



William Chalmers Burns

**The Complete Works of**

**William Chalmers Burns**

**From the Original Printings,  
Sermons, Tracts, and Letters**

**With**

**His Personal Accounts of the Revival in 1839**

**Edited by:**

**Peter-John Parisi/Bryan Edwin Dean**

**2011**

Copyright 2011

By Peter-John Parisis

Self-Published

Flint, Michigan, USA

**A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO:**

**My Parents**



**Harry Walter Dean & Margaret Lenore Kelley Dean**

**&**

**Fellow Worker In This Book & Friend**



**Ralph Dale Link**

**Thanks to the following people who influenced me during this  
work:**

**To my people who have influenced my life concerning God and/or my writings  
(alphabetic order):**

**Steve Girard**

**Rev. Ralph C. Link**

**Charles McNeice**

**Rosiland Townes**

**Daniel Turner**

**Mark Woodmore**

## Preface

In 2010, I acquired an original writing from 1843, of William Chalmers Burns. This led me to seek after all his writings. The work contained in this book is from my search into museums and special collections.

All the writings were taken from the original manuscripts, letters, tracts, and sermons of Mr. Burns. Here for the first time is the complete works of Rev. William C. Burns that has survived throughout time.

May God bless your readings to His glory!

Rev. Peter-John Parisi/Bryan Edwin Dean

December 16, 2010

Flint, Michigan, United States of America

## Table of Contents

## Descriptions

Preface

Chapter 1 – Kilsyth – 1839

Chapter 2 – Account of the Communion – 1839

Chapter 3 – The Knowledge of Sin – 1840

Chapter 4 – Walk Circumspectly – A Letter From the Rev. W. C. Burns to the  
Professed Disciples of Christ At Perth – 1840

Chapter 5 - A Letter to the People of Milnathort – 1841

Chapter 6 – A Letter to Saints and Sinners in Strathtay, Breadalbane, Athol, and  
the Neighbourhood – 1841

Chapter 7 – Plain Sentences To: Perishing Sinners, In Newcastel and Gateshead  
– Also, A Letter to the People of Milnathort – 1841

Chapter 8 – Letters to Sinners Seeking Salvation, In Aberdeen, Dundee, Perth,  
Kilsyth, and Other Places – Number 1 – General Remarks – 1841

Chapter 9 - Letters to Sinners Seeking Salvation, In Aberdeen, Dundee, Perth,  
Kilsyth, and Other Places – Letters Number 2 – The Knowledge of  
Sin – 1841

Chapter 10 – Two Letters to the Inhabitants of Balnaguard; A Village in  
Strathtay - 1841

Chapter 11 – Confidence In God - 1841

Chapter 12 – Two Letters to Young Disciples of the Lord Emmanuel

Chapter 13 – Anxious Sinner – 1843

Chapter 14 – Salvation is of the Lord – A Sermon Occasioned by the Death of  
the Rev. R. Murray M’Cheyne – 1843

Chapter 15 – Comfort and Encouragement; A Letter to those at Leven who  
are setting their faces Zionward – 1843

Chapter 16 - China and the Missions at Amoy – 1854

Pictures of The Journal

Chapter 17 – Addresses From a Hearer’s Notes – 1858

Preface

Governor Yeh’s Account of Mr. Burns’ Arrest in the Interior

Chapter 1 – A Race To Glory

Chapter 2 – The Precious Saviour

Chapter 3 – Sin Condemned

Chapter 4 - The Spirit of Adoption

Chapter 5 - Refuges of Lies

Chapter 6 - Saved by Hope

Chapter 7 - The Good Ground

Chapter 8 - The Throne of Grace

Chapter 18 – Notes of Addresses – 1869

Preface –

Chapter 1 – Pressing Into The Kingdom

Chapter 2 - Covenant Mercy  
Chapter 3 - The Limit Set  
Chapter 4 - I Am Debtor  
Chapter 5 - The Secret Place  
Chapter 6 - The Eve of the Disruption  
Chapter 7 - The Lord Passing By  
Chapter 8 - True Zeal  
Chapter 9 - Uzza Smitten  
Chapter 10 – Return of The Ark  
Chapter 11 - Trial Made Sweet  
Chapter 12 - The Breaker Up  
Chapter 13 - Words of Warning  
Chapter 14 - The Valley of Vision  
Chapter 15 - The Ten Virgins  
Chapter 16 - Sin Condemned  
Chapter 17 - A Letter to the People in the Highlands of Perthshire

Chapter 19 – The Precious Saviour – 1864  
Chapter 20 - Missionary Operations in China – 1865  
Chapter 21 - Recalling William C. Burns – 1875

## Chapter 1

### KILSYTH

1839

*Being the Substance of a Statement by the Rev. Mr. Burns, Minister of the Parish, drawn up at the request of the Presbytery of Glasgow, with additions.*

I was admitted to the charge of this parish on the 19<sup>th</sup> April, 1821, on which I entered "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." (1 Corinthians 2:3 – my first text on Sabbath, the 21<sup>st</sup> April.) I saw a beautiful valley before me, like that of Sodom, rich and well watered; but, alas! it bore too close a resemblance to it also in its spiritual and moral aspect. Yet there were several Lots, yea Jacobs, among them, who prayed and wrestled for the return of the time of revival. This was often referred to in the prayers of my predecessor, and familiar to the ears of our people, who seemed to think it an honor to have their father's names and sepulchers thus build up and honored, while they, alas! followed not their example.

A visitation of every family in a parish, after a minister's induction, is generally an important event in its history. Nothing could have been more kind than the reception I received from all classes and denominations, and which has met me ever since in my annual rounds. The appearance, too, at church, and the solemnity and prayers *at funerals*, struck me as indicative of more of a spirit of religion than I had anticipated: but these good symptoms were overbalanced by the appalling number who attended no place of worship, and by the woeful prevalence of intemperance, and the lightness with which that vice seemed to be regarded, even by religious professors. I was struck with the meaning of our Savior's words, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many waxeth cold."

There were four or five prayer meetings at that time in the *whole* parish: one of these, composed of the session members, and continued ever since the days of Robe. In 1823, classes on weekday evenings, for youth of both sexes from fourteen to twenty years, were opened by myself. Four of the elders, who are now so active in the cause of revival, were members of the young men's class. Of late years a great increase in numbers and efficiency has taken place in the Sabbath schools; and in 1826, a most important improvement took place in the mode of parochial teaching. *The mind and heart* were daily plied with the lessons of *heavenly* as well as *secular* wisdom. In 1829, however there were frightful out breakings of wickedness, arising out of drunken quarrels. A day was set apart (January, 1830) for fasting and prayer on this account, and the reasons thereof set forth by a memorial from the Kirk Session. It was very solemnly observed, and was followed by an evident blessing. In 1832, the cholera visited this country. We saw a dark cloud discharging itself on the neighboring town of Kirkintilloch; and our people seemed to reason with themselves, "whether this comes from east or west, whether from natural or moral causes we may be assured of a visit of this dire calamity." (Yet it never actually came to us!) We had prayer meetings weekly in town and the two Baronies, which were flocked to by many, anxious that they might not die unprepared. The panic soon subsided, and the prayer meetings were thinned. I see it marked in my day-book, May 13, 1832, "Intimated prayer meetings for *revival of religion*." Several lectures were given on the subject; at the same time commenced the monthly tract distribution, and exertions to arrest the tide of intemperance, and the conducting of funerals without any other service excepting a prayer. In March, 1836, after the communion, a prayer meeting was held in the church, especially for revival, addressed by the Rev. Mr. Walker of Muthil, who had preached on the subject on the Friday before, after which the prayer meetings in dwelling-houses were considerably

increased in number, and in attendance – all in connexion with the Church. The Methodists had been for some years more or less active, both in the town and the East Barony, and had roused not a few careless individuals; and the members of the Relief set about similar meetings. Sabbath evening lectures, of a very plain and familiar character, have been more or less resorted to, but regularly for three seasons; and have been mentioned by several individuals as the means of first impressing their hearts. A goodly number of poor people came out to these evening sermons, who could not be brought to attend on the ordinary services. Prayer meetings have been referred to by many as the means of their first serious thought; and sermons delivered in the churchyard last summer, by Mr. Somerville of Anderston, and by myself, have been often mentioned as having been blessed to awakening and enlivening. Nine months ago, a new missionary meeting began, which interested many of our people. Still, after all these and other symptoms of good, it was not till Tuesday, the 23<sup>rd</sup> July, that a decided and unquestionable revival took place. We may well say of the amazing scene we have witnessed, “When the Lord turned our captivity we were as men that dreamed.” We have, as it were, been awakened from a dream of a hundred years.

The communion had been, as usual, upon the third Sabbath, and 21<sup>st</sup> day. Intimation had been made upon the Saturday, that the minister would wish to converse with such persons as were under religious concern, inasmuch as two or three had previously called upon that errand. The effect was that several other individuals did come to converse. The Monday evening was the half-yearly general meeting of our Missionary Society, when a sermon was delivered by Dr. Burns of Paisly – text, Isaiah 52:1: “Awake,” &c. It was intimated that Mr. William C. Burns, who had preached several times with much power during the solemnity, would address the people of Kilsyth next day, if the weather proved favorable, in the open air, the object being to get those to hear the word who could not be brought out in the ordinary way. It was known too, that he was very shortly to leave this place for Dundee, and probably soon to engage in missionary labors in a distant land. The day was cloudy and rainy. The crowd, however, in the Market Place was great; and, on being invited to repair to the church, it was soon crowded to an overflow – the stairs, passages, and porches, being filled with a large assemblage of all descriptions of persons in their ordinary clothes. The prayer was solemn and affecting; the chapter read without any comment was Acts 2. The sermon proceeded from Psalm 110:3, “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.” Throughout the whole sermon there was more than usual seriousness and tenderness pervading the hearers; but it was towards the close, when depicting the remarkable scene at Kirk of Shotts, on the Monday after the communion there, 1630, when, under the preaching of Mr. John Livingstone, a native of Kilsyth, five hundred were converted, that the emotions of the audience became too strong to be suppressed. The eyes of most of the audience were in tears; and those who could observe the countenances of the hearers expected half an hour before, the scene which followed. After reciting Mr. Livingstone’s text, Ezekiel 36, “A new heart will I give,” &c., and when pressing upon his hearers the all-important concern of salvation, while, with very uncommon pathos and tenderness, he pressed immediate acceptance of Christ, each for himself – when referring to the affecting and awful state, in which he dreaded the thought of leaving so many of them whom he now saw probably for the last time – when, again and again, as he saw his words telling on the audience, beseeching sinners, old and young, to embrace Christ and be saved – when he was at the height of his appeal, with the words, “*no cross no crown,*” – then it was that emotions of the audience were most overpoweringly expressed. A scene which scarcely can be described took place. I have no doubt, from the effects which have followed, and from the very numerous references to this day’s service, as the immediate cause of their remarkable change of heart and life, that the convincing and converting influence of the Holy Spirit was at that time most unusually and remarkable conveyed. For a time the preacher’s voice was quite inaudible; a psalm was sung tremulously by the presenter, and by a portion of the audience, most of who

were in tears. I was called by one of the elders to come to a woman who was praying in deep distress; several individuals were removed to the session-house, and a prayer meeting was immediately commenced. Dr. Burns, of Paisley, spoke to the people in church, in the way of caution and of direction that the genuine, deep, inward working of the Spirit might go on, not encouraging animal excitement.

The church was dismissed after I had intimated that we were ready to converse with all who were distressed and anxious, and that there would be a meeting again in the evening for worship at six o'clock. We then adjourned to the vestry and session-house, which were completely filled with the spiritually-afflicted, and a considerable time was occupied with them. Several of the distressed were relieved before we parted. These were persons believed to be Christians, but who were not before this rejoicing in hope. Others continued for days in great anxiety, and came again and again; but are now, generally speaking, in a peaceful and hopeful state, and have been conversing with a view to admission to the Lord's table.

In the evening the church was again crowded to excess. Mr. Lyon of Banton lectured on the parable of the prodigal son, and Mr. William C. Burns preached from Matthew 18:3, "Except ye be converted," &c. The impression was deepened; but there was no great excitement, the aim of the preacher being to forward a genuine work of the Spirit. (Mr. W. C. Burns found it impossible to leave a scene so interesting, and Mr. Lyon went to Dundee to supply his place.) A great many came to the manse to speak about their souls. Evening meetings in the church were continued without intermission, and even in the mornings occasionally. Our hands were full, but the work was precious, and often delightful. Our elders and praying men were, and still are, very useful in aiding us. He who was honored as the chief instrument of the awakening was earnestly sought out, and our part in it became comparatively small till the work had made progress.

On Thursday, the 25<sup>th</sup>, the day proving favorable, the meeting was called in the Market Square, where an immense crowd assembled at half-past six. From the top of a stair Mr. W. C. Burns addressed upwards of three thousand from Psalm 71:16, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God." The emotions of the audience were powerful, but for the most part silent, though now and then there might be the utterance of feeling, and, in countenances beyond numbering, expression of earnest and serious concern. Six young girls, from fourteen to sixteen years, two of them orphans, came next day bathed in tears, and seeking Christ. The scene was deeply affecting. This day (26<sup>th</sup>) many conversations were held by Mr. W. C. Burns in the session-house; by myself and my other son (on trial for license) in the manse. Upon Sabbath, the 28<sup>th</sup>, the church was crowded, and with the unusual appearance of not a few females without bonnets and men and children in weekday and working dresses. I preached from Hebrews 4:16. In the afternoon we met at three in the churchyard, where there assembled not fewer than four thousand. The sermon by Mr. W. C. Burns was solid and impressive, from Romans 8:1. He finished about five o'clock; but after the blessing was pronounced, about a third part either remained or soon returned, of various ages, but especially young, which led to various questions, at first, and then remarks, and appeals frequently repeated, which led to great meltings of heart in many, and, in a few cases, to considerable agitation; so much so, that my son and I continued to address the hearers in various ways, and to sing and pray over and over again, the people still unwilling to depart. Four of our pious men, two of whom were elders, were called to pray at intervals, which they did in a most appropriate and affecting manner. Even at half-past eight it was with difficulty we got to a close, proposing to have a meeting next morning at seven in the church. A great many still pressed around as we left the churchyard for the manse, and several remained till eleven or twelve o'clock. Next morning I went to the church at seven, after calling on an aged woman on the way, whose cries of distress arrested me. Even

at that early hour there were from two to three hundred met in solemn silence, joining with me in prayer and praise, and listening to a short exposition of Song of Solomon 2:10-14. Through the whole day conversations were held in the manse, and in the vestry and session-house. In the evening the bell rung at half-past six. The church being before that filled, and as great a number pressing forward, it was found necessary to adjourn to the Market Square. Mr. Somerville of Anderston addressed a very large assembly of most attentive hearers, from John 16:14. At the close I was called to see three or four very affecting cases of mental distress, and there was still a desire to get more of the word and prayer. There was an adjournment to the church, where at first, as I understand (for I was engaged as above stated,) there was considerable excitement, but which subsided into solemn and deep emotion, while Mr. W. C. Burns and Mr. Somerville addressed the people, and joined in prayer and praise. Next day at eleven A.M., Mr. Somerville again addressed a full congregation in the church.

Ever since the date to which I have brought this imperfect narrative, with the exception of one evening, we have had meetings every evening for prayer, for the most part along with preaching of the word. On the evening referred to (the 6<sup>th</sup> August,) there was held a meeting in the Relief church, which, was crowded by various classes, the work expressly approved of by the ministers present, Mr. W. Anderson of Glasgow, and Mr. Banks of Paisley. From the first the people of the Relief congregation seemed interested in the work equally with our own people, and there appears to this day to be much of the spirit of love diffused among us. The state of society is completely changed. Politics are quite over with us. Religion is the only topic of interest. They who passed each other before, are not seen shaking hands, and conversing about the all-engrossing subject. The influence is so generally diffused, that a stranger going at hazard into any house would find himself in the midst of it.

The awakening in the newly-erected parish of Banton has of late become most intensely interesting. At a prayer meeting in the school there, the whole present, above one hundred men and women, not a few of them hardened miners and colliers, were melted. Every night since this day there have been meetings in the church of Banton, and many earnest inquirers. The missionary, Mr. Lyon, whose labors have been for upwards of a year greatly blessed, has been aided, as I have been, by many excellent friends in the ministry, and the work goes on there in a manner fully as surprising as here. I am under obligations to my brethren for their ready and efficient services. I may just mention Mr. Duncan of Glasgow, Mr. Macnaughtan of Paisley, Mr. Moody of Edinburgh, Mr. M'Donald of Urquhart, and Mr. Jamieson Willis, as having been longest with us, and given valuable assistance; with Mr. Salmon, our former teacher.

We are tried by the intrusion among us of teachers who are likely to sow divisions, some of them, Stranoubt, much safer in doctrine than others, who come among us, from good motives, are in danger of injuring our converts by over-kindness, and bringing them too much into notice. Enemies are waiting for occasion of triumph; and professors of religion, of a cold description, are doubting and waiting a long time ere they trust that any good is doing. Meantime the work proceeds most certainly; and from day to day there are additions to the "Church of such as shall be saved." The sermons preached are none of them eccentric or imaginative, but sound and scriptural; and there is not, as formerly a tendency to compare the merits of preachers, but a hearing in earnest, and for life and death.

The waiting on of young and older people at the close of each meeting, and the anxious asking of so many "what to do" – the lively singing of the praises of God, which ever visitor remarks – the complete desuetude of swearing and foolish talking in our streets – the order and solemnity at all hours pervading; the song of praise and prayer almost in every house – the cessation of the tumults of the people – the consignment to the

flames of volumes of infidelity and impurity – the coming together for Divine worship and heavenly teaching of such a multitude of our population day after day – the large catalogue of new intending communicants giving in their names, and conversing in the most interesting manner on the most important subjects – not a few of the old, careless sinners, and other frozen formalists, awakened, and made alive to God – the conversion of several poor colliers, who have come to me, and given the most satisfactory account of their change of mind and heart, are truly wonderful proofs of a most surprising and delightful revival.

