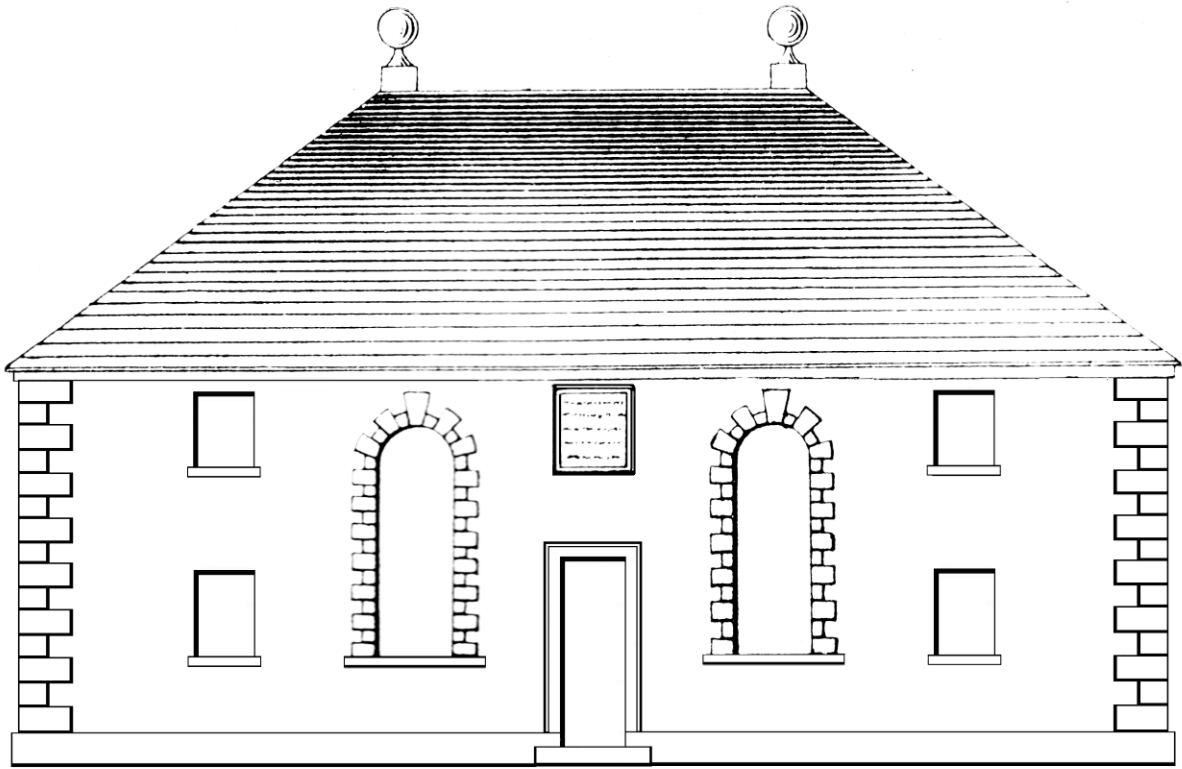


RELIEF CHURCH,  
BELLSHILL





OLD CHURCH  
1763



NARRATIVE

of the

ORIGIN AND PROGRESS

of the

RELIEF CHURCH, BELLSHILL.

By the

REV. JOHN WILSON

“We will go into his tabernacles” – PSALM cxxxii. 7

GLASGOW

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MDCCCXLVII



TO  
THE SESSION,  
MANAGERS, AND MEMBERS,  
of the  
RELIEF CONGREGATION, BELLSHILL,

THIS NARRATIVE  
is inscribed  
BY THEIR AFFECTIONATE PASTOR.





## PREFACE

THE following Narrative was written on the occasion of the taking down of the old Relief Church at Bellshill, and the re-building of it. The object of it is to give an account of the Relief cause here. Dr Struthers has kindly furnished the closing address of his discourse at the opening of the church. Several circumstances of a more general kind have occasionally been introduced into the Narrative, but these, it is hoped, will not be deemed irrelevant. It is now printed for the benefit of those within the sphere of the Author's ministerial labours. If it lead them to revere the memory of their forefathers - to copy after their conduct so far as it was commendable, and to cherish gratitude to God, it has not been printed in vain.

BELLSHILL RELIEF MANSE,

January, 1847.



## PART I



## NARRATIVE.

“Yea, I remember will the works  
Performed by the Lord:  
The wonders done of old by thee  
I surely will record.

“I also will of all thy works  
My meditation make;  
And of thy doings to discourse  
Great pleasure I will take.”

No institution is more interesting to the Christian than the church. Its members are his brethren - having been redeemed by the same blood, sanctified by the same Spirit, and they are destined to live together in the same mansions of bliss. Even an individual church has many attractions for the Christian. From it, as well as from the church universal, he derives both comfort, encouragement, and instruction. In it the conduct of a part of his brethren, the trials they endured, the sacrifices they made, pass in review before him; he is presented, at the same time, with a proof of the watchful and gracious providence of God. These remarks, it is presumed, will not be found inapplicable to the church whose history we now propose to give.

BELLSHILL, where the church is situated, lies nearly in the centre of the parish of Bothwell in the middle ward of Lanarkshire. Its origin is comparatively recent, extending back scarcely a century. Viewed in itself, there are few facts connected with it either interesting or striking. It is rendered important, however, by events that have taken place in its immediate neighbourhood. A little to the south of it is the bridge memorable for an engagement fought in 1679, between the forces of Charles II, under the Duke of Monmouth, and the Covenanters. Nearer it still, in the same direction, on the beautiful estate of Orbiston, is a bridge called the Roman bridge, erected, in all likelihood, by the Romans when they invaded our island, about the commencement of the Christian era. The village being built on part of the lands of Orbiston, it was originally called the new lands of Orbiston. Its present name was transferred to it about 60 years ago, from a place a mile west called Bellshill, and is partly owing to a person of the name of Bell, and partly to the nature of the locality. As many of the houses are the property of their occupants, it is marked by much neatness and cleanliness. For some time the chief employment of its inhabitants was the hand-loom, but since the introduction of the coal and iron works, the hand-loom has been exchanged, except by the aged, for outdoor labour. Its population, as was to be expected, has of late considerably increased. In the year 1841, when the last census was taken, the population was somewhere about a thousand; and, what is rather singular, the males preponderated nearly a hundred. With the increase of population, we wish we could have added that it had also improved in its morals. According, however, to the testimony of the older inhabitants, it has in this respect, particularly in the observance of the Sabbath, greatly deteriorated. Doubtless, several causes have contributed to this: one is an establishment erected some years ago in its vicinity by Mr Owen. That establishment, it is true, since the estate on which it was reared came into the possession of Mrs Douglas, has been numbered among the things that were - not one stone of it being left

on another; yet who can doubt but the leaven of its principles is still operating? A second cause is the increase of public works, and the manner in which some of these are conducted - work, to a certain extent, being carried on the Sabbath. A third cause, and not the least powerful, is the unnecessary vending of spirits on the Lord's-day. There are in the village two day schools, one of which is taught by a female, which owes its origin to Mrs Hozier, a benevolent lady in the neighbourhood, and in which the ordinary branches of female education are taught; a Sabbath evening school, which has been in existence for about thirty years. There are two churches. One of these a late erection, having been built in the year 1842. At its commencement it was in connexion with the Congregational Union, but has since been cut off for entertaining opinions on election and the Holy Spirit at variance with those of the Union. Though not connected with, it favours the principles of what is called Evangelical Union, which sect originated with Mr Morrison, a Secession minister in Kilmarnock, who was deposed by the Church Courts in the year 1841, for advocating peculiar views in reference to the atonement, the influences of the Holy Spirit, &c. The other church is in connexion with the Relief Synod. It is of considerable long standing, having been erected well nigh ninety years ago.

About the period of its erection the people of God in Scotland were suffering many grievances, the chief of which arose from the operation of the law of patronage. Instead of being consulted as to the minister they wished, they had often one thrust upon them by a Presbytery, aided by dragoons. It was not to be expected that the good men in the church would allow such things to take place, without lifting up their voice against them. Accordingly, Ebenezer Erskine, in a sermon at the opening of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, in October, 1732, boldly testified against the corruptions of the church, for which he, along with three ministers who adhered to him, were suspended, and thus was laid the foundation of the Secession Church. A few years subsequent to this, Thomas Gillespie, who afterwards became the founder of the Relief Synod, lifted up a similar testimony. He was minister of the Parish of Carnock, and had been ordered to be present at a violent settlement in the parish of Inverkeithing; but this he refused to do; and because of his refusal he was deposed, by the General Assembly in the year 1751. His deposition took place on Saturday. On the Sabbath following he preached in the fields at Carnock to his people. Having preached in the open air for several months, he retired to the town of Dunfermline, where a church had been erected for him. Here he laboured for upwards of twenty-three years, when, he departed this life in the 66th year of his age; but before his death he had the satisfaction of seeing the denomination, of which he was the founder, making rapid progress. The first accession to his standard was the church at Jedburgh, which was erected in the year 1757, and was the scene of Mr Boston's labours, son of the distinguished author of the "Fourfold State". The second was at Colinsburgh, a small village in the east of Fife. It arose in the year 1761. It was here the first Relief Presbytery was held. In the minutes of this meeting, among other things, we find it stated that the members declared their adherence to the standards of the Church of Scotland and that they had united and formed themselves into a Presbytery of Relief, for the relief of Christians oppressed in their Christian privileges. The third accession was the church at Blairlogie, in Stirlingshire, which was erected in the year 1762. The fourth was at Auchtermuchty in Fife, which was built in the same year 1762. Those who wish fuller information on these, as well as other points connected with the Synod, we refer to Dr Struthers' excellent history. The fifth church was at Bellshill. The immediate occasion of it was an unpopular settlement in the parish church of Bothwell. This settlement was not, indeed, of such a violent kind as some others at that time, still it was unpopular. The Rev.

