his charge was difficult and his life not a happy one. Small notes that "zeal for the peculiarities of the party has cut off the prospect of extensive usefulness": and again, "the congregation did not grow, but remained always small and poor, and to be able to live at all he found it necessary to follow teaching or some other employment, and finally was involved in charges of immorality, which brought him under the discipline of the Church". In April 1810, the Synod of Elgin suspended him, and a year later 'loosed him from his charge'.

For the next nine years there was no minister. Shaw goes so far as to say the congregation became extinct until 1817, but this is not correct. It continued to maintain a precarious and untended existence. Gaelic was still almost indispensable, and supply the more difficult on that account, but familiarity with English must have grown apace in the congregation. In 1816 Mr Eddie, of Forfar, held charge for two months, and in 1817 Dr Stark, of Dennyloanhead, and Dr John Ritchie, of Kilmarnock, acted for similar periods. The latter first constituted a congregation and dispensed the Lord's Supper.

For two years more the congregation depended upon casual supply from the Elgin Synod, and then in July 1819, Mr James Scott, from Pitcairn Green, Perthshire, took up the charge he was to hold for fifty-four years.

It is difficult, from the established security of the present day, to recreate the situation which the congregation and their young pastor faced in 1819. When the Union Street church was built in 1863 a document called 'A Statement of Origin' was written by Mr Donald Davidson, solicitor, a leading elder of the church, which throws some light on the position. Mr Scott "in a short time received a unanimous call to be their minister. But in consequence of the apparent hopelessness of the cause - the number of members and adherents being small and without influence, and the opposition of other churches - he would not accept of the call and submit to be ordained till 21st March 1821".

There were only twelve members and about forty regular adherents. There was no place of worship - from 1817 they met in the open air on the Barnhill, near the top of the Raining Stairs.

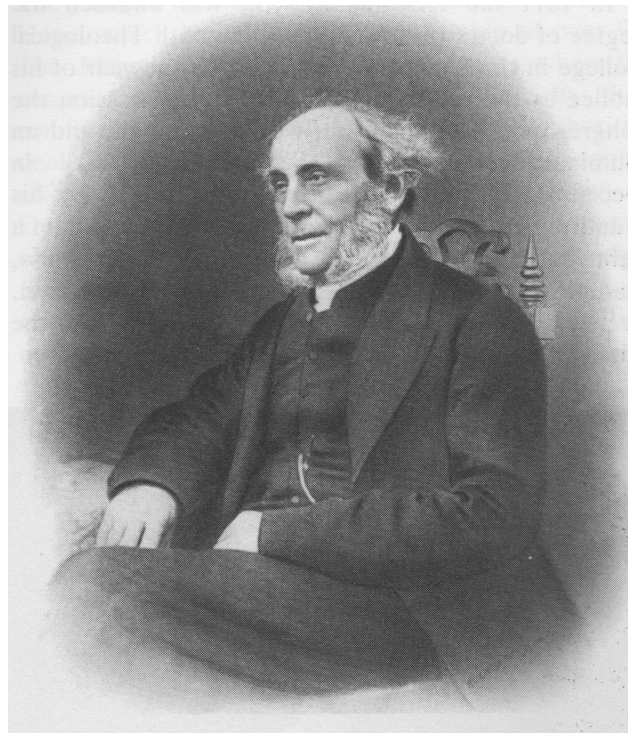
Ness Bank Church Ter-Jubilee 1787-1937

Mr Scott first met his adherents in an old house in Margaret Street, 'habitable once it was cleaned out'. The Union of the Secession churches in 1820 was announced in a loft in Albert Place, so inconvenient that, as neither Church nor Town Council would grant them accommodation - seven times negotiations were broken off when it was known the site was intended for the Seceders - they crossed the river to a thatched cottage in Fairfield Lane, where on 21st March 1821, Mr Scott was ordained, a Session was constituted, and the three original elders were chosen. We do well to be proud of that little company. Their means were straightened and their outlook perilous, but their faith was in Jehovah Jireh, and in the strength of that faith they went forward.

Of these early days we still have a relic in the shape of the original collection plate of old pewter, given to the Associate Congregation of Inverness in 1793 by Mr K. Treasurer. This now hangs on the wall of the present church vestibule.

From the ordination of Mr Scott in 1821 we have a written record. The Minutes of Session from that year are extant, as are the Minutes of the Managing Committee from 1837; while from 1887 'Life and Work' began to appear and chronicle all important events in the history of the congregation. Finally there are the Minutes of the Mission Society from 1841 to 1857, and of the Mission Committee from 1886 to 1905. It is from these authorities that the present note is compiled.

The history of the congregation may conveniently be divided into three periods, coinciding with the occupation of its three successive places of worship : the Baron Taylors Lane Church, the Union Street Church, and the Ness Bank Church. The first-named was used until 1864, and hence roughly coincides with the period of Dr Scott's sole charge. The second church saw the close of Dr Scott's long ministry, and the twenty-nine years of his successor, Mr, afterwards Dr, Robson; and the five years of Mr G. S. Stewart. Finally our present building, dating from 1901, and inaugurated immediately after the Union of the U.P. and Free churches, has seen Mr Chas. Robson, Mr J. Reid, Mr T. W. Armour, and our present pastor, Mr J. Wright.



The Reverend James Scott - Minister from 1821 to 1875

Part 1

The Baron Taylor's Lane Church, 1821-1863

This was built in eight months and cost £1100. Mr Scott laid the foundation stone as one of the first acts of his ministry. The 'Courier' of 22nd November 1821, contains this notice: 'The new Chapel of the United Associate Congregation was opened by the Rev. Mr Stark, Forbes, who preached three discourses in the course of the day to crowded congregations; the collection amounted to £15 15s'. There was accommodation for 650 persons, and for the handful of worshippers in the first years it must have been oppressively empty. It was never a good building, being dark, damp, and unpleasantly close to a large mews, but it was their first peculiar and permanent home, and the sacrifices required to build it were heavy. It must be remembered that the congregation numbered little over fifty souls, and looking back in 1836 Mr Scott wrote, 'Few congregations in the body, if there is one, have had to struggle with such poverty, opposition, and difficulty'. The Synod gave £300 towards the building costs, but it was not until 1830, eighteen years later, that the debt was finally liquidated. In that year the Liquidation Board gave £150 and the small congregation itself raised £270 to make the final payments. How poor they were may be evidenced by the fact that a second Communion in the year could only be approved by the Managers upon Mr Scott waiving the small extra fee then paid to the minister holding the service, and by the continued dilapidation of the Session House for want of money to effect repairs. It is impossible to read these early minutes, the finer for their undecorated brevity, without a feeling of deep reverence for the courage with which new burdens were undertaken, and the unshaken confidence that the Lord will provide.

Language was another difficulty. Mr Scott had no Gaelic, and this must have kept many sympathisers from joining the little congregation, especially those who were now coming into the town from Ross-shire, Sutherland, and the West. Ultimately another congregation of the Secession body was formed as the Queen Street Church. The Session records of our church contain no mention of this rival sister, and relations were probably frigid in the early years.

In the Baron Taylor's Church the three first elders, who with Mr Scott as Moderator composed the Session, were Donald Stewart, Angus McLea, and David Jack. One of their first recorded difficulties was that only one member, other than the Moderator, could officiate at prayer meetings in English, 'and he, from his worldly calling, seldom available'. Yet in 1824 it was resolved that another prayer meeting be held in a central place to cure 'the very low state of family and social religion among those generally associated with the congregation'. This was held on Thursday at 6 p.m. in the house of Andrew Vass, 'in the head of the town'.

The Session drew up a strict set of rules to guide its managers, who were elected half from the Session and half from the congregation. The congregation was divided into districts, each with its own elders (now increased to nine), and it is interesting to note that one district is defined as 'Alturle Point and all the County in that direction'. An annual congregational meeting was instituted to be held on New Year's Day, 'as that is an idle day in the town'.

The election of a new elder was a solemn matter. The elders elect were required to answer at public worship certain questions of 'the Formula'. This was followed by ordination by the laying on of hands, and thereafter the right hand of fellowship was given them by the Moderator and older elders. They were then suitably exhorted upon their duties.

