

**OPENING OF  
PETER MEMORIAL CHURCH, STIRLING**

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The Peter Memorial Church, Stirling, which has just been opened by the United Free North Congregation, is built on ground lying between Park Terrace and Melville Terrace, with approaches from both thoroughfares, the principal doors facing towards Port Street. The church occupies the eastern half of the building, the end next Gladstone Place Lane being devoted to halls and retiring rooms. It is built of white, Polmaise stone, from plans prepared by Mr. John J. Stevenson, of the firm of Stevenson & Redfern, architects, London.



A spacious vestibule leads, by doors at either side, into the church, the plan of which is in the form of a short L, with one transept on the left, in which is a side gallery divided from the nave by three massive stone pillars, which support the roof. There is abundance of light from beautiful, traceried windows. The pulpit occupies the corner on the right at the entrance to the choir, in which is placed the marble font and the communion table. The organ, which is being built by Binns of Leeds, will occupy the inner end of the choir.

The decoration of the church is in keeping with the style of architecture followed in the building. The roof, which is fitted in with wood carved in panels, has been left in its natural colouring. The Oak of which the pews and gallery are made is simply polished. Copper and wrought iron have been largely used in the fittings, the electric light brackets and hanging

lamps being of the latter. The windows are shaded with handsome curtains of rough linen sheeting with an artistic border of brown stencilling. The floor is laid with polished, parquet inlay. A short tower in the centre of the building separates the church from the hall. Here is a vestibule, entered both from Park Terrace and from the back of the church building. On the left is the church, on the right the hall, in front the vestry and cloak rooms. Upstairs are entrances to gallery of transept and gallery of hall, also to Session-House and class-room, another class-room being another storey higher. The hall is a spacious room, capable of accommodating about 276 persons. A platform is at one end and a small gallery placed rather high up at the other. The Session-House is particularly handsome, the window by which it is lighted being one of the most beautiful in the building. The heating of the whole building is by radiators. Ventilation is provided for by an extract flue in the tower carried out at its roof, with openings into the roof of the church, the efficiency of the draught being secured by heating by gas, fresh air being introduced at the windows and other openings. The heating apparatus was supplied by Messrs Boyd of Paisley. The tower of the church which rises 80 feet, forms a notable feature of the landscape. In the original plan it was surmounted by a crown like that of St Nicholas, Newcastle, but owing to the lack of funds the trustees were unable to complete the tower as designed by the architect. The tower, meanwhile, is satisfactorily completed on a different design and all necessary preparations have been made in building it for adding the crown should funds for this purpose be available at a future time. The buildings have electric light throughout, carried out by Messrs Lockhart & McNab, Stirling, under the superintendence of Mr. R.E. Yorke. The contractors were Builders, Messrs. Reynolds & McQue, St Ninians; joiners, Messrs. Herbertson & Sons, Glasgow; slaters, Messrs. D. McGregor & Sons., Stirling; plasterer, Mr. R. Foster, Stirling; painter, Mr. Dowell; plumber, Mr R. Frater; glazier, Mr Crichton; iron work, Messrs. W & T Marshall. Mr. C. Wilton as Clerk of Works, superintended the erection of the building.

**OPENING SERVICE**

The congregation met for the first time in their new church on Thursday afternoon, when the opening service was conducted by the Rev. Robert Rainy, D.D. Principal of the New College, Edinburgh. There was a large attendance of the congregation and friends and amongst the ministers present, in addition to the Rev. Mr. Chalmers and his assistant, were the Rev. Dr. Frew, St. Ninian's, father of the church; Rev. J.P. Lang, parish minister; Rev. Messrs McIntosh, Alva; Paul, Dollar; Huie, Bridge of Teith; Anderson, Blairlogie; McKenzie, St. Ninian's; Morrison, Bannockburn; Trotter, Bannockburn; Ormond, Angus, Arnott, Wright, Yuille and Scott, Stirling; Carmichael, Clackmannan; Arnold, Stirling; Rev. Mr. Chalmers, Mr. D. Ferguson and Mr. Robert Wall's, trustees of the late Mrs Peter and Mr. John Jenkins, agent for the trustees, occupied seats in the front of the choir.