James Baillie of Shotts was the presentee who had been inducted into Bothwell on the 2d Sept., 1762, contrary to nearly the unanimous remonstrance of the parish, only eight names being attached to his call. He had received the presentation a year and a-half before this, but the Presbytery delayed his induction, thinking that the dissatisfaction manifested to him would subside.

*Minutes of Hamilton Presbytery in the Case of the Rev. James Baillie.*

"Hamilton, April 28th, 1761.

"Compeared Mr Wm. Bogle, writer in Hamilton, and in virtue of a commission for that purpose, gave in to the Presbytery a presentation from the Tutors of his Grace the Duke of Hamilton to Mr James Baillie, minister of Shotts, to be minister of Bothwell. There was also given in along with said presentation a letter of acceptance from the presentee - both which were read, and lodged in the clerk's hands; whereupon Mr Bogle took instruments in the clerk's hands, and craved extracts."

"Hamilton, 28th Octr., 1761.

"There was given in to the Presbytery, by Mr Cullen of Parkhead, a petition, signed by several of the heritors and others of the parish of Bothwell, craving that the Presbytery would moderate a call to Mr J. Baillie, and take the necessary steps for transporting him from Shotts to Bothwell; but as some of the elders of said parish, who were present, represented to the Presbytery that delay, at least till next Presbytery, would tend more to the comfortable settlement of that parish, the Presbytery delayed to grant the desire of the petition presented by Mr Cullen till next Presbytery."

"Hamilton, Decr. 1st 1761.

"The Presbytery, resuming the consideration of the petition presented to them last Presbytery by Mr Cullen of Parkhead, craving that the Presbytery would be pleased, with all convenient speed, to moderate a call to Mr Baillie, minister of Shotts, to be minister of Bothwell, appointed Mr Cleland, their moderator, Mr Risk, Mr Park, and Mr Bell, these four, or any one of them, to meet at the kirk of Bothwell upon Tuesday, the 5th of January, in order to moderate a call to Mr Baillie; and they appointed Mr Bell to preach at Bothwell, Sabbath come 8 days, and to write letters to non-residing heritors."

"Hamilton, Jany. 12th, 1762.

Mr Bell reported that he had preached at Bothwell according to appointment, and intimated the moderation of a call to Mr Baillie, minister of Shotts, to be minister of Bothwell; and the Moderator, Mr Bell, and Mr Risk, reported that, according to the appointment of the Presbytery had met at Bothwell, and moderated said call, which was produced and read. Compeared also Mr Boyes, writer in Hamilton, and factor for his Grace the Duke of Hamilton, who gave in reasons of transportation. The Presbytery delayed to give judgment upon Mr Baillie's call till next Presbytery, because there was ground to believe that several heritors and others of the parish of Bothwell would accede to the call, which, by reason of the extreme badness of the day, they had not an opportunity of signing at the moderation."

"Hamilton 28th March 1762

"The Presbytery entering upon the consideration of the settlement of Bothwell, Mr Cleland

reported that the parish of Shotts had been summoned; conform to appointment. Parties being called at the Presbytery door; to wit, Mr Baillie, the parish of Shotts, and parish of Bothwell, all compeared. Mr Baillie represented to the Presbytery that if none were concerned in the affair but himself, he would make all easy, and was willing, as far as was consistent with the principles of honour, the interest of the church, and regard to his own character, to give quiet to all ties; that if the Presbytery thought fit give delay for a month, that something might happen that would contribute to peace, at least it would give him time to consult with himself and friends what part he should act; which request the Presbytery thought reasonable, and therefore granted the delay."

"Hamilton, 27th April, 1762

"The Presbytery entering upon the affair of Bothwell, compeared - Mr Bogle, writer in Hamilton, agent for Tutors of his Grace, &c, Mr Cullen of Parkhead, Mr Hamilton of Stevenson, Mr Baillie of Carnbroe, heritors in the parish of Bothwell, craving that the Presbytery would proceed to the transportation of Mr Baillie from the parish of Shotts to the parish of Bothwell, compeared also Mr Clerk of Moffat, Mr Meek, Fortisset, Mr Cleland of Auchinlee, and several other heritors and inhabitants of the parish of Shotts, who produced answers to the reasons of transportation, signed by 147 persons. After reading of which, and hearing parties on both sides, the Presbytery ordered them to withdraw; which being done, the members of the Presbytery reasoned a considerable time among themselves on the expediency of the transportation, and considering that Mr Baillie had craved a delay of one month at the last meeting of Presbytery, for the reasons the minute of that day, and that they had not yet had an opportunity of learning from him what part he was to act, they were, therefore, of opinion that they ought to delay giving a final judgment in this affair at this meeting, as for other reasons so particularly, till they had an opportunity of conversing with Mr Baillie; and therefore did, and hereby do, delay this affair till next ordinary meeting of Presbytery. Parties being called in, and the above sentence intimated to them, Mr Bogle, in name of Duke of Hamilton's Tutors, the heritors, elders, and others concurring in the call to Mr Baillie, protested and appealed to the ensuing General Assembly, promising to give in their reasons of appeal in due time, took instruments in the clerk's hands, and craved extracts."

"Hamilton, June 8th, 1762.

"Compeared Wm. Bogle, writer in Hamilton, agent for the Tutors of, &c., with several of the heritors of the parish of Bothwell, craving that the Presbytery would be pleased to proceed to the transportation of Mr Baillie from the parish of Shotts to the parish of Bothwell with all convenient speed, according to the rules of this church; which sentence the Presbytery having read and considered, it was proposed that, if this matter were delayed a month longer, it might tend to the more comfortable settlement of the parish of Bothwell, and the members of the Presbytery would be more ready than they were at present to give their judgment in this affair; and parties having agreed to this proposal, the affair was accordingly delayed till next meeting of Presbytery."

"Hamilton, July 6th, 1762.

"The Presbytery entering on the affair of Bothwell, and parties being called, the abstract of the sentence of the Assembly, relative to that affair, was read, and the members of Presbytery having reasoned a considerable time among themselves, at last came to the following state of a vote - to wit, "proceed," or "delay;" understanding by *proceed*, immediately to appoint Mr Baillie's translation to Bothwell without judging of the call, reasons of transportation, answers



to these reasons and expediency; and by *delay*, understanding not to proceed till the above things be considered. The roll being therefore called, and votes marked, it carried *delay*. Accordingly the Presbytery did, and hereby do, delay this affair. Against which sentence Mr James Morehead, moderator, Messrs James Millar, Thos. Cleland, Robt. Bell, and John Risk, ministers, and James Cook, elder, craved liberty to enter their dissent, in regard it appears evident to them that the General Assembly, by their sentence appointing the Presbytery to proceed to the transportation of Mr Baillie from Shotts to Bothwell with all convenient speed, has virtually sustained both the call and reasons of transportation, and left the Presbytery nothing to do but execute their sentence; and because delaying the affair *sine die* can serve no other purpose but unnecessarily to prolong the vacancy. Upon which delay also Mr Bogle, in name of Duke of Hamilton's Tutors, and of the callers of Mr Baillie, protested and appealed to the ensuing Commission of the General Assembly, and thereupon took instruments in the clerk's hands, and craved extracts."

"Hamilton, 17th Aug., 1762.

"Compeared Wm. Bogle, and several of the heritors of the parish of Bothwell, craving that the Presbytery would be pleased to proceed to the translation of Mr Baillie from Shotts to Bothwell, producing, at the same time, an extract of the sentence of the General Assembly relative to this affair, appointing the Presbytery to proceed to the admission of Mr Baillie at Bothwell betwixt and the 22d of September next; which sentence being read and considered by Presbytery, they agreed to admit him minister of Bothwell upon the 2d of Sept. next, appoint Mr Cleland to preach at Bothwell on Sabbath 1st, and to serve his edict, and Mr Morehead to preach at his admission; and farther, they appoint their clerk to write to all the absent members of the Presbytery that they may be present at said admission."

11 Bothwell, 2d Sept., 1762.

The Presbytery being met according to appointment, for the admission of Mr Baillie - *Post preces sederunt* - Messrs James Morehead, moderator, James Millar, Robt. Bell, Robt. Park, Thos. Cleland, James Baillie, Richard Robison, and John Risk, ministers; John Tabet, &c., elders. Mr Cleland reported that he had preached at Bothwell, conform to appointment, and had served Mr Baillie edict, a copy whereof, duly indorsed, he gave in to the Presbytery. The Presbytery next appointed their officer to go to the most patent church-door and to call three several times if there were any persons in the parish that had any objections to offer to Mr Baillie's life or doctrine, that they would immediately repair to the Presbytery and declare the same; but no objections being offered, after sermon by Mr Morehead, Mr Baillie was called upon, who answered the question prescribed by the Assembly, and was thereupon solemnly received and admitted minister of Bothwell"

The Presbytery, however, in thus delaying the induction, failed in their object; but as the people here were very unwilling to abandon the church in which they had been reared, and form themselves into a separate party, they, on the day of Mr B.'s induction, went so far as to ask of the Presbrety to allow the elders to grant lines to persons who wished to observe sealing ordinances in the neighbouring parishes, and that they would continue to attend the ministry of Mr B. on ordinary occasions, that they might judge for themselves; but, this could not be granted. On this request being refused, they quietly separated, and resolved to erect a church for themselves. Though they thus at an early period lifted up the standard of dissent, there were dissenters in the parish before them. In the neighbouring parish of Cambusnethan, a Secession church had been erected about twenty years previous to this, which had arisen

from a similar cause, to which several individuals went from this parish. This circumstance, there can be no doubt, strengthened the hands and encouraged the hearts of the people here. To the Secession, it might have been supposed, they would have applied for sermon, but such was not the case. Whatever might have been the opinion of individuals, it was the wish of the majority to make application to the Relief Presbytery. Their application was favourably received. As there was no house in the village in which they could conveniently assemble, they had sermon for some time in the open air, during which period they enjoyed more than once the services Mr Gillespie. Soon after receiving sermon, they were joined by persons from several parishes, and some of them at a considerable distance. Persons came from Blantyre, Hamilton, Cambuslang, Strathaven, Cambusnethan, Dalzell, Shotts, and Old Monkland. This circumstance is highly creditable to the Relief preachers, and shows the estimation in which the principles of the Relief were held in and around this district. But what was it may be asked, in these principles different from the other evangelical denominations in Scotland at the time? In some respects there was no difference, but in others there was. This difference I cannot more satisfactorily state than by quoting from a work of a distinguished Relief minister, the Rev. Patrick Hutchison, of Paisley.