Much of the time of the early Session, and much of the space of their minutes, was taken up

with cases of church discipline. Any instance of moral delinquency was met by summoning the offender before the Session and hearing his defence. If found guilty, he or she might be suspended from the privileges of church membership until proof of effective repentance was forthcoming. In very grave cases the culprit was admonished in church at the close of public worship, or, if obdurate, removed from membership altogether. One is impressed with the patience and moderation of these Session judgments, and with the value attached to the privileges of church membership. If no particular business fell to be enacted, the Session passed the time in prayer and praise; and as a general rule, any matter of special importance formed the subject of special congregational prayer; e.g. in 1832, the eve of the Reform Bill, Session 'took into consideration the alarming state of the country from political commotion: from the depressed state of trade: and from that awfully mysterious and appalling pestilential scourge with which we are at present threatened'. A special day of humiliation and prayer was appointed.

As time passed, relations with other congregations seem to have improved, partly through recognition of Mr Scott's character and work, and denominational asperities are infrequent. In 1835 the Session petitioned Parliament against any further grant, from the National Fund to the Established Church; and in 1838 there is a solemn resolution to take, no notice whatever of a fast-day ordained by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

On the other hand the use of the church was freely given for Gaelic services, and in 1831 a collection for the poor of the town was taken and handed over to the Established Church for distribution.

Finances were a continual source of anxiety, and the position of Treasurer was a difficult one. This office was created in 1833, with the proviso that the Treasurer should not retain in his own hands more than £8. In practice the year invariably closed with money due to the Treasurer by the congregation. In 1838 he had by his own endeavour to raise £200 to meet debts, and this was only effected by Mr Scott himself borrowing £100, for which the Treasurer and another Manager gave him a letter on behalf of the congregation, promising to repay the sum on demand. Money had to be borrowed from members of the congregation, and there is one case where a creditor for £250 compounded for an annuity of £10, and, dying after twenty years, saved the congregation £50.

In 1838 the congregation was rent by a violent controversy. A pulpit gown had been presented to Mr Scott by those whom the somewhat bald parlance of the day called 'females connected with the congregation'. Objections were raised, headed by two members who had themselves subscribed. At a heated special meeting of Session the offending garment was denounced, together with its appendages, as 'a thing unlawful in itself, its tendency sinful, and consequently injurious to the interests of Christ's Kingdom'. Mr Scott intimated his discontinuance of the use of the gown, lest he cause any member to stumble. Thereupon the senior elder withdrew from Session and congregation, and a large body of members petitioned for resumption. After some further stormy meetings the controversy dropped and the gown was accepted, but the years 1838 to 1844 were unhappy ones owing to serious discords in the congregation. Even the annual meeting in 1843 ended in a painful scene. The causes were, however, matters of personal opinion, and not questions of principle, and with the withdrawal of the opposition leader some years later, following complaints by Sabbath School teachers, harmony was restored.

Meantime deeper matters engaged the attention of the Church. In 1845 the Synod had issued a document on the subject of atonement, which the Session thought contrary to the

principles of the Church. Their memorial to the Synod is an earnest and dignified document, though to our present views narrow and doctrinaire. There seems to have been at this time a wave of apprehension for the cardinal tenets of the Church. In 1847 the Union of the Secession and Relief Churches is given a bare three-line notice in the Session minutes, while at much greater length was debated and approved a memorial to the Presbytery on the laxity of other churches as regards admission of individuals to 'the sealing ordinances'. About this time also began the agitation for a separate Presbytery in Inverness, which still lay under Elgin, and by 1856 this was accomplished.

In 1850 we have the first mention of the Sabbath School, but it must have started some years before, for it already had seven teachers. A library was started in the Session House, funds being raised by the popular device, of a soiree. Hymn books were also introduced about this time, and Mr. Scott presented the congregation with a baptismal font.

Despite repeated notes showing the addition of new members, the congregation in 1853 had only 156 on the Communion roll, and it is noted that many were old and infirm or lived at a distance. The managers reluctantly decided they were not in a position to raise the minister's stipend from £100 to £120 per annum. 'We are always short of money at the year's end' runs the minute. Not a few had emigrated, and new enrolments did not fill the gaps. Only 160 seats were let out of 650, and the next year (1854) the managers had actually to run into debt to pay the stipend, and reported to the Synod that 'the congregation is rather going back in money matters'. Yet the same congregation had from 1850 instituted a special collection for the poor of the congregation, and was contributing £15 to missions. Special demands were met by special collections, and the cruse never actually ran dry.

The first beginnings of Mission work appear in 1841, when a 'society for religious purposes' was formed to assist in sending the Gospel to others. There was a committee of nine, headed by the minister, and the town was divided for collection purposes into three districts. For the first year £27 16s was collected and its apportionment is interesting.

Synod's Fund for assisting weak Congregations	£5	0	0
Lossiemouth Congregation	5	0	0
Synod's Mission Fund, Home and Foreign equally	8	0	0
Synod's Ordinary Fund	2	0	0
Congregational Expenses	<u>7</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>0</u>
	£27	16	0

This last item, congregational expenses, continued to absorb about one-third of the Mission contributions, and in 1854 the whole was applied to vestry repairs. This must have made for uneasy consciences, for next year a resolution was passed that the whole sum should be used solely for Mission purposes. From 1856 contributions dwindled, and times in the North appear to have been hard. Only £15 or £13 was now available. In 1856 this was divided amongst the U.P. Missions, the Irish and London Missions, and the Waldensian Mission. On behalf of the latter a special service was held in the church by the Theological Students' Missionary Society. The end of this year brings the first mention of individual Foreign Missions, when specific allotments were made to Kaffraria (£3), Jamaica (£3), and Calabar (£2). Unfortunately this record stops at 1857, and I have not been able to find any other Mission record until 1886.

The singing in the church depended largely on the precentor, for there was no instrumental music and no regular choir. In 1857 the salary of the precentor was 'raised' to £4 per annum

on condition of his conducting practising classes, and for a year or two he combined the functions of church officer and precentor, and was also responsible for the cleaning of the church. For these multiple duties he received £10 per annum. An improvement in congregational finances from 1860 is reflected in the increased pay of the precentor. In 1865 he is drawing £20, and by 1867 £30. An allowance of £10 was made for training the choir, and there is a pathetic minute in 1875 that the entire choir had resigned because they were not supported by the congregation. Not until 1882 was the idea of instrumental music first mooted, and only in 1894 was an organ introduced.

Early in the sixties it became evident to Session and congregation that all was not well either with their pastor or their kirk. The plain square building that had for a generation been their spiritual home was falling sadly into disrepair, and the tall austere man who for over forty years had been their spiritual guide was feeling the strain of his unremitting labours. In 1863 the congregation agreed to purchase a site on the newly opened Union Street, the price not to exceed £150, and to build a new church. The same year Mr Scott, now in his 72nd year, was given his first holiday, a month's rest and £10 for expenses.

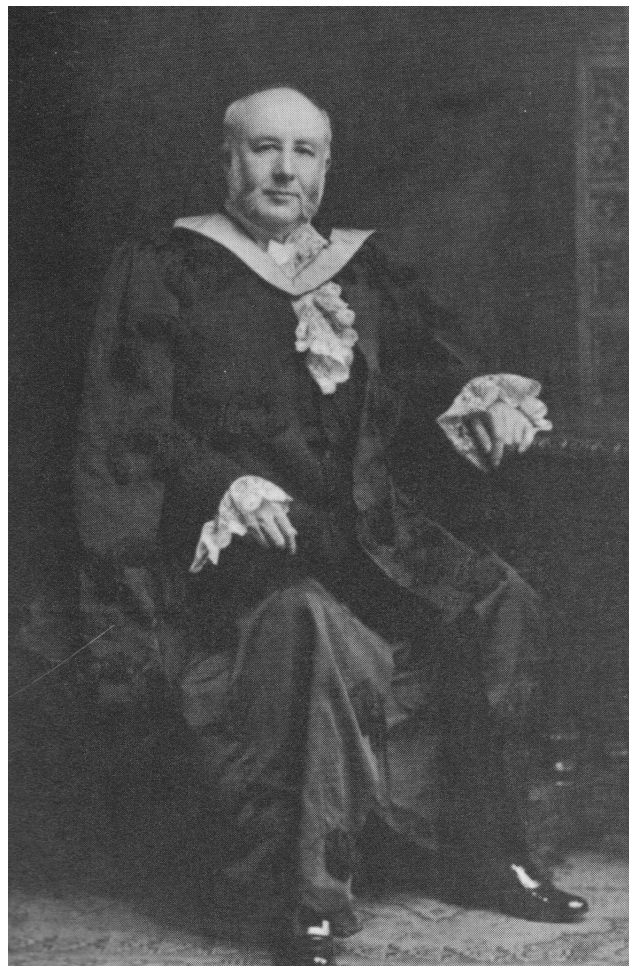
The resolution of the congregation was to the effect that the new church was 'not to exceed, if at all possible, £1700'; but the lowest estimates were £2030, and towards this no more than £700 could be expected. Mr Donald Davidson, solicitor and elder, and Mr Scott himself, were alone prepared to guarantee the balance of £1330. Yet the congregation went forward with the work. Mr Scott laid the foundation stone on 26th August 1863, and utilised his holiday to make a tour in the South to collect funds. The elders made a house-to-house collections; £800 was borrowed to pay the contractors, secured by a personal bond given by Messrs Davidson and William Morrison, elders; special collections, lectures and soirees were held, and the heavy debt was steadily reduced. In 1868 the Ferguson Bequest Fund of Glasgow offered £100 if the congregation raised another £200. It was done. Next year the Debt Liquidation Fund of Glasgow agreed to give £250 if the congregation raised the balance of £550 within a year. Again the challenge was accepted. Mr Arres donated £100; Mr Robson, the newly-appointed colleague of Mr Scott, obtained £100 from his father's congregation of Wellington Street, Glasgow, and himself raised £170 for the Building Fund, and £315 for the new Vestry and Session House. By May 1870, the whole debt was paid off. In six years a congregation that counted only 160 members and as many adherents had raised over £2000 in addition to their ordinary contributions. By the light of the courage that accepted, and the self-denial that discharged, these tremendous obligations, the old phrase 'the faith of our fathers' takes on a deeper meaning.