The service was opened with a short prayer, in which Dr. Rainy asked that a great and manifest blessing might be vouchsafed on the minister, office-bearers and congregation and that this church might more and more become memorable in the minds of His servants here in connection with the awakening, in connection with the sanctifying and in connection with the comforting influences in Christian lives.

Psalm 84 - "How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place" was then sung by choir and people. The Scripture lesson was in the 132<sup>nd</sup> Psalm and Matthew v. and 13. Hymns 379 "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" and 468 "Thou whose unmeasured temple stands" were then sung.

Dr. Rainy preached from Matthew v. 14 "Ye are the light of the world." He chose this text, he said, thinking that when a congregation was taking an important step in its providential history it was good to have set before them their Christian calling in a plain and clear view. The dark ages were now said not to have been so very dark after all. The 18<sup>th</sup> century was full of talk about enlightenment, but the enlightenment was rationalistic light, not Christian. A similar impression, at least as

strong, was cherished about the intelligence of our own day. A man must be blind indeed who did not recognise the mass of valuable truths which had been accumulated for us by able and thoughtful men, yet for all that there was a darkness in the world which only one influence could dispel - nay, it was *the* darkness - that which most properly and sadly deserved the name. A light was needed which would effectually disclose and carry home to each of us God's mind about us, which would reveal the use and end of human life in the view of God, which would show us how durable and happy relations with Him arise for us, in which He effectually blesses us and we securely trust in Him, which would give to our life a reason and a goal. Over this region a darkness had lain in human experience and the sages, to who the world owed much, had not been able to penetrate or remove it. It was a darkness also which visited men individually, with this special aggravation that sin vitiated the eye of the soul and indisposed it to receive the due effect of light.

Our Lord said to his disciples "Ye are the light of the world." The first question they had to consider was how the disciples came to have that character and were fitted to fulfil this function, to be the light of the world. The second question was how this function was practically to be discharged. In regard to the first question, how the disciples came to have a character in virtue of which it was reasonable to say to them, "Ye are the light of the world," they must also remember that Christ said (John viii) "I am the light of the world." Christ had a powerful way of associating others with himself; they became the light of the world because they received the light for themselves. When they became disciples this light got in and began to be a light to their own heart and to their own life. It began to illuminate the man and his thoughts and deeds; it became a light to see by and a light to judge by; a light to walk by and a light to live in. Strangely enough, some men could be conversant with light and not be enlightened. They could discern it to be light and could contemplate it and discuss it and have various interesting thoughts about it and yet could keep it outside of their most intimate selves. If they would faithfully and lovingly welcome the light of Christ, walk in it and see

by it; if they would let it take dominion over them, their whole life would be filled with the influence of that healthful light and they might be the means of transferring it to others in a degree which at present might seem to them to be impossible. In regard to His second point, how was the office of disciple to be discharged? The preacher said that now that Christ was gone the world was prone to think of him as a beautiful dream. It was no dream. It was they who must exemplify in the world the standard and hopes which were not of the world. They must be so influenced by the true light that as people looked at them they would say in their hearts, "There is light after all; there is such a thing and it is working there." When men did begin to confess the light of divine might and seek it, they would at the same time begin to catch the rays from the Sun of Righteousness himself. They might continue to derive some benefit from some other lights in the world, but they would be mainly occupied with a clearer and better light than any earthly. Christian men were to be made the means of awakening in worldly minds impressions and longings into which the spirit of God often made the beginning of His own decisive work. It was not what they saw, or felt, or said - although sometimes, no doubt, a man's words were of great value - but it was what they were, what they turned out to be in practice - that distinctive thing in the life that came with Christ - which the world, looking at the man, saw as a shining light which awakened the consciousness of its darkness and its needs. "Ye are the light of the world." It was they who were called upon to be the living refutation of the agnostic. Christianity was the affirmation of the true light come into the world and if they were to be true to their calling as the light of the world they must aim at something far higher than the common average attainment of good people. They required more lights and more manifest, convincing, effectual influence in those who were lights of the world.