On his title page he inscribed a motto from Witsius, as descriptive of his party:-

In necessariis, unitas;  
In non-necessariis, libertas;  
In utrisque, charitas,"

In necessary things unity;  
In non-essentials, liberty;  
In all things, charity."

This work consists of three parts. In the first he refers to the religious doctrines taught by the Relief, and shows that they are the same as what was taught by other evangelical denominations. In the second he specifies the points in which the Synod differs from the national establishment. He condescends on two-legal preaching, and intruding ministers on vacant congregations without a call from the members of the church, and proves that, so long as the church of Christ stood on its own foundation, and was not united to the kingdoms of this world, there was no patronage. In the third part he gives an account of the points of difference between the Synod of Relief and Seceders. He mentions three: 1<sup>st</sup>, Their anti-toleration principles; 2d, Their opposition to occasional hearing of evangelical ministers not of their own party; 3d, The unscriptural narrowness of their terms of communion.

But, to proceed with our narrative. After the people had enjoyed sermon for some time in the open air, they resolved to erect a church. For the carrying out of this purpose the following persons were appointed:- John Fleming, and John Yetts, tenants in the lands of Cleland; Matthew Riddle, and William Mackie, tenants in the lands of Woodhall; Robert Gibson, tenant in the lands of Carfin; John Pollock, and Thomas Ballantine, tenants in the lands of Orbiston; Francis Mackie, weaver in Bothwell; John Thomson, shoemaker, and John Forrest, mason, in the town of Uddingston; John Wood, weaver at Calder Bridge; John Brownlie, shoemaker, Dalzell; Wm. Cunningham, merchant, Hamilton; and Thomas Reston, Old Monkland.

To Mr James Laurie, of Shirril, they made application for a piece of ground, who very generously made them a present of about one hundred falls, on part of which they erected a church, the remainder they set apart for a burying-ground, and which has of late been considerably enlarged by having added to it an adjoining piece of ground. The church was finished in August, 1763. At first it was built to accommodate between six and seven hundred, but it was soon found necessary to enlarge it. About the time the church was finished, an agreement was entered into by the subscribers, of which the following is a copy:-

"We, the under subscribers, dissenters from the ministry of the parish of Bothwell - in respect that we are fully resolved to form ourselves into a body, or society, for having the worship of God celebrated to us by a minister of our own choosing, in the house at present built by us on part of the lands of Shirril and Hattonridge. Agreeable to a contract to be entered into by us for that effect, a scroll of which we have this day read to us, and with the conception of which we are well pleased; and as said contract cannot, for want of time, be got extended, so as to be signed by us of this date, we, therefore, with unanimous consent, promise and engage ourselves to sign said contract so soon as the same shall be got extended on stamp paper by Mr Alex. Brown, writer in Airdrie, and agreeable to the above mentioned scroll; and if any of us fail so to do, we hereby promise to pay two pounds sterling, to be applied for the use and interest of said society; and we hereby ordain any competent judge to pass sentence against us for payment of that sum within fifteen days after we are charged for that effect."

Signed, "Wm. Robertson, Esq., Lauchope, James Wotherspoon, Jas. Laurie, John Gardner, Harie Wilson, Wm. Mackie, Alexander Freebairn, James Allan, John Renwick, Robert Millar, Gavin Lang, John Todd, Robert Pollock, William Robertson, James Laurie, Robt. Freebairn, John Yetts, Thomas Ballantine, James Wilkie, James Wood, John Jack, Robert Hamilton, Francis Mackie, William Cullen, William Neilson, Robert Gibson, William Scott, John Todd, James Morrison, William M'Lea, James Scott, James Wotherspoon Matthew Riddle, John Hill, John Cumming, John Rae, John Brownlie, John Pollock, William M'Callum, John Barr, Thomas Cullen, William Yetts, Jas. Naismith, Robert Wallace, James Allan, John Forrest, James Wilkie, James Steel, James Steel, Alex. Hamilton."

Shortly after the building of the church, they invited Mr ALEXANDER SIMPSON to be their pastor, who was ordained on the 27th October, 1763. For a short time after his ordination he resided at Uddingston, and rode up to Bellshill on the Sabbath morning with his wife seated behind him; but he was not required to submit long to this inconvenience. Immediately on the erection of the church, the people set about building a manse. For this purpose, they purchased from Archibald Hamilton, Esq. of Orbiston, a piece of ground, consisting of an acre, on part of which they erected a manse; the rest they set apart for an orchard and garden. They also took in tack for 99 years about nine acres of ground adjoining to the aforesaid acre, to be possessed by the minister as a glebe, which piece of ground has since been taken in feu. In the conduct of the founders of this church there is much to admire. They showed that they were no schismatics - that they were lovers of peace - that they had no desire to raise a separate party in the parish if they could have enjoyed the gospel in accordance with their mind in the church of their forefathers. And though they made no declaration as to the

voluntary support of the gospel, as is now being done, and as was done by some of the Relief churches at that time, yet, if not Voluntaries in words, they were so in practice, as is evident from the sacrifices they made to enjoy their rights and privileges.

Of late years many sacrifices have been made by some for truth and a good conscience. These we do not mean to undervalue. So far from this, we readily grant they were many and great; but they were no greater, nor nearly so great, as those of the founders of the Relief Church. In their case there was nothing to encourage them save the righteousness of their cause. They were few in number, and for the most part poor. The mode of supporting dissenting churches was not so well understood then as now. They had no prospect of any building, or sustentation, or manse fund, to animate and support them; neither did they enjoy the sympathy nor the pecuniary support of the members of other denominations. Instead of this, they were loaded with the reproaches and calumnies of those who should have strengthened their hands, and encouraged their hearts; but notwithstanding of all this, they have persevered for upwards of 90 years in avowing their principles. In the conduct of the early members of the Relief Church there is another circumstance which ought not to be overlooked, namely, the manner in which they provided for the comfort and convenience of their ministers. The object with them was not to obtain their minister on as cheap terms as possible, but to make him as comfortable as their circumstances would admit of. In this they showed that they perceived what, indeed, it is not difficult to see, that the more comfortable they made their minister, the more they raised him above the anxieties of the world, and the more able, therefore, he was to attend to their spiritual interests. The fathers of this church seem to have been aware of this. The minister whom they invited and obtained was well deserving of all their kindness and generosity. He was a native of Paisley, and was born on the 24th of Feb., 1733. Having pursued his studies at Glasgow University very much to the satisfaction of the Professors, he was licensed by the Presbytery of Paisley in July, 1762. Soon after receiving his license he left the National Church, and joined the Relief Synod. From manuscript notes of his sermons preached here, taken by one of his hearers, it is evident he must have been a very popular and acceptable preacher. This, indeed, is the testimony of all who heard him. But he was not only a popular preacher - he was also a good man. The great truths which he preached he firmly believed, and exemplified in his life and conversation. We insert here a testimonial he received, from a clergyman, before he went to London:- "Mr Alex. Simpson is a minister of the most evangelical principles and exemplary deportment. As a friend, he is steady and sincere, as a Christian, devout, without affectation, and as a minister, faithful and conscientious. His judgment is strong and vigorous - his understanding clear and penetrating. His zeal for his Master's glory ever burns, and his love to all the saints is ever warm; and yet an habitual humility would say that he knows not he is possessed of these things. The darling topic of his sermons is the cross of Christ, and his pleasant work appears to be to exalt Christ, and to humble and gain the sinner."

Nor did he confine his illustrations of the sufferings of Christ to the pulpit. He also defended them from the press. While minister at Pittenweem, he published a work in refutation of the errors taught in the writings of Mr Smith, who was at one time a Relief minister in Dunfermline. It was published under the title, "The dangerous errors contained in Mr Smith's publications on the nature, and necessity and design of Christ's sufferings, stated and refuted" As this work was very useful at the time in settling the minds of many, and in confirming them in the faith of the gospel, and as we have reason to believe it is in the hands of few of the members of the Relief, we shall give an extract or two from it. His object, in the

following extract, is to prove that God must punish sin:- "Again, if God's infinite perfection entitle him to the infinite esteem and love of himself, it must also entitle him to the supreme esteem and love of his intelligent creatures. And if he is entitled to it from the perfection of his nature, he cannot but require it from the perfection of his will, and so he doth. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. Now, if it be right that God should be supremely esteemed, and loved, and obeyed, then it must be wrong not to esteem, love, and obey him. If the great commandment is to love and serve God, the great transgression must be not to love nor serve him. It is doing wrong to infinite perfection. It cannot but be displeasing to him to find that his infinite glories are hated and condemned by his creatures, and sinful desire preferred to him. And if he cannot but be displeased, he cannot but manifest that displeasure in suitable acts, seeing he cannot act otherwise than in an agreeableness to his nature."

