

The Annandale Observer, March 8, 1918. NEW JOINT CHURCH OPENED AT GRETNA DEDICATION CEREMONY REV. DR M'KICHAN'S ADDRESS

Another stage was reached on Saturday in providing for the religious wants of the new population settled in Gretna by the opening of a new church for the Presbyterian community, and known as the "Church of St. Andrew." It is probably unique circumstance in connection with the founding of this church that the established and dissenting bodies agreed to unite their efforts, and so create an organisation which would embrace all Presbyterian worshippers. May it not be a precursor of what will eventually come to pass in other parts of Scotland? The foundation stone of the new church was laid on 1st Sept., 1917, and as if in compensation for the tempestuous weather on that day the sun shone brilliantly at the opening ceremony on Saturday, bringing a great number of people near and far to witness the event.

The church is situated at the junction of Central Avenue and Loanwath Road in a central position of the new township. It is very simply designed as a war building, depending for its effect on a broad dignified treatment. It is built throughout of brick, the outside walls being rough cast, with a pan tile roof and a massive tower. The nave, which is thirty-five feet wide by eighty-six feet long, is divided from narrow passage aisles by six circular archways, and at the end of the chancel is a circular apse. In addition there are two transepts, organ space, vestry, etc. Over the western entrances is a gallery. The ceiling is plastered with slightly enriched beams. There is seating accommodation for about 580 persons. The estimate for the building without furniture was £5,337. It is hoped at some future date to raise funds to provide a bell and pipe organ. The contractors for the whole works were Messrs Sykes & Sons, of Essex Street, London, the heating being carried out by Messrs Mackenzie & Moncur, Edinburgh. The architect for the building was Mr Courtney M. Crickmer, F.R.I.B.A., of the Ministry of Munitions, Gretna, the clerk of works being Mr W. Denholm, also of the Ministry of Munitions. The Presbyterian congregation has meanwhile been worshipping in the Cinema House, kindly lent by the Ministry. The charge of supplying religious service has been laid upon the two church authorities, and several ministers have held the appointment temporarily, the present minister being the Rev. Mr Mackie.

The opening ceremony took place at 3:30 in the afternoon. This was performed by the Right Rev. Dr

M'Kichan, Principal of Wilson College, Bombay, and Moderator of the United Free Church of Scotland, assisted by the Rev. Dr Martin, convener of the Church of Scotland Home Mission Committee. They were supported by the Rev. Mr Mackie, the Rev. A Sinclair Nicol, Cummertrees, the clerk of Annan Presbytery; the Rev. J. O. Stafford, Gretna; Rev. J. A Robertson, Dornock; and Rev. D. Eaglesham, Chapelknowe; and other ministers of the respective Presbyteries. The musical part of the service was sustained by a well-balanced choir led by Miss Sedgewick.

The first part of the service was conducted by Dr Martin, and began with the singing of the 24th Psalm, verses 7-10, "Ye gates, lift up your heads on high" and was followed by prayer. The congregation then joined in singing hymn 454, "The Church is one foundation." Dr Martin next read a passage of Scripture from I. Kings viii., 22, which was followed by the choir singing the anthem "How amiable are the dwellings." The Rev. Mr Mackie then read the 21st chapter of the Book of Revelations.

Rev. Dr Martin, addressing the congregation, said: I have been asked before the Right Rev. Moderator proceeds to the dedication of this church to state one or two of the steps that have led up to the opening of it today. The United Free Church and the Church of Scotland have co-operated in this district since 1916. They co-operated first of all in the work among the navvies, and bye-the-bye, when the work of the construction was more or less complete and an increasing population had sprung up here, the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church felt that they must co-operate further and provide spiritual services for those coming from all parts of the country. They did this through their Presbyteries, who have worked together, and a committee was formed from the Kirk sessions of the two churches along with several gentlemen co-opted from the township who were known to have an interest in their work. We are very grateful that the Ministry of Munitions have helped us by allowing us the use of a temporary building, and have also given us a grant of £4,000 to aid in the erection of this church, just as they have done to others. We have had to contribute about £2,000 from our own funds. These, then are the steps that have led up to this auspicious day. We would, therefore, like to thank the Ministry of Munitions, and we have also to thank all those willing gentlemen and others who have helped in the work.

At this stage Dr M'Kichan stepped forward and pronounced the formal dedication of the church as follows: Beloved brethren, - This house which has been built for the honour and service of Almighty God we now dedicate unto the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, one living and true God, to whom be glory and majesty, dominion and power both now and forever, world without end, Amen. Wherefore let us beseech Him to receive this offering at our hands, to accept the worship of this people in this place, to continue to them and to their children the pure word of His Gospel, and to build up to believers a spiritual house, a high temple of the Lord.

After prayer Hymn 466, "Christ is made the sure foundation" was sung.

Dr M'Kichan took his text from the first epistle of St. John, 5th chapter, 20th verse, the closing words, "And we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ: this is the true God and eternal life." In a simple earnest discourse Dr M'Kichan said he desired to speak of two things, of Jesus Christ as making God real to men, and Jesus Christ as eternal life. All through the ages men had sought after God who was real. It was Jesus Christ who made God real to us. In the glory of His humanity and in the glory of His holiness He comes to us and makes us feel that God is near. In these days of tribulation and darkness through which the nation is passing how often have we heard men say that they had lost their hold on God, that they cannot believe there is a real and living God who guides the affairs of men and of nations. How often in our times of deepest sadness have we ourselves not felt as if God had gone out of existence, and we were left terribly alone. Jesus Christ has taught us that God may lead us in our national and in our individual life through dark and sad paths of suffering and sorrow that He may bring us into higher and brighter glory. Jesus bore our nature, knew our infirmities, and passed through our trials. He also makes real to us eternal life. If we are Christ's we have eternal life now, and the life which we now live is but a part of a life which must endure and grow in glory throughout all the coming ages. Those who have sought to walk in the Saviour's steps have had experiences of that life that make it real and certain. We were living in an age that had seen self-sacrifice on a scale that was never witnessed before. Did they not call up before their minds the vision of our noble and generous youth eager for the conflict with evil, who chose to listen to the nation's call, and heard in it the call of God? Love of self-sacrifice and love of service bring to every Christian the inspiration of that blessed life to which he looks forward in the presence of his God and Saviour. If they lived for high spiritual ideals they would never lost their faith in the life that is eternal. Then faith would grow brighter and brighter in this life of service to which the Saviour has called them, and at last it would lead them into the glorious vision of the Lord Himself. All the hopes and aspirations of their soul in their deepest and highest moments would find their eternal fulfilment.

At the close of Dr M'Kichan's address the Second Paraphrase, "O God of Bethel," was sung and the benediction was then pronounced, followed by the singing of the National Anthem.

There was a large attendance at the services on Sunday. In the forenoon Dr Martin preached, and Dr M'Kichan dispensed the communion at the evening service.