The exact date when the new church was first opened is not noted in the Session record, but must have been some time in 1864, for the congregation worshipped for nine weeks in the Independent Church during that year. This probably covers the transition period from the old to the new building.

Meantime Mr Scott's failing health involved short absences from duty in 1864 and 1865, and in September of the latter year the congregation agreed to appoint a colleague and successor, and to allow £150 stipend to each pastor. In March 1866, it was proposed to call a Mr James Davidson. Why this call was not sustained or accepted is not known, but in October of the same year we find the Presbytery fixing the date for the ordination of Mr George Robson, and in November 1866, he took up the duties he was not to lay down until 1894. From this time Mr Scott, although he still at times presided at meetings of Session and preached fairly regularly, left to his younger colleague more and more of the congregational work. In 1871 he celebrated

the jubilee of his ministry, and was presented by the congregation with £150 and an address, and towards the end of the year was given the degree of Doctor of Divinity by Monmouth College, U.S.A. He died in December 1875, and a stone in the Chapelyard Cemetery and a tablet in the church commemorate the fifty-four years of his ministry.

It is not easy to appraise him now, for his work was done under conditions that have wholly passed away, but the congregation owes him a debt hard to exaggerate. He found it homeless, leaderless, and despised. He left it firmly established, decently housed, with a respected place in the comity of churches. The Kirk Session, who were best able to judge, have left a fine appreciation of 'the high character of our deceased father'. 'He was indeed a workman who needed not to be ashamed. An able expositor of the Word, a diligent and unwearying pastor, full of warm and generous sympathies . . . faithful and fearless to rebuke, earnest and affectionate to exhort. A standard-bearer has fallen, a man greatly beloved. He fought a good fight, finished his course, and kept the faith; and now he has entered into rest, gathered home like a shock of corn in its season'.



The Reverend George Robson - Minister from 1866 to 1894

Part 2

The Union Street Church, 1864-1901

This period coincided very closely with the ministries of the Rev. George Robson (1866-1894) and the Rev. G. S. Stewart (1895-1899). Mr Robson was a son of the Manse, his father being minister of the Wellington Street U.P. Church in Glasgow, and he brought with him to Inverness a rare organising ability and a power of appeal that must have made him a tower of strength to a sorely harassed Session and managers and a congregation struggling with a heavy burden of debt. Mr Robson undertook to raise £150 for the Building Fund in 1869, and after a tour in the South actually handed over £170. He also, as noted above, raised a further £315 for the new Vestry and Session House, and it was mainly due to his personal efforts and inspiring example that the debt on the new church was so speedily paid.

With the financial relief afforded by this discharge, the congregation was able to raise the stipend of the minister. As late as 1855 Mr Scott was given only £100 and £15 Manse rent. In 1866 the stipend was £300, divided equally between Mr Scott and Mr Robson. In 1875 Mr Robson's stipend became £300, plus £50 Manse rent; the church officer's pay was raised to £20; and £50 was approved for a salaried precentor to supercede the old system of voluntary psalmody. It was also agreed to allow the minister a month's holiday every year, a relief never possible in Mr Scott's time, the want of which during the forty-five years of his sole charge must have told seriously upon his health.

Among the first acts of Mr Robson was the drawing up of notes for the Sabbath School Society and the Congregational Missionary Society. During his first two years further changes were made in old customs. Hitherto those coming forward to the Lord's table were given metal tokens at the previous church service. These tokens were now abolished in favour of communicants' cards, handed to each member by the elder of his district. The second change was the introduction of the U.P. Hymn Book at public worship. The Session took the opinion of the congregation, and found 77 in favour of, and only nine against, the proposal. The Hymn Book was accordingly introduced from May 1867. From December 1876, a revised Hymn Book was brought into use, and in 1928 our present Pan-Presbyterian Hymnal took its place.

The years 1867-68 were marked by steady additions to the congregation. The usual procedure, where the applicant did not produce a certificate from another church, was for the district elder to interview the applicant. If he reported him or her suitable, the applicant then appeared before the Session, and answered questions put by the Moderator. If the answers were satisfactory, the Session adjourned to the church, where public worship was conducted, certain further questions put to the applicant, after which he or she was received into the membership of the church by prayer and the right hand of fellowship. Membership was a valued privilege, neither lightly bestowed nor lightly cancelled. At the same time numerous instances are on record of names being expunged from the membership roll because of long continued absence from Church privileges, or for grave moral delinquencies.

In September 1868, the congregation suffered a great loss in the death of Mr William Dallas, of Castle Street, who had for forty-three years been a member of Session, for fifteen of which he had acted as Treasurer to the congregation. A Session's note shows that the number of members in full Communion in December 1869, was 232. In April 1873, Mr John Mackintosh of Ardchattan was elected elder, an office he was to hold until 1915.

In May 1874, a congregational vote was taken on the proposal to substitute evening for afternoon as the time of the second diet of public worship. 103 voted for, and 66 against the change, and in face of the large minority the Session decided against any change. In 1876, however, the evening service was approved by a large majority and tried for three months, June-August. The innovation was found acceptable and confirmed as the regular practice.

At the end of 1874 the Session appointed two of its members to co-operate with two of the Free High Session in regard to the opening of a children's church in the Maggot. These representatives strongly recommended the proposal, which was accepted by our Session; and in February, 1875, the church was duly opened with forty-six children present, none of whom were church-goers. The Maggot Mission in some form must have been established prior to this date, though no reference is made in the Session's minutes, for a special collection for the Mission was taken in October, 1875.

An interesting note occurs in May, 1875, when the Session unanimously agreed to petition Parliament to repeal the Contagious Diseases Act. Unfortunately we have no details of the discussion, nor do we know why men as enlightened as Dr Robson and his colleagues opposed a measure now universally accepted.

Considerable difficulty was being experienced at the time in regard to the service of praise. The voluntary leadership of the singing broke down, and it was decided to appoint a precentor at £35 per annum 'to conduct the Psalmody of the congregation at all its ordinary meetings of worship, to train the choir, and to teach a congregational class'. There were fourteen applications, and the choice fell upon a Mr Hope from Dunfermline. He wanted too much guaranteed and finally a Mr Macgregor from Forres took the post, but gave it up within a year. The Session then re-advertised the post at a reduced salary, which, singularly enough, produced more applications. This time a man from Hawick was selected and duly took up his duties, only to resign them after two years. These repeated failures to obtain a permanent precentor led in the end of 1882 to the first proposal for the introduction of instrumental music at the church services. This proposal was too revolutionary for the time, and was negatived by the Session. The new precentor was Mr David Petrie, of Inverness, who had already given substantial help in connection with the service of praise. After a further fifty-five years of service in capacities of growing importance, and an eldership of nearly fifty years, Mr Petrie is still with us.

In October, 1881, Mr Roderick Scott, son of Dr Scott, was allowed to take over the old Communion service, a salver, tankard, and four cups, in return for which he presented a new set. These old pieces stood in the library of Rosemount until 1906, when the contents of the old Manse were dispersed by sale.