In the next extract which we give, his object is to show that Christ's obedience is the only ground of salvation:- "The obedience of Christ was obedience of a very, peculiar kind. It was the obedience of a Mediator between God and man. It was the obedience of one who was God, as well as man, and, therefore, it is called in scripture "the righteousness of God." It was intended to, accomplish a work of God which all the obedience of all the other intelligent creation of God could not effect. It was obedience which had proper merit in it before God, which no mere creature obedience can possibly have. When they have done all those things which are commanded them, they must say they are unprofitable servants. The obedience of Jesus Christ, however, on the footing of justice, was able to purchase deliverance from the curse of the law, and all that positive good of which the vessels of mercy are to be the subject for ever."

To his other qualities he added those of a gentleman. For everything mean and dishonourable he had the greatest abhorrence. His sense of honour indeed, was very high - so much so, that he was frequently subjected to inconveniences from which those who act a less honourable part are exempted.

Though a distinguished individual, however, he was not faultless. At no time was this more manifest than in his conduct in the case of the Rev. Mr Pirrie, who, though a person of no ordinary abilities, had been libelled and suspended by the Burghers for alleged heresy. During the period of his suspension, he made application to be received into the Relief. While many of the members of Presbytery were opposed to him, Mr. Simpson was his warm and admiring friend. Meanwhile, Mr Pirrie received a call from the Relief church, Blairlogie, which, rather than lose him, left the Synod. At his first communion, Mr Simpson very imprudently went and assisted him. He even on one occasion engaged him to supply his pulpit when he was from home. The people learning on the Sabbath morning that Mr Pirrie was to preach locked the door of the church. To a number of the people Mr Pirrie preached from a window of the manse. When Mr Simpson returned, he was greatly incensed, and, under the influence of excited feelings, threw up his charge. At an irregular meeting of some of the managers and elders his demission was accepted. Both parties afterwards regretted very much the step they had taken.

Mr Simpson's popular talents soon obtained for him another charge. He was speedily called by the Relief congregation at Dunse. Connected with this charge there were many circumstances of attraction. Dunse was the birth-place of the Rev. Thomas Boston, of

Etterick, the grandfather of Mrs Simpson; and by the people there Mr Simpson was very much esteemed. It does not appear, however, that he felt himself at home; his affections seem to have lingered around his former charge. Nor is this to be wondered at. Bellshill was his first charge. By the people he had been almost idolised, and with them he had spent eight years of the most unbroken harmony; but it was not the will of God that he should again be their minister. Though during his incumbency at Dunse he paid a visit to this place, and preached on a Sabbath during a vacancy, and at the close of worship expressed his regret for the hasty manner in which he threw up his charge, yet there was no movement towards calling him again. After labouring about ten years at Dunse with much acceptance, he gave in his demission in a manner as abrupt as he had done in the case of his first charge. With his conduct on this occasion the Synod were so much dissatisfied, that they suspended him from preaching in their connexion until he gave satisfaction.

He received and accepted a call to become pastor of a church in Crispin Street, Spitalfields, London, whither he removed about the latter end of the year he left Dunse. During his ministry there the degree of D.D. was conferred upon him, in all likelihood by the college in America, with which Dr Wotherspoon was connected; as with him Mr Simpson had long lived on terms of the closest intimacy. For the metropolis Mr S. had a strong attachment, and would willingly have ended his days in it, but his children rapidly lost their health, and one of them died; after which, he agreed to become pastor of a church at Alnwick, in the county of Northumberland, to which place he removed in July, 1786.

About three years after this he received a call from the Relief congregation, Pittenweem. Being still out of connexion with the Synod, this call the Presbytery refused to sustain, and referred the case to the Synod. Mr Simpson appeared at Synod in his own behalf, but failed to give satisfaction, so that his call was not concurred with. Sometime after this he confessed to the Presbytery of Dysart that he had done wrong, and was by them inducted into the church at Pittenweem, but the Presbytery, at the following Synod, was rebuked for the irregularity of their conduct.

Of the church at Pittenweem he was minister for the period of six years. About two years after his settlement his health began to decline. An internal complaint, which did not seem to have been understood by his medical attendants, preyed upon him, and terminated in inflammation of the bowels, which, after a fortnight's confinement, carried him off on the 6th of January, 1793, in the 60th year of his age.

As he lived, so he died. The great theme of his meditations in life constituted the theme of his meditations, in the prospect of death. While his mind remained unclouded, the sufferings of Christ was the great subject of his conversation; and, even during his aberrations, he was frequently employed in the act of serving tables. "The righteous shall hold on in his way."

Though the removal of such men is a source of grief, yet it is cheering to think that the work of God does not cease. God raises up other servants to enter on the labours of those who are called away. This was verified in the case of those churches of which Mr Simpson was minister. They are all still in existence, are in a flourishing state, remain in the same connexion, and in them the cross of Christ continues to be preached. "Though all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man is as the flower of grass, the word of the Lord endureth for ever."

After Mr Simpson's resignation, the church of Bellshill continued vacant for the period of four years. This was owing to the scarcity of preachers. So great was this scarcity, that vacant churches received sermon once in the two months, and that by ministers vacating their own pulpits. How very different are our circumstances? It is a rare thing for us to be without sermon once in a twelvemonth. If an increase of responsibility follow an increase of privileges, our responsibility must be greater than that of our forefathers'.

During one of the four years' vacancy that succeeded Mr Simpson's resignation, the congregation engaged Mr Archibald, Simpson, who had been supplying, a pulpit in Airdrie in connexion with the Establishment. He is supposed to have been a native of America, reared under the ministry of Whitefield, and employed as one of his preachers. Like the great preacher, under whose ministry he is understood to have been brought up, he was very popular. With him the people here seem to have been well satisfied; for, at the expiry of his engagement, they wished him to leave the Establishment, join the Synod, and they would call him as their minister. This, however, from what cause we know not he refused to do. On his leaving this, he obtained a charge in the Chapel of Ease at Port-Glasgow. At a subsequent period, we are informed, he went to America.

The pastor who succeeded him was Mr John Kerr, who was ordained on the 11th January, 1775. He was a native of Glasgow, and had been trained up in connexion with the Secession Church, but being dissatisfied with some of its principles, he left it and joined the Relief. From his earliest days he seems to have been attached to the ministerial office; for, while he was a mere boy, he was accustomed to collect a number of children together, in some of the out-houses of his father's establishment, and preach to them. After entering on this office, he showed that he had not mistaken his calling. Though not so talented, perhaps, as his predecessors, he was not less popular. While sound and evangelical in his sentiments, he was also peculiarly earnest and animated in his manner. No person who heard him preach could mistake the great object he had in view. Baxter's immortal lines give a correct description of his manner:-

“He preached as never sure to preach again,  
And as a dying man to dying men.”

As was the custom of his day, he preached very long. His sermons often exceeded an hour and half in length. In this we think he erred. Whitefield the prince of preachers, is reported to have said that a man with the eloquence of an angel ought not to exceed forty minutes in the length of a sermon. And, it is well known that the distinguished Wesley seldom exceeded thirty. In private Mr Kerr was not less popular than in the pulpit. To all persons he was kind and accommodating. While the rich he respected, the poor he did not despise. He endeavoured to become all things to all men. He was a great lover of peace; and when at any time discord arose among his hearers, he could not rest till he got the parties reconciled. He was benevolent to the poor. There is an anecdote told of him, which, while it illustrates this feature of his character, exhibits another for which he was also distinguished - smartness of reply. He had been visiting a poor old woman, of the name of Catherine, to whom he gave a shilling, after having prayed with her. To one of her neighbours she told how kind Mr Kerr had been to her, that he had not only prayed with her, but, what was better, had given her a shilling. This neighbour, no doubt, for the purpose of representing Catherine as being

worldly-minded, related the circumstance to Mr Kerr, whose answer was, "Catherine, poor woman, must go through this world before she can get to the next."

Under his ministry, the church lost none of its former prosperity. His ministrations were so popular, that the church could not accommodate all who wished to wait on them. The front wall required to be taken down and carried forward several feet; and even after this the passages were crowded. While deeply interested in the welfare and prosperity of his own charge, he was not indifferent to the interest of the Synod in general. Of its liberal principle he was a warm admirer, and longed to see them more universally disseminated. He was among the first who moved the appointment of a professor of divinity, which motion led the Presbytery at that time to overture the Synod on the subject. In the midst of his usefulness, however, and in the very prime of life, he was suddenly arrested by the hand of death at Irvine, on Saturday, 30th June, 1792, whither he had gone to assist at the dispensation of the Lord's Supper. It is believed he got his death on the Sabbath preceding, at Anderston, on the occasion of the communion, having over-exerted himself at the tent. It is somewhat singular his last text here was Job xvi 22 "I shall go the way whence I shall not return." In his own experience, this was strikingly and mournfully verified; for he not only died at Irvine, but his remains were also interred there, though the congregation expressed a wish to bring them to Bellshill.

On the occasion of his death, an elegy was written, part of which we shall insert here, not for the beauty of its poetry, but because it contains a description of his character:-

#### AN ELEGY

On the death of the Rev. Mr Kerr, late minister of the Relief Congregation, Bellshill, who died suddenly at Irvine on Saturday, the 30th June, 1792, greatly lamented by his congregation and by all who had the pleasure of his acquaintance.

Come let me tune my humble muse  
Into a mournful strain,  
Since Kerr, who was of noble use,  
Does not on earth remain!

Tis men of worth, and such as he,  
When they are torn away,  
Whose memories deserve to be  
Preserved by poet's lay.

He preached gospel pure and good -  
From errors clear and free -  
And, for truth's sake, he boldly stood  
'Gainst men of high degree.

In counsels he was bold and clear,  
In argument concise -  
The face of great he did not fear  
Nor yet the poor despise.



The flock committed to his care  
With precious food he fed,  
And always taught them for to fear  
And love the Lord their God.

A faithful servant to his God,  
Example to his flock;  
For in those very paths he trod  
Which he in teaching spoke.

But suddenly was snatched away  
By death's resistless hand -  
Let us the willing tribute pay  
His virtues do command.