The case of D. S., collier, may be mentioned as interesting. He had for some time been thoughtful, and had given up entirely taking any intoxicating liquor and might be characterized as one of the more hopeful description. Since the present awakening, he was deeply convinced of his sin and misery, and for a month was deeply exercised and spending much time in secret prayer and reading the Scriptures. On the evening of the 21<sup>st</sup> of August, he had a meeting with several of his praying companions, and spent the night in prayer, praise, and converse. He appears to have obtained peace during that night, and came home to his house in a very happy state of mind. After taking two hours rest, he worshipped with his family, and proceeded to his work. Being the foreman, it was his lot to descend first into the pit, which he did with unusual alacrity and with prayer. On reaching the bottom, the air instantly exploded, and in a moment he was ushered into eternity! How soothing and cheering the thought that he was escaped the everlasting burnings, and has passed literally through the fire to the regions of glory!

But the bounds of this communication will not permit enlargement. The work I consider as ongoing and increasing. The limits of Satan's domains here are diminishing daily. The account not a few give of their conversion is, that they could not think of being left a prey when others were making their escape. There is thus a provision made for the increase of the kingdom of Christ by a kind of laudable jealousy – a pressing in ere the door be shut.

I have been engaged, and still continue to be engaged, in conversing with new communicants; and never before now have I had such pleasant work in listening to, and marking down, the accounts which the youngest to the oldest give of the state of their minds. While some, who seem to be savingly impressed, have given a somewhat *figurative* account of their feeling, yet, in by far the greater number of instances, they give most Scriptural and intelligible accounts of their convictions, and of the grounds on which they rest their peace. Their experiences are evidently so various, as not to be in any degree copies of each other. Yet they all end in building upon the sure foundation, Christ in the promise, and Christ formed in them. The question naturally occurs, and has been put, "Is there anything peculiar in the subjects and mode of address of the sermons which have been so remarkably successful?" I answer, that upon a ground work of solid, clear, and simply expressed views of Divine truth, there was a great measure of affectionate, earnest pleading, rich exhibition of the fullness and freeness of the Gospel, eminently calculated to convey to the hearers the conviction and feeling of the sincerity of the preacher, and of the rich grace of the Lord Jesus. It has also been a matter of general remark, that there is an unction and deep solemnity in the *prayers* of the preacher who has been honored to begin this work, and which, perhaps, even more than the sermons, have made way to the heart. We have had much precious truth presented to us by my much beloved brethren, to whom it must be gratifying to be assured, that in conversations with my people, there have been references, I may say, to each of their discourses, as having been profitable, as well as acceptable; and that having been so well supported by their cooperation, and the Presbyterianial notice taken of the subject, we cherish the pleasing hope, that, under the special and continuing blessing of the great Head of the Church, this will prove not only a genuine, but an extensive and a permanent revival – the only means of arresting our downward

course, and effecting that blessed consummation, which the diffusion of merely intellectual knowledge will never accomplish.

WILLIAM BURNS      Minister of Kilynth.

Manse, Kilsyth, September 16, 1839.

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER 2

## ACCOUNT OF THE COMMUNION

1939

About three weeks after this remarkable work commenced, it was considered most desirable and obligatory to have *another* communion season. The Session met for special prayer for direction as to the matter, and afterwards as to the *time* most suitable.

The number of new communicants amounts nearly to ninety. A few who spoke on the subject seem to have had scruples, and did not come forward. With the exception of a very few, and the account given of their views and spiritual condition has been very pleasing and satisfying. They vary in regard to age from twelve to three score and ten; a good many are from fifteen to eighteen years of age. The work of examining has been of a different character from that of former years, wherein "*we have seen evil.*" No doubt the systematic knowledge of not a few of them is deficient, and much pains must be taken by themselves and by us in this matter. I have urged on the young converts especially a very careful study of the Shorter Catechism, and the earnest, close, and prayerful study of the Scriptures. We solicit the prayers of Christian friends and ministers that we may have the great joy of seeing our children "walking in the truth," and *established with grace.*

The number of communicants would doubtless have been greater had we deferred the communion for a few weeks, as the Banton revival is not so far advanced as to have furnished a large addition.

A great concourse of people, including not a few genuine friends of the Lord Jesus, assembled to our communion. It is thought that not fewer than from twelve to fifteen thousand *we in and about* the town of Kilsyth upon the Lord's day; at the Tent the number is estimated at about ten or twelve thousand. The day was uncommonly favorable; and indeed during the whole interesting season external circumstances were most propitious, and having been made the matter of special prayer, the answer should be marked and remembered.

One the Fast day (Thursday) public worship began at the usual hour, the minister commencing with praise and prayer, and reading Psalms 126 and 130. The Rev. C. J. Brown of Edinburgh preached from Romans 7:9, "I was alive without the law once," &c. The Rev. Dr. Malan of Geneva preached in the afternoon, from John 14:29, "Peace I leave with you, &c. Mr. McNaughten of Paisley in the evening from Isaiah 42:3, "A bruised reed shall he not break," &c. He preached also at Banton, and Mr. Cunningham of Edinburgh from the words in Romans 5:8, "God *commendeth his love* to us." Friday evening the Rev. Mr. Middleton of Strathmiglo preached from Jeremiah 8:22, "Is there no balm in Gilead, is there no physician there?" Saturday Mr. W. C. Burns preached in the tent to a large assembly from Romans 10:4, "Christ is the end of the law," &c. In the evening Mr. Somerville of Anderston preached to a crowded audience from John 16 on the work of the Spirit. This was a remarkable night of prayer, secret and social; probably there was not an hour or watch of the night altogether silent. The beds were not much occupied: many, like the Psalmist, prevented the dawning of the morning. The morning bell rung at nine o'clock, and worship began at fully twenty minutes to ten, both in church and at the tent. The action sermon was from John 6:35, "I am the bread of life," &c. Mr. Brown of Edinburgh fenced the tables. Mr. Rose of Glasgow preached in the Tent and fenced the tables.

The first table, as usual, contained about one hundred; but to prevent confusion and undue protraction of the services, arising from so unusual a number of communicants, the second was composed of those already seated in the body of the church; after this the third was composed of those in the usual bounds, with a few seats additional, and the remainder were served in the usual tables, so that the great accession was not felt as any obstruction to order or comfort. The ministers were at full liberty to address the communicants without the constant urgency of studied brevity. There were eight services as follows: -- The Minister, first; Mr. Martin of Bathgage, second; Mr. Dempster of Denny, third; Mr. Brown, fourth; Mr. Somerville, fifth; Mr. Rose, sixth; Mr. Duncan, Kirkintilloch, seventh; and Dr. Dewar, eighth.

Mr. Rose preached in the evening from Isaiah 42:3. All over by nine, without interval. In the tent, after Mr. Rose, Mr. W. C. Burns, Mr. Middleton, Mr. Somerville, and Dr. Dewar preached. Mr. W. C. Burns preached again, by moonlight, to a great assembly, from "The mountains may depart," &c. All was most orderly and decorous, and in many cases there were symptoms of deep emotion. We have heard of several well authenticated cases of persons who came with levity of mind and went away deeply impressed; and of one or two who *could not get away*; but remained over Monday. Besides the vast crowd at the tent, Messrs. Martin, Dempster, Brown, and Harper (of Bannockburn) severally addressed groups of people near the church, waiting for entrance to the tables. After public service, a great number of the godly strangers, and of our younger members, and of persons concerned about salvation, remained. The younger ministers present continued in exhortation, prayer, and psalms successively, for a considerable time in a most solemn, affectionate manner, feeling unusual enlargement in their own spirits, with much of the felt gracious presence of God.

On Monday, at a quarter past eleven, probably from two to three thousand assembled around the tent. Dr. Dewar preached from John 16:5, "He (the Spirit of truth) will convince the world of sin," &c. Mr. W. C. Burns preached from Ezekiel 36:23-26, "A new heart will I give you," &c. The hour of five struck ere all was over, and very few withdrew previously. The sensation was deep and solemn. In the evening Mr. Brown preached in the church from "What do ye more than others?" Similar exercises were engaged in also on the Monday night as on Sabbath night; which the ungodly jeer at, the formal wonder at and censure, and which many good Christians would at first pronounce rather carrying it too far. But the fact is, that this is a spring-tide, a very uncommon season, in which a rigid adherence to the rules of ordinary times must not be applied. We have been drawing up a large draught, and the nets cannot be kept and laid by so orderly and silently as usual.

This precious season of communion is now over and gone, but the remembrance is sweet. Having been preceded, accompanied, and followed by a very unusual copiousness of prayer, the showers in answer have been very copious and refreshing. We are daily hearing of good done to strangers, who came Zaccheus-like to see what it was, who have been pierced in heart and have gone away new men. Our own people of Christian spirit have been greatly enlivened and strengthened, and some very hopeful cases of apparently real beginnings of new life have been brought to our knowledge. I feel grateful to the God of grace and God of order in the churches, that there has been such a concurrence of what is true, *venerable*, pure, just, lovely, and of good report, and that little indeed has escaped from any of us which can justly cause regret. We are anxious (we trust we have a good conscience) that nothing should be done against, but everything *for* the truth, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ. The solemn appearance of the communion tables, and the delightful manner in which they were exhorted – the presence of not a few unusually *young* disciples at the tables – the seriousness of aspect in all, and the softening and melting look

of others, made upon every rightly disposed witness a very delightful impression. May the Lord give abundant increase.

For ninety years, doubtless, there has not been in this parish such a season of prayer and holy communings and conferences – nor at any period such a number of precious sermons delivered: the spiritual awakening and the genuine conversions at this time are not few, and it is hoped will come forth to victory. But the annals of eternity only will divulge the whole! The *enemy*, the Devil, has been also among us, and is doubtless busy *now* – more so than at the time of this dispensation. We are not ignorant of his devices.

Yet upon the whole, there is much cause indeed to give God the glory for what he hath wrought. That he hath been the chief worker is most undoubted, for “the Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the Devil,” and his works have been much damaged and brought down among us. The public houses, the coal pits (A coal master here bears witness, that the colliers who were formerly drunk ten days in the month, are now sober, and that instead of swearing, they have prayer-meetings below ground, and are orderly. And why should colliers not be numbered among saints, and be kings and priests to God? Pious colliers and miners, what a treasure!), the harvest reaping fields, the weaving loom-steads, the recesses of our glens, and the sequestered haughs around, all may be called to witness, that there is a mighty change in this place for the better.

The wicked scoff – nay, some we hear around us, or passing by, have brought upon themselves the great guilt of speaking evil of this work. We pray for them. “They know not what they do!” Some decent professors and moral people, are opposed to this whole work, and say, “If it continue, it may do good,” but they do nothing to make it continue, and others throw cold water upon it. It is strange, that when sermons seem to make no impression, these persons should feel no anxiety about the permanency of the good expected – but when there is really appearance of good impressions, their doubt should be expressed about the duration of the good promised. Shall we be satisfied that we preach, and are heard, and no one showing any concern, but preach, and are heard, and no one showing any concern, but just sitting, and it may be, sleeping out the hours, and returning home as they came? Surely, surely even a degree, yea, a great deal of enthusiasm, is better than death-like insensibility.

Such godly fear has come upon the people, that scarcely a single instance of intoxication, or any approach to it, has been observed in the whole multitude assembled, where in formerly the prevalence of this and the quarrels it engendered brought dishonor on tent-preaching, and in fact extinguished it.

Special instances of good done are naturally called for. Many memorable cases can be produced. Selection is difficult. A woman from Airdrie was observed by a few around her to be much impressed while Mr. VV. C. Burns preached. She at length left the field and retired for prayer. After a while she was followed by some praying people, who conversed with her. She seems to have undergone a complete change, and went away in a composed frame. A young gentleman from Glasgow, with whom I and Mr. Brown conversed, who had come with some indefinite notion of good or of being pleased, went home a new man in Christ Jesus. I know several cases of whole houses being really converted. Mrs. H. has been converted in a very wonderful way. She had been a very passionate regardless character, who with her husband and family spent the Sabbath day in drinking, and other tainted enormities; two pious women, unknown to each other, had called upon her, telling her that they could get no rest till they came to warn her of her sin and danger. The poor woman thought with herself, if these two are so concerned about me that they cannot get rest, what should be my

concernment about myself? She attended a prayer meeting, came home at midnight, and roused her family to tell them of her change of mind. There seems a very remarkable work of grace with the husband, and other branches of the family.

A. B., collier, aged fifty, a month ago, was upon the road side on the way from the church in great agony of mind when I passed homewards. I at first thought he had been *in drink*: but it turned out that he had Hannah-like been pouring out his heart before the Lord, having got a sight of his sinfulness; he went to his bible and prayed; got heartening, as he expressed it, from the thought that had come to him, ' Shall I be a cast away?' Enabled to lay hold on Christ as the Ransomer, and as having paid the debt, he said, "Come life, come death, I will depend on his merits and mercies:" resolving to be with Christ hence forward. On receiving his token, he said, "I used to run from you, but am now happy to meet. I served Satan fifty years: I am now the Lord's." His two companions, J. S and T. A., gave very satisfactory accounts of their change of heart, and are also communicants. The accounts of other cases more detached and interesting must be deferred.

I add a very few words in the way of inference.

1st. Prayer united, as well as secret, for the bestowal of the Spirit's influence, is most important, and will sooner or later be heard.

2nd. *Extra* means should be used to bring those without the pale of any church to hear the Gospel. The preaching the former summer in the church-yard once and again, and the late frequent addresses in the market and field, has most certainly brought the word near to many who might have remained to their dying day without hearing it. Assuredly these means must be used, otherwise our newly provided churches will remain unoccupied, and in a great degree useless.

3rd. There is a close connection betwixt *Missionary* work and revivals. Our newly organized Missionary Society, in January this year, has been marked by several people as an era. No church can be in a lively state when nothing is done for the heathen.

4th. The social nature of man is an important element in his constitution, and exerts a powerful influence on the state of the church and of the world. There are those who view the weavers' shops as objects of unmingled aversion, as hotbeds of anarchy; but when a good influence is made to bear upon the minds of the operatives, the facilities for *good* are proportional to those for evil — the reviving interest spreads much quicker than in a rural district. Let every minister of the Gospel, and every Christian patriot keep this steadily in view, and ply the workshops with every good and generous influence. Never let us cease in good times and bad, to essay to do good, in the morning sowing seed, and in the evening withholding not our hand: thus are we to sow beside all waters. God give the increase!

W. B. Kilsyth, 30<sup>th</sup>, September, 1839.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Chapter 3

## THE KNOWLEDGE OF SIN

1840

“And when He is come He will reprove the world of sin.” – John 16:8.

#### MY DEAR FELLOW-SINNERS

The object I have at present in view is to guide you to a true and saving knowledge of THE NATURE AND HEINOUSNESS OF SIN. This is a subject which lies at the very foundation of all true religion; and I know of nothing which is more fearfully wanting, even among professing Christians, than a thorough acquaintance with it. It is from the want of this that the ungodly world is lying fast asleep on the edge of the pit’s yawning mouth; and it is from the same cause that many anxious sinners come short of a saving union to Jesus, and that the true people of God, in general, feed with so little appetite from hour to hour upon Emmanuel, as the righteousness and life of their souls. The knowledge of sin, and that alone, will make the Saviour truly, supremely, and permanently prized.

In a future letter, if the gracious Lord permits me, I mean to speak to you upon the work of the Holy Ghost in convincing the soul of sin. At present, we are to consider the means which he employs, in performing this blessed work. But, in the very outset, I would press upon you the great – and, alas! greatly neglected – truth, that it is only through the almighty and direct operation of the Spirit of God, that true views of sin can be attained by fallen man. The truths which we are now about to consider are indeed momentous, and are fitted to awaken the whole world, were it not bound in chains of satanic darkness; but they will not, and cannot possibly do you any good, unless the Holy Spirit graciously open your eyes, and reveal them within your soul. I would therefore beseech and implore you, dear fellow-sinner, before you process farther, to retire to a secret place, and plead with the God of Love to pour our his Spirit upon you. By your doing so, these lines may be the humble, means of saving your soul – if it is not yet saved – or of leading you on in the narrow way to Zion, if you are already upon it. But, O! remember that it is at your peril that you read the truths of God as if they were the thoughts of a fellow-worm! Rather lay down this tract, and read not another line, than do so in a prayerless, easy, carnal frame of mind; for it *will* be a savour of death unto death, if it is not rendered by the Spirit a savour of life unto life. It *must* add drops of torment to your cup of wrath, if it is not useful in prevailing with you to take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.

We shall, first, very briefly, notice some of those false balances in which men weigh sin and weigh themselves, and then bring ourselves to the Law of God – the balance of the sanctuary – which cries to every sinner, like the handwriting on the wall to the King of Babylon, “Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.”

#### FALSE STANDARDS OF SIN

1<sup>st</sup>, *The Natural Conscience*. -- Multitudes remain at ease under the wrath of God, because they judge of their state by the voice of the natural conscience. The conscience may be compared to a clock – the Law of God to the sun. The clock is right only when it keeps time with the sun; and if a man should close his windows, keep a taper burning in his room, and regulate his movements by a clock which is standing, or has

gone wrong, he might sleep at noon-day, and the night overtake him before his work was aright begun. So it is with the conscience. It is a safe guide only when it is guided by the Law; it is to be followed only when it follows God; if we follow it farther, we shall follow it to hell! The conscience was originally in perfect harmony with the Law of God; but when man sinned, it fell, with all his other faculties, under the power of sin and Satan. In all unregenerate men it is very blind, and very insensible to the true character and claims of Jehovah; and in many it is so completely blindfolded by false religion, or seared by habitual and flagrant sin, that they pass through life thinking that all is well with them, and at last drop suddenly into the flames! Think of it, dear fellow-sinners, the conscience may give you no uneasiness, and yet you may be on the very brink of hell! A dead conscience leads many of damnation without a warning! They dream that they are to escape until they awake under the scorching of the fire that is never quenched, and the gnawing of the worm that never dies! Study the Divine Law, under the teaching of the Divine Spirit, and your conscience, when enlightened, will teach you that you deserve eternal death on account of many things in which you used to see no evil. Learn to regulate your timepiece by the sun – to guide your conscience by Jehovah's Law, and thus it will lead you to heaven, instead of leaving you, as alas! it leaves millions, to make shipwreck of your soul on the rocks and quicksands of the kingdom of darkness.

