

THE PLAN OF STUDY

FOR THE CHILDREN.

Conducted by Rev. R. Douglas Fraser.

Topic for Week beginning June 11.

A GREAT SCOTTISH PREACHER.

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Scotland, as all school children know, is a very great country, yet it has produced many famous men.

This is also true of Palestine, and Greece, and Rome, of Switzerland, and of England and Ireland.

We learn from this that it is not the size of a thing but the quality that is important. This is true of a girl or a boy, a mission band or a Sunday school, a church or a country.

Scotland has always been a very religious country. "Theological Scotland" it is called, and so most of its great men have been connected with the Church. A few, however, like Scott, and Burns, and Carlyle, are famous for their literary works.

Of Scotland's great religious men you are this year to be introduced to three, viz., Dr. Bonar, the great Scottish hymn-writer, Dr. Duff, the great Scottish missionary, and Dr. Chalmers, the great Scottish preacher.

Thomas Chalmers was born at Anstruther, on the 17th of March, (St. Patrick's Day,) 1780, more than a hundred years ago. He was the sixth child of a family of fourteen. His father was not wealthy, so that he was not brought up with a silver spoon in his mouth.

When he went to school nobody thought he would become a great man, but he thought so himself, for, like Joseph, from his earliest years he had a dream that he would be some great one. His ambition was to preach, and so a preacher he became.

When he finished his course at the college of St. Andrews, at the age of nineteen, he became the minister of the parish of Kilmany, where he became famous as a clever preacher and scholar and was beloved by all his people.

But, like the rich young ruler told of in the Gospel, during these years (1799-1809) Chalmers lacked one thing—a warm personal attachment to the Lord Jesus Christ.

This new affection came to him through affliction and the reading of Wilberforce's Book on Christianity, and it made him a far better man than he was before, so that the city churches of Glasgow called him to preach, and afterwards the colleges at St. Andrews and at Edinburgh made a professor of him.

Before he experienced this change of heart, Chalmers lived mainly to improve himself, but afterwards he consecrated his talents to the good of his fellow men.

For one thing, he took a lively interest in the welfare of the poor. When he was minister at Kilmany he spent his spare time, some five days a week, studying mathematics, science, and philosophy, but when he was minister of St. Johns, Glasgow, he spent his spare time in helping the poor, and if he had had his way, he would have had all the poor of Scotland cared for by the churches, even as his own church cared for all the poor of the parish of St. John's.

His new heart also went out in pity after those who never went to church. In the section of Edinburgh where he lived when a professor there, he found that only 140 families, out of 1300, had taken sittings in any church. So he prevailed upon the rich to provide churches for the poor, and in six years twenty new churches were built in Glasgow, and throughout the whole of Scotland, some 220.

Then again, for he was a very practical Christian and a man full of energy, he labored to give freedom to the parish people of Scotland.

In those days, called in the histories, "days of moderatism" (1752-1843) the landlords were the patrons of the church. These men, because they paid the stipend, forced the people to accept whatever ministers they chose to appoint, though these ministers were often very unsuitable men and unsound in the faith, and sometimes not what they should be in life. The consequence was that many good people did not go to church at all, while in some places the people left the church in a body and formed voluntary congregations.

These congregations were known as "Seceders" and had grown to the number of 150 at the time that Chalmers was born. But before he died and largely by his influence, a body of members and elders in a procession a quarter of a mile long, marched out of the Established Church (General Assembly), and formed what is known as the Free Church of Scotland, with Chalmers as its Moderator.

This event is known as "The Disruption"