By 1886 quarterly Communion services took the place of half-yearly, and the evening service in place of the afternoon was firmly established. The old practice of having an interval between service and Communion had ceased, and the Communion service followed immediately on the regular.

A message from Presbytery, following a visit to the congregation by their deputies, notes with warm approval the healthy and flourishing condition of the congregation, the thoroughness of the congregational organisation, the attention given to the instruction of the young, and the hearty way in which Home Mission work has been taken up. Among the suggestions made is one emphasising the importance of the prayer meeting and the maintenance of family worship. 'Amid the wasting, withering worry of the present age it is hard to keep the heart's life fresh

and green, even when we diligently use all the helps God has given us'. If fifty years ago the world was too much with us, the message has even greater force to-day.

1887 - Jubilee year - was marked by the issue of the first number of 'Life and Work'. This was founded and edited by Dr Robson, and the opening paragraph defines its object as being to put into the hands of members of the Church more full and regular information regarding the different branches of Church life and work. At first a two-monthly record, it became after a year a quarterly, and from January, 1902, with occasional interruptions, a monthly issue. Taken with the minutes of the Kirk Session it gives a fairly complete record of our congregational life.

1887 also marked the centenary of our congregation, and it is interesting to compare the position with that in which the handful of 'Seceders' found themselves a century before. The U.P. Church in 1887 numbered 565 congregations, with 182,170 members; it had eight fields of Foreign Mission work, with 87 congregations and 13,479 members. Our own church had grown from twelve communicants to 316, and the improvement in our financial status is shown by the fact that in 1886 we raised £457 for congregational purposes, and £188 for Missions and benevolent purposes. The centenary services were held on 14th October 1888, a year late. Dr Brown, of Paisley, conducted the Sabbath services, and at the week-day meeting representatives of sister churches, including Dr Black and Rev. Gavin Lang, offered their warm congratulations and good wishes. Those who remembered the coldness or even opposition of early days must have given thanks that the leaven of the Master's charity had worked so powerfully through the years.

There is an interesting note at this time, illustrating both Dr Robson's versatility and the broadened tolerance of the congregation. Occasional services for Germans were held in the German language within the church.

At the end of 1889 Dr Robson went to Jamaica for five months, partly to recruit his health and partly on a mission to visit the Jamaica churches. The first U.P. Church in Jamaica, at Hampden, had been founded in 1824, and Dr Robson's father had paid a similar visit many years before. A year later services were conducted in the Union Street Church by a native pastor from Jamaica, the Rev. Henry Scott.

Shortly after his return, the value of Dr Robson's work received recognition by the conferment of the degree of Doctor of Divinity by his Alma Mater, Glasgow University.

Our congregation had chosen as the main field for Home Mission work the poor and overcrowded part of the town known as the Maggot, comprising Friars' Street, Glebe Street, Albert Square, Factory Street, Shuttle Lane, and Green Row. There is little on record of the beginnings of this work. The minute book of the Missionary Society begins in 1886, and from this it is clear that the Maggot Mission had already been established for some years. Regular services seem to have started in 1875 as a children's church, conducted by our congregation jointly with the Free High Church, but soon to have become solely our care; but, as we have noted above, there was certainly some Mission work even before this date. Herr Waack, for many years a prominent figure in our congregation and an elder for eleven years, took charge of the Maggot work from 1886, and a student missionary was specially engaged for its duties. One who held this post, and has left a valuable report on its conditions and problems was Mr G. A. Johnston Ross, afterwards a Professor in Union Theological Seminary, New York. The curse of the Maggot was drink. Mr Ross reported, "The one word drink explains by far the most formidable part of the resistance offered in the Maggot to the reception of the Gospel, especially among women".

Accordingly a Factory Street Temperance Society was formed, which increased in numbers so rapidly that the younger members were constituted a Band of Hope, and by 1892 this was ninety strong. A note in 1888 says, 'The number of those who really keep the pledge is small, but there is an improvement in regard to temperance'. Evening services were, held in the Maggot, out of doors if possible, on Sunday and Thursday, and a weekly mothers' meeting, which combined Bible reading with the practical work of sewing. Conditions were terrible. 'There are many in the district', says one report, 'who, through no fault of their own, are forced to eke out such an existence in this mortal life as leaves little time and less inclination to think of eternal life'. The total cost of conducting this Mission was only about £12 per annum, and it is a strange commentary on our spiritual focus that even this small sum was never subscribed. There was invariably a deficit to be made up from other funds. Workers, too, were generally insufficient, and at times various activities had to be curtailed or suspended. The work, however, persisted. An organ was bought in 1895 for £20 which greatly helped temperance meetings. The Established Church co-operated in these meetings, which were generally 'inconveniently crowded'. I can remember when Mrs Fred. Fraser and my mother were running these 'pleasant Saturday nights', being enlisted as a small boy to help hold the fort until the 'pubs' were closed.

From 1890 a Mission was also conducted at Davis Square, over which Mr John Mackintosh of Ardchattan found time to preside. It had a Sunday School of its own, which in 1890 had forty-five scholars and nine teachers.

Gradually physical conditions in the Maggot area improved ; overcrowding diminished; and for various causes drunkenness decreased. Finally, when we moved into Ness Bank Church, the Home Mission Board decided that as a congregation we should take up Mission work in the Haugh area, and leave the Maggot to other workers.

In 1891 Dr Robson celebrated his semi-jubilee as a minister, and was presented by the congregation with his portrait in oils, a gown, cassock, and D.D.'s hood. His health, however, was far from good, and an assistant, Mr James Wark, was appointed. Mr Wark was in 1902 ordained to the U.P. Church at Banchory.

In 1892 Mr William Morrison, who had been an elder since 1860, was appointed one of the delegates representing the U.P. Church at a general alliance of Presbyterian churches held in Toronto, Canada. Mrs Morrison accompanied him to represent Women's Missions. The Church could have had no better delegates. Unhappily this was to be the closing service of a life devoted to God. In March 1894, Mr Morrison died. He had been an elder for thirty-four years, session clerk for thirty-three. What he stood for in our congregational life finds expression in the sorrowful minute of the Session. 'He was a prudent counsellor; a brother who helped much in the Lord; and an example in Godliness. Not the least part of the service he rendered lay in the unconscious influence of his meek and blameless manner of life, his spiritual discernment and taste, and his calm, patient, and considerate spirit'.

1893 was in several respects an important year for the congregation. It saw the first home-bred missionary, Mr W. T. Weir, sail for the foreign field. At first as a lay helper and organiser, later as an ordained missionary, Mr Weir forged a close personal link between us and Old Calabar. In this year also proposals for a new church were first mooted. The lack of a commodious hall and other accommodation for the many and growing Church activities was being increasingly felt. Offers were made for the premises behind the Union Street Church, fronting on Drummond Street and Baron Taylor's Lane, but the price was considered too high. New sites were examined; the two finding most favour being on Charles Street, Barnhill, and

on Old Edinburgh Road, next the observatory building. None of these proposals was considered satisfactory, and the acquisition of the old Queen Street U.P. Church as a Mission Hall, which was considered in 1895, was also rejected. Feeling in favour of a new, self-contained, headquarters for the congregation was steadily growing, although it was not until 1900 that this step was finally adopted.

The third advance made in 1893 was in regard to the service of praise in the Church. As early as February 1891, the annual congregational meeting had asked the session to consider the provision of an organ, and in June of that year a congregational vote was taken. This showed 227 for an organ, 36 against, 44 neutral, and 39 unreturned voting papers. The Session, having regard to the strength of feeling among the opponents, decided to postpone change; but in December 1893, the Musical Association definitely stated that an organ was essential. The Session agreed, and recommended the introduction to the congregation, who accepted it by a very large majority. Even then, several members, including one of the elders, left the congregation. The loss of men and women who were prepared to sacrifice a lifelong connection for conscience sake was a real one, but constant difficulties with precentors and choir had made instrumental music inevitable. £94 was immediately raised, but, perhaps in view of the possibility of an early change of building, it was decided to purchase an American organ for £40 as a temporary measure. Amongst those who volunteered as our first organists were Miss Mackintosh, Southwood, and Miss Cosie Fraser.