2<sup>nd</sup>, *The Natural Understanding*. – The understanding of fallen man, like the conscience, is naturally under the power of the prince of darkness, and is so completely blind to the things of God, that the very light which is in us by nature is darkness. In consequence of this fearful condition, the things of God appear to the natural man to be foolishness; he thinks them unreasonable, and is so puffed up by the flatteries of a vain and deceitful heart, that he cannot receive them. The natural understanding may admit the reasonableness of morality, and even of religion, however strict, provided only that it be not the pure gospel of Christ; but, when the testimony of God regarding holiness and sin is set before the mind, unless the almighty power of God accompany it, to beat down and strongholds of the prince of darkness, it finds no admittance – the eye is closed, and the heart is barred against it. How common is it to hear unregenerate men talk of the reasonableness of their religion! How generally do they look down with contempt upon the pure truth of the Word of God as a religion only fit for enthusiastic and narrow-minded bigots! How many monstrous forms of impiety and blasphemy, which cry aloud to Heaven for the thunderbolts of Divine vengeance, are the children of the devil setting forth in our own days under the injured names of reason and justice! All these are the fearful fruits of man's natural blindness; and, if we desire to know truly the nature of sin, we must not only escape from this blinded crowd, but must have the root of all their impieties and blasphemies destroyed with us. The root of all is the setting up of our own blinded views in opposition to the clear and holy declarations of the God of Truth; and this is so common, that there are thousands everywhere among us, who profess to be Christians, and yet have their minds impregably fortified by their proud imaginations, against the entrance of the true and saving knowledge of God; and, therefore, my dear fellow-sinner, I would urge you to examine, at the Throne of Grace, how far the natural darkness of your understanding has been dispelled, and your natural thoughts of what is reasonable have given way before the humbling light of the Holy Ghost. O! think how fearful is the impiety of that puny worm, who dares to call Jehovah to the bar of his blinded reason, and to sit in judgment upon the word and ways of the Holy One! Think what must be the peril of that sinner, who is setting up his own miserable views in opposition to the unerring voice of the God of Truth, and whose only hope of being saved, really depends of his being found to be wiser and more righteous than God! O! wonderful forbearance, which can suffer such creatures to breathe a single moment out of hell! When the Holy Spirit visits any soul, he teaches it that, if any man is wise in this world, he must become, in his own eyes, a fool, that he may be wise; he shows the sinner that all his boasted thoughts of what is reasonable, are nothing but the essence of pride and impiety, and that, if he

had no other thing to answer for than these at the bar of God, they would be more than enough to make the justice of his perdition plain. Dear fellow-sinner, examine yourself in regard to this matter, and seek that the God of Truth would deliver you from the power of darkness, and bring out your soul into the marvelous light of his own pure Word and Holy Spirit. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is the way of death." "Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away."

3<sup>rd</sup>, *The Opinion of the World*. – This is the last, but not the least powerful and dangerous of those false rules by which men in general form their views of right and wrong. There is hardly anything which tends so much to keep the multitude at ease in their perishing condition, as their following the general opinion of men around them; and even when a sinner is awakened by the Holy Spirit, he has often a fearful struggle before he can fully deliver himself from the bondage of the world's opinion, and can find strength to act upon it as an undoubted truth, however awful, that the whole world lieth in the wicked one; that Satan reigns in every unregenerate soul, and sways the scepter of the globe. It is indeed difficult to say with full conviction, "Let God be true, and every man a liar;" to embrace God's views regarding sin, and to give the lie to all the darkness and pride of the soul within, and of the ungodly world around. This, however, we must do, if we are ever to learn our true condition, and are to be saved from the perishing wreck of this apostate world. And you must remember, dear friend, that though this is hard, nay impossible, for man himself, through the power of sin and Satan, it is both possible and easy to the God of Salvation. When the Spirit comes to anyone in his conscience-convincing power, he speedily destroys the power of the world's opinion, and brings the soul to take part with the blessed God of Truth, against all the enemies who oppose him. The Spirit teaches a sinner that the things which are highly esteemed among men are an abomination in the sight of God; that, under the covering of natural virtue, men are universally depraved; that the decent, respectable, amiable, learned, accomplished, and honourable, in the unregenerate world, who, he used to think, could hardly fail to be saved, are really nothing more and nothing less than decent rebels, respectable enemies of God, learned fools, amiable slaves of Satan, accomplished children of wrath, honourable heirs of hell; that the world is not one whit better in the nineteenth century than it was in the first, when Jews and Gentiles, high and low, learned and ignorant, profligates and professors of religion, rose with one consent against the Light of the World, and put Him to death, because they could not endure his holy doctrine, nor these piercing beams of his Divine glory which shone through his human nature, concealing, like the veil in the ancient temple, the Holiest of all! He teaches the soul that, however much men may think of themselves, and of this world, with its nobles, parliaments, princes, and monarchs, the nations are before God as nothing; that he can as easily punish a world as destroy a worm; and that his enemies, though they were multiplied a million-fold, could not shield themselves one moment from the avenging stroke of his almighty arm! By such discoveries as these, the power of the world's opinion in regard to sin is effectually broken, -- the sinner feels that, if he is to be saved, he must take part with God against it, and that, if he should persist in following the world, he must be condemned with the world, and be driven away with the world into everlasting punishment.

These, then, dear fellow-sinner, are some of the false standards by which the world at large, and all of us by nature, judge of sin, and by which multitudes are kept bound under darkness here, until they are at last sent down to the blackness of darkness forever. It is easy and common to disown these rules *in words*, but few do so *in very deed, and from the heart*; and you may be assured, my dear friend, that if the power of these principles has not been discovered to you, and destroyed within you, by the Holy Ghost, you still continue a stranger to his saving work, and are ignorant of God, of your own heart, of sin, of your lost condition, and of

Emmanuel, the only Saviour of the lost. Praying that the Holy Spirit may make us willing to judge ourselves sincerely by that perfect Law which God has given to man, we shall now proceed to consider its nature.

#### THE TRUE STANDARD OF SIN

The only true standard of sin is THE LAW OF GOD, which is summed up in the Ten Commandments, and is explained at large throughout the Word of God. The Law of God is the solemn declaration of his holy will, as our Creator, Proprietor, and Moral Governor. It has proceeded forth from the inaccessible light of Jehovah's eternal throne, as the perfect and unalterable rule of man's character and conduct, and the foundation of all God's dealings with him. It is only when we view the Law in connection with God as its author, and when, by the Spirit, we discern somewhat of God's infinite glory, that we see its excellence and authority, and feel that infinite guilt is contracted by the violation of it. The world has mean and carnal thoughts of God, -- imagining him to be such an one as themselves, and, therefore, men in general trample on the Law without remorse or fear; but when so much as a single beam of the Divine glory shines into the guilty soul, the sinner discovers the infinite majesty of the Law, and the infinite demerit of the very least offence against it. Let us therefore seek, as we are briefly considering the properties of the Law, to realize the glorious presence of Jehovah who gave it; and thus, at every step, we shall be ashamed and confounded on account of our iniquities, and shall fall low as undone sinners at the feet of Jesus.

1<sup>st</sup>, *The Law is Holy.* -- The moral law is a copy of God's holy nature, a mirror in which all the Divine perfections shine gloriously forth. When we say that God is holy, we mean two things; first, that he is perfectly and unchangeably free from all iniquity himself; and, second, that his blessed nature recoils with an essential and infinite abhorrence from the very sight of iniquity in any of his creatures. And thus it is with the Law which he has given to man. That Law demands perfect and constant love to God, perfect obedience to his will, perfect dedication to his glory, and perfect delight in his character and love. These glorious requirements manifest the infinite holiness of the Law. And, on the other hand, it shows its holiness when it forbids and condemns, with the fearful threatening of the second death, the very least degree of any form of sin; searching out and pursuing with divine vengeance, ungodliness, pride, irreverence, rebellion, impurity, malice, injustice, falsehood, envy, and every other form of sin. Man's depraved nature is a hotbed for the growth of all these iniquities, a fountain which is continually sending forth the black streams of impurity and ungodliness; but the Law of God, is unchangeably opposed to the very least sin even in thought or desire. Little do the multitude dream that they are under a Law so holy as this; and therefore they imagine that they can do many good things, and that they are in little danger of God's indignation; but when the Holy Ghost reveals to the soul the Law of God, and the nature of God, as represented in it, the conscience is set on fire, and the sinner is cast into depths of alarm and horror, wondering that the Almighty God, against whose perfections and government he is every moment sinning, does not let loose his thunderbolts upon him, and hurl him from the face of the earth into the bottomless pit! Dear fellow-sinner, have *you* ever felt in this way? If you have not, it is not because you are safe, but because you are blind. O! plead, in the name of Jesus, that the Spirit would reveal the holy Law to your conscience in its real nature, and then you shall be able to find no rest, except in the precious blood of God's own Son, which has been, as it were, sprinkled upon the Law, that its holiness might be vindicated, and the unholy sinner saved.

2<sup>nd</sup>, *The Law is Spiritual.* -- This is a property of the Law which is little attended to; but there is none which more fully sets forth its glory, nor the extent and heinousness of sin. When it is called "spiritual," the meaning seems to be, not only that it is a law which reaches to the heart of man, but that it is a law which is fitted for a spiritual nature, or, in other words, a nature communicated to man by the power of the Holy

Spirit. When man was created at first in the Divine image, the Spirit of God dwelt in his soul, as in a temple, and made him capable of discerning, and admiring, and obeying the spiritual Law which the Lord inscribed upon his holy conscience. In consequence of sin, however, the Spirit of God deserted the soul of man, and he forthwith became, as the Scripture says, "carnal," or "sensual, not having the Spirit." That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Thus, the nature of man has become entirely contrary to the Law. "I know," says Paul, "that the Law *is spiritual*, but I am *carnal*, sold under sin." "The carnal mind is *enmity* against God; it is not subject to the Law of God, *neither*, indeed, *can* be; and they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God." There is no view of the Law of God which so utterly destroys the hopes of an unregenerate man as this. The natural man thinks that he can do many things which the Law requires, and that he has at least some good works to recommend him to the mercy of God, as men speak. But what does the spirituality of the Law teach us? It is, indeed, a different doctrine. It shows a man that he is wholly "carnal;" that he cannot even discern the Law aright; that his heart is unmixed hatred to it, when truly known; that he cannot please God in anyone particular; and that his best dispositions, and most commendable actions, are wholly destitute of spiritual life and glory, and are as different from those which the Law demands as a dead waxen image is different from a living man. An unrenewed man neither has done, nor can do, anyone thing which will meet the requirements of the Law. His works are dead works, proceeding from selfish, carnal principles, and being destitute of that holy love to God, and dedication to his glory, which constitute the value of actions in the judgment of the Law; and thus, instead of deserving a reward, they are fitted to draw down the consuming wrath of the Holy One! Poor carnal sinner, you must betake yourself, with grief and shame, to the glorious spiritual obedience of the Lamb of God, as your only refuge from the curse of a spiritual Law, and in him you will find the promise of the Holy Ghost to restore to you a spiritual nature, that, being accepted in the Beloved, you may be again conformed to God's image.

3<sup>rd</sup>, The Law is Bread. – This is another view of the Law which exalts the character of God, and strikes at the root of all man's pride and self-confidence. By nature we imagine that the Law is narrow in its requirements, and, in our blindness and pride, we are disposed to stretch out our own righteousness, as it were, to correspond with it, and cover it; but when the Spirit opens our eyes, we are led to say with David, "I have seen an end of all perfection; but thy commandment is *exceeding broad*." We now see that the Law is wide as the perfections of the Divine character, and that it is broad as the nature of man, reaching to everyone of his powers and faculties, fathoming the mighty depths of his heart, penetrating into the most concealed recesses of his being, following him into the darkest mazes of his thoughts and imaginations, attending him wherever he goes, observing him whatever he does, unveiling his hidden depravity, searching to the bottom of his soul, examining and judging every thought, every desire, every imagination, every look, every feature, every word, every motion, every passing expression of the countenance. Ah! when the Law of God is thus seen in its exceeding breadth, the enmity of the sinner to it is fearfully exasperated – the commandment comes home to him, as it came to Paul; sin, which was asleep, revives, and the sinner dies! He is made to feel that, though his fancied good works were *really* good, they could no more meet the breadth of the commandment, than the point of a needle can cover the surface of the globe, or than the puny insect can veil with its wing the face of the vast immeasurable skies! This conviction strikes him to the dust, and he would lie there and perish in despair, did not the blessed Spirit direct his eye to the surety of sinners, and discover to the conscience the Law-magnifying righteousness of Jesus, which, through the infinite glory of his Godhead, not only meets, but overpasses the Law in all the exceeding breadth of its demands.

4<sup>th</sup>, The Law is Righteous. -- When the holiness, spirituality, and exceeding breadth of the Law are set before us, we are ready to complain of it as unreasonably strict and severe; but, if we view the matter in the

light of God, we shall see that this charge is unreasonable, unjust, and impious. Justice consists in giving to everyone his due. Now, let us apply this to the Law. It demands for God supreme and constant love to his blessed nature, complete obedience to his holy will, entire devotedness to his glory, and perfect delight in his presence and love. These demands we have, alas! withstood; but are they therefore unjust? No. They are the natural and the unalienable rights of Jehovah, which he cannot but insist on, and to surrender which would be to surrender his glory as God. That Law which declares these rights of God, and guards them with its fearful threatening, is a righteous Law. Its demands are righteous, -- its curse it righteous. If its demands were less strict, or its threatening less severe, it would be an unjust law – the enemy of God’s glory, and of God’s creation. It is sin – it is not the Law – which is unjust, robbing God of his glory, and man of his dignity and his blessedness; and though sin has obtained so complete dominion in the human heart, that man has no disposition to keep the Law, it is righteous in continuing to maintain the claims of God, and in condemning all who oppose them. Poor sinner, you may think to spring backward and escape from the grasp of the Divine Law, by charging it with too great severity; but it is impossible – you cannot escape. It holds you in the awful bonds of justice, and never can you be delivered from its iron bars and its gates of brass, until you see yourself righteously condemned, and throw yourself into the arms of Jesus, who, as the sinner’s surety, met the law in all its just demands, and fully satisfied it on the cross! You have robbed God of his rights and glory; you have been guilty of high treason against the King of kings; you have exposed yourself to the consuming stroke of God’s avenging justice; but behold! the blessed Jesus stands in the breach to turn away God’s wrath, he stores that glory to God which you have taken away, and, by his precious sufferings, renders your salvation possible, in harmony with the rights of God, and the honour of his Law.

5<sup>th</sup>, The Law is Good. – This is the crowning feature in the character of the Law, and it is the one which gives the finishing stroke of infamy to the character of sin. The natural man thinks that the Law, at least when explained in its spiritual nature, is the enemy of human happiness; and that, though a man may increase his happiness by decent moral conduct, holiness is opposed to it. This is an unfounded, but a deep and fearful delusion, under which sin and Satan have bound an apostate world. It is indeed true that the unrenewed sinner can find no enjoyment in the holy Law, but is pained and tormented when it comes near his guilty conscience and carnal heart; and it is certain, that, if the carnal man were transplanted to heaven, where all is perfect holiness, it would prove to him a place of restraint and of torment. But this only proves that man’s taste is depraved, and not that holiness has anything in its own nature that is evil or unpleasant. In what does the infinite and ineffable blessedness of God himself consist? It is little that we can conceive of this, but yet we are warranted to say that it arises chiefly from his reflecting, with infinite and unchangeable complacency, on the perfections of his own holy nature. Now, if this be the case, must not the Law be essentially and infinitely good and gracious, which commands man to be in the contemplation of Jehovah’s uncreated glory? We may, through the power of sin and Satan, think little of this; but, in reality, it is the perfection of dignity and of blessedness; and God, in giving man such a law, designed to make him a partaker of his own glory and felicity. And, although the Law be armed with a fearful curse against all who transgress it, this does not alter its essential goodness. Nay, this very curse is placed as the guardian and defender of goodness, to take vengeance on those who would injure and destroy it. The Law which was ordained unto life, we find to be unto death; but does this show that the Law is evil? No; it only proves the infinite evil of sin, which can change the sweetest food into the most deadly poison. “Was then that which is good made death unto me?” says Paul. He answers, “God forbid;” it was not so, but it was sin that wrought death in him by that Law which is good, in order that sin, by the good commandment, might become “exceeding sinful.” Indeed, my dear fellow-sinners, the Law of God is so essentially and perfectly good, that, constituted as man has been, it is impossible for Almighty power to make him truly and eternally

blessed, except by restoring his nature to harmony with its demands; and when man is again perfectly restored to agreement with the Law, and its righteousness has been fulfilled in him, through the power of the Holy Spirit, his blessedness will be complete. The reason why the blessedness of the children of God is not perfect on earth is simply this, that their holiness is still imperfect; but when they leave the world, and become free from the power of sin, their joy will be full. Even here they can say with Paul, "I delight in the Law of God after the inward man," and with David, "Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it;" but when they enter into glory, and are conformed to the image of God's dear Son, their delight in the Law will be ineffable, and they will feel that, in departing from it, they had not only trampled on the principles of justice, but had sinned against the very essence of goodness. How infinite, then, is the evil of sin! How fully deserving to be pursued with God's everlasting vengeance! How mad and infatuated is that world, which seeks for happiness by forsaking the holy Law, and entering those regions of ungodliness which are walled off by Divine justice – nay, by the Divine goodness itself – as the habitation of wrath and vengeance!