The pastor who succeeded Mr Kerr was Mr Archibald Robertson. In him the congregation were not so fortunate. He was a native of the Calton of Glasgow, and was brought up in the communion of the Reformed Presbyterians. Having preached only one Sabbath, and as there were few preachers at the time, and the present law of the Synod, which requires preachers to preach three separate Sabbaths before they can be eligible to be called, not being then in existence, he was speedily called and ordained in January, 1793. Soon after his ordination, a spirit of dissatisfaction began to manifest itself in the congregation, on account of certain acts of imprudence rumoured about him. This spirit of discontent, instead of subsiding, increased, owing to graver charges being preferred against him. These, however, on examination, were found to involve nothing criminal; still his usefulness was greatly injured, so much so that he was advised to demit his charge, which he did on the 15th January, 1799. Though the pastoral relation between him and his people was dissolved, he retained his license, and continued to preach in connection with the Synod till within a short period of his death, which took place very suddenly in Glasgow a few years ago.

Before the settlement of its next pastor, the church had to pass through a series of trials and disappointments. Two candidates were proposed - Mr Jamieson, who was ultimately ordained, and Mr Auld, now the venerable pastor of Greenock. Between them the congregation was nearly divided. On the 1st January, 1800, a petition was laid on the table of the Glasgow Presbytery, praying for a moderation, which was granted. The moderation took place on the 4th February, at which Mr Stewart Anderston presided. The call turned out in favour, of Mr Jamieson, but was rejected by the Presbytery, whereupon his friends protested and appealed to the next meeting of Synod. The Synod, after hearing the reasons of protest and the Presbytery's answers, Mr Struthers of Edinburgh rose and said, that as the call from Bothwell appeared to be a very irregular one, he would move that it be dismissed, which motion being seconded by Mr Thomson of Edinburgh, was unanimously adopted; after which a suitable admonition was tendered from the chair to both parties to bury past differences in oblivion, and live in peace and harmony for the future.

In April, 1801, another moderation was granted at which Mr Carrick of Hamilton presided. The call again turned out in favour of Mr Jamieson. At the close of the voting, Mr Auld's friends protested and appealed to the next meeting of Presbytery. The Presbytery, after reading the papers and hearing parties, referred the matter *simpliciter* to the Synod, which was

then sitting in Glasgow, whose decision was, that the Presbytery sustain and concur with the call, and proceed therein according to the rules of the church, which the Presbytery did, and appointed the Rev. John Brodie, Dovehill, father of the late Rev. Robert Brodie, Campbell Street, to prosecute the same at the bar of the Presbytery of Dysart, of which Presbytery Mr Jamieson was at that time a member, being minister of the Relief church at Colinsburgh. This call, say the friends of Mr Auld, much to his honour and credit, Mr Jamieson declined to accept. In a short time, however, another moderation was talked of, petitioned for, and granted. Mr Watson of Glasgow presided. When he was about to proceed, a protest was lodged by one of the members; but not withstanding of this, he fulfilled his appointment - the call again was found to be in favour of the same candidate. At the next meeting of Presbytery the call was laid on the table, and also the protest and papers of adherence, together with reasons of protest, which were ordered to be transmitted to Synod. After parties were heard, it was decided that the call be sustained and concurred with. Mr Jamieson, in the July following, was accordingly inducted. At the time of his coming, as was to be anticipated, not a few were disaffected and many even left the church, but some of these he was the means of bringing back.

He was a native of the parish of Gargunnoch in Stirlingshire, and a licentiate of the Presbytery of St Ninian's. That he was a popular preacher, is only saying what must be clearly evident. The persevering efforts made by the people here, in the face of so much opposition, to obtain him, sufficiently proves this. The great truths of the gospel were the topics on which he chiefly dwelt; and these he delivered with much energy and animation. Nor was he popular merely with his own people, he was equally so in those churches where he was accustomed to assist on communion occasions. While performing the duties of a Christian pastor, he frequently discharged those of a physician. For a person, and especially a minister, who has not studied the healing art, to give advice and prescribe remedies, in the case of afflictions, is worse than presumptuous; but this did not apply to the individual in question - for, when pursuing his theological studies, he also, we are informed, attended some of the medical classes which, in those days, it was not uncommon for theological students to do. As there was no medical practitioner in the place at the period of his ordination, nor for some time after, his medical knowledge was of peculiar service to him, and which, together with the urbanity of his manner, contributed not a little to his popularity. His ministry, which extended to the period of thirty years, was very suddenly and unexpectedly brought to a close. On Sabbath, 16th February, 1832, he commenced the public services in his usual health. In the course of his lecture, the subject of which was 1 John iii. 10, &c., feeling himself unwell, he said he would pause for a little, and sing to the praise of God. While in the act of taking the psalm-book, he fell back on his seat in a state of insensibility. He was immediately carried out to the session-house, and every means employed to restore him to consciousness, but to no purpose. In the course of a few hours he breathed his last. At the period of his death he was only a little past the prime of life being in the 56th year of his age.

A few years before this, the Rev. Mr Brown of Falkirk - Mr Jamieson's father-in-law - was cut off in an equally sudden manner, at Bellshill, on the occasion of a communion. In going down to the church on the Sabbath morning, and when only a few yards from the manse, he fell down and instantly expired. From cases of such sudden death we may learn many useful and important lessons. They remind us most impressively of the brittleness of the thread of life - of the very precarious tenure by which we hold our existence - and are a loud call to us to be living at all times in a state of habitual preparation for death. Their language is, "Be ye

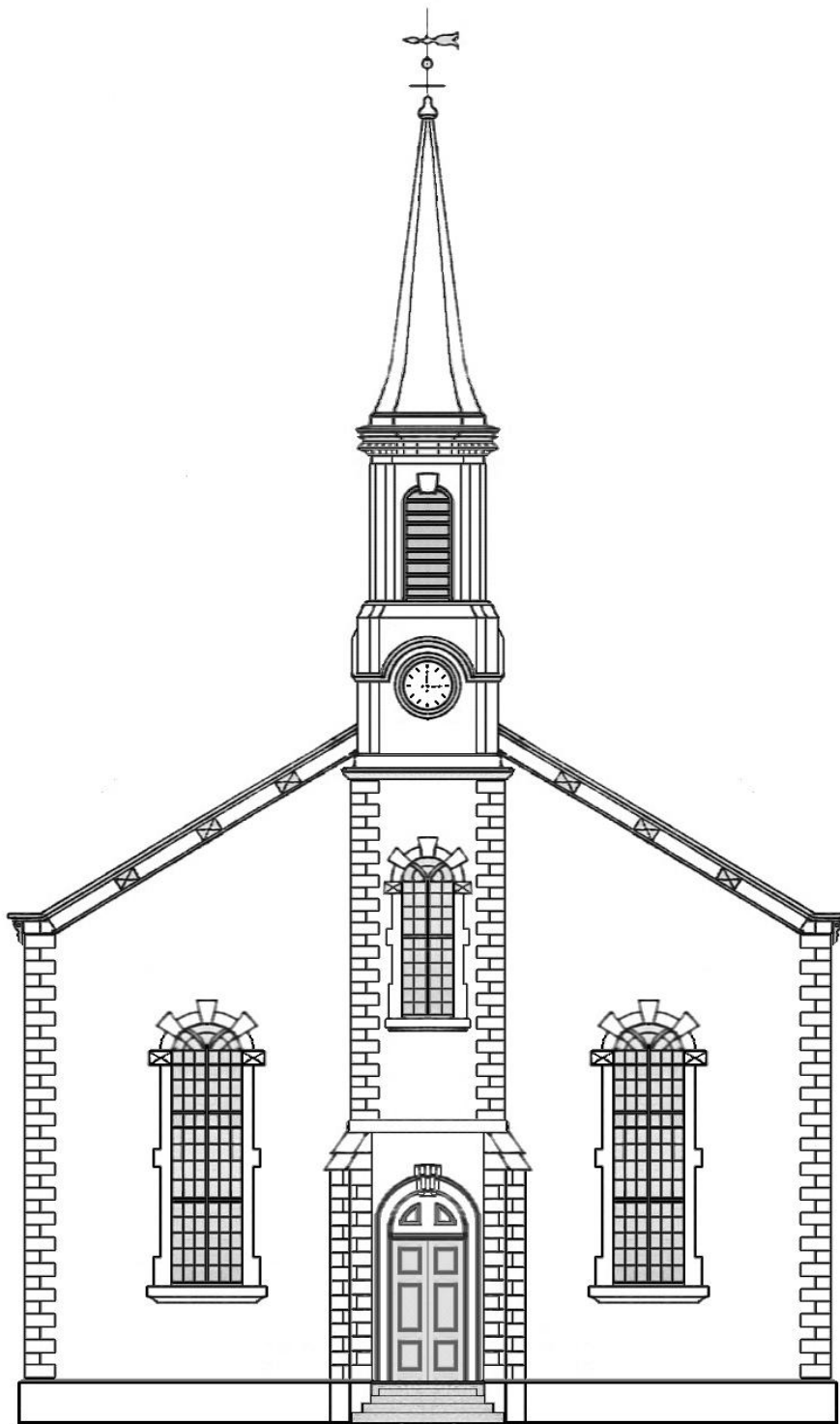
also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."

After the death of Mr Jamieson, the church remained vacant for a year and a half. On the 17th October, 1833, the writer of this narrative was ordained over it. For upwards of 13 years I have endeavoured to discharge the duties of its pastor. Though in the church little has occurred during that period that maybe interesting to the men of the world, yet events have taken place of a solemn and important kind. Upwards of 600 persons have I admitted to the table of the Lord - for the first time to more than 700 children I have administered the ordinance of baptism - and the remains of as many I have followed to the grave. The session, with the exception of one member, and he, through age and infirmity, can no longer officiate, has been wholly renewed. Many of the older members of the church, too, have been gathered to their fathers, while not a few, who were mere striplings, have reached the period of manhood, some of whom are efficient office-bearers of the church.