Towards the end of 1894 Dr Robson received a call from the newly-formed congregation of Bridgend, Perth. The news was received with consternation. Elders and congregation pressed Dr Robson to remain, and a deputation of four men and four ladies waited upon him. The session records and Dr Robson's own farewell letter in 'Life and Work' prove how deeply both sides felt the separation after 29 years of harmonious and fruitful fellowship, but Dr Robson felt it his duty to accept the call, and accordingly was loosed from his charge in Inverness on 26th December 1894. We were to hear him again at rare intervals, for his interest in his first charge lasted until his death in 1911, and we were to rejoice in the signal honour done him in 1903, when he was Moderator of the General Assembly. In his later years Dr Robson was particularly identified with Foreign Missions, and time and again in 'Life and Work' are echoes of the eloquence with which he pleaded for help and helpers in the foreign field. When he came to the congregation in 1866 the number on the roll was below 150. When he left in 1894 it was 377. Dr Scott and Dr Robson cover between them 75 years, just half of our congregational history.

New rules had been framed by the Presbytery, allowing 'liberty of moderation'. A congregation, after their church had been preached vacant, could now take all steps necessary to fill the vacancy and call a minister. Such call was then submitted to Presbytery to be sustained; the Presbytery of the chosen minister was consulted, and if they agreed and the call was accepted, the Presbytery of the calling church put the call into the hands of the new pastor and arranged for his induction.

The congregation formed a vacancy committee, and the Rev. A. A. Robertson, Ardersier, acted as interim moderator. This was one of the many services rendered by Mr Robertson to our congregation, and it is a joy to us that his widow now worships with us (Since this was written Mrs Robertson passed away, 25th September 1937) and that one of his daughters, Miss Barbara Robertson, has contributed the design on the cover of this booklet. At a congregational meeting on 5th August 1895, a call was addressed to the Rev. George S. Stewart, probationer, of Edinburgh. Before the Presbytery he accepted the call and 'agreed to

bear his trials for ordination'. These consisted of 'an exercise with additions to Phil., ii., 6-8, and an examination in theology'. On 7th October 1895, Mr Stewart was ordained in the presence of many well-known ministers, including Dr Robson himself from Perth. Dr Black, the Rev. Gavin Lang and Dr MacTavish from the Free Church and the Established Church, associated themselves with the act of ordination. The old sectarian jealousies were gone: the spirit of Union was in the air.



The Reverend George Stewart - Minister from 1895 to 1899

Mr Stewart's first action showed his strong missionary bent. He sought Session's approval to his asking the aid of the congregation to provide a mission for the large number of navvies then working at Foyers on the British Aluminium Company's scheme. Actually a missionary was appointed independently almost immediately.

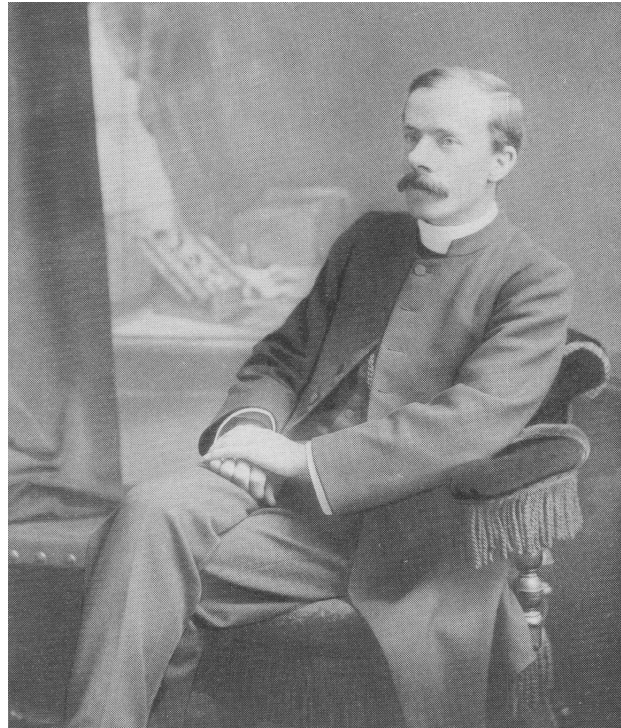
It was under Mr Stewart, in 1896, that evening Communion service was first introduced for those unable to attend the morning service.

About this time the Presbytery mooted the idea of a second U.P. church in Inverness, but after prolonged consideration it was decided that there was no room for another congregation, though a mission might be started, preferably in Kenneth Street. One of the arguments adduced was that the U.P. Church was essentially a southern one, and, therefore, not likely to attract immigrants from Ross-shire and Sutherland or the West Coast. The Session clerk, Mr John Mackintosh of Ardchattan, who was exceptionally well qualified to judge, dissented strongly from this view, and remembering our origin, many of us will be inclined to agree with him. In any case the proposal lapsed for want of support.

In 1898 we find the first note upon the proposed Union of the United Presbyterian and Free Churches. The proposal was discussed by the Session and unanimously approved. It was not, however, until October, 1902, that the final step in the amalgamation took place.

In March, 1899, Mr Stewart accepted a call to the Mission field in Kaffraria, to establish another personal link with Foreign Missions. Letters and an occasional visit and address from Mr Stewart, now settled in Edinburgh, have always been warmly welcomed, and he attended the semi jubilee of our present church in 1926.

Again, from March to December 1899, the congregation was without a pastor, and again the Rev. A. A. Robertson acted as interim-Moderator. A call in September to Mr G. A. Johnstone Ross, of London, a son of the congregation, was refused, but the services of Mr Chas. Robson, of Pollock Street, Glasgow, were obtained for the October Communion services, and he presided over the Session on 29th September. In October the congregation addressed a call to him, which was accepted, and on 21st December he was inducted. Once again Dr Robson showed his affection for his old charge by attending the ordination, and again several ministers from local churches were present to welcome the new-comer.



The Reverend Charles Robson - Minister from 1899 to 1903

The enthusiasm and energy characteristic of Mr Robson soon found outlet. The Factory Street Mission had fallen on evil days. Despite repeated appeals at congregational meetings and the untiring devotion of Herr Waack and a few others, this Mission had never been adequately staffed or financed. The people were terribly poor. Sheer lack of clothing kept many away, and teachers in its Sunday School frequently found provision of hot tea and buns the most practical form of Christian charity. The population was dwindling; work by the Episcopalian Mission was adversely affecting our own. Mr Robson made a detailed personal inspection, and declared for a new church with adequate halls as 'the citadel of the position' ; and from this time the project moved apace. A congregational meeting in April, 1900, resolved to sell the old site, to build a new church, and to install a pipe organ. The old site fetched £5500, exclusive of all woodwork and fittings, which we retained. The new site, at Ness Bank, cost £1700, less £452 allowed by contractors for old material; and including £590 for the new organ, the total cost of the present church was over £8500. By March 1906, the managers were able to report that the entire cost had been paid, a tribute to the generous support of the members and friends, and to the devotion of Mr F. E. Martin, the treasurer of the Building Fund, who after many years of unforgettable service to the congregation has recently passed from our earthly fellowship.

The last service in the old Union Street Church was held on 21st July 1901. For the next five

months the congregation worshipped in the Town Hall by the kindness of the Town Council. Just eighty years before, the Town Council had seven times interfered to prevent the congregation getting a site for a church.

The new church was dedicated on 22nd December 1901, the service being conducted by Dr A. R. MacEwen, of New College, Edinburgh. The old building was dismantled carefully and re-erected, stone by stone, at Alness, where it now stands. The Union of the U.P. and Free churches, which coincided with the change of building, necessitated a change in the name of the congregation. Various suggestions were made: 'St Columba's', 'South Church', 'Trinity' - before the present 'Ness Bank U.F. Church' was adopted.

It should be noted here that a few years before, in 1897, Mr Archibald resigned the post of Church Officer which he had held for twenty-eight years. He retired to Mull, but visited his son in Inverness at intervals till his death. He was succeeded as Church Officer by Mr John Mackenzie.

A bottle containing a 'Statement of Origin' and other documents of historical interest was taken from the foundations of the old church, and the contents are now preserved in a safe in the Vestry. The 'Statement' as already noted, was written in August 1863, probably by Mr Donald Davidson, afterwards Sheriff Davidson, then one of the senior elders.

Part 3

The Ness Bank Church, 1901-

With the occupation of the new building came a change in the Home Mission field. The Home Mission Board decided that the Haugh district, for which Ness Bank Church was advantageously situated, should be taken up by us, while the Baptist Church took over the Maggot. To meet the needs of the new district it was arranged that a band of ladies should make house-to-house visits among non-church-goers; that a meeting for women should be held weekly; and that every Saturday evening a Gospel Temperance meeting should be held. The Session was soon able to report that this last meeting had proved most successful in drawing young men from the streets.

