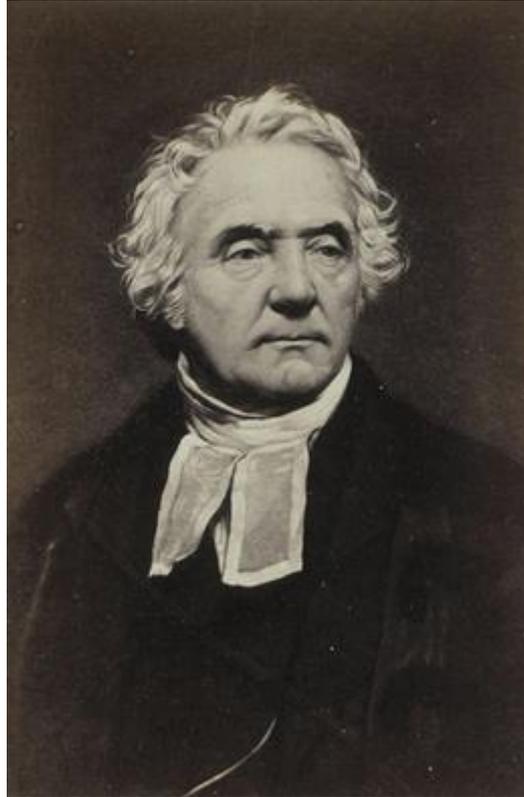


Thomas Chalmers, 17.03.1780 - 31.5.1847



Thomas Chalmers was the sixth of fourteen children born to ship owner and general merchant, John Chalmers and his wife Elizabeth Hall, daughter of a Crail wine merchant. Thomas attended the Parish School in Anstruther before entering St Andrews University at the age of twelve. The Chalmers family lived in the 16th century house in Old Post Office Close off the High Street, now known as Chalmers Birthplace.

In July 1799, Thomas Chalmers was licensed as a teacher of the Gospel by the St Andrews presbytery. In addition to acting as assistant to the professor of mathematics at St Andrews University, he was appointed as minister at Kilmany Parish, Fife, in 1803.

Chalmers fell foul of the university by criticising the professor and his lectures were discontinued. However, he carried on teaching privately, carrying out his duties as minister at weekends. In 1812, he married Grace Pratt and they had a family of three daughters.

In 1815, Chalmers was appointed minister of the Tron Church in Glasgow despite opposition by some to his evangelical style of preaching. He reorganised the parochial system and attempted to bring about change in the social conditions of the poor in Glasgow. His reputation as a preacher spread throughout the UK. He endorsed missionary work and during his time as Convener of Church Extension, 220 new churches were built over Scotland.

In 1823, he accepted the Chair of Moral Philosophy at St Andrews University, the seventh academic offer made to him during his eight years in Glasgow. In 1828, Chalmers transferred to the Chair of Theology at Edinburgh University. He was elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1834 and served as Vice President from 1835 - 42. Chalmers became leader of the evangelical section of the Church of Scotland in the General Assembly.

On the 18th of May 1843, 470 clergymen led by Chalmers withdrew from the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to form the Free Church of Scotland. Chalmers and the "non-intrusionists" supported the principle that no minister should be introduced to any parish against the will of the congregation. Previously, a minister could be selected by a land owner without the support of the congregation.

Thomas Chalmers became the first Moderator of the Free Church of Scotland. He died in Edinburgh on 31st May 1847 and is buried in the Grange Cemetery. He has been described as "the greatest 19th century churchman in Scotland".

There is a Memorial Garden to Thomas Chalmers at the corner of Hadfoot Wynd and East Green, Anstruther. The Chalmers Lighthouse on the pier and Chalmers Memorial Church, the Free Church built at the top of Hadfoot Wynd (now Chalmers Brae) in 1891 were named in his honour. Unfortunately Chalmers Church burned down in 1991 after a period of disuse.

Port Chalmers, the port for Christchurch, New Zealand is also named after him.