Psalm 122, "Pray that Jerusalem may have peace and felicity," was then sung and the benediction pronounced.

The praise was led by Mr. Dunsmore, Mr Forbes Forsyth accompanying on the American organ.

### CONGREGATIONAL SOIREE

A congregational soiree was held in the evening. Tea was served in the halls, the purveyors being Messrs James Millar & Sons. At half past eight an adjournment was made to the church which was well filled with members and their friends. Rev. John Chalmers presided.

The proceedings opened with the singing of the 133rd Psalm, after which the Rev. Mr. McEwan engaged in prayer.

The chairman then made a few remarks. On behalf of the Trustees, as well as on his own behalf, he expressed gratification that so many had responded to their invitation that evening. The congregation had, that day, entered on the occupation of their new ecclesiastical home and the evening was, so to speak, their homecoming, an event which had induced the Trustees to prepare a welcome for them, so that they might come into their new building with a friendly and brotherly feeling one towards another. The work of the Trustees in relation to the building was now practically closed and in the course of the evening, the building would be conveyed, as it was legally termed, into the hands of the Deacons, on behalf of the congregation. The work of the Trustees now happily ended, had extended, as far as the building was concerned, for about four years and it had cost them a great deal of consideration, some anxiety and a large number of meetings and consultations in which, however, they had been very ably assisted by two members of the Deacon's Court, Provost Thomson and Mr, T,L, Galbraith. There were others who had given them very valuable assistance, whose names he should like to mention.

There was, first of all, the agents for the Trust, Messrs A. & J. Jenkins a firm which was well known and esteemed for its business capacity. They had given most valuable help, not only as the legal agents of the Trust, but in friendly consultation. They were also under special obligation to Mr. Stevenson, the architect. When the building was commenced, Mr Stevenson was not known to them, but before it had been long in progress, they found him, in respect to taste and skill as an architect, everything that could be desired and he was sure they would all agree with him and the longer they occupied the building, the more heartily they would concur, that in its external

appearance and internal arrangement, it would be difficult to surpass.

They had also to acknowledge their obligations to Mr. Williams, the Clerk of Works, who by his care and diligence had seen that work progressed favourably to its completion. The various tradesmen had carried out their work admirably without the slightest friction and it was a matter for thankfulness that the work had been completed without serious accident. The Trustees and all concerned had worked together with all heartiness without any strife or quarrelling, every one doing his best to make the building a comfort to the congregation and also an addition to the architecture of the town. He quite believed that a good many of them that evening did not feel altogether at home within these walls, but had no doubt that in the course of time—and the way to bring it about was just to frequent the church as regularly as they could, especially on the Sabbath Day—that feeling would wear off. If they did that, he believed that they would soon acquire a very homely and attached feeling to the seat and the building. The pews, he thought, they would find very comfortable. They were not so well adapted for sleeping in as the ones they had lately left—(laughter) - but in other respects, they left little to be desired. This change had been a discipline for them all—a discipline in faith, patience, wisdom and in self-sacrifice and he believed it would do them very real spiritual good and bind them closer together as Christian brethren. He was glad for the way the congregation had acted and he felt strengthened and encouraged by it and he hoped also it would draw them together, not only as pastor and congregation, but all to one another in material sympathy, kindness and consideration. He (Mr Chalmers) did not believe much in the consecration of buildings and there was no consecration service that day, but he believed in the consecration of living men and women to Christ and he trusted that that day would see a new giving of themselves to the service and the fellowship and the obedience of Christ, so that they may look back upon it as a day to be remembered in their history in time and eternity. (Applause)