6<sup>th</sup>, The Law is Unchangeable. – It is a common delusion, that because man is now utterly depraved, and unable to keep the Law, according to its holy and spiritual character, the Law must be brought down to suit his fallen nature. No error is more common than this, and there is none which more completely saps the foundation of the gospel. It is beyond all doubt true that man is totally depraved, and that, until he is born again, he cannot command so much as one holy thought; yet it is equally certain that he is bound, absolutely bound, by Divine justice, to keep the Law as strictly and perfectly as Adam was in the day of his creation. *God did not deal with Adam as a private person, but as the head and representative of the human family;* and when he gave him the Law, he gave him with it a holy nature to be preserved and conveyed to all his posterity. We are ready to object to this arrangement because the covenant is broken, and we are involved in Adam's guilt and ruin; but would anyone have done so, had Adam stood? Would we not have had infinite reason to admire God's boundless grace in giving eternal glory to us so freely? And, had we been present on the day when God humbled himself so infinitely us to make a covenant with man, must we not have joyfully and thankfully approved of that covenant? And was it not then most righteous and gracious in the Lord to make that choice for us in our absence, which we must have joyfully welcomed if present? *It is not the choice of God, but the choice of Adam, that we ought to condemn;* and yet the very individuals who find fault with the first covenant, madly reject the second, and follow their first father in the paths of rebellion and apostasy from day to day and hour to hour!

And then consider, again, *the nature of that inability which man is under to keep the Law of God.* Were men willing and anxious to keep it, and yet prevented by some outward hindrance, such as the want of faculties or opportunities, it might with some reason be said, that the Law demanded too much. But is this the case? No! The reason of our inability is simply the greatness of our depravity – that we are desperately wicked and full of pride, enmity to God, rebellion, impurity, and injustice. And shall the Law of God give countenance to principles so base and fiendish as these? Shall it consent to man's rebellion? Shall it legalize iniquity and ungodliness? Fearful thought! What! shall the fall of a guilty worm shake the principles of eternal righteousness! Shall man's willful enmity against the blessed God rob God of this right to perfect and constant love! Ah, no! Man may fall, but God's Law and justice cannot be shaken. Man may become so depraved that he cannot love God, and cannot hate sin, but God cannot cease to demand that sin should be abhorred, and that his own character – the perfection of beauty – should be admired. Were he to retreat from these demands, and to wink at sin at any form, he would cease to be God – the glory of him who dwelleth in the light that is inaccessible would set in an eternal night! Ah! praise to the Lord, this cannot be. There is One in the universe who cannot do iniquity, and who, infinitely rather than that his Law should be

violated, his justice injured, his glory tarnished, would case with indignation a whole world of rebels into the abyss of wrath! heaven and earth may pass away, but one jot or tittle can in nowise pass from the Law till all be fulfilled. We may break a way to hell through the Ten Commandments, which are set as a fence sound the pit to keep man out of it; but who shall break up a door through them into heaven? The world may dream that God's Law is relaxed, and may not be violated with impunity, because men have agreed to trample it under impious feet. We may dream that God can now bear our sins, because he has been so long accustomed to have his majesty insulted, his glory despised, his name dishonoured. But ah! sinners will one day learn that they are mistaken. They will learn this at the bar of judgment, if they refuse to learn it at the throne of mercy: they will be taught it by the devils in hell, if they are not taught it by the gracious Spirit upon earth!

If it had been possible that the Law could be relaxed, where would it have been so but in the Garden of Gethsemane? to whom but to the only-begotten Son of God? If ever Jehovah could have sacrificed the claims of justice to the cry of mercy, it would surely have been in that mysterious hour of Emmanuel's sufferings, when he fell on his face, and three times prayed, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," and his sweat was great drops of blood falling down to the ground. It was not possible. There was, indeed, an answer granted to his prayer, -- an angel appeared unto him from heaven to strengthen him; but it was to strengthen him that he might reach the cross, and might not die before he had there drunk to its very dregs that awful cup of trembling which Divine justice had measured out to sinners, and which was put into his holy hands as their redeeming surety! There was one way, indeed, in which he might have escaped, and there was only one. Could he have broken his covenant engagement to the Father as the surety of his elect, -- could he have given up his mighty and unparalleled undertaking, by which he was about to magnify the Law, and redeem from its curse sinners who had dishonoured it, -- could he have retreated from that scene of conflict, where he was about to make an end of sin, and overcome the devil, and death, and hell, -- could he have returned dishonoured to the Father's bosom, -- then, indeed, his agonies might have been avoided. But this he could not do. His love to God and to his people, his truth, his oath, his glory, all engaged him to carry through the work which the Father had laid upon him. He could not, and he would not, retreat until he had spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly. And if he must go forward, Justice was inflexible, -- the Law was unchangeable, -- God was inexorable! The sins of his people had been laid upon him, and though he was the man who is God's fellow, he lay bound under the adamant chains of Divine everlasting justice, and he could not be set free until he had magnified the Law in all its unchangeable breadth and holiness, and had fully paid the penalty of his people's sins! And can we imagine for a moment, that, if the Law could not be relaxed to the man who is God's fellow, it can be relaxed to poor guilty worms of the dust, such as we are -- that God will punish his own Son and yet spare us? This is impossible; and the hopes that are founded on such a ground are desperate and impious.

But how, then, how will say, can anyone be saved? If the Law is thus holy and unchangeable, who can keep it? and if it must be kept, who can have hope? It is indeed true, that it must be perfectly fulfilled; and yet, mystery of mysteries! it is equally true that the guiltiest sinner out of hell may be saved! How can this be? Not by the Law being brought down to meet the sinner, but by the sinner being brought up to meet and magnify the Law, as clothed and covered with the righteousness of Christ. The sins of men were laid on Christ, and the unchangeable Law condemned him, and humbled him even to the death of the cross; and so, when the righteousness of Christ is put upon the sinner, the unchangeable Law justifies him, and exalts him to everlasting life in heaven! It was no sin of Christ's for which he wore a crown of thorns, and in like manner it is no righteousness of ours for which we may wear a crown of glory. Thus it is that mercy and

truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other. The Law remains unchanged and unchangeable; and yet, mystery of mysteries! the sinner who has broken it is saved.

Beloved fellow-sinner, the subject is so large, and has occupied us so long, that I can add nothing in the way of exhortation. But, let me ask you these solemn questions in the presence of God: Have *you* seen the Law to be holy, spiritual, exceeding broad, righteous, good, and unchangeable? Have *you* felt and acknowledged that you are under it, and that you are utterly undone? Have *you* confessed to God that you deserve to bear his holy curse in hell? Have *you* fled from your own works, and embraced with all your heart the Law-magnifying work of Christ as your only ground of hope? If you have done these things, or if you do them *now*, through the Spirit, you are saved, and *cannot* come into condemnation. But if you have not this experience, and if you should never have it, it is impossible, infinitely impossible, that you can be saved. Beware, dear fellow-sinner, of begging at the door of justice for mercy, or of bargaining with the Law by doing what you can to fulfil it. The Law cannot speak a syllable of mercy; it will have nothing to do with prayers, and tears, and reformation: it has a promise for those who keep it perfectly; but it has a curse for all who do not. It will enter into no compromise; it will not meet sin half-way with a reduction of its righteous demands; it must have a perfect obedience, or it will inflict an everlasting curse. Thus, dear fellow-sinner, you are shut up to faith in the righteousness of Christ. Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. Look unto him as your surety, and you *will* be saved; despise him, neglect him, and you *must* eternally perish!

Praying that the Holy Ghost may savingly enlighten all who read these lines in the knowledge of Emmanuel, and entreating the prayers of the Lord's children, that, in the next Letter, I may be enabled to speak aright of the work of Jesus, the glorious foundation of a sinner's hope, which God hath laid in Zion, I am, dear fellow-sinners, a lover of your souls, for the sake of Jesus.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 4

### WALK CIRCUMSPECTLY - A LETTER TO THE PROFESSED DISCIPLES OF CHRIST AT PERTH

1840

"He that endureth to the end shall be saved."-Matthew 10:22

MY DEAR FRIENDS IN THE LORD

I have felt the deepest anxiety about the state of your precious souls since we parted last, and have often wished to write to you; but when I thought of doing so, I always felt your case so very weighty, that I was obliged to give it over, having no power to speak to you as I could wish. I cannot, however, delay longer to let you know my continual care for you in the Lord. "Now we live if ye stand fast in the Lord." "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

When I consider our Lord's wonderful and most affecting parables of the sower, of the tares and the wheat, and of the ten virgins, with many other parts of his heart-searching Word; when I look around me and see one and another going back to the world, and walking no more with Jesus; and, above all, when I hear of some among yourselves who walk disorderly, and, by their open vanities and sins, bring dishonour on the holy and blessed name of Jesus, I feel my heart almost ready to break with concern about you all, and would indeed be utterly cast down, were it not that I hear the Lord Jesus saying, "My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." They are in his hand,-the hand of Jehovah, and yet the hand which was nailed to the cross to redeem them; and neither the devil, with all his malice and cunning wiled; nor the world, with its seductive smiles and bitter frowns; nor the old man, with its deceitful lusts and passions, can take them from him. But ah! My dearly beloved and longed for, how many of those who seem for a time to be Christ's sheep, listening to his voice, and following him, turn out afterwards to be wolves in sheep's clothing! Christ's true sheep hear his voice, and follow him,-they follow him willingly, they follow him fully, and they follow him constantly; whereas many that walk for a time among the sheep soon begin again to listen to the voice of strangers, and follow them rather than the Good Shepherd, when they come to a point where they must make a choice, and either part with others for Christ, or part with Christ for others. When we begin to set our faces Zionward, we are often like a dog following two men who are going together upon the same road. You cannot tell, as long as the men go on in company, to which of the two the dog belongs; but when they come to a point where they must separate and go opposite ways, the dog will follow the one who is his master. Thus, have you not seen some around you who seemed to follow Christ while the crowd followed him, but who now, alas! when these have gone back to their old ways, desert Christ and go with the world? O! is it not so with some of you, dear friends? When you must sacrifice a lust or sacrifice Christ, which do you crucify? When you must part with a companion, or a lover, or a relative, in order to serve the Lord, which do you abandon-your friend or your Saviour? I am sure you are beginning to understand somewhat better than you did, why the Christian life in this world is called a warfare. You are no doubt feeling that you have enemies without and enemies within, who seek your downfall and your destruction night and day. Do not be deluded with the idea that the way to heaven is everywhere strewed with roses, and that the enemies you have to contend with are either few or weak. The Lord has said "they are many, and they are strong, and they hate us with cruel hatred." How powerful and deceitful an enemy

has each of you in your own heart! "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" O, how it can point the most hideous sins in the colours of innocence! How I can honey over with unhallowed pleasure polls of the most deadly soul-slaying poison! This enemy, dear friends, is far more than a match for all the saints that ever lived on earth, and it will assuredly ruin both you and me, unless the Lord make us by his Spirit to detect its wiles, and enable us by his Almighty power to overcome them. If you would overcome in the Lord's battle, O! study deeply your own hearts, and flee to the infinite grace and power of Emmanuel, for refuge from it. And remember this must be a daily and hourly work. The old man is not easily made to lay down his arms to Christ: he will fight after he has got many a fall, and many a severe wound; and, even after he seems to be lying dead, he will revive again and renew the combat. The world also is the irreconcilable and deadly enemy of the Lord's ransomed ones. It overcomes many by its ungodly example, and its ungodly spirit; and when the influence neither of its spirit nor example will prevail against us, it will try to win us by smiles, or terrify us by frowns,-to attract us by a blooming rose, or daunt us by an unsheathed dagger. You will generally find that its smiles, and fawning and flatteries, are more to be dreaded than its scoffs and jeers, and bitter calumnies. No one is so dangerous to the Christian as a companion or friend, who is unconverted, but has many amiable qualities, and treats him with kindness and respect. Satan will tempt one to believe, in such a case, that there may be something really good in an unregenerate heart, and that you need not be so anxious as you may have been about a new heart, and a new Christ-exalting, world-condemning, God-glorifying, flesh-crucifying life! O! beware of the wolf in sheep's clothing. Abandon the unconverted as your companions, if you do not wish to abandon the well-grounded hope of escaping eternal perdition, and reaching eternal glory. In almost every case of open backsliding which I have heard of in this place, I have found that the poor backslider never fully renounced his or her former associates, and thus was gradually drawn away by them again into former habits of ungodliness; and I have no doubt you have noticed the same thing among yourselves. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but the companion of fools shall be destroyed." "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." What shall I say, my dearly beloved friends, of the wiles and malice of the devil, the god of this world? Alas! I am myself but little acquainted with these, through my own carnal blindness and security, and am therefore little able to warn and direct you, from experience. But the Lord hath said, "Satan goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Woe to them that are ignorant of Satan's devices against the Lord Jesus, and all who truly follow him! Their ignorance is the surest proof that they are led captive by him at his will. Believer, he will watch his opportunity against you; and, when you are off your guard,-perhaps, when alone, or when in the company of those from whom you think you have not much to fear, he will seek to prevail against you by some of his manifold devices.-I might say much more of these things, beloved, but my time is nearly gone; and I am afraid that, while I have been seeking to put you on your guard, and to beat to pieces a false, and therefore awfully dangerous, security, it may be needful to add a word of encouragement to anxious and desponding souls. Are there any of you that have got such a view of your spiritual enemies, and of the dangers and difficulties that beset you on the road to Zion, that you are cast down, and ready to give up the contest? To such an one I would say, While you have good reason to despair of help from yourself, or any other creature on earth or in heaven, you have infinite reasons for looking unto Jesus as the author and finisher of faith; who, as the Captain of Salvation, has already overcome, in the name of all his people, the devil and the world, and has promised to give them the victory, yea, to make them more than conquerors! The thought of our guilt, and depravity, and misery, ought not to lead us to despair of Emmanuel, but only

to despair of ourselves. It ought to drive us TO the throne of Jehovah's grace, instead of driving us away from it. Presumptive fleshly confidence is a soul - ruining sin, but unbelieving distrust in Jehovah-Jesus is a sin unspeakably more heinous and hell-filling. It is precious to be taught that without Christ we can do nothing; but it is far, far more precious, to be led by the Spirit, with Paul, to glory even in our infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon us. The first gospel-lesson is to look for nothing connected with salvation in ourselves: but the second and the greatest lesson is to see Christ as "all and in all." When we are weak, then we are strong,-weak as the worm Jacob in ourselves, but mighty as he was in Jehovah, to thrash the mountains and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff. It was Jacob's sense of weakness that was his strength, when he wrestled with the angel at Peniel, and prevailed. We are told that he wept and made supplication. His tears and prayers prevailed with Jehovah, whose compassions are most deeply and tenderly moved in our behalf, when, like poor worms, we are lying helpless in the dust at his feet! There may be the weakest child of God say, with David,

'By thee through troops of men I break,  
 And them discomfit all;  
 And, by my God assisting me,  
 I overleap a wall.

"As for God, perfect is his way:  
 The Lord his word is try'd;  
 He is a buckler to all those  
 Who do in him confide.

Who but the Lord is God? But he  
 Who is a rock and stay?  
 'Tis God that girdeth me with strength,  
 And perfect makes my way.

"He made my feet swift as the hinds,  
 Set me on my high places.  
 Mine hands to war he taught, mine arms  
 Brake bows of steel in pieces.  
 The shield of thy salvation  
 Thou didst on my bestow.  
 Thy right hand held me up, and great  
 Thy kindness made me grow.

"And in my way my steps thou hast  
 Enlarged under me,  
 That I go safely, and my feet  
 Are kept from sliding free.  
 Mine en'mies I pursued have,  
 And did them overtake;  
 Nor did I turn again till I  
 An end of them did make.

"I wounded them, they could not rise;  
 They at my feet did fall.  
 Thou girdest me with strength for war;

My foes thou brought'st down all:  
 And thou hast giv'n to me the necks  
 Of all mine enemies;  
 That I might them destroy and slay,  
 Who did against me rise.

"They cried out, but there was none  
 That would or could them save;  
 Yea, they did cry unto the Lord,  
 But he no answer gave.  
 Then did I beat them as small as dust  
 Before the wind that flies;  
 And I did cast them out like dirt  
 Upon the street that lies."  
 (Psalm 18:29-42)

If you want to fight, and overcome, and receive the crown of life in the day of the Lord, which is at hand, O! study his Word much, and, as far as you can, alone, and upon your knees! Watch and pray without ceasing. But above all, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Behold the Lamb of God. Live by faith upon the Son of God. Behold him as your only righteousness, to atone for your guilt, and give you a right to eternal glory;- behold him as your only life, raising you from the grave of your trespass to walk with him in newness of life, and glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which are God's. Behold him as your only strength, saying "Fear not, thou worm, Jacob," &c. (Isaiah 41:14), and teaching you to say, "Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob. Through thee will we push down our enemies," &c. (Psalm 44) O! let us think of Jesus, until our hearts are filled with adoring love to his glorious person, and with ardent humble zeal for his glory; until we hate sin with a perfect hatred, and have our whole hearts set on that holiness without which no one shall see the Lord.