Changes have also taken place in the other churches of the parish. Instead of three, which was the number at the date of my ordination - the parish church at Bothwell, a Secession one at Newarthill, and my own - there are now no fewer than seven. Two of these, new ones, are connected with the Free Church, one in connexion with the Establishment, and one belonging originally to the Congregational Union. While other denominations have been adding to their number, the Relief, in and around the neighbourhood, has enjoyed its own share of prosperity. Since the erection of this church, and within a circle of nine miles, no fewer than nine churches have been added to the Synod. As was to be supposed, many of the streams which once flowed into this church have been cut off, but it has not, on that account, decreased in its numbers. In consequence of the increase of the population of the parish, other sources have been opened up. Connected with the church, there is a Sabbath school, conducted by several of its members; and there is also one superintended by myself. There is a library, a missionary society, and a society for relieving the wants of the poor. In the church the greatest peace and harmony have uniformly prevailed, and with no small measure of temporal prosperity it has continued to be blessed.

This prosperity led to a proposal, a short time ago, to take down the old church, which in some respects was uncomfortable, and rebuild it. To this measure a very great many most cordially agreed, and even those (the most of whom were the descendants of the founders of the old church), who did not enter so readily into the measure, manifested no opposition. The church was taken down in the second week of April. On the Sabbath immediately preceding, three sermons were preached in it. The Rev. Mr Brown, of Wishawtown, on the forenoon, preached from 1 Cor. i. 18 - "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." On the afternoon I preached from 1 Chron. xxii. 19 - "Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God: arise therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the Lord God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and the holy vessels of God, into the house that is to be built to the name of the Lord;" and on the evening the Rev. Mr Anderson, Glasgow, preached from Acts iv. 20 - "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard;" on which occasion the collection amounted to the sum of £63.

## PART II



NEW CHURCH  
1846

## Part II

Strangers and pilgrims here below,  
As all our fathers is their day,  
We to a land of promise go.  
Lord, by thine own appointed way,  
Still guide, illumine, cheer our flight,  
In cloud by day, and fire by night.

"Thy presence with us, move or rest;  
And as the eagle o'er her brood  
Flutters her pinions, stirs the nest,  
Covers, defends, provides them food,  
Bears on her wings, instructs to fly,  
Thus, thus, prepare us for the sky.

"When we have numbered all our years,  
And stand at length on Jordan's brink –  
Though the flesh fail with human fears –  
Oh! let not then the spirit shrink;  
But strong in faith, and hope, and love,  
Plunge through the stream to rise above."

Montgomery.

The foundation-stone of the new church was laid on Thursday the seventh of May, 1846, in the presence of the session and managers, building committee, a number of the members of the church, and other friends. It is on the same site as the old church. The services were commenced with praise and prayer.

The two first and the two last verses of the 90th Psalm were sung:-

“Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place  
In generations all.  
Before thou ever hadst brought forth  
The mountains great or small;  
Ere thou hadst form'd the earth,  
And all the world abroad;  
Ev'n thou from everlasting art  
To everlasting God.

“O let thy work and power appear  
Thy servants' face before;  
And show unto their children dear  
Thy glory evermore:  
And let the beauty of the Lord  
Our God be us upon:  
Our handy-works establish thou,  
Establish them each one.”

A narrative of the old church, and the circumstances connected with the new one, was read, together with a copy of an agreement entered into by the original subscribers to the old church. Into a cavity of the buttress, on the right hand side of entrance, was placed a bottle, containing a copy of the Synod's regulations, the Relief Magazine for May, a brief narrative of the old church, and the circumstances connected with the new one, a copy of the original agreement already referred to, one of the Glasgow Herald and Chronicle newspapers, and several coins of the present reign, when the foundation-stone was laid by Mr William Barrie, architect. Immediately after, three verses of the 191st Hymn of the Synod's collection were sung:-

“This stone to thee in faith we lay -  
We build the temple, Lord, to thee -  
Thine eye be open night and day  
To guard this house and sanctuary.

“Here, when thy people seek thy face,  
And dying sinners pray to live,  
Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place,  
And when thou hearest, O forgive!

“Here, when thy messengers proclaim  
The blessed gospel of thy Son;  
Still by the power of his great name  
Be mighty signs and wonders done.”

Several addresses, suited to the occasion, were thereafter delivered by the ministers present - the Rev. Mr Brown of Wishawtown, the Rev. Mr Battersby, and the Rev. John T. McFarlane, of Hamilton; after which, I concluded the services by pronouncing the benediction. During the period of the erection of the church, the exercises of Sabbaths were conducted in the tent in the burying-ground. Any of the churches in the parish we could have obtained. Some of them were kindly offered us, but we had previously made arrangements for sermon in the tent. The state of the weather, during the whole time of the tent service, we cannot soon forget. It might be wet and stormy on Saturday and Monday, but on Sabbath the weather, for the most part, was singularly favourable.

The people continued remarkably united, and the greatest peace and harmony prevailed among the office-bearers. The church was opened for public worship on the 13th Dec., 1846. The Rev. Dr Struthers, Glasgow, preached in the forenoon from Exodus xxv. 22 - "And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercyseat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel;" I preached in the afternoon from 1 Cor. i. 21, last clause - "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe;" and the Rev. Mr Edwards in the evening from 1 Cor. ii. 2 - "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." At all the services the church was filled with crowded and attentive audiences, and the handsome sum of £158 12s was collected in aid of the building fund. It is proper to state that several kind friends in the vicinity assisted us, not only while the church was being erected, but gave their support and countenance at the opening.

To all connected with it, the building is highly creditable. It is built to accommodate upwards of 900 sitters, is of Grecian architecture, has a tasteful spire, and when to the spire the clock and bell have been added, it will be at once a great ornament and convenience to the village and surrounding neighbourhood. A comfortable and commodious house has now been provided in which we can meet and worship the God of our fathers. How highly favoured are we compared to many of the people of God in former ages!

“In caves and glens their Sabbath hours were spent,  
Till the pale moon illum'd the firmament:  
And there they wandered at the dead of night,  
When the dim stars withheld their glimmering light.  
And oh! how oft their wild retreat's been found  
By those who sought them like the blood-trained hound,  
And made that place, their oft frequent'd cave,  
The holy martyr's solitary grave!"

Though I have endeavoured to improve the narrative as I went along, there are still several points of a practical kind to which I wish to advert.

In the first place, learn from this narrative the enlightened views of the founders of the Relief Church. We have seen that, though on many points they agreed with other evangelical denominations in Scotland, there were others on which they differed. On account of this difference, they were often exposed to much abuse and ridicule. No epithets of reproach, indeed, were considered too undignified and abusive in which to represent their principles. They were designated the principles of latitudinarism, and held up to the world as being more favourable to licentiousness than to the interests of pure morality. Their great error lay in being in advance of the age. Accordingly, now, owing to the increase of knowledge, they are no longer deemed loose and heretical, but sound and scriptural, and are every day becoming more popular. What is the great principle for which the Free Church is now contending? Is it not for one of the principles which the Relief Church has held from its very commencement? and the free communion principle - the characteristic principle of the Relief - is now being recognised by almost every evangelical denomination. What is the great principle acted on by the Evangelical Alliance that has lately been formed? Is it not this very principle?

This Alliance arose out of the Bicentenary of the Westminster Assembly, held in Edinburgh, July, 1843. Its great object is the cultivation of union among such persons as hold and maintain what are usually understood to be evangelical views in regard to such important matters of doctrine as the following, viz. :-

- “1. The Divine inspiration, authority, and sufficiency of Holy Scripture.
- “2. The unity of the Godhead, and the Trinity of persons therein.
- “3. The utter depravity of human nature, in consequence of the fall.
- “4. The incarnation of the Son of God, and his work of atonement for sinners of mankind.
- “5. The justification of the sinner by faith alone.
- “6. The work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion and sanctification of the sinner.
- “7. The right and the duty of private judgment in the interpretation of Holy Scripture.



“8. The Divine institution of the Christian ministry, and the authority and perpetuity of the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.”

And in the Secession Church the same principle of free communion is now all but universally admitted. In a late able work on the Lord's Supper, by one of the leading ministers of this church, the following liberal statements are made:- " Since our fellowship at the Lord's table is that of saints, only saints should be there; but the converse proposition seems equally axiomatic, that all saints are admissible. It is the Lord's table, and who, then, shall keep back the Lord's people? To confess that any are children, and yet deny them the children's bread, is not very safe or reasonable conduct." So much, indeed, are the Secession and Relief Churches now at one, not only on this point but on every other of importance, that they have seen the folly and sin of remaining any longer in a state of separation. A union between the two churches has been fixed to take place in Edinburgh in May next.

#### ARTICLES OF THE BASIS AS ADOPTED BY THE TWO SYNODS.

- “ i. That the Word of God contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is the only rule of faith and practice.
- “ ii. That the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, are the confession and catechisms of this church, and contain the authorised exhibition of the sense in which we understand the Holy Scriptures, it being always understood that we do not approve of anything in these documents which teaches, or may be supposed to teach, compulsory or persecuting and intolerant principles in religion.
- “ iii. That Presbyterian government, without any superiority of office to that of a teaching presbyter, and in a due subordination of church courts, which is founded on, and agreeable to, the Word of God, is the government of this church.
- “ iv. That the ordinances of worship shall be administered in the United Church as they have been in the bodies of which it is formed; and that the Westminster Directory of Worship continue to be regarded as a compilation of excellent rules.
- “ v. That the term of membership is a credible profession of the faith of Christ as held by this church - a profession made with intelligence, and justified by a corresponding character and deportment.
- “ vi. That with regard to those ministers and sessions who think that the 2d section of the 26th chapter of the Westminster Confession of Faith authorizes free communion - that is, not loose or indiscriminate communion, but the occasional admission to fellowship in the Lord's Supper of persons, respecting whose christian character satisfactory evidence has been obtained, though belong to other religious denominations - this church allows them what they enjoyed in their separate communion, the right of acting on their conscientious convictions.
- “ vii. That the election of office-bearers of this church, in its several congregations, belongs, by the authority of Christ, exclusively to the members in full communion.
- “ viii. That this church solemnly recognises the obligation to hold forth, as well as to hold fast, the doctrine and laws of Christ; and to make exertions for the universal diffusion of the blessings of his gospel at home and abroad.
- “ ix. That as the Lord hath ordained that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel - that they who are taught in the word should communicate to him that teacheth in all good things - that they who are strong should help the weak - and

that, having freely received, they should freely give the gospel to those who are destitute of it, this church asserts the obligation and the privilege of its members, influenced by regard to the authority of Christ, to support and extend, by voluntary contributions, the ordinances of the gospel.