Mr. D. Ferguson, National Bank, one of the Trustees, then handed over to Mr Robert Whyte, on behalf of the Deacon's Court, the deed of conveyance of the church and halls to

be held by them for the congregation. It gave him special pleasure, he said, to discharge this duty which Mr Chalmers had imposed on him. The circumstances connected with the erection of the church were well known to them all and it was unnecessary to refer to them further than to say that the late Mrs. Peter, an aged member of the congregation, believing that the Free North Church with its flight of steps was unsuitable for the aged and infirm, that she could not do better than to provide in her will for the residue of her estate being expended in the building of a new church, within a prescribed area, to be called the Peter Memorial Church.

The Trustees understood the erection of the church and that fine building which was designed and its erection superintended by Mr. John J. Stevenson of the firm of Stevenson and Redfern, Architects, London, was the result. It was a matter of much regret to the Trustees that they had not sufficient funds to build the crown on the top of the tower, as it would have added materially to the beauty of the structure. The Trustees hoped that the congregation would find the church comfortable and commodious, as it was, in their opinion a beautiful building, externally and internally and a striking architectural feature in the locality. It was their belief that the church and its well-equipped halls would be found suitable for prosecuting those manifold Christian agencies which had hitherto been carried on with conspicuous success by this historic congregation over which Mr. Chalmers presided. In handing over this disposition to the Deacons of the congregation he had only to add that the Trustees had perfect confidence that the Deacons would take special care of the church and preserve it intact for those sacred uses for which it had been built. (Applause)

Mr. Robert Whyte, in accepting the disposition of the building on behalf of the Deacons of the congregation, who were the Trustees appointed to hold the church, said that the trust was a sacred one and an important one and he could only promise, on behalf of the Deacons, present and to come, that they should do their honest endeavour faithfully to discharge the duties involved in it.

He took this opportunity of acknowledging the great service rendered by Mrs. Peter's Trustees, consisting of the Rev. Chalmers, Mr.

James Drummond, Mr Robert Walls and Mr Ferguson, during the twelve years or more in which they had held office. They had had many difficulties to overcome and they had discharged their duties admirably. There had been delays, but they had been unavoidable and they congratulated them now on being able to hand over this beautiful building, free of debt. Any regret they might have had in leaving their old church had passed away with the knowledge that soon it would be occupied by another congregation and in this way, while they themselves had received a great benefit, their congregation would profit by it as well. (Applause.)

### PRESENTATIONS TO MR AND MRS CHALMERS

Provost Thomson made two presentations on behalf of the ladies of the congregation, but before discharging the duty, he said that there was a sense of joyous exhilaration in the air that evening and the feeling ought to be one of intense thankfulness, for it was a difficult and risky thing to remove a congregation from a building it had so long occupied and go to another. It had been successfully accomplished, however and they were glad the thing was safely over.

If the congregation felt relief, he asked, what must the feelings of Mr Chalmers be, to whom this change had been a matter of infinite thought and anxiety. They congratulated him on the successful issue of the undertaking, for there were not many ministers who have taken such a step and carried their people along with them. The thing that impressed him this evening was this tribute to Mr. Chalmers, that they had come with him. (Applause.) They recognised that all through these trying times, it had been owing to his wise counsel, his consideration for the feelings of others and all his good qualities of prudence and love, that they had managed this business so well. Seeing that they were going into a new church, the ladies of the congregation had thought it proper that the minister should have a new gown, although when the matter came to Mr Chalmers' knowledge he shook his head and protested that it would perhaps spoil the collection for the organ—(laughter) - the

proposal had been enthusiastically carried out and the gown was now before them. The gift was no adequate expression of the affection and esteem they had for their pastor, but it was an indication of their feelings towards him. This was the third gown Mr. Chalmers had received during the 25 years he had been amongst them. Mr. Chalmers would pardon him displaying some of the other things intended for his dear wife. The ladies of the congregation also thought that Mrs. Chalmers should be remembered at this time and they had purchased several articles for her acceptance. He was not going to speak of Mrs. Chalmers' good qualities. It was a difficult thing to be a minister's wife and there were not many minister's wives like Mrs. Chalmers. She was a regular, good helpmate to Mr. Chalmers, not only doing her duties at home, but serving them daily in the congregation. (Applause.)