Time would fail me, my dear friends, were I to try to say a hundredth part of what is in my heart: I must draw to a close. I would press upon you to study the concluding chapters of the Epistles, as your divine and blessed rule of life in the hands of the merciful and righteous Mediator. Pray over these for the illumination of the Holy Ghost, and for his Almighty power to sanctify your hearts through the truth. Be much alone with God. Grieve not the Spirit. Rejoice in the Lord, and again I say, rejoice. Walk wisely toward them that are without, redeeming the time. See that you fall not out among yourselves by the way. Warn the unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men: and the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your bodies, souls, and spirits, be preserved blameless to the day of his coming. *Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.* Brethren, remember me in your prayers, that I may open my mouth boldly, to declare the mystery of Christ, as I ought to speak. I cannot write more, but trust to come to you again, and see you face to face, when the Lord will, which perhaps may not be long. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his; and let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." May grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, be with you all. Amen.

Your humble and affectionate servant in the Lord,

Kilsyth, August 11, 1840.

WILLIAM C. BURNS.

P.S.-I have got many letters from Perth, which I find it almost impossible to answer at present, for want of time. There were signs of the Lord's presence at Glasgow, when I was there last week. I go again to them tomorrow. "In the name of the Lord will we display our banners." "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" Why tarry the wheels of thy chariot? Gird thy sword on thy thigh, and ride forth, conquering and to conquer. Remember Breadalbane, to which I go on Friday, if the Lord will.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 5

## A LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF MILNATHORT

1841

DEAR-BELOVED FRIENDS,

I am now far from you in bodily presence; but I can with truth say, that my heart is nearer to you than before, as my eye turns joyfully, from the awful contemplation of sin and ungodliness around me, in this poor town, to those favoured spots of my dear native land, on which the Holy Ghost has lately been pouring out his quickening grace. I lately sent you, in print, a letter on the all-important subject of "THE KNOWLEDGE OF SIN;" and as I have many duties pressing on me here, I must fulfill my promise of writing to you in a very hurried way, -- hoping that you will read the letter I have alluded to, as if sent to you in writing, and addressed to you alone. I shall, then, say a word to the following classes among you.

I. THE CARELESS. Careless sinners, I know not what to say to you. I have before declared to you the terrors of the Lord, and have sought to win you by the love of Christ. Others have done, and are doing the same: And is this to be all in vain? Are you *resolved* to go on as if there were no God, no Devil, no sin, no Saviour, no Heaven, no Hell? It is a time to *dream* when death, and devils, and perdition, are coming *every moment* nearer you, and are expecting *soon* to have you for their victim? What mean ye, O! sleepers? Arise, and call upon your God!

II. THE ANXIOUS. I am glad that there are some of this class among you, and I would that there were thousands more; for a man will never get to Heaven until he cries, under the sight of a holy God, of a guilty soul, and of a bleeding Saviour, "What must I do to be saved?" but beware, I entreat you, of thinking that *all* the *anxious* are saved, or that *you* are sure to be *converted*, because you are in this state. It is when you find peace and joy in believing, or, at least, when you *do* actually *believe* on Jesus as a Saviour, that you enter in at the strait gate. If you cannot find peace, the reason may be, either, as it often is, that you do not view Jesus as an all-sufficient Savior, freely offered to you, in your present state and as you are; or, it may be, that you are not willing to make a full surrender of yourself to him, but are holding fast some bosom sin or secret idol. This will *infallibly* rob you of peace, and, if it is not abandoned, rob you of eternal life! Ah! dear friend, look after the Achan in the camp. Be sure your sin *will* find you out.

III. THE BACKSLIDER. I am afraid there may be some among you *already* in this melancholy state. Do any of you feel that your impressions are decayed -- that your former feelings and habits are returning -- that your old companions are again drawing round you -- and that, though you may be still keeping up a profession of religion, its life and savour are gone? Do you feel that you have no true nearness to JEHOVAH -- no warm, grateful, adoring love to JESUS -- no deep, penitent thirsting after the presence and power of the HOLY GHOST? If this be your state, O! do not conceal it from yourself or from God' do not cloak it under dead religious forms; awake to your true condition; admit the full view of its guilt and danger; spread it out, with grief and shame, before the Lord; resist every suspicion of his pardoning love to returning backsliders; cherish high thoughts of his pure and infinite mercy; cast yourself on the merits of Emmanuel's blood; plead for the return of the Holy Ghost; watch against all that would keep him away; stay yourself on the promises to sinners; and wait on the Lord until the day break and the shadows flee away. Remember eternal life is at stake and the glory of the name of JESUS also. O! will you go back to Hell from Heaven's gates? Will you be

mocked, by men and devils, as one who *once* sought to be better than they, and, at the same time, hated and abhorred by God, and Christ, and saints, and angels, because you went *back* from following the Lord?

IV. THE CHILDREN OF GOD. To such of you as are, *in very deed*, entitled to this high name of heavenly dignity, I would say, Think much of your infinite privileges, of their cause in the bowels of JEHOVAH'S love, of their channel in the wounded heart of EMMANUEL, and of that blessed SPIRIT, who takes the things of Christ, and shows them to the soul. Set perfect likeness to the Son of God before you, as the pattern to which you are to be conformed. Cultivate, at any sacrifice of time, or comfort, or worldly advantage, increasing nearness to God, as your Father. Abound in the love of Jesus, and be ashamed to love him so little as, even at the best, you can do. Be *filled* with the Spirit, as the fountain of all grace, and the author of all fruitfulness in the life of God. O! seek to commend the Lord Jesus, by a godly, humble, consistent, devoted life, which is mightier to convince than a hundred sermons. All Christians cannot preach Christ; but they ought *all* to live Christ. Be intent on winning souls to Jesus, especially among your immediate friends and acquaintances. This, even when you do not see fruit following will be a means of glorifying God, and will be blessed for the growth of grace in your own soul; and *at last*, also, if persevered in with much prayer and watchfulness, will lead to the saving of souls. Be not weary in well-doing; for in due time you shall reap, if you faint not. Plead continually in behalf of a perishing world; and seek to have the heart enlarged to embrace in its desires the whole human race. We are told that John Welch was heard praying one night, when others were asleep, -- asleep in two senses, alas! -- and that he cried, "Lord, give me Scotland! Lord, give me Scotland!" Every Christian should be like him, -- nay, we may cry, "Lord, give me the world -- the whole world -- to Jesus!" This already is and it will more and more be, the cry of God's children, until at last Babylon shall fall, and the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ.

For the benefit of all the classes among you whom I have addressed, I would add a word or two in regard to some of *the ordinances of grace, and the manner in which you should improve them.*

1<sup>st</sup>. *The Closet.* This is the nearest spot on earth to Heaven. It is *here* more than anywhere that souls are brought near to God; it is *here* more than anywhere that souls are brought near to God; it is *here* that almost every new attainment of grace is won; it is *here* that the Devil is dismayed and driven away to the pit; it is *here* that the world is to be rescued from his grasp, through the blood and spirit of Jesus! If a sinner wish to be saved, let him go to the closet, and bolt his door until the door of mercy open to him, and lie on the ground until God's mercy lift him up, and read the Word until the Spirit shines in it, and shows him his sin and his Saviour. If a backslider wish to return, let him return to his closet, and bedew the ground with his tears, and lay hold on the horns of the altar. If the believer wish to go on to perfection and to have souls, let him be like Jacob, when he was left *alone*, and there wrestled a man with him till the breaking of the day. O! Christian, remember *the closet*, and write over it, in your thoughts at least, "My Father is *in secret.*"

2<sup>nd</sup>. *The Family Altar.* No one can pretend to be a Christian who has a family, and yet does not worship God in it regularly and devoutly. I have, alas! known some who would rather go to a prayer meeting in a neighbour's house than have one with their family in their own dwelling. This will *not do*. Some say they cannot pray in public; but, if they cannot pray *finely*, surely they can tell God *plainly* what they are, and what they need, and what they have caused to praise him for. He that cannot do this must be a *dead* sinner, and *cannot* be acquainted with closet prayer. The curse of God will rest, remember, on every prayerless heart and every prayerless house. Begin, I entreat you, tonight, if you have not already; and if you can say no more, cry aloud, "Lord, teach me to pray." Confess your guilt in not being able to do so, and retire from your knees in public to your knees, or to lie on your face, in secret, and wrestle for divine teaching. Many have

the *form* of family worship; but it is a dead dry skeleton, -- a monument of their ungodliness rather than of their piety.

3<sup>rd</sup>. *The Prayer Meeting*. Such meetings you had formed and were forming when I was among you. I hope you have realized so much advantage from them that you are more and disposed and resolved to meet together in such associations. If such meetings do not prosper, the guilt lies upon yourselves. Purge out the old leaven that ye may be a new lump! In coming to a prayer meeting, make conscience of having the soul *in tune*, by being previously with God in *the closet*; and, if every member comes from the presence of Jehovah, you will be like burning faggots piled on each other and fanned into a blaze; whereas, if you meet together in a dry and carnal frame, you will find it like lighting wet firewood to kindle the communion of the saints among you. You will have little enjoyment, and little profit, and so tire of the meeting, and at last give it up. We have heard of prayer meetings which through the grace of God upon the members of them, grew and flourished long, and even survived to bless succeeding generations. Avoid controversy, and feed at your meetings on *the marrow* of the Word. Beware of making censorious remarks on each other's prayers, even though less suitable than might be wished. In your prayers, be brief, scriptural, spiritual, humble, earnest, sincere, and full of faith. Plead with a *precise* object in view, and let your cries be the echo of God's intimation, "*Now is the accepted time.*" Ask for blessings *now* with humble expectation, and *wait* with constancy on the Lord. Let love -- the love of Jesus -- reign among you; and if anyone should be as a thorn in the flesh to buffet you, seek to view this, not only as your fellow sinner's guilt, but as God's arrangement for trying and humbling and refining you.

4<sup>th</sup>. *The Public Ordinances*. Set a high value on these as appointed of God, for the quickening of sinners and the edifying of his children. Wait upon the preaching of the Word and public worship with a hungry, humble, prayerful, thankful spirit; and, doing so, you will often obtain a full feast where others find nothing but a ground of empty speculation, or of idle and censorious talk. Pray much for ministers, and do all you can to encourage those who seek the Lord's glory in their high, responsible, and arduous work.

My time, dear friends, does not allow me to enlarge these hints; and I have only to add, that I have been rejoiced to hear, from my dear brother Mr. M'Cheyne, interesting tidings of the work of God among you, and that I shall seek to agonize in prayer in your behalf.

I have to *implore*, in conclusion, the *wrestling* cries of *all* who seek the Lord in behalf of Newcastle, to which the Lord seems to have led me, I hope, for his own glory. Tens of thousands are here openly and visibly going down the broad road, and there are great difficulties in the way of even reaching their ears. But the Lord is *almighty*; and, in answer to his people's cries, and in fulfillment of his own promises and purposes, he *will* do *great* things. (Blessed be God, we *have* tokens of his presence *now* (September 27<sup>th</sup>). Let the Lord's people *continue* in prayer.) O! give him *no* rest until he arise and make Jerusalem a praise in the whole earth.

Your affectionate servant in the Gospel,

Wm. C. BURNS

Newcastle, August 17<sup>th</sup>, 1841.



## Chapter 6

A LETTER TO SAINTS AND SINNERS IN STRATHTAY, BREADALBANE, ATHOL, AND  
THE NEIGHBOURHOOD.

1841

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

On arriving here this afternoon, with the view of meeting you again as an ambassador of Christ, I have found that there has been a desire expressed by many of you to have a printed copy of the following lines, which were sent to some of you from Dundee several months ago. Unworthy as they are of appearing in print, I have thought it my duty to agree to your request; and I seize the little spare time that is allowed me before again entering on the Lord's work among you, for the purpose of correcting them. They will at least serve to put many of you in mind of those glorious days of the power and grace of God which we enjoyed together last Autumn, -- days which we shall all remember, either with grief or joy, throughout an endless eternity. Oh! that these days were now to return among you with tenfold greater glory, and that multitudes who have hitherto withstood every call of God that has been made to them by their own ministers and by strangers, were at least persuaded to repent and turn to God through Jesus Christ. Oh! that the Holy Ghost were now poured out upon many thousands among you in his convincing, converting, sanctifying, and comforting power! Plead, dear fellow-sinners, for this infinite promise of the Father, which we have heard of Jesus. Ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence, and *give him no rest*, until he arise and make Jerusalem a praise among you, and throughout the whole earth.

Commending you all to the infinite, free, sovereign, and everlasting grace of Jehovah, and desiring an interest in the prayers of the Lord's children among you,

I remain, Your affectionate and humble servant in the Lord,

Wm C. Burns                      Grandtully, June 11, 1841.

MY DEAR FRIENDS IN THE LORD

I have often thought of writing to you but have been hitherto prevented by various causes; and I now take up my pen in great haste to send you a few hurried lines, praying that Jehovah, the God of all grace, may enable me to say a word in season to each of your precious and dearly-beloved souls.

It has given me unfeigned joy to hear that those appearances of spiritual concern, which I was privileged of God to witness among you, have *not* proved in every case as the morning cloud, and as the early dew; but that some among you who seemed, when I was among you, to be entering in at the strait gate, are still following on to know the Lord. It is a sweet and sure consolation to me to think that the work is Jehovah's, and his alone, that he *will* have mercy on whom he will have mercy; and that, though many, alas! may, and actually do, abuse their privileges, and grieve away the Holy Ghost, and are left, in righteous judgment, to follow their own ways, and perish, yet the Lord *will* pluck his own chosen ones as brands from the burning, and *will* put his fear in their hearts, so that they *shall not* depart from him.

1. Blessed indeed are *those among you whom God has called by his grace to the fellowship of his Son*. Your blessedness, believers in Jesus, is infinitely greater than the tongue of archangel can express. *Now* are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. *All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death – all are yours; and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s!* True it is, my dear brethren in the Lord, that you must, through *much* tribulation, enter the Kingdom. *All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*. You will be hated by an unrighteous and ungodly world; assaulted and buffeted by a cunning and malicious devil; and, above all, deceived, and in danger of being destroyed by a desperately wicked heart. But be encouraged, fainting believer, he that shall come *will* come, and will *not* tarry. Then shall the battle be over, the victory be gained, the crown of glory be bestowed by the hand of Jesus! Then we shall see face to face that adorable and matchless One whom, not having seen, we love. Then shall we join the blood-washed throng in crying, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God with his blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God and the Father, and we shall reign forever and ever!”

How sweet the trials of a Christian are when he meets with Jesus in them, and feels that the Lord is making them a means of purging away his dross, and taking away all his tin. The believer’s trials are like the fiery furnace to the three children of Israel at Babylon, which burned off their hands, but touched not a hair on their heads. Seek, dear followers of the despised Emmanuel, to obtain glimpses of his divine glory and grace, through the power of the indwelling Spirit, and these will make you to see such a surpassing beauty and glory in Jesus, that you will count *all* things loss that you may win him, and be found in him. If you find the way to glory hard and rugged, oh! think what it cost the Son of God to open up that way! Remember also that, wherever you are called to go, in following the Lamb, you may see, by faith, the prints of Emmanuel’s feet on the path before you. He *does* lead his people through fire and through water, but it is to a *wealthy place*. Soon will he come to call us home to the place prepared for us above. Soon he will offer up for us the prayer, “Father, I will that these whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory,” and then shall we depart and be with Jesus! To them that look for him he will appear the second time without sin unto salvation! Now the just shall live by faith; but, if any man drawback, my soul, saith God, shall have no pleasure in him. May none of you be of them that draw back unto perdition; may you all be of those who believe unto the saving of the soul.

Let me exhort you, beloved, with a view to your perseverance in the good ways of the Lord, to feed continually upon Jesus Christ and him *crucified*, as he is made known in the holy word of God, and by the Holy Ghost. For this purpose read the Bible much, and pray continually over it for the saving illumination of the Spirit. Examine your hearts frequently in regard to your acquaintance with sin, and your knowledge of the Lord Jesus. See that you be *wholly* dedicated to God in Christ; that his holy, heart-searching law be written on your hearts; and that you be aiming habitually with a single eye at the advancement of the Divine glory. It was the common saying of an eminent saint (Brainerd) that nothing else made him content to remain in this world for a single day, but that God could be seen and could be served in it. This is the language of the heart of every true saint; though, alas! few can say it with such emphasis as he. Let me press upon you also to make the truly godly your only companions, and to seek that God may greatly bless to you the fellowship of the saints. Avoid, I beseech you, in all things the very *appearance* of evil; and make it manifest, by your holy, pure, humble, meek, spiritual, and consistent walk, that you are no more of the world, but have been born of God, and are preparing to enter into the holy Kingdom of your Father, who is in Heaven. Finally, let me exhort you to keep the conscience always clean and peaceful, by beholding the

bleeding Lamb of God as your surety and Saviour, to put on the Divine righteousness of Jesus as the only covering of the guilty, naked soul at the bar of Divine Justice, and to be filled with the Holy Ghost, who quickens, sanctifies, comforts, supports, and at last glorifies the soul in which he dwells!

2. But what shall I say to *those among you who have neither part nor lot in the matter of salvation?* Alas! your case, dear fellow-sinners, is awful indeed, little as it *now* affects your own blinded souls. My heart is ready to break for you, when I think that, after all the solemn warnings you have received, and after all the pressing offers of Jesus that have been made to you in the name of God, you still remain in a state of heart-ungodliness, or of open sin! Others around you can this day say with joy, "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed:" but of you it is written in the word of the holy and unchangeable God, "their judgment *now* of a long time lingereth not, their damnation slumbereth not!" Oh! dear fellow sinner, is it not the height of madness to go on any longer in a Christless state? You know well that except a man be born again he *cannot* see the Kingdom of God – that the time is at hand when the Lord Jesus will appear in the clouds of heaven with his mighty angels, taking vengeance on all that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that these shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power! You *may* go on a *little* longer without being cast into hell; but oh, how *soon* will death, the king of terrors, come and drag you to the bar of God! You *may* avoid the Throne of Grace, but you *cannot* escape the Throne of Judgment! You *may* despise Jesus as a Saviour; you *cannot* but tremble before him as a Judge! You *may* reject him as the Lamb of God, but, alas, you *must* endure his consuming wrath as the Lion of the tribe of Judah! You *will* not weep for sin *now*, but you *must* weep for it *hereafter*! You *shall* mourn for sin in hell, if you do not mourn for it on earth! Ah! tell me why you reject the Lord? What fault can you find in Jesus? Have you found any other Saviour? Oh! dear fellow-sinner, it is high time for you to awake out of sleep! Arise and come to Jesus *now*. He is crying, Come unto me, I will in no wise cast you out. The Father is ready to receive you into his family. The Spirit is striving with you, did you not resist him and grieve him away. Halt no longer between two opinions. Sin and Satan are ruining you; knowledge cannot save you, decency cannot save you, profession cannot save you, conviction cannot save you – you may go to hell with the arrows of the Almighty festering in the conscience; -- nothing will avail but the blood and the Spirit of Jesus. Yield yourself, then, to the Lord as a lost sinner, and he will *not* cast you out. You have seen individuals around you, perhaps some of your own friends or companions, fleeing to Jesus; why did you not follow them? Are you *resolved* to be left behind in Sodom and to perish in the flames?