In November 1903, Mr Robson accepted a call from the Moncrieff congregation of Alloa, and for eight months the church was vacant. On 4th July 1904, the congregation decided to call Mr John Reid of the Tay Square Church, Dundee. The call was accepted, and Mr Reid was inducted on 15th September 1904. Very shortly before he joined us, the new United Churches had heard with dismay the decision of the House of Lords regarding the property rights in churches and manse claimed by those members of the Free Church, often a very small minority, who had refused to join in the Union of the churches. It was estimated that seventy churches or halls and sixty manse, costing about £150,000, were rendered necessary by this decision. The bitterness of the dispute and the indignation following the decision find expression even in the sober pages of 'Life and Work'. 'In matters of conscience we acknowledge no right of the State to dictate, and in matters of theology no right to interpret. By this decision both realms have been invaded'.

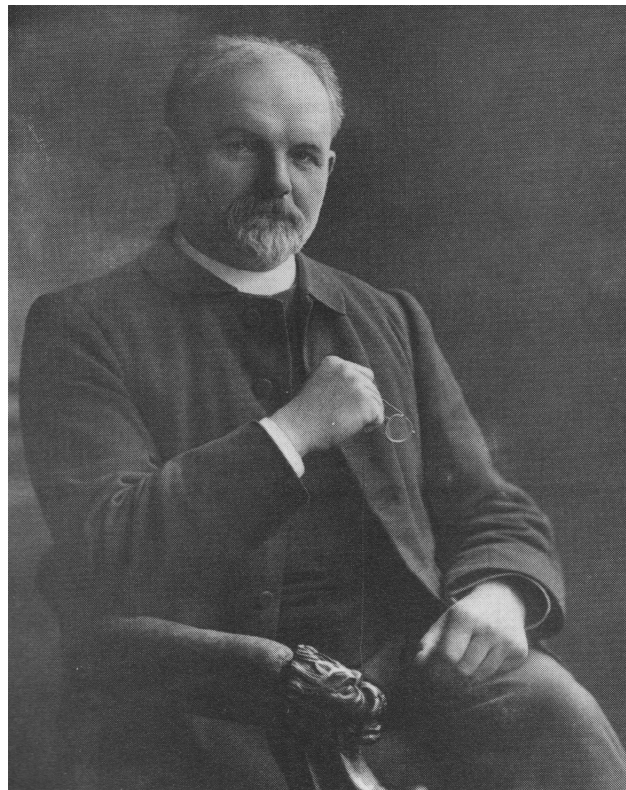
The U.P. Church lost not a single congregation over the Union, but as members of the United Church they took their share of the new burden.

For some time past the Session had been considering the use of an unfermented wine for the

Communion table. The project had once been dropped owing to opposition by a few members, but the general feeling in Session and congregation favoured the change, and after a fair and patient hearing of objections, the Session decided to introduce the new wine, which was practically free from alcohol, at the October Communion, 1906. Most of the objectors later acquiesced in the general opinion, but at least one prominent member left the congregation over the question.

In 1906 Mr Reid celebrated his semi-jubilee as a minister, and a social meeting of the congregation was held to mark the event. A deputation from the Tay Square Church participated.

Next year saw the origin of the Boys' Brigade, when Mr W. Treasurer became the first captain; and in April 1908, our lads were formally constituted in church as the Second Inverness Company, although they were in point of fact the pioneer company in Inverness. The boys attended Bible Class from 4 to 5 p.m. on Sunday, and met in the College gymnasium for drill and gymnastics on Wednesday from 8 to 9 p.m. The movement appealed to the boys from the start, and has gone from strength to strength, but it owes a deep debt to the enthusiasm and sacrifice of leisure by its early officers, Mr W. Treasurer, Mr A. J. Fraser, and Mr P. Swanney.



The Reverend John Reid - Minister from 1904 to 1917

Mr Reid's services were in demand outside the congregation. In 1908 he took the services in the Presbyterian Church at Weisbaden. Next year he was appointed Vice-Convener of the Highlands and Islands Committee, and two years later was chosen as a member of the deputation which attended the Pan-Presbyterian Churches' conference at Prague and Budapest.

There are several instances of petitions addressed to Parliament by the congregation. One of these, dealing with the Infectious Diseases Act, has already been noted; another supported

local option; and in 1909 a protest was sent against the Bill allowing shops to remain open on Sunday for the sale of tobacco, papers, etc. The petition characterised these provisions as 'retrograde and objectionable'. The shadow of impending war was upon Europe. The Agadir incident of 1911 lifted for a disquieting instant the thin veil that covered international hatreds. We joined in the 'World Petition to Prevent War Between Nations', presented to the Third Hague Conference that year, and presented in vain.

Before the storm broke, two outstanding figures in our congregational history were to pass away. In August 1911, Dr Robson died. The funeral service was held in Ness Bank, and he was laid to rest among the people he had served so long. 'An earnest, scholarly and instructive preacher; a loving and devoted pastor; a wise adviser, and a succourer of many'. So runs the Session's minute. He was largely responsible for founding the Institute for the Blind in Inverness; he had edited the 'Missionary Record' for twenty years; and his untiring labours for the success of the great World Missionary Conference of 1910, and in the negotiations for the broader union of the Scottish churches, only carried into wider spheres the spiritual insight and power of achievement for which we honoured and loved him here.

In November 1912, Mr and Mrs John Chisholm died within a few hours of one another. In a letter addressed to the bereaved family the Session paid tribute to Mr Chisholm's services to the congregation. For thirty-one years he had been an elder, distinguished for 'his upright and straightforward character, his devotion to the service and will of Christ, his ungrudging liberality, and his unwearied attention to all that concerned the welfare of the congregation'.

In August 1914, came the war, and for the next four and a half years the congregational life shared in the stress and strain of that period. Amid the harassment and weary questionings of post-war re-adjustment, it was well to read again Mr Reid's message in September's 'Life and Work'. In words clear and splendid as a trumpet call he proclaimed the real issues at stake, and the righteousness of our cause. The words have an added significance, coming as they do from one who was above all a man of peace. The cost of the reckoning is apt to obscure both the nature and the value of what we fought to save.

One of the first effects of the war was the presence in Inverness of hundreds of Territorials, and as part of the Town scheme, our Hall was opened after evening service on Sundays for the 'Soldiers' Hour'. Tea and light refreshments were provided, sacred songs were sung, and Miss Sara Walker's orchestra played a valuable part. At the same time work parties were held to provide Red Cross comforts and garments for those at the Front. Letters which appeared in 'Life and Work' testify to the appreciation of the recipients. At the head of these working parties were Mrs Petrie and Mrs J. H. Davidson. By February 1915, the church halls had been requisitioned for billeting purposes, and the Soldiers' Hour had to be given up, but the evening services were modified to attract soldiers and sailors, and proved very successful. An 'Inverness Home' for Belgian refugees was maintained, although for military reasons this had to be outside the Inverness area. Special collections were taken in aid of the Polish Jews whose homes had been devastated, and after the Armistice, for the famine-stricken Hungarians. Touch was maintained, as far as possible, with members of the congregation serving with the Forces, and their names appeared in 'Life and Work'. The problems of 'after the war', and the lessening of the Church's appeal to the younger generation, were beginning to obtrude themselves. A note in 'Life and Work' states: 'In regard to the spiritual effects of the war, it was noticed at the beginning that an increased interest was taken in the Sabbath services and prayer meetings, but as time passed, this disappeared'.

Two changes fall to be noted in 1915. The Lord's Prayer was now repeated audibly by the

congregation, and the system of individual cups for the Communion service was introduced, an anonymous member generously presenting a complete set. The old cups were ultimately donated to the Mission Church of Ikpa, in Old Calabar. Four years later a set of individual cups was presented, also anonymously, for use in private homes.

1915 brought the death of Mr John Mackintosh of Ardchattan, senior elder and one of the oldest members of the congregation. He had served for forty-two years as an elder of the church, and for twenty-five as session clerk. In every activity of the church, and more particularly in connection with the Sabbath School, he had led the congregation. The U.F. Presbytery recorded a special resolution: 'Mr Mackintosh on account of his consistent Christian character, his whole-hearted devotion to the Redeemer's Kingdom, both at home and abroad, and his many Christian activities, was for many years an outstanding personality in the religious life of Inverness and the Highlands'. For many of us his fine presence and kindly smile is a vivid memory, and his death left a great blank.