Provost Thomson concluded by calling upon Mrs. Walls to put the robe upon Mr. Chalmers, which duty Mrs. Walls gracefully performed. The gifts to Mrs. Chalmers, consisting of two pieces of silver plate and a gold bracelet, were presented by Mrs. Dunsmore.

Before Mr. Chalmers replied, the choir sang "*Bless Thee and Keep Thee.*"

Rev. Mr. Chalmers said he thanked them with all his heart for the beautiful robe they had given him and which he would have great pleasure in wearing in the fulfilment of his duties. It was true, as the Provost had said, that when he heard of this movement, although he knew it sprang from the kindest feelings, he felt it was a little out of place, partly because there were other expenses at hand and partly also because the robe he had was not yet in a very dilapidated condition. He, however, felt that there was some force in the argument advanced, that seeing as he was going into a new church and a new pulpit there should be a new gown and so he did not see his way to say anything further. He could only say that they had fulfilled their promise in the most handsome way and he just wished that all the ladies of the congregation, who had contributed so heartily to the gift, might get a new gown for the Sabbath and that all the husbands might get a new coat, or at all events, a new hat

to start in the new church. (Laughter.) If he required any impulse, this gift would be an impulse to him to try and make the services of the sanctuary here more edifying and more Christian in their spirit and substance. He had now received three gowns from them and there had been about twelve years between each. Twelve years hence, if he was spared, he thought they would be presenting a gown, not to him, but to his colleague and successor, as it would be time to give place to a younger and a better man. For the kind gifts to his dear wife, he thanked them exceedingly. He did not know that he was worthy of the gown, but he knew that his wife was worthy of these gifts. It was a great gratification that they had recognised her help to him and to the congregation in this handsome way. Together they would cherish these mementoes as a happy memory of that evening and as an incentive to further service for their sake and for Christ's sake. (Applause.)

Rev. Dr. Reith, College Church, Glasgow, afterwards delivered an admirable address. He expressed the hope that the beautiful new church would lead to further zeal on their part—that the outward beauty of the sanctuary might be but a reflection of the beauty of the Lord resting on everyone who was privileged to meet there from Sabbath to Sabbath to worship their common Lord and Master. (Applause.)

The choir, under Mr. Dunsmore, sang several pieces during the evening, Mr. Forbes Forsyth playing the accompaniments.

Votes of thanks, proposed by Rev. Mr. Agnew, Mr. Hugh Gavin and Mr. Valentine, brought the meeting to a close.

### **SABBATH SERVICES**

The services on Sunday were conducted by Rev. Dr. Watson ("Ian Maclaren") In the forenoon he preached from Hebrews xii, 1, "Compassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses," his discourse being divided into two parts—"The testimony of the saints," and "The confirmation of faith."

Dwelling for a little on the interpretation of the word "witnesses," Dr. Watson said that if the word "witness" was understood as being a

person who was looking on, then they were taught to believe that those who had gone before were not only conscious, but were also observers of this present life and he did not envy the person who was not strengthened amid the trials of life and moved unto its heroisms, by the belief that those whom he loved but had lost for a while, were still following his earthly career with eyes that never looked on him on earth except with love, rested on him with a deeper affection today, that hearts that prayed for him on earth were interceding with a deeper and more effectual petition today and that hands which held his own in the stress of life with firm grip would be held out to him when those whom he loved were the first to meet him, together with the Lord, on the further shore.