Do I seem to you, dear fellow-sinner, as one that mocks, when I thus warn you? Ah! remember it was so in the days of Noah. The old world thought him, no doubt, a self-righteous fool, when he warned them that the world was about to be devoured by the floods of God's vengeance; but they saw that he was divinely wise, when he entered into the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all! Soon will the deluge of everlasting wrath roll over this guilty, sin-stained earth, and sweep away, in its devouring, relentless waves, the whole world of the ungodly! Then will the penitent followers of Jesus rest secure upon the rock of ages, and look down without fear upon the horrific floods below! Ah, sinner! what joy will the pleasures of sin give you *then*? will you laugh, and dance, and drink with your companions *then*? Ah, no you will rue the day that you were born! you will curse the day that you heard the Gospel and despised the Saviour! Yea, you will even hear the words that I am now writing to you ringing in your ears, and adding new anguish to your unutterable torment! Do not, I beseech you, leave the place where you now are until you have given yourself up to the Lord, who still waiteth to be gracious. Will you *yet* delay? Oh! it is the suggestion of Satan, your murderer; yield at last to the love of God, put the crown upon Emmanuel, save your soul, disappoint the devil, and give the angels a song of joy in heaven. May the Holy Ghost descend in his

almighty power and prevail with you. May you *now* escape from that miserable company – the unregenerate – against whom the Lord’s messengers, and I among the rest, must stand as witnesses at the Judgment-seat of Christ, to condemn them to the second death.

I have no time to add more at present, but I shall continue to pray for you all, both saints and sinners; and whether we meet on earth again or not, may we all meet at the Lamb’s right hand on the Judgment Day, and sing the praises of Jehovah’s love to all eternity. Amen.

I remain, Your humble and affectionate Servant, For Jesus’ sake,

Wm. C. Burns.

DUNDEE, February 18, 1841.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 7

PLAIN SENTENCES TO: PERISHING SINNERS, IN NEWCASTLE AND GATESHEAD -  
ALSO, A LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF MILNATHORT.

1841

MY DEAR FELLOW SINNERS,

Perhaps you have heard of the wonderful things which the Great God has been doing for us in Scotland. The servants of Satan have reviled God's blessed work; and I wish to tell you something of the truth about it. You know that many people come from the church the same as they went to it: The Word does not touch their consciences, and they remain under the power of sin and Satan – of death and Hell! This used to be very much the way among us until lately; but the God of Love has visited us, and poured out his life-giving Spirit upon the dead souls of men. In some places, you might see the solemn sight of hundreds weeping for their sins, and seeking to give up their hearts to Jesus. And, Ah! what a sweet change has taken place on many! The high looks of the proud have been brought down; dead formalists have become living Christians; worshippers of Mammon have been changed into lovers of God; the blasphemous tongues of the profane have been made to sing God's praise; drunkards have cast from them the cup of devils, and have taken the cup of salvation; unclean persons, who used to be the slaves of lust, the drudges of the Devil, the very dregs of humankind, are now sitting at the feet of Jesus; and some, who were ringleaders in every form of sin, are now bold, and open, and unflinching in the service of Christ, even as they once were shameless, brazen-faced, and steel-hearted in the service of the wicked one. Many, who formerly were dead in sin, are now living in the grace of Jesus, in the love of God, in the communion of the Spirit, and in the hope of Heaven!

Dear fellow sinners, do you not think that *you* need such a change as this? and do you not think that Newcastle and Gateshead stand in need of such a glorious work of God among their perishing thousands? I am sure you must see, that, if the Bible be true, the multitude here are on the highway to Hell. Many are fighting for wealth as if they had an eternal lease of life. Many are as proud as if they were not heirs of wrath. Multitudes flock to Satan's encampment on the race-course, and are there murdered for eternity. Multitudes press into the theatres, where devils cry louder than men, "Again! Again!" Multitudes crowd into the tippling-houses, which are the Devil's shambles, the open mouths of Hell! Young men and young women, think of it! Tippling-house-keepers, think of it, and give back your license; or, if you are still *resolved* to retail for the Devil, O! write, for the sake of miserable souls, above your doors, "A short road to the pit." Look at your evening streets! How many sally forth to glut their eyes with sin! how many stagger along to the pit! how many wait, and walk about, to see if the Devil will buy their souls for a lewd companion! Ah! Satan is quick to strike so good a bargain. He buys souls cheap in the Newcastle market; and never more than on the Sabbath, when multitudes flee out of the town by land and water, as if the plague were in it, and travel with *tenfold* railway speed to Hell. Alas! sinners seem now to ride post to perdition, as if they were afraid of being too late to get in. It seems as if there would be a stir in Hell to find room for the shoals that are rushing down to it! Shut up your Railways on Jehovah's day, ye to whom it belongs, else *you* must be shut up in that place out of which there is neither weekday nor Sunday travelling. Ye that have shares in such iniquity, ye hold them at a heavy drawback, -- a share in the curse of the Almighty God! God *will* ease him of his adversaries: He *will* avenge him on his enemies!

Sinners, is this state of things to continue? -- It *cannot* continue. Mercy or judgment *must* end it. The town is *ripe* for Christ's atoning blood, or for God's devouring wrath. Sinners *must* repent and be saved, or go on and be damned. There is *no* middle ground to stand upon. The blood of Jesus and the power of the Holy Ghost are the *only* refuge. To these let us turn while God waiteth and putteth a drag upon the wheels of vengeance. And, O! let us beware of *delusive* remedies. Tee-totalism, for instance, will *not* do. It is good, indeed, as far as it goes; but it *cannot* change man's nature -- it *cannot* save man's soul. (From the experience of 2 ½ years, since I became a preacher, I would recommend the principle of *total abstinence from intoxicating liquors*. But let us keep things *in their own places*.) Science and knowledge will *not* do. The march of France to the heights of science, was a march to the brow of that precipice over which the nation was dashed to pieces! Is there any other remedy? -- "Yes," cries some shameless slave of sin: "Socialism is the remedy." Socialism! O! do not make us brutes by system. "Popery," cries another, "is the only remedy." Ah! beware. "Popery *has* a door to Heaven; but it is a *painted door*, put up by the Devil, to screen the mouth of Hell! Nor is Puseyism, if you know it better. It is "the great whore of Babylon" again, but with an English surplice and an Oxford mask, to hide her haggard visage and bloody skirts.

There is one remedy, and there is *one only*, -- the blood of God's only begotten Son, and the almighty power of the Holy Ghost. The blood of Emmanuel can cleanse a world from its iniquity; it can wash this Sodom -- like town, and make the blackest sinner in it whiter than the snow. The Spirit of the Lord is *not* straitened. A *nation* shall yet be *born again* by his power in *one* day. He can awaken the conscience of a city, and cause it to cry out as one man, "Woe is me! I am undone!" "Lord, save me, I perish!" Such things England, and Ireland, and Scotland have already seen; and perhaps the time may come when God shall pour his Spirit upon us so abundantly, that the Devil shall be driven from his throne in the land, and millions shall rejoice in God's salvation.

Fellow sinners, it is time to seek the Lord! Who shall say it is not? O! blinded sinner, can you stand the piercing flames of wrath? -- can you find the fire of Hell a downy bed! Can you meet Jehovah, when the great day of his wrath is come? Awake from your sleep -- it is a sleep on the edge of a precipice! Turn to God *now*. Come out of the Satan-bound multitude -- case yourself at the feet of Jesus -- receive the Holy Ghost. God is *now* waiting to be gracious; but, if you refuse his love, you *must* endure his wrath; if you reject Jesus as a Saviour, you *must* meet him as a Judge; if you will not submit to him, and follow him to Heaven, you *must* submit to him at last, and be driven from his blessed presence into the company of devils and the damned! O! dear sinner, will God's love not move you? will the wounds and blood of God's own Son not break your heart? Yield, O! yield to god, and be saved! "Come, Holy Ghost, descend in love upon this sinner's soul, cast out Satan, and bring him to the feet of Jesus." Amen.

If the Lord will, I shall preach for a little season among you, and in the open air when circumstances favour, that sinners may be compelled to come into God's kingdom. You may easily hear of these meetings; but, that you may not be at a loss, I may mention, that we intend to meet on Monday and Wednesday evenings, at seven o'clock, in the *High Bridge Presbyterian Church*. Unfortunately, the entrance to that Church is bad, as you have to pass hard by a tipping-house. But this may remind you, that if you wish to go to Heaven, you must force a passage through crowds of sinners and legions of devils. Will you come then, and hear about Jesus? It is time to seek the Lord. Hell is surely full enough without us!

I have spoken plainly, as I would not be charged with the blood of souls; and, praying for your salvation,

I am, dear Fellow Sinners, Your sincere Friend in the Lord Jesus,

Wm. C. BURNS

Newcastel, August 20<sup>th</sup>, 1841.

P.S. – Working people, come in your *common* dress.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 8

### LETTERS TO SINNERS SEEKING SALVATION, IN ABERDEEN, DUNDEE, PERTH, KILSYTH, AND OTHER PLACES

#### Number 1 - General Remarks

1841

#### TO THE READER

The following is my reason for printing the Letters, of which the present is the first.

When I left Aberdeen, in the beginning of December last, I was lead at the desire of many in that city, whom I was leaving in a state peculiarly interesting and critical, to send them occasionally from Dundee a few lines of sympathy and counsel. I was again in Aberdeen a few weeks ago, and was then much pressed to allow the Letters which I had sent to be printed for the use of those to whom they were addressed. When I considered all the circumstances of the case, in the sight of God, I did not feel it my duty to refuse this request. But, as the subjects on which these Letters were written were of universal importance – oh! that we could say, of universal *interest* – and as I knew that there were many dear fellow-sinners in different parts of the country who would read them if they were put in print, I thought that I ought to write them anew, and to fit them for more general use, by throwing out those things which had a special reference to the case of Aberdeen. I now, accordingly, send forth the first, to be followed soon, if the Lord will, by the other Letters in their order.

The reader, whoever he is, may be assured that there is at least one fellow-sinner pleading with the Lord to visit his soul with salvation, and to deliver him from the guilt and power of sin, and from the dominion and the doom of Satan, through the precious blood of God's only-begotten Son, and by the almighty power of his Holy Spirit.

Wm. C. Burns

STRATHMIGLO, May 31, 1841.

N.B. – Study, with prayer, the passages referred to at the bottom of the page.

#### LETTER 1

MY DEAR FELLOW SINNERS,

I have often had the unspeakable honour of beseeching many of you, as an ambassador of Christ, to be reconciled to God by the death of his Son; and now that I am called, in the providence of God, to address you in the present form, I pray that I may feel an unspeakably stronger desire for the glory of the Lord in your salvation, than I have ever had when speaking to you face to face.

There are none among you in whom I feel so deep an interest, and to whom I am so anxious at present to speak a word in season, as the class of *those who have been brought to feel their sin and misery, as apostates from the love and service of the blessed God, but who have not yet found salvation in Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant.* Those who are in this condition remind one of a person who is lying ill under a deadly disease, and is in

such a state that the slightest change for the better or for the worse, may bring him back to life, or lay him prostrate in the cold, iron grasp of death. Ah! that is a time of awful interest! Every pulse, every breath, every feature is watched by the weeping family around the bed! It is true, that the case of the multitudes who are lying all around us cold and motionless in the greave of their trespasses, -- as completely dead to the living God as the bones in the churchyard are to the living world, -- ought to move the hearts of the children of God, and to make them cry aloud to Emmanuel, whose voice maketh the dead to live. It is true, also, that real Christians have need to cultivate a holy jealousy over themselves, and over all who seem to be alive unto God, but who, alas! not unfrequently droop, and die, and go down to the Pit. But still it is the anxious, alarmed, conscience-stricken, law-condemned, wrath-pursued sinner, who is seeking rest, but finding none, that ought to engage the first attention and the most earnest prayers of the ministers and people of God. The state of such an individual is so very critical, that the very smallest circumstance, to human view, may either raise him to Heaven, or turn him over the precipice of sin into the yawning pit of Perdition! Therefore, while I would desire, in the following lines, to declare such truths of God's word as may be useful to all, I shall more specially address myself to the case of those who are *convinced* but *not converted*. May the Holy Spirit breathe with quickening, melting power upon my cold heart while I write, and upon yours, dear fellow-sinner, while you read what is written!

Allow me then, solemnly and affectionately, to call you to consider the following circumstances in your case.

I. YOUR STATE IS UNCOMMON. The true people of God are but a little flock in this world, and in this land. We have many church-goers, many communion-attenders, many so-called Christians, but, alas! Few children of God, who have been born again of the Holy Ghost -- who hate sin, and love Emmanuel, and follow after holiness, and lay up treasure in Heaven. And alas! Anxious awakened sinners are even more rare. We may meet with individuals here and there who seem to be Christians; but how seldom do we see persons who seem to be under the awakening operations of the Holy Ghost! Men, in general, are at ease. Christians, alas! Are too much at ease, and sinners are at ease; and when an individual is brought to see his lost condition, he can hardly find anyone who feels like himself. Blessed be God, this is not so much the case in those places where the Holy Ghost has been lately poured out so abundantly upon the souls of sinners; and you may know perhaps a few around you, who are, like yourself, acquainted with spiritual anxiety. But still your case is uncommon. You meet with few that feel as you do, -- with few that think they have need to be so much concerned about the soul, -- and with some who are even disposed to mock at your anxiety. If you find this to be the case, do not be surprised, do not be staggered by it. It is a truth, an undoubted truth, though the world hates it, and would gladly conceal, because it cannot alter it, that the gate of life is *a strait gate*, and that the way to Heaven is *a narrow way*. If you wish to go to Heaven in this day of general ungodliness and contempt of Jesus, you must not shrink from being singular, but must leave the crowd, and join yourselves to the little band of Christ's spiritual followers, who are wondered at, suspected, hated, and persecuted by the world of the ungodly, because their anxiety about salvation and their holy spiritual lives condemn the world, and proclaim aloud that it is lying under the wrath of God. Fear not, anxious sinner, to join the Lord's people, though they may be few in number where you live, and may be contemptible in the eyes of ungodly men. JESUS himself was despised, and hated, and persecuted, when he was on earth, and if they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more they of his household? Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you; and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Be not afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as grass. Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be afraid of their reviling;

for the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool; but my righteousness shall be forever, and my salvation from generation to generation. (Study 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, and Isaiah 51.) Consider, again,

II. YOUR STATE IS HOPEFUL. You know that there is no hope of any person being saved who goes on in the paths of open sin; on all such the devil *reckons* as his prey. They bear the brand of Hell on their brass-lined, Heaven-defying brows. Neither is there any hope of the unrenewed professor, whatever be his knowledge, his morality, his privileges, his office, his standing in the world, or in the Church. Such persons, continuing destitute of the new birth, are as certain to perish as those who live in open sin. And, what is more, they are even less likely, to human view, to be awakened to a sense of their lost state than open and abandoned transgressors, because they have more to put asleep, and to keep asleep the conscience, until the fires of Divine Judgment rouse it up to do its office. ANXIOUS SINNERS are the class out of whom the ranks of God's dear children are filled up; and everyone who is under conviction of sin stands, as it were, a candidate for union to Christ and a place in the family of God. It is by a sense of sin and misery that the Holy Ghost begins his glorious saving work; it is thus that the way of Zion's King is prepared in the wilderness of the natural heart; and therefore, dear fellow-sinner, while, it is true, you are not yet in a state in which it is safe or blessed to remain, you are in a state through which all must pass on the way to glory. This ought to encourage you to seek the mercy of the Lord, through Jesus Christ, and to make immediate humble, penitent, and earnest application to Jehovah, who is seated on the Throne of Grace, waiting to be gracious to the chief of sinners. (Study Isaiah 55 and Luke 15). Consider, again,