- “ x. That the respective bodies of which this church is composed, without requiring from each other an approval of the steps of procedure by their fathers, or interfering with the rights of private judgment in reference to these, still unite in regarding, as still valid, the reasons on which they have maintained their state of secession and separation from the judicatories of the Established Church, as expressed in the authorised documents of the respective bodies; and in maintaining the lawfulness and obligation of separation from ecclesiastical bodies in which dangerous errors are tolerated; or the discipline of the church, or the rights of her ministers or members are disregarded - both bodies having always asserted and acted upon this principle.

“The United Church, in their present most solemn circumstances, join in grateful acknowledgment to the great Head of the Church, for the measure of spiritual good which he has accomplished by them in their separate state - their deep sense of the many imperfections and sins which have marked their ecclesiastical management - and their determined resolution, in dependence on the promised grace of the Lord, to apply more faithfully the great principle of church-fellowship - to be more watchful in reference to admission and discipline, that the purity and efficiency of our congregations may be promoted, and the great end of our existence, as a collective body, may be answered with respect to all within its pale, and to all without it, whether members of other denominations, or ‘the world lying in wickedness.’

“And, in fine, the United Church regard with a feeling of brotherhood all the faithful followers of Christ, and shall endeavour to maintain the unity of the body of Christ, and promote union among its members, by a readiness to cooperate with all its members in all things in which they are agreed”

Connected with this proposed union, there are many circumstances of a pleasing and gratifying kind. It has not been agreed to rashly or inconsiderately, but after the maturest deliberation. The doctrine, discipline, and government of both churches have been narrowly and minutely examined, and no material difference on these points has been discovered between them. Besides, the greatest sincerity for union has been evinced by both parties. A union formed under these circumstances cannot fail to be a happy one, and productive, of great good to both churches. But the benefits resulting from this union will not be confined to these churches alone - its influence will be felt by other Christian denominations. It will have the effect of breaking down the walls of separation now subsisting between them, and of hastening on the delightful era when “The envy of Judah shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: when Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.”

In the second place, the circumstances in which we are placed should fill us with the liveliest sentiments of gratitude to God. As already observed, it is well nigh ninety years since the Relief cause was planted here. During that period, the goodness of God has been largely enjoyed. Many changes, indeed, and some of these of a mournful kind, have been experienced. With the exception of one old venerable man, there is not one of the many individuals alive, connected with the church who saw the foundation-stone of the first church

laid. To the grave - the house appointed for all living - they have long since gone. All the former ministers, too - five in number - have been gathered to their fathers. But, painful as these changes are, our circumstances might have been more mournful still; God himself might have taken his departure. Such a calamity, we know, has befallen other churches. Look to the seven churches of Asia. At one time they were as highly favoured as we are with the light of the gospel, and the presence of God; but how sadly changed is their condition now. Look even to the land of Judea itself, the birth-place of the Saviour, and the scene of his ministry and wonderful miracles; it is now covered with the mantle of darkness, and the gloom of error. But very different is the manner in which God has dealt with us. Amid all our changes he has never forsaken us - he has always been in our midst. When the fathers were removed, he raised up the children; when one teacher was taken away, another was speedily sent in his room. And perhaps at no previous period was more of the favour and the presence of God enjoyed than at present. Never were we more numerous - never more united; and then think of the very comfortable and commodious church which we have been able to erect. With what gratitude, then, ought we to be filled! With the Psalmist it becomes us to say, "What has the Lord wrought for us!" and, like Samuel, we ought to raise our stone of Ebenezer, inscribing on it - "Hitherto, the Lord hath helped us."

In the third place, the circumstances in which we are placed should lead to inquiry as to our own spiritual improvement. That we have greatly improved our place of worship, by rebuilding it, will at once be admitted; that it was our duty to do so, appears not less evident. Not to speak of the spirit of improvement, which forms a striking feature of our age, I cannot reflect on the deep interest which God manifested for the temple - the very great splendour and magnificence by which it was characterised - the minute directions he gave in reference to its erection - without being satisfied that he must be interested in the place of his worship still. It is true, we now live under a different economy; at the same time, I have yet to learn that God has ceased to care for the building in which his name is honoured, and in which he specially resides. No, this I cannot believe; for now, as well as under the former dispensation, God is the author of order, and not of confusion; and his plain injunction, in reference to his church, as well as in regard to other matters of form connected with his worship, is, "Let all things be done decently, and in order:" But, while I am convinced it is our duty to improve the house of God, I am not less convinced that it is also our duty to be solicitous about our own moral and spiritual improvement. This, indeed, is the great object which we should be most anxious to obtain. Being naturally sinful and depraved, nothing save the pardon of sin, new hearts, and right spirits, can be of any real or lasting benefit to us. To be without these blessings is to be destitute of everything like peace of mind, strangers to God's favour, and being exposed to his wrath. Resting not satisfied, then, with improving the temple of God, let us inquire whether a change for the better has taken place in the temple of our souls; whether, while we have been renewing the house of God, we ourselves have been renewed in the spirit of our minds?

In the fourth place, let us learn, from the circumstances in which we are placed, the importance of enjoying the presence of God.

Of the great value and importance of the presence of God, the most enlightened and pious of the people of God have in all ages been deeply convinced. When Moses was commanded to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt, and to conduct them to the promised land, he not only supplicated the presence of God to be with him, he also added, "If thy presence go not

with me, carry us not up hence." Solomon, too, who had spared neither labour nor expense in beautifying and adorning the temple, and in rendering it a magnificent and splendid building, was, at the same time, satisfied that it had been erected in vain, and would be shorn of all its usefulness and glory, if it lacked the presence of God. Accordingly, after he had finished it, he prayed most earnestly that God would bless it with his presence. What Solomon felt to be so necessary for the temple is equally necessary for the church. In the church itself, whatever may be its elegance there is neither sanctity nor virtue. All its efficiency flows from the presence of God in it. Without his presence we may preach, and you may hear, but our preaching will be vain. Even a Paul may plant, and an Apollos may water, but God giveth the increase. This blessing; which is so indispensable, we have great encouragement to pray for from our past experience of God's kindness and condescension. Amid all the changes we have seen He has never been far from us. Let us be encouraged, then, to plead that he would continue still to dwell in our midst, that we may see his power and glory as these have been seen heretofore in the sanctuary; and with no blessing, short of his presence, let us be satisfied - assured that the possession of it will secure for us every other.

In the fifth place let us learn, from our present circumstances, the necessity of continuing our liberality.

Already you have manifested a liberal spirit; but it is not enough to begin well - you must persevere. So long as any debt lies on our church, let us never consider our work finished. The opinion has long since been exploded that debt on a church is a necessary thing. The foolishness of this opinion, at all events, is being clearly seen at the present period. To liquidate the debt of churches never were greater or more successful efforts made than now. In this we must all rejoice. Debt, in every case, is evil, and it is not less an evil when it happens to be on a church. Not to speak of the dishonour of it, debt is most damping and discouraging to the minister, and is greatly injurious to the temporal prosperity of the church. Some, I am aware, will say, If we erect a church free of debt, we leave nothing to do for the succeeding generation. This, however, is a very great mistake. Instead of leaving the next generation nothing to do, we, by leaving them a church free of debt, place them in circumstances which enable them to do a vast amount of good. Having no interest to pay, and their time not being consumed in devising plans to remove their debt, they will just have the more money and the more time to devote to other religious and benevolent measures; and, if we are not much deceived, the signs of the time indicate that, the next generation will have enough to do, that their benevolent exertions will be sufficiently taxed, and their faith tried, without the additional trials which a church in debt will impose upon them. To disencumber our church of debt, we are not only able, we have every motive to do so. To some of these reference has already been made; but, not to dwell on these or upon others that might be adduced, we call attention to the great motive which arises from what Christ has done for us. To form an accurate idea of all that he has performed for us is impossible; but we know enough to convince us that he has laid us under the deepest obligations. For us he relinquished heaven with all its glories, took up his abode in this world amid the greatest poverty, exposed himself to reproach and persecution, and at last submitted to the painful and ignominious death of the cross. Now, if Christ has made so many and so painful sacrifices for us, is it not our duty to do something for him in return? And is it too much, is it too costly a sacrifice, to give what we are able of our substance to relieve his church, which is so dear to him, from the dishonouring and weakening influence of debt? It is, you will observe, only what we are able to give that he requires. Is this an unreasonable - is this an unjust demand.

Can any - will any - refuse compliance? Nor let it for a moment be supposed that our duty, in this respect, consists in consulting merely the welfare of our own church. To other churches less favourably circumstanced we are to give all possible assistance. Nor is it enough that we contribute to the support of the gospel where it is already enjoyed; we must use every means to send it where it is not. To us, as well as to the first disciples, the command of the Saviour is addressed – “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” As a church, we have not been altogether neglectful of the heathen; but we must continue our exertions; nay, we must do more, and never cease our labours so long as a spot in the moral world is not blessed with the gospel. The resolution of the prophet must be ours – “For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.”