As he was not going to touch on that side of the subject today, he said so much about it that in order that when that went home and returned to their ordinary duties, they might remember that the saints of the past in this congregation were the witnesses—not critical, not indifferent—but sympathetic and tender, faithful and interceding, of our present struggle. The word "witness" might also be read in the sense of one who testified to a fact which was within his knowledge and which he could confirm. In this sense they did not think of the saints who were gone as in the heavenly places, but they thought of their life before they passed through the veil and the scriptures told them that before they died and while they were here on earth, their faith and their hope remained to be the confirmation of our faith. They had not only entered into heaven, but they had to remember that they carried heaven with them while they lived here. Dr. Watson proceeded to show the triumph of faith over symbolism. The Hebrew Christian saw, as it were, the outward fabric and support of religion depart and although he was taught that what was lost in the letter was delivered in the spirit and what was taken from the eye was restored a thousand-fold unto the heart—it was not easy to walk by faith and not by sight and it was through this trial of vanishing symbols that the Hebrews had to pass. Was it, he asked, not very much the same trial through which we in our age were passing, which also was an age of transition? The change in our own

time, he thought, was quite as great, for practical effect as the change through which the Hebrew Christians had to pass. For instance, a man began by believing in the verbal inspiration of holy scripture and now today he was invited to believe in the inspiration of the truth contained in and conveyed through the Book—a change from the letter to the spirit, from the visible to the invisible. He had great and increasing sympathy with those who were perplexed and cast down, anxious and doubtful about this change. He wished to point out what it was that, amid all the changes, whether of doctrine or of temporal environment, or of age or circumstances, should confirm their faith and that was the testimony and the exact testimony of the people who had gone before. Dr. Watson, after dealing with the testimonies of the saints and sages from Abraham downwards, said he could not forget that in modern times a number of able and good men did not hold this faith and in fact denied it. When he looked at such men as Professor Huxley, what came over him was this—what men they were without the conscious aid of the divine grace; what comfort and strength they would have had in their life if they had had that aid. Now if there was one characteristic of this age more patent than another, it was what he would call its positivism. Supposing he were to examine witnesses on a question of navigation or on theology, he would not ask witnesses to speak who could only deal with theories, or speculation, or sentiment and similarly, if he were to enquire into the reality of God he would bring in expert witnesses—St. Paul and St. John, St. Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Archbishop Leighton and so on in endless array—the great and the mighty saints, the masters of knowledge and of reason, of piety and religion, to confirm the testimony.

Perhaps today, when they were meeting in their new church, believing folks might put down their names with the saints of all ages as believers in Jesus Christ. He wished the most timid and the weakest, most despondent, low-hearted Christian to go home with his head up today and to pluck up courage and say, "*I know in whom I believe.*"

The Rev. Chalmers conducted a service for children in the church in the afternoon.

In the evening, Dr. Watson again occupied the pulpit and preached from Acts xxvii, 15, "Whom when Paul saw he thanked God and took courage." his discourse dealing with the value of encouragement. He dwelt upon censoriousness in life, public and private, clerical and lay. He condemned it with point and pith insisting upon the need of sympathy and charity between man and man. Incidentally, he objected to the description of a minister being "in form." The phrase "in form" savoured of the sports field and having such associations, ought not, to be held, to be applied to a bearer of the Gospel message. Rev. D.D. Ormond, Craigs Church, read the lessons.

#### **THE COLLECTIONS**

The collections on Thursday and all the diets of worship on Sunday, were on behalf of the organ fund and amounted to the handsome sum of £560-19s

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#### **EDITOR'S NOTES**

In transcribing this article from the 1902 original, it's been interesting to note how the use of language has changed in the intervening 113 years. There is, for example, one sentence in the "Sabbath Services" that runs to no less than 173 words; my old English teacher would have had apoplexy at the thought.

Notwithstanding, with the exception of a very few obvious spelling or grammatical errors, and to remain true to the original, I have changed nothing.

Lastly, the sum raised by collection for the organ fund, translates into today's money as something of the order of £52,000 to £60,000, an incredible sum of money for the time.