III. YOUR STATE IS DANGEROUS. Alas! There are comparatively few, even in this the day of the Lord's great mercy to our favoured land, who seem to tremble at His word, and to ask in earnest, "What must I do to be saved?" and yet, among those who are brought under anxiety about their souls, many are not saved. You may be anxious, and yet not thoroughly awakened. You may be convinced of your danger, and may tremble with the faith of devils, and yet not be convinced of the evil and heinousness of sin as it opposes the law and the nature of the holy God, defaces the image of God in the human soul, and pierces the Lord of Glory. Alas! I have myself known many such cases. Some, like Felix, have *trembled*, but, like Felix, have *turned away* from Christ. Some have been, with Agrippa, *almost saved*, and yet, with Agrippa, will be *altogether lost*. Yea, some have gone farther than this. They have wept, they have prayed, they have read their Bibles, they have gone to prayer-meetings, they have forsaken their worldly companions, they have seemed to be entirely changed, and yet, after a time, they have returned as the dog to his vomit, and as the sow that was washed to his wallowing in the mire! Such an one has become, like Saul the king, "*another man*," but not, like Saul the Pharisee, "*a new man*." (See 1 Samuel 10:6-9) Sin has *not* been driven *out* of the heart, but has rather been driven *up into* the heart. It lies hid for a time, but it is hid in the Citadel, and, at a convenient opportunity, it comes forth and again takes possession of the whole soul. Ah! Then, dear fellow-sinner, beware of thinking you are safe, because you have shed tears, and have been all on fire to get to Jesus, as you have thought, and as others may have hoped. It is not a sense of sin that saves a man, -- it is not repentance, -- it is not reformation, -- it is *Christ and Christ alone*; and, therefore, it is only when you accept of Him as your atoning High Priest, and yield yourself to Him as your Sovereign Lord, that you are safe, and cannot come into condemnation, but have passed from death to life. Oh! It is infinitely awful to think of being eternally lost, and of lying down amid everlasting flames, without a drop of water to cool the parched tongue. The only drops of water that are to be got in Hell are the briny, bitter tears of a repentance that comes too late! Oh! Strange that any reasonable being can rest a single moment without the certainty of escaping such a doom. Mad, infatuated world, that can spend its moments of reprieve and respite from the

wrath of an almighty and eternal God in ease and carelessness! Yet there is something, were it possible, even more awful than this in the perdition of an anxious inquirer after the Saviour. Such an one has had the eye opened to see the approaching doom of the ungodly, his conscience hears the distant muttering thunders of God's vengeance, the awful stillness that precedes the forked lightning settles on his soul, he is on the very point of entering in at the gate of life, of taking refuge in the wounds of the man who is God's fellow – in the clefts of the Rock of Ages, rent to afford a hiding-place for sinners in the day of wrath – and yet, after all, he is not saved! He trifles with conviction, he loses his opportunity, he grieves the Spirit of Grace, he secretly rejects the Son of God, he seals his own destruction! Ah, yes! And remember, also, that if you follow after sin, amid the arrows of conviction, and reproof, and warning from the Lord, your condemnation will be far more awful than that of those who have never been thus visited. The Gospel kills where it does not cure. We *may* refuse to know it so as to be saved, but we *cannot* avoid knowing it so as to be condemned. And if we despise the bleeding Saviour, and resist the Holy Spirit, we shall wish in Hell that we had been Hindoos or Mahomedans. Ah! There are none of whom Satan takes so desperate a grasp as those who had once nearly escaped from his chains. There are none who will endure so much of the wrath of the Lamb as they who "trample him under foot," and, as it were, make a way for themselves to the Pit over the bleeding body of the Son of God! Come, then, *now*, dear fellow-sinner, let *this* be the hour, *this* the blessed moment, or your cordially accepting Jesus, and passing from death unto life. He waits to be gracious; he is near, he is able, he is ready to save you. Oh! Yield the heart to him *at once*, and at once you pass from the number of those anxious souls whose case is dangerous and doubtful, to the number of those who believe and who are sealed by the Holy Ghost unto the day of redemption. Oh, sinner, where is your heart? Has Jesus got it? I cannot, I dare not, go farther till you yield, and put the crown upon Emmanuel's head. (Study 2 Corinthians 5:11-21, & 6:1-2)

IV. MANY EYES ARE UPON YOU. This remark may perhaps at first sight seem strange to you. You may be unknown in the world, and few may seem to care whether you live or die, -- be saved or perish; but, my dear friend, you know that things of little consequence in themselves sometimes become of great importance from particular circumstances. Men of a contentious spirit will dispute as vehemently about a trifle as about a treasure. Their honour (alas! They have little) is at stake, and therefore they refuse to yield a single hair's breadth. So it is in this case. You know that, on this earth, the prince of darkness and the Lord of Glory are contending for victory and dominion, and that all men take part either with the Lord or with Satan. Every soul that Jesus begins to alarm or to allure is in danger of being lost to Satan, and that soul becomes a battle-field, on which Satan and Emmanuel contend for victory. It is of little consequence to the creation of God whether a puny work like me be saved, or be lost; but, when Satan and Emmanuel are contending about me, it is of *infinite* consequence whether God or the devil shall prevail, and have dominion. In this way every individual who is concerned about salvation becomes important, unspeakably important, and attract notice not only on Earth, but in Heaven, and in Hell. The UNGODLY around you desire to see you coming back to their condemned company, and following them, in the downward paths of sin and vanity, to death and destruction. They would rejoice to see your tears dried up, your serious countenance laughing as of old, your singularity, as they call it, laid aside; they will try many methods to make you join their company, their dance, their glass, their song' and thus they would lure you with them to the Pit. Beware, O sinner! Avoid the *appearance* of evil, if you wish to avoid the *reality* of it; resist the *beginning*, if you do not wish to see the *end*. The *end* of these things is death! On the other hand, THE LORD'S PEOPLE, as far as they are like to Jesus, are labouring and praying that you may be savingly converted; they tremble lest you should ruin your soul, and dishonour the name of Jesus, by returning to the world; and oh! How they would rejoice to see you meekly, and purely following the Lamb, adorning the doctrine of the Gospel, and running for the crown of

life. Ah! Shall their labours and their prayers be all in vain? Shall we who have preached and prayed for your conversion, stand up in the day of Judgment to condemn you to the flames? I shudder at the thought! But again, though you may be little conscious of it, SATAN is contending with all his guile and malice to ruin you. In this hellish work of deceit and murder, the devil seldom shows himself without a mask. If he did, he would scare away his prey. Oh! How could his willing captives still love his baits, and his flatteries, and his chains, if they saw him in his true character, as the roaring lion ready to devour their souls? The devil works unseen, that he may work successfully. He speaks by the voice of your own heart, and by the mouth of those around you whom you love, that he may speak with power, and lead you captive at his will. They that resist sin, resist the devil; they that obey sin, obey the devil, though unseen. And, more than this, while the devils plots your ruin, and seeks by every means, fair or foul, to keep you from giving your heart to Jesus, and ANGELS in heaven are longing for your conversion, and stand, as it were, ready to break forth into a shout of praise and joy, when you touch the hem of Jesus' garment, and are saved. Oh! Shall the golden harps of Heaven be never used in rejoicing over you? Nay more, to crown the whole, JEHOVAH himself has his eye upon you, and condescends so infinitely far as to be interested in your doom. Behold! He pleads, he waits, he beseeches, he commands you to embrace the offers of his free and everlasting love! Shall the rejection of the love of God consign you to the lowest Hell? Oh! Shall his mercy never bless and glorify your soul? Dear fellow-sinner, you engage the interest of Heaven, Earth, and Hell at once; and can you think that you are sufficiently alive to your danger? -- that you feel aright your need of *instantly* giving the heart to Christ? Shall *you* be less anxious to escape from coming wrath, and to lay hold on future glory, than the God of love, with saints and angels, is to see you saved? yea, than wicked men and devils are to see you damned? Oh! Madness to be lulled asleep by the deceiver and murderer of souls! To be cheated out of the inheritance of Heaven by those apostate spirits who never had an offer of a Saviour, and who grudge God's unspeakable gift to a dying world. Oh! How foolish will poor sinners look in hell, when the very devils tell them that they might have been saved, had they not madly been in love with death! It will make the pit tenfold more insufferably awful to lost sinners when they think that they might have been in Heaven, had they been wise in time, and embraced God's offered mercy.

Trembling sinner, have you heard the thunders of the Law at Sinai? Have you seen the lightning-flash of God's indignation? Oh! Then, look to Calvary, and behold the sword of eternal justice awaking against Jehovah's Shepherd, the man who is God's fellow! Behold EMMANUEL, a God-given surety, standing in the sinner's place, magnifying the holy law, satisfying offended justice, pacifying incensed holiness, and quenching the flames of wrath for all who believe in this name, and trust in his blood! Oh, dear sinner! delay not a moment, but look to Jesus and be saved. Look to him and wonder, look and live, look and love, look and be sanctified, look and be glorified! (Study Isaiah 53 and 55.)

Do you say, Alas! I try to look to Jesus, but I can obtain no view of his glory which will pacify the conscience or satisfy the heart? All is darkness – all is confusion – all is trouble. If it is so, beware lest you are speaking with *secret* insincerity, lest you are *secretly* rejecting Jesus, as he is *freely* offered to you from the Throne of God, and *secretly* keeping hold of some idol which he calls you to abandon. Beware lest you are making a righteousness of your anxiety, a saviour of your feelings or your faith. See that you consider Jesus as *all your salvation*; thus you shall find him to be *all your desire*. Go to the Throne of Grace, and humbly tell the Lord that you desire to be saved by Jesus – plead for the Holy Spirit to enlighten you savingly in the knowledge of him, and though he seem to disregard your cry, lay hold of the promises of mercy, trample unbelief under foot, resist the devil, and wait upon the Lord. At last, in his own good time he *will* bring you forth to the light, and you *shall* behold his righteousness; and you will then sing joyfully to his praise in the

words of that blessed Psalm, which is so sweet to awakened souls, "I waited for the Lord my God, and patiently did bear, At length to me he did incline, My voice and cry to hear," &c. – Psalm 40. Dear fellow-sinner, if, instead of patiently *waiting* on the Lord, you are tempted to prefer the cordials and comforts of the world, which the devil will have ready at hand to help you – to help you to the Pit! – oh! Remember that the distress of an awakened soul is many leagues nearer Heaven than the ease and security of a sinner who is settle on his lees. Yes! the distress of a penitent is unspeakably better than the peace of a proud professor, or of a heart-seared profligate. It is infinitely better as an heir of Heaven to walk in darkness, than as an heir of Hell to walk in light! The darkness of the penitent will *soon* give place to the bright shining of the Sun of Righteousness, which will at last be perfected in that land of glory where there shall be no night forever! The candle of the ungodly will soon be put out amid that blackness of darkness which reigns eternally unbroken in the grave of dead souls, the prison of unclean spirits! Oh! poor sinner, *wait* on Jesus, for "the Lord is good to the soul that seeketh him, and they that wait on me," he saith, "shall not be ashamed." (Study Lamentations 3.) It is good that a man both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God. May *you* find it so, dear fellow-immortal, in your blessed experience, and rejoice eternally in the Lamb. I shall in the mean time commend you to the grace of the Lord Jesus, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit; and

I am, DEAR FELLOW SINNER, Your Friend and Servant, In the Lord Jesus

Wm. C. Burns.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 9

### LETTERS TO SINNERS SEEKING SALVATION, IN ABERDEEN, DUNDEE, PERTH, KILSYTH, AND OTHER PLACES

#### LETTERS NUMBER 2

#### THE KNOWLEDGE OF SIN

1841

DEARLY-BELOVED FELLOW-SINNERS,

Although I am separated from you in body, I have many an anxious, burdened thought about the state of your precious souls; and, while I daily seek to cast this burden on the Lord, who alone can bear it, it is with joy and thankfulness that I take this opportunity of speaking a word to you in the name of the blessed Jesus, that I may in some degree relieve myself of the oppressive load.

The object I have at present in view is to guide you to a true and saving knowledge of the NATURE AND HEINOUSNESS OF SIN. This is a subject which lies at the very foundation of all true religion; and I know of nothing which is more fearfully wanting, even among professing Christians, than a thorough acquaintance with it. It is from the want of this that the ungodly world is lying fast asleep on the edge of the Pit's yawning mouth; and it is from the same cause that many anxious sinners come short of a saving union to Jesus, and that the true people of God, in general, feed with so little appetite from hour to hour upon Emmanuel, as the righteousness and life of their souls. The knowledge of sin, and that alone, will make the Saviour truly, supremely, and permanently prized.

In a future Letter; if the gracious Lord permit me, I mean to speak to you upon the work of the Holy Ghost in convincing the soul of sin. At present we are to consider the means which he employs, in performing this blessed work. But, in the very outset, I would press upon you the great – and, alas! greatly neglected – truth, that it is only through the almighty and direct operation of the Spirit of God that true views of sin can be attained by fallen man. The truths which we are now about to consider are indeed momentous, and are fitted to awaken the whole world, were it not bound in chains of satanic darkness; but they will not, and cannot possibly do you any good, unless the Holy Spirit graciously open your eyes, and reveal them within your soul. I would therefore beseech and implore you, dear fellow-sinner, before you proceed farther, to retire to a secret place, and plead with the God of Love to pour our his Spirit upon you. By your doing so these lines may be the humble means of saving your soul – if it is not yet saved – or of leading you on in the narrow way to Zion, if you are already upon it. But, oh! remember that it is at your peril that you read the truths of God as if they were the thoughts of a fellow-worm! Rather lay down this tract, and read not another line, than do so in a prayerless, easy, carnal frame of mind; for it *will* be a savour of death unto death, if it is not rendered by the Spirit a savour of life unto life. It *must* add drops of torment to your cup of wrath, if it is not useful in prevailing with you to take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord!

We shall, first, very briefly, notice some of those false balances in which men weigh sin and weigh themselves, and then bring ourselves to the Law of God – the balance of the Sanctuary – which cries to every sinner, like the handwriting on the wall to the King of Babylon, “Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting.”

I. FALSE STANDARDS OF SIN. – Among these we may notice –

1<sup>st</sup>, *The Natural Conscience*. – Multitudes remain at ease under the wrath of God, because they judge of their state by the voice of the natural conscience. The conscience may be compared to a clock – the Law of God to the sun. The clock is right only when it keeps time with the sun; and if a man should close his windows, keep a taper burning in his room, and regulate his movements by a clock which is standing, or has gone wrong, he might sleep at noon-day, and the night overtake him before his work was aright begun. So it is with the conscience. It is a safe guide only when it is guided by the Law; it is to be followed only when it follows God; if we follow it farther, we shall follow it to Hell! The conscience was originally in perfect harmony with the Law of God; but when man sinned, it fell, with all his other faculties, under the power of sin and Satan. In all unregenerate men, it is very blind, and very insensible to the true character and claims of Jehovah; and in many it is so completely blindfolded by false religion, or seared by habitual and flagrant sin, that they pass through life thinking that all is well with them, and at last drop suddenly into the flames! Think of it, dear fellow-sinners the conscience may give you no uneasiness, and yet you may be on the very brink of Hell. A dead conscience leads many to Damnation without a warning! They dream that they are to escape, until they awake under the scorching of the fire that is never quenched, and the gnawing of the worm that never dies! Study the Divine Law, under the teaching of the Divine Spirit, and your conscience, when enlightened, will teach you that you deserve eternal death on account of many things in which you used to see no evil. Learn to regulate your time-piece by the sun – to guide your conscience by Jehovah’s Law, and thus it will lead you to Heaven, instead of leaving you, as alas! it leaves millions, to make shipwreck of your soul, on the rocks and quicksands of the kingdom of darkness.

2<sup>nd</sup>, *The Natural Understanding*. – The understanding of fallen man, like the conscience, is naturally under the power of the Prince of Darkness, and is so completely blind to the things of God that the very light which is in us by nature is darkness. In consequence of this fearful condition, the things of God appear to the natural man to be foolishness; he thinks them unreasonable, and is so puffed up by the flatteries of a vain and deceitful heart, that he cannot receive them. The natural understanding may admit the reasonableness of morality, and even of religion, however strict, provided only that it be not the pure Gospel of Christ; but, when the testimony of God regarding holiness and sin is set before the mind, unless the almighty power of God accompany it to beat down the strongholds of the Prince of Darkness, it finds no admittance – the eye is closed, and the heart is barred against it. How common is it to hear unregenerate men talk of the reasonableness of their religion! How generally do they look down with contempt upon the pure truth of the Word of God as a religion only fit for enthusiastic and narrow-minded bigots! How many monstrous forms of impiety and blasphemy, which cry aloud to Heaven for the thunderbolts of Divine vengeance, are the children of the Devil setting forth in our own days under the injured names of reason and justice! All these are the fearful fruits of man’s natural blindness; and, if we desire to know truly the nature of sin, we must not only escape from this blinded crowd, but must have the root of all their impieties and blasphemies destroyed within us. The root of all is the setting up of our own blinded views in opposition to the clear and holy declarations of the God of Truth; and this is so common, that there are thousands everywhere among us, who profess to be Christians, and yet have their minds impregably fortified, by their proud

imaginings, against the entrance of the true and saving knowledge of God; and, therefore, my dear fellow-sinner, I would urge you to examine, at the Throne of Grace, how far the natural darkness of your understanding has been dispelled, and your natural thoughts of what is reasonable have given way, before the humbling light of the Holy Ghost. Oh! think how fearful is the impiety of that puny worm, who dares to call Jehovah to the bar of his blinded reason, and to sit in judgment upon the word and ways of the Holy One! Think what must be the peril of that sinner, who is setting up his own miserable views in opposition to the unerring voice of the God of Truth, and whose only hope of being saved really depends on his being found to be wiser and more righteous than God! Oh! wonderful forbearance, which can suffer such creatures to breathe a single moment out of Hell! When the Holy Spirit visits any soul, he teaches it that, if any man is wise in this world, he must become, in his own eyes, a fool, that he may be wise; he shews the sinner that all his boasted thoughts of what is reasonable are nothing but the essence of pride and impiety, and that, if he had no other thing to answer for than these at the bar of God, they would be more than enough to make the justice of his perdition plain. Dear fellow-sinner, examine yourself in regard to this matter, and seek that the Lord God of Truth would deliver you from the power of darkness, and bring out your soul into the marvelous light of his own pure Word and Holy Spirit. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is the way of death. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away."