In December 1915, Mr Reid had to take three months' rest owing to high blood pressure, and during his absence the Ness Bank and Wesleyan congregations worshipped together under Mr Mace, the Wesleyan minister. In March Mr Reid resumed his duties, though not fully restored to health, but in April 1917, greatly to his own and the congregation's sorrow, he was again laid aside, and in July, when he seemed to be making good progress towards recovery, he passed away. In his reference from the pulpit, the Rev. J. D. MacGilp very fittingly described Mr Reid as one who "never withdrew into spiritual isolation, never lost touch with men and women and little children. He was very tender, very affectionate, very human. One of the great passions of his life was the spread of the Gospel in heathen lands. The services he has rendered to Foreign Missions here and elsewhere will have influence for many years". 'Faithful in his duties', says the Session's minute, 'and zealous in the cause of his Master, his delight was in preaching the Gospel of reconciliation and peace'. Never was that Gospel more in need of preaching than in those bitter years of war. The service of Mr Reid, and of Mrs Reid, is fittingly commemorated by two stained glass windows in the west wall of the church, the work of Miss Isobel Goudie. These, the gift of the ladies of the congregation, were unveiled after Mrs Reid's death by Mrs E. D. Jarvis, her daughter.

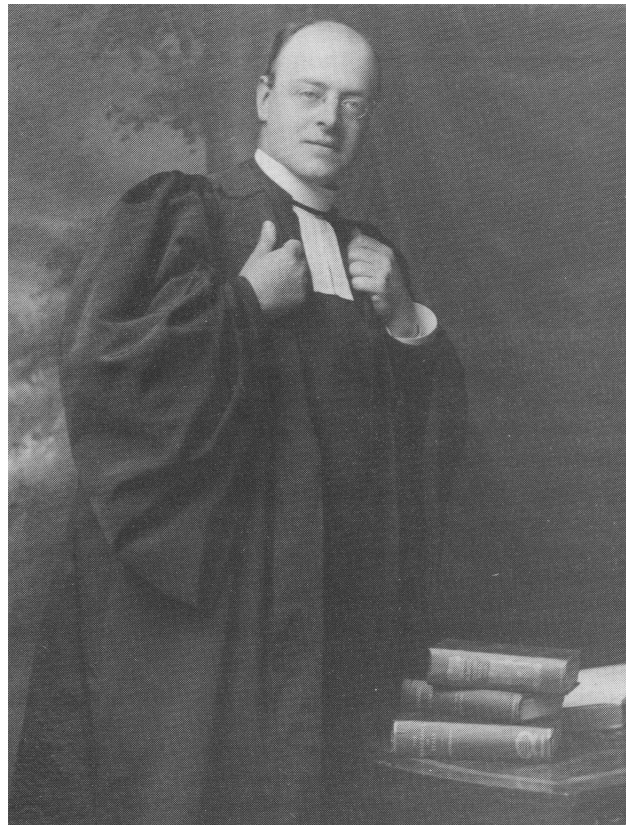
The interregnum following Mr Reid's death was short. Mr T. W. Armour, of Fort-Augustus, had been most helpful during the time of Mr Reid's illness, and in September 1917, he accepted the call to Ness Bank, and was inducted on 5th December. His pastoral foreword in 'Life and Work' contained a wise anticipation of impending changes in post-war Britain, and a call 'to trim our lamps and be ready, and to strengthen the things that remain'; and Mr Armour's sermon at the Thanksgiving service after the signing of the Armistice, reproduced in 'Life and Work' for December 1918, may stand with Mr Reid's words at the outbreak of the war as a message we should not willingly forget. A Roll of Honour in the form of a brass tablet set in the church vestibule contains the names of twenty-one members of the congregation who gave their lives in the war.

An article in 'Life and Work' draws attention to 1917, and recounts milestones in our congregational history. It was nearly one hundred years since Dr Scott's induction; fifty years since the first Sunday School Teachers' Society and first Missionary Society were formed; fifty years since the introduction of the first Hymn-Book; and nearly fifty years since the choir was inaugurated.

Early in 1919 the congregation suffered a great loss when Mr C. A. Hendery left Inverness. A member for over fifty-two years, an elder for thirty-one, Mr Hendery had rendered signal

service as conductor of Bible Classes for young people, as missionary and congregational treasurer, and as Preses for the managers. Mrs Hendery, who died in 1917, and Miss Hendery, had also given ungrudgingly for many years for the welfare of the Church.

1919 saw several changes in the working life of the congregation. Electric light was introduced, paid for largely by a legacy from Mrs Macdonald, Crown Drive; the elders now entered the church in a body on Communion Sunday and occupied the choir seats; and the whole system of contribution was revised. To obviate repeated special collections and stabilise the church income, all collections were scheduled, and members intimated what they found themselves able to give. We were the pioneers in this system, and its immediate success led to its wide adoption by other churches. It was shortly afterwards extended to our ordinary contributions, and is the system in use to-day.



The Reverend Thomas Armour - Minister from 1917 to 1924

In 1919 our collections for Missions, both for the General Fund and for Women's Missions, reached a new record, and the congregational finances allowed of raising the minister's stipend from £350 to £450. The Boys' Brigade also showed record attendances, and the Sunday Schools collected £25 for the starving poor of Hungary. An adverse rate of exchange had hit very hard most of our Foreign Mission fields, and a call was issued by the Synod for a large increase in contributions. Mr Armour was appointed Convener for the committee in charge of the campaign in Moray and Ross. The Inverness Presbytery's response was so generous that the figures were published 'for the inspiration and encouragement of the whole Church'. In that response Ness Bank took its full share. In October of next year (1920) Rev. Donald Fraser, of Livingstonia, preached on behalf of Foreign Missions. He was linked to the congregation by his marriage to a daughter of Dr Robson, and Mrs Fraser herself addressed a crowded Foreign Mission meeting in the following March.

During 1921 a special missionary was allotted to our congregation. This was Dr A. B. Macdonald of Calabar, who has, by his frequent letters and occasional addresses when on leave, done much to make African Mission work real and personal for us.

The General Assembly of 1921 was noteworthy for the advance made towards Union with the Established Church of Scotland. A Bill had recently been brought before Parliament designed to promote the recognition of the Established Church as entirely free from all restraint through its statutory obligations and financial relations to the State. These had been the main obstacles to Union from the point of view of the United Free Church when the subject was broached ten years before. The great majority of the Assembly expressed themselves in favour of the Union.

In 1921 for the first time the pre-Communion Fast-day was discontinued, the Session having come to the conclusion that this service had outlived its usefulness.

In May, 1922, Mr John Mackenzie, our church officer, or beadle, to give him the old name, completed twenty-five years' service, and was presented with a framed enlargement of his photograph, while a copy was also hung in the managers' room 'among the photos of those who have enriched the traditions of the congregation by their service'. 'John' was himself the son of a beadle, and told how his father's counsel to him had been "Never neglect the poor of the congregation". It was a counsel faithfully followed.

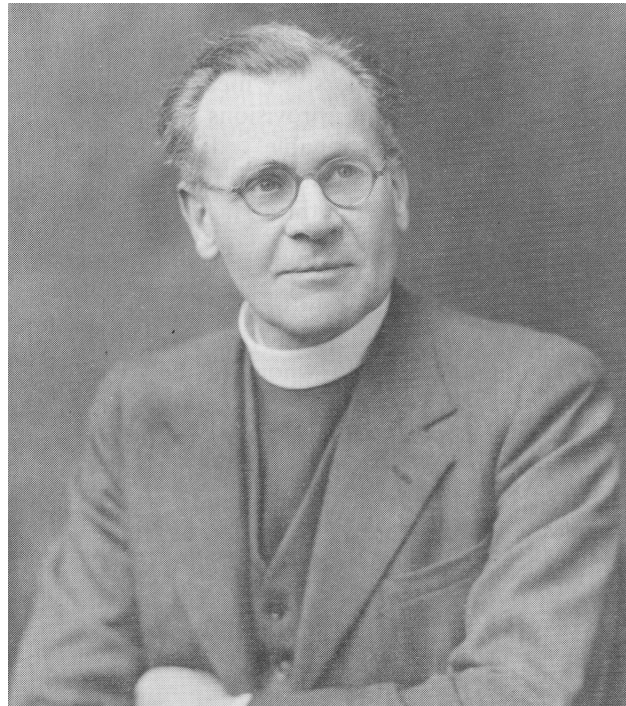
In 1922 two more Sabbath Schools were opened, one in the Culduthel Day School, the other in a private house at Holm Mills. The former was presented with an organ by the generosity of an Inverness-shire man in Glasgow - Mr Younie.