In the sixth place, let congregations learn the duty of making provision for the widows and children of their ministers.

At first sight this duty may seem to have little or no connexion with the narrative. Even granting this, it is a duty of such importance, and at the same time so much overlooked, that we feel justified in giving it a place here. But it is not so much out of keeping with the narrative as some are apt to suppose. We have seen, in the course of the narrative, that of the five ministers connected with this church three have been cut off in a very sudden manner. And it will be found that this is a feature that characterises the death of ministers more than that of many others of other professions. In consequence of this, together with the very limited income of many dissenting ministers, their widows and children are frequently involved in much poverty.

In any case poverty is a great evil; but it is peculiarly so in the case of a minister's family. Owing to the sphere in which they have been accustomed to move, they cannot have recourse to those means for bettering their circumstances which are open to others. To prevent this evil, and to remove it where it already exists, is surely a most necessary duty. The widow and fatherless of any class have a claim on our sympathy. Indeed, the greater part of pure and undefiled religion is sometimes represented as consisting in remembering the widow and the fatherless; and a judgment is denounced against those who oppress them. If the widow and fatherless of any class have thus a claim on our attention, not less powerful, surely, is the claim of the widow and the fatherless of the servants of God. Nor do we ask support for them on the principle of charity, but on the plea of justice. If a minister cast in his lot among a people, make sacrifices for them by denying himself to other means by which he might have raised himself in the world, it is surely their duty to make provision for those whom he leaves behind. And at no time was there ever less room for apologising for the neglect of this duty than at present. The time has been when the performance of this duty was not so practicable. At one time, the usual way of making provision for the widows and children of ministers (for, be it remembered, by some churches this has always been considered a reasonable duty) was to allocate a sum of money from the funds of the church in the form of an annuity. But this method which, while it removed one evil, was sometimes the occasion of others. It frequently interfered with the income of the minister who succeeded, and often caused animosities between him and the recipients of the annuity. Since the institution, however, of Life Insurance Societies all these evils can now be remedied. By paying only a small yearly sum into one of these societies, a congregation can secure a respectable sum for the widow and family of their minister at the period of his decease. Some churches are acting on this

principle; and sure I am it is solely from want of consideration that it is not more generally adopted. But whatever be the means employed, the duty cannot safely or consistently be overlooked.

In fine, while worshipping in the temple below, let us see that we are making preparation for the temple above.

Though glorious things are said of the church on earth, more glorious things are spoken of the church in heaven. John who was favoured with a vision of it, informs us that the building of the wall of it is of jasper - that the foundations of the wall are garnished with all manner of precious stones - that it has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of the Lord doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. This, indeed, is a figurative description, but the reality falls not short of the description. In other parts of scripture we are informed in plain language, that heaven is the residence of the more immediate presence of God - the scene of unmingled purity, and the seat of unalloyed and unfading bliss.

Into this blissful state, however, it is not the privilege of every one to be received, but only those who are prepared for it. Accordingly, the same apostle who gives us the above description, adds at the close of it - "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Valuing heaven, then, as we profess to do, and living in the hope of being admitted into it when we leave the church on earth, let us give all diligence that we may then be found prepared for it. Resting not satisfied with a mere profession, let us live a life of faith on the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us. To our faith let us add virtue; to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity. In Zion below let us live for Zion above.

“Lord of the Sabbath! hear us pray,  
In this thy house, on this thy day;  
Accept as grateful sacrifice,  
The songs which from thy temple rise.

Thine earthly Sabbaths, Lord! we love;  
But there's a nobler rest above;  
O that we might that rest attain  
From sin, from sorrow, and from pain!

O long-expected day begin!  
Dawn on this world of wo and sin:  
Fain would we leave this weary road,  
To sleep in death, and rest in God.”

Note;- At a congregational meeting, held in the church, on Monday, 25th January, 1847, it was stated that the church (exclusive of the bell and clock, and the gratuitous labour given by some of the members of the congregation and others) cost £1600, and that there had been raised by subscriptions, collections, and otherwise, the sum of £820. From the spirit at present manifested by the congregation, it is hoped that at no distant period the church will be altogether free of debt.

## APPENDIX.

### THE ADDRESS OF THE REV. DR. STRUTHERS TO THE CONGREGATION, ON THE FORENOON OF THE DAY THE CHURCH WAS OPENED FOR RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

Christian Friends - I have now brought my discourse to a close; but before I conclude the services of this forenoon I may be allowed to congratulate you on your late undertaking, so auspiciously began and terminated; and also as a friend interested in your being built as a church upon Christ to tender to you a word of advice.

You have for many months been rearing a house for the public worship of God. It requires no living tongue to stand within it and pronounce an encomium upon it as substantial, commodious, and tasteful. It speaks its own praise. It is highly ornamental to the part of the country where it stands. It is a memorial more lasting than brass, of the philanthropy and piety of those who have laid its foundations, reared its walls, and placed the coperstone upon its graceful spire. Here wisdom has builded her house. Truth is here to lift up her voice; and "blessed is the man that heareth her, waiting at the posts of her doors; for whoso findeth her findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord." "Give unto the Lord, ye kindred of the people. Give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name. Bring an offering and come before him. Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Fear before him all the earth."

The mode in which you have reared this house has been honourable to your benevolence. As in the case both of the tabernacle and temple, no one has prescribed to you how much and what you should give. It has been left to your own generosity, without the compulsion of legal notices. And every one, I am persuaded, has given cheerfully and abundantly, according as God has prospered him. One has been ready to give his silver and his gold. Another has "brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation and build the walls of the house." The impression has been general among you, that the best use which persons can make of their worldly wealth is gratefully to lay it out for God, in rearing a house for his service; and after you have gone to heaven, I trust you shall yet welcome many a child of grace to glory who has been born within this sacred place. Let the sentiment become universal, that it is "no waste" to give to Jesus; and let it continue so to operate upon you that every farthing debt shall be extinguished, and this noble pile shall lift up its head as a *corban* - a dedicated thing to the Most High.

The spot on which you have reared it is honourable to your filial piety. It stands on the spot where the house of your fathers once stood. They reared their tabernacle under many discouragements, and when nothing but sterling principle could have carried them through the undertaking. The iron hand of patronage was about to induct a man into their pulpit, contrary to their choice and their most earnest remonstrances. He was no drunkard - no fool - no libertine, with a tarnished reputation, but he did not preach free and full salvation by the cross of Christ so as to edify their souls; and, rather than starve under legal doctrine, they manfully claimed their Christian rights and exercised their privileges - "calling no man master." They became dissenters when the name was a reproach; and they became Relief dissenters when religious freedom was nicknamed licentiousness. Dissenters! Honoured name now. But then



their children were marked at school - their daughters were refused in marriage by their compeers - their landlords extruded them from their farms - the tax-gatherers oppressed them to the utmost - the courts of law scarcely threw their shield around them - and in fairs and markets they were men wondered at. Conscience gave your forefathers, who had felt the power of the truth, no rest till they should build to the Lord a house. Rather than not have the gospel preached to them they would have gone to the stake, and made Bellshill another Bothwell Bridge. They lifted up their hands unto the Lord, and came forth. Out of their small means they reared their church and built their manse - paid their minister and supported religious ordinances, and still their barrel of meal and cruise of oil did not fail. On their *hill* they set up their watch-tower, and on its apex they hung the lamp of the gospel, and it shed its light on many surrounding parishes, sitting in comparative darkness. On sacramental occasions, the whole country turned its face thitherward. The vale of the Clyde, upward and downward, sent its virtuous sons and chaste daughters to hang upon the lips of the eloquent preachers who discoursed from its tent upon the unsearchable riches of Christ. The multitudes assembled were without number. Men were chained to the spot, and forgot the declining sun. Every house had its table furnished and open to strangers. Every barn was a dormitory, with its long ranges of couches - every bush was a secret spot for prayer - the whole fields were vocal with praise, and for days religion reigned over the district, and people enjoyed the rest of God.

O that the men who laid the foundations of the original church were this day to rise from the dead! They are sleeping around us. I think I feel their dust moving under my feet. I think I see them, like Samuel, coming forth from their graves. They are clothed like him in plain attire. Such attire as was worn some eighty or ninety years ago. The men have buckles on their shoes, and grey plaids crossed upon their broad breasts, and the broad Scotch bonnet is placed upon their heads. Beneath it there appears the brow of courage and the eye of fire, and on their cheek there sits the calm composure of heaven. They have each a bible in his hand. I hear their voices. Hark! What are they saying? - Children, and grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, we expect great things of you. Your hearts are not to be the graves of God's mercies. Love his gospel - frequent the courts of his house - hang upon the cross of Jesus - support his cause - wipe off every incumbrance upon his church - and come up hence, and ye shall receive a hundred fold.

The vision is gone - the voices from the silent tomb are hushed. But does no one from their appeals recall to his remembrance the sacred injunctions which he in childhood has often heard repeated in the family circle, springing from the zeal, the sufferings, and the sacrifices of his fathers? Let the present generation be the worthy sons of their worthy sires; and let those who of late have cast in their lot with this congregation even outstrip the most devoted among them. Let the emulation be, Who shall be the most regular worshipper in this church - who shall bring most of his children to crowd its pews - who shall be the most devout in his prayers - the most sleepless in his attention - the most attached to the incarnate Saviour - and who shall take the firmest hold upon his altar! What shall follow? God shall make the gates of this house the gate of heaven, and its sainted worshippers shall soon worship in a region where indeed there is no temple for the Lord God and the Lamb are the temple of it.

Ye are travelling home to God  
In the way your fathers trod.  
They are happy now - and ye  
Soon their happiness shall see.

Fear not, brethren, joyful stand  
On the borders of their land;  
Jesus Christ, God's only Son,  
Bids you, undismayed, go on.

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