At the annual Mission meeting in this year one of the leading speakers was Dr Moton, the negro Principal of the Tuskegee Institute, and successor to Booker Washington. In a powerful address he urged a closer understanding between the white and negro races. A fortnight's evangelistic Mission was also held in November of this year, conducted by 'Jock' Troup, Rev. J. Somerville Smith, and Duncan MacColl. It laid great stress on house visitation, direct intercourse with enquirers, small week-night meetings. 'Life and Work' contains warm tributes to the work done and results achieved.

In February 1924, died suddenly Mr John Cook, who had been a member of the congregation for over fifty years, and an elder for twenty-one. Towards the end of the year Mr Armour accepted a call from Christchurch, New Zealand, a dominion where most of his own and his wife's relatives were resident. Rev. John Dow acted as interim-Moderator, and Rev. W. E. Shaw, of Lossiemouth, as locum tenens, during the short vacancy. In December the congregation addressed a call to Rev. James Wright, of St Mark's, Glasgow, which was accepted, and on 25th February 1925, Mr Wright was inducted as our eighth minister.

At the end of 1925 the question of Union with the Established Church of Scotland was the subject of a reference by the General Assembly to all U.F. congregations, and a congregational meeting was held to consider the matter. Opinion was very divided. In the Session 11 favoured and 6 opposed Union; while in the congregational meeting, which was very thinly attended, the figures were 34 for, and 26 against Union. Throughout the U.F. Church generally the same divided opinion prevailed. The Union was to wait four years more.

In 1926 our choir, which under Miss Mackintosh had already won distinction, was given first place at the Elgin Festival, and the judges commented particularly on 'the worshipful, reverent spirit in their renderings', and on 'the evidence of very able direction'. This success was repeated in 1927 and 1928.



The Reverend James Wright - Minister from 1925 to 1945

Under Mr Wright the week-day 'Women's Hour' was re-introduced, a Young Worshippers' League inaugurated, and the Rambling Club begun. Sunday services were also held at Culduthel.

On 19th December 1926, the semi-jubilee of the Ness Bank Church was celebrated. The morning service was taken by Rev. Charles Robson, of Moncrieff Church, Alloa, and the evening by Rev. George S. Stewart, of Cairn's Memorial Church, Edinburgh, both former pastors of the congregation. On the 20th evening a social was held in the Church Hall, and short addresses were given by Revs. Chas. Robson, George Stewart, W. E. Shaw, of Lossiemouth; ex-Provost Petrie, Mr J. E. Scott, and our church officer, Mr John Mackenzie. The Rev. Donald Connell and Rev. Donald Macleod from sister churches in Inverness added their tributes and congratulations to close a memorable occasion, when for a space we dwelt with reverent pride amid the great traditions of our spiritual heritage.

As the year closed Mr Charles A. Hendery died, and in his death the congregation lost one of its oldest and most devoted elders. Ordained in 1888, he had filled the offices of Treasurer and Preses, and in the building of our present church he had taken a leading part.

At the annual congregational meeting in February 1927, a presentation was made to Miss Mackintosh in recognition of over twenty-five years' service as organist and trainer of the choir.

The General Assembly of 1927 carried the proposed Union with the Established Church a long step forward. It decided by 675 votes to 126 to send the report (favouring early Union) to the presbyteries and congregations for information. It should be noted that the opposition was not to the Union itself, but to Union before certain safeguarding measures had been taken. In the General Assembly of 1928, many who were formerly opposed to the Union found it possible to support it, and the opposition fell to half its number.

From 1st January 1928, the present revised Hymn-Book was introduced. It was the result of four and a half years' work by a Committee representative of the Presbyterian Churches of

Scotland, England, Wales, Ireland and the Empire (except Canada), and therefore gave a common book of praise to practically the whole British Presbyterian world.

On January 22nd 1928, the death of Mrs John Mackintosh, Ardchattan, removed the oldest member on our Communion Roll, a pioneer in Temperance and Child Welfare work, 'with such a record of service, so varied in its character, so single in its aim, so steadfast and unwearying, that, apart from the pain of parting, here is no cause for tears'.

In the summer of the same year died Mrs Roderick Scott, who had worshipped with the congregation for fifty-six years, and in her own quiet sphere had laboured faithfully in the Lord. She had taken a leading part in the early Saturday Temperance meetings, and in Mission work in Maggot and Haugh. In her last years she was specially identified with the Home of Rest for the aged poor.

In 1928, also, Mr John Mackenzie gave up his duties as church officer after thirty-one years of 'constant courtesy and unfailing helpfulness'. He was succeeded by Mr George A. Hendry, who is still with us. In October, at the annual missionary meeting, Mr Mackenzie was presented with a gift of recognition from the congregation.

In February 1929, at its annual meeting, the congregation with a happy unanimity approved the Union with the Established Church of Scotland on the basis and plan proposed. Feeling in our congregation, as in the Church at large, had run strong on this momentous issue, but Mr Wright, who had himself been in the opposing minority, gave an inspiring lead, 'describing the steps taken to build a bridge across which the minority could pass into the United Church without abandoning their principles, and professing himself satisfied to cross that bridge, not reluctantly, but hopefully'. It is a remarkable tribute to the harmony that has always characterised our congregation, that the approving motion was accepted without a dissentient voice.

On October 1st 1929, at the last meeting of the U.F. Church Assembly, in a tense and crowded meeting, the motion for Union was adopted with only 22 adverse votes in that great gathering. At St Giles's Cathedral the two branches met, and for the first time joined as one in a devotional service, mainly of thanksgiving. The first sederunt of the Assembly of the United Church was held in the afternoon, and at its proceedings, as Lord High Commissioner, was our present King.

This reuniting of the broken fragments of our Scottish Presbyterianism, and the entry of our own congregation into the fuller life and service of the United Church, would seem a fitting point at which to leave our history.

It is a far cry from the handful of Seceders on the Barnhill in the rain to the great procession of the United Churches through the Edinburgh streets. Let us again give thanks for all the way by which He has led us, and for the high courage and unwearying faithfulness with which our fathers followed His way. And let us keep our history before us, 'Lest we forget. Lest we forget'.

J.E. Scott

A Note on Our Foreign Missionaries

ON the wall of our church a brass tablet records the names of those of our congregation who gave their lives in the Great War. There is another Roll of Honour no less memorable, without which no history of our congregation would be complete, the roll of those devoted men and women who have given their lives to the service of God and their fellow men in the Foreign Mission field. From time to time a letter in 'Life and Work', or, more rarely, an address from the pulpit or at our missionary meeting, lights up the wide regions of Christless dark in which labours this little band, and reminds us that ours must be, above all else, a missionary church.

Some have gone direct from our midst to the foreign field; others were of our number in their earlier years; one is ours by spiritual adoption. There may well be names omitted here which should be set down. If so, their greater charity will forgive. In all our pride; for all our prayers.

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| 1. Dr Robert Robson, Rajputana | } | Son and Daughters of
Dr George Robson D.D. |
| 2. Dr Agnes Robson (Mrs Dr Fraser), Livingstonia | | |
| 3. Miss May Robson (Mrs Wilkie), Lovedale | | |
| 4. Rev. William Thomas Weir, Old Calabar (1893) | | |
| 5. Rev. George S. Stewart and Mrs Stewart, Kaffaria (1899) | | |
| 6. Dr Amy Marion Mackintosh (Mrs Alexander), India (1909) | | |
| 7. Miss Bessie Mackintosh (Mrs Adam Brown), Calabar
(Daughters of Mr Mackintosh, Ardchattan) | | |
| 8. Rev. James Robson, Sheikh Othman, S. Arabia | } | Son and Daughter of
Rev. Chas. Robson |
| 9. Miss Dolly Robson, Madras (Nurse) | | |
| 10. Mr John Paul (1911), Alberta, to work for Presbyterian Church of Canada | | |
| 11. Miss Netta Petrie, Madras (1920), Lecturer, Medical College for Women | | |
| 12. Miss Annie MacColl, Nurse Superintendent, Sheikh Othman, S. Arabia | | |
| 13. Miss Ella McTavish, China | | |
| 14. Mr and Mrs Tom Collett (1923), India | | |

Our 'adopted' missionary is Dr A. B. Macdonald, of Itu, S. Nigeria, who has been peculiarly ours since 1921, and has paid us several furlough visits. Dr Macdonald is in charge of the Leper Colony in Itu, which has done such magnificent work, and now has 1800 patients on its roll.