3<sup>rd</sup>, *The Opinion of the World*. – This is the last, but not the least powerful and dangerous of those false rules by which men in general form their views of right and wrong. There is hardly anything which tends so much to keep the multitude at ease in their perishing condition, as their following the general opinion of men around them; and even when a sinner is awakened by the Holy Spirit, he has often a fearful struggle before he can fully deliver himself from the bondage of the world's opinion, and can find strength to act upon it as an undoubted truth, however awful, that the whole world lieth in the wicked one; that Satan reigns in every unregenerate soul, and sways the scepter of the globe. It is indeed difficult to say, with full conviction, "Let God be true, and every man a liar;" to embrace God's views regarding sin, and to give the lie to all the darkness and pride of the soul within, and of the ungodly world around. This, however, we must do, if we are ever to learn our true condition, and are to be saved from the perishing wreck of this apostate world. And you must remember, dear friend, that though this is hard, nay impossible, for man himself, through the power of sin and Satan, it is both possible and easy to the God of Salvation. When the Spirit comes to anyone in his conscience-convincing power, he speedily destroys the power of the world's opinion, and brings the soul to take part with the blessed God of Truth, against all the enemies who oppose him. The Spirit teaches a sinner that the things which are highly-esteemed among men are an abomination in the sight of God; that, under the covering of natural virtue, men are universally depraved; that the decent, respectable, amiable, learned, accomplished, and honourable, in the unregenerate world, who, he used to think could hardly fail to be saved, are really nothing more and nothing less than decent rebels, respectable enemies of God, learned fools, amiable slaves of Satan, accomplished children of wrath, honourable heirs of Hell; that the world is not one whit better in the nineteenth century than it was in the first, when Jews and Gentiles, high and low, learned and ignorant, profligates and professors of religion, rose with one consent against the Light of the world, and put Him to death, because they could not endure his holy doctrine, nor those piercing beams of his Divine glory which shone through his human nature, concealing, like the veil in the ancient temple, the Holiest of all! He teaches the soul that, however much men may think of themselves, and of this world, with its nobles, parliaments, princes, and monarchs, the nations are before God as nothing; that he can as easily punish a world as destroy a worm; and that his enemies, though they were multiplied a million-fold, could not shield themselves one moment from the avenging stroke of his almighty arm! By such discoveries as these, the power of the world's opinion in regard to sin is effectually broken, -- the sinner

feels that, if he is to be saved, he must take part with God against it, and that, if he should persist in following the world, he must be condemned with the world, and be driven away with the world into everlasting punishment.

These, then, dear fellow-sinner, are some of the false standards by which the world at large, and all of us by nature, judge of sin, and by which multitudes are kept bound under darkness here, until they are at last sent down to the blackness of darkness forever. It is easy and common to disown these rules *in words*, but few do so *in very deed, and from the heart*; and you may be assured, my dear friend, that if the power of these principles has not been discovered to you and destroyed within you, by the Holy Ghost, you still continue a stranger to his saving work, and are ignorant of God, of your own heart, of sin, of your lost condition, and of Emmanuel, the only Saviour of the lost. Praying that the Holy Spirit may make us willing to judge ourselves sincerely by that perfect Law which God has given to man, we shall now proceed to consider its nature.

II. THE TRUE STANDARD OF SIN. – The only true standard of sin is THE LAW OF GOD, which is summed up in the Ten Commandments, and is explained at large throughout the Word of God. The Law of God is the solemn declaration of his holy will, as our Creator, Proprietor, and Moral Governor. It has proceeded forth from the inaccessible light of Jehovah's eternal throne, as the perfect and unalterable rule of man's character and conduct, and the foundation of all God's dealings with him. It is only when we view the Law in connection with God as its author, and when, by the Spirit, we discern somewhat of God's infinite glory, that we see its excellence and authority, and feel that infinite guilt is contracted by the violation of it. The world has mean and carnal thoughts of God, -- imagining him to be such an one as themselves, and, therefore, men in general trample on the Law without remorse or fear; but when so much as a single beam of the Divine glory shines into the guilty soul, the sinner discovers the infinite majesty of the Law, and the infinite demerit of the very least offence against it. Let us therefore seek, as we are briefly considering the properties of the Law, to realize the glorious presence of Jehovah who gave it; and thus, at every step, we shall be ashamed and confounded on account of our iniquities, and shall fall low as undone sinners at the feet of Jesus.

1<sup>st</sup>, *The Law is Holy*. – The Moral Law is a copy of God's holy nature, a mirror in which all the Divine perfections shine gloriously forth. When we say that God is holy, we mean two things; first, that he is perfectly and unchangeably free from all iniquity himself; and, second, that his blessed nature recoils with an essential and infinite abhorrence from the very sight of iniquity in any of his creatures. And thus it is with the Law which he has given to man. That Law demands perfect and constant love to God, perfect obedience to his will, perfect dedication to his glory, and perfect delight in his character and love. These glorious requirements manifest the infinite holiness of the Law. And, on the other hand, it shows its holiness when it forbids and condemns, with the fearful threatening of the second death, the very least degree of any form of sin; searching out and pursuing with divine vengeance, ungodliness, pride, irreverence, rebellion, impurity, malice, injustice, falsehood, envy, and every other form of sin. Man's depraved nature is a hotbed for the growth of all these iniquities, a fountain which is continually sending forth the black streams of impurity and ungodliness; but the Law of God is unchangeably opposed to the very least sin even in thought or desire. Little do the multitude dream that they are under a Law so holy as this; and therefore they imagine that they can do many good things, and that they are in little danger of God's indignation; but when the Holy Ghost reveals to the soul the Law of God, and the nature of God, as represented in it, the conscience is set on fire, and the sinner is cast into depths of alarm and horror, wondering that the Almighty God, against whose perfections and government he is every moment sinning, does not let loose his thunderbolts upon him, and

hurl him for the face of the earth into the bottomless Pit! Dear fellow-sinner, have you ever felt in this way? If you have not, it is not because you are safe, but because you are blind. Oh! plead, in the name of Jesus, that the Spirit would reveal the holy Law to your conscience in its real nature, and then you shall be able to find no rest, except in the precious blood of God's own Son, which has been, as it were, sprinkled upon the Law, that its holiness might be vindicated, and the unholy sinner saved.

2<sup>nd</sup>, *The Law is Spiritual*. – This is a property of the Law which is little attended to; but there is none which more fully sets forth its glory, nor the extent and heinousness of sin. When it is called “spiritual,” the meaning seems to be, not only that it is a law which reaches to the heart of man, but that it is a law which is fitted for a spiritual nature, or, in other words, a nature communicated to man by the power of the Holy Spirit. When man was created at first in the Divine image, the Spirit of God dwelt in his soul, as in a temple, and made him capable of discerning, and admiring, and obeying the spiritual Law which the Lord inscribed upon his holy conscience. In consequence of sin, however, the Spirit of God deserted the soul of man, and he forthwith became, as the Scripture says, “carnal,” or “sensual, not having the Spirit.” “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Thus, the nature of man has become entirely contrary to the Law. “I know,” says Paul, “that the Law is *spiritual*, but I am *carnal*, sold under sin.” “The carnal mind is *enmity* against God; it is not subject to the Law of God, *neither*, indeed, *can* be; and they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God.” There is no view of the Law of God which so utterly destroys the hopes of an unregenerate man as this. The natural man thinks that he can do many things which the Law requires, and that he has at least some good works to recommend him to the mercy of God, as men speak. But what does the spirituality of the Law teach us? It is, indeed, a different doctrine. It shows a man that he is wholly “carnal”; that he cannot even discern the Law aright; that his heart is unmixed hatred to it, when truly known; that he cannot please God in anyone particular; and that his best dispositions, and most commendable actions, are wholly destitute of spiritual life and glory, and are as different those which the Law demands as a dead waxen image is different from a living man. An unrenewed man neither has done, nor can do, anyone thing which will meet the requirements of the Law. His works are dead works, proceeding from selfish, carnal principles, and being destitute of that holy love to God, and dedication to his glory, which constitute the value of actions in the judgment of the Law; and thus, instead of deserving a reward, they are fitted to draw down the consuming wrath of the Holy One! Poor carnal sinner, you must betake yourself, with grief and shame, to the glorious spiritual obedience of the Lamb of God, as your only refuge from the curse of a spiritual law, and in him you will find the promise of the Holy Ghost to restore to you a spiritual nature, that, being accepted in the Beloved, you may be again conformed to God's image.

3<sup>rd</sup>, *The Law is Broad*. – This is another view of the Law which exalts the character of God, and strikes at the root of all man's pride and self-confidence. By nature we imagine that the Law is narrow in its requirements, and, in our blindness and pride, we are disposed to stretch out our own righteousness, as it were, to correspond with it, and cover it; but when the Spirit opens our eyes, we are led to say with David, “I have seen an end of all perfection; but thy commandment is *exceeding broad*.” We now see that the Law is wide as the perfections of the Divine character, and that it is broad as the nature of man, reaching to everyone of his powers and faculties, fathoming the mighty depths of his heart, penetrating into the most concealed recesses of his being, following him into the darkest mazes of his thoughts and imaginations, attending him wherever he goes, observing him whatever he does, unveiling his hidden depravity, searching to the bottom of his soul, examining and judging every thought, every desire, every imagination, every look, every feature, every word, every motion, every passing expression of the countenance. Ah! when the Law of God is thus seen in its exceeding breadth, the enmity of the sinner to it is fearfully exasperated – the

commandment comes home to him, as it came to Paul, sin, which was asleep, revives, and the sinner dies! He is made to feel that, though his fancied good works were *really* good, they could no more meet the breadth of the commandment, than the point of a needle can cover the surface of the globe, or than the puny insect can veil with its wing the face of the vast immeasurable skies! This conviction strikes him to the dust, and he would lie there and perish in despair, did not the blessed Spirit direct his eye to the surety of sinners, and discover to the conscience the Law-magnifying righteousness of Jesus, which, through the infinite glory of his Godhead, not only meets, but overpasses the Law in all the exceeding breadth to its demands.

4<sup>th</sup>, *The Law is Righteous*. – When the holiness, spirituality, and exceeding breadth of the Law are set before us, we are ready to complain of it as unreasonably strict and severe; but, if we view the matter in the light of God, we shall see that this charge is unreasonable, unjust and impious. Justice consists in giving to everyone his due. Now, let us apply this to the Law. It demands for God supreme and constant love to his blessed nature, complete obedience to his holy will, entire devotedness to his glory, and perfect delight in his presence and love. These demands we have, alas! withstood; but are they therefore unjust? No. They are the natural and the unalienable rights of Jehovah, which he cannot but insist on, and to surrender which, would be to surrender his glory as God. That Law which declares these rights of God, and guards them with its fearful threatening, is a righteous Law. Its demands are righteous, -- its curse is righteous. If its demands were less strict, or its threatening less severe, it would be an unjust law – the enemy of God’s glory, and of God’s creation. It is sin – it is not the Law – which is unjust, robbing God of his glory, and main of his dignity and his blessedness; and though sin has obtained so complete dominion in the human heart, that man has no disposition to keep the Law, it is righteous in continuing to maintain the claims of God, and in condemning all who oppose them. Poor sinner, you may think to spring backward and escape from the grasp of the Divine Law, by charging it with too great severity; but it is impossible – you cannot escape. It holds you in the awful bonds of justice, and never can you be delivered from its iron bars and its gates of brass, until you see yourself righteously condemned, and throw yourself into the arms of Jesus, who, as the sinner’s surety, met the Law in all its just demands, and fully satisfied it on the cross! You have robbed God of his rights and glory; you have been guilty of high treason against the King of kings; you have exposed yourself to the consuming stroke of God’s avenging justice; but behold! the blessed Jesus stands in the breach to turn away God’s wrath, he restores that glory to God which you have taken away, and, by his precious sufferings, renders your salvation possible, in harmony with the rights of God, and the honour of his Law.

5<sup>th</sup>, *The Law is Good*. – This is the crowning feature in the character of the Law, and it is the one which gives the finishing stroke of infamy to the character of Sin. The natural man thinks that the Law, at least when explained in its spiritual nature, is the enemy of human happiness; and that, though a man may increase his happiness by decent moral conduct, holiness is opposed to it. This is an unfounded, but a deep and fearful delusion, under which sin and Satan have bound an apostate world. It is indeed true that the unrenewed sinner can find no enjoyment in the holy Law, but is pained and tormented when it comes near his guilty conscience and carnal heart; and it is certain, that, if the carnal man were transplanted to Heaven, where all is perfect holiness, it would prove to him a place of restraint and of torment. But this only proves that man’s taste is depraved, and not that holiness has anything in its own nature that is evil or unpleasant. In what does the infinite and ineffable blessedness of God himself consist? It is little that we can conceive of this, but yet we are warranted to say that it arises chiefly from his reflecting, with infinite and unchangeable complacency, on the perfections of his own holy nature. Now, if this be the case, must not that Law be essentially and infinitely good and gracious, which commands man to be like to God to love the Lord with

all his heart, and to delight himself in the contemplation of Jehovah's uncreated glory? We may, thought the power of sin and Satan, think little of this; but, in reality, it is the perfection of dignity and of blessedness; and God, in giving man such a law, designed to make him a partaker of his own glory and felicity. And, although the Law be armed with a fearful curse against all who transgress it, this does not alter its essential goodness. Nay, this very cruse is placed as the guardian and defender of goodness, to take vengeance of those who would injure and destroy it. The Law, which was ordained unto life, we find to be unto death; but does this show that the Law is evil? No; it only proves the infinite evil of sin, which can change the sweetest food into the most deadly poison. "Was then that which is good made death unto me?" says Paul. He answers, "God forbid;" it was not so, but it was sin that wrong death in him by that Law which is good, in order that sin, by the good commandment, might become "exceeding sinful." Indeed, my dear fellow-sinners, the Law of God is so essentially and perfectly good, that, constituted as man has been, it is impossible for almighty power to make him truly and eternally blessed, except by restoring his nature to harmony with its demands; and when man is again perfectly restored to agreement with the Law, and its righteousness has been fulfilled in him, through the power of the Holy Spirit, his blessedness will be complete. The reason why the blessedness of the children of God is not perfect on earth is simply this, that their holiness is still imperfect; but when they leave the world, and become free from the power of sin, their joy will be full. Even here they can say with Paul, "I delight in the Law of God after the inward man," and with David, "Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it;" but when they enter into glory, and are conformed to the image of God's dear Son, their delight in the Law will be ineffable, and they will feel that, in departing from it, they had not only trampled on the principles of justice, but had sinned against the very essence of goodness. How infinite, then, is the evil of sin! how fully deserving to be pursued with God's everlasting vengeance! How mad and infatuated is the world, which seeks for happiness by forsaking the holy Law, and entering those regions of ungodliness which are walled off by Divine justice – nay, by regions of ungodliness which are walled off by Divine justice – nay, by the Divine goodness itself – as the habitation of wrath and vengeance!

6<sup>th</sup>, *The Law is Unchangeable*. – It is a common delusion, that because man is now utterly depraved and unable to keep the Law, according to its holy and spiritual character; the Law must be brought down to suit his fallen nature. No error is more common than this, and there is none which more completely saps the foundation of the Gospel. It is beyond all doubt true that man is totally depraved, and that, until he is born again, he cannot command so much as one holy thought; yet it is equally certain that he is bound, absolutely bound, by Divine justice, to keep the Law as strictly and perfectly as Adam was in the day of his creation. *God did not deal with Adam as a private person, but as the head and representative of the human family;* and when he gave him the Law, he gave him with it a holy nature to be preserved and conveyed to all his posterity. We are ready to object to this arrangement because the covenant is broken, and we are involved in Adam's guilt and ruin; but would anyone have done so had Adam stood? Would we not have had infinite reason to admire God's boundless grace in giving eternal glory to us so freely? And, had we been present on the day when God humbled himself so infinitely as to make a covenant with man, must we not have joyfully and thankfully approved of that covenant? And was it not then most righteous and gracious in the Lord to make that choice for us in our absence which we must have joyfully welcomed if present? *It is not the choice of God, but the choice of Adam that we ought to condemn;* and yet the very individuals who find fault with the first covenant, madly reject the second, and follow their first father in the paths of rebellion and apostasy from day to day and hour to hour!

And then consider, again *the nature of that inability which man is under to keep the Law of God*. Were men willing and anxious to keep it, and yet prevented by some outward hindrance, such as the want of faculties or opportunities, it might with some reason be said that the Law demanded too much. But is this the case? No! The reason of our inability is simply the greatness of our depravity – that we are desperately wicked, and full of pride, enmity to God, rebellion, impurity, and injustice. And shall the Law of God give countenance to principles so base and fiendish as these? Shall it consent to man's rebellion? Shall it legalize iniquity and ungodliness? Fearful thought? What! shall the fall of a guilty worm shake the principles of eternal God of his right to perfect and constant love! Ah, no! Man may fall but God's Law and justice cannot be shaken. Man may become so depraved that he cannot love God, and cannot hate sin, but God cannot cease to demand that sin should be abhorred, and that his own character – the perfection of beauty – should be admired. Were he to retreat from these demands, and to wink at sin in any form, he would cease to be God – the glory of him who dwelleth in the light that is inaccessible would set in an eternal night! Ah! praise to the Lord this cannot be. There is One in the universe who cannot do iniquity, and who, infinitely rather than that his Law should be violated, his justice injured, his glory tarnished, would cast with indignation a whole world of rebels into the abyss of wrath! Heaven and earth may pass away, but one jot or tittle can in nowise pass from the Law till all be fulfilled. We may break a way to Hell through the Ten Commandments, which are set as a fence around the Pit to keep man out of it; but who shall break up a door through them into Heaven? The world may dream that God's law is relaxed, and may now be violated with impunity, because men have agreed to trample it under impious feet. We may dream that God can now bear our sins, because he has been so long accustomed to have his majesty insulted, his glory despised, his name dishonoured. But ah! sinners will one day learn that they are mistaken. They will learn this at the Bar of Judgment, if they refuse to learn it at the Throne of Mercy: they will be taught it by the Devils in Hell, if they are not taught it by the gracious Spirit upon earth!

If it had been possible that the Law could be relaxed, where would it have been so but in the Garden of Gethsemane? to whom but to the only-begotten Son of God? If ever Jehovah could have sacrificed the claims of justice to the cry of mercy, it would surely have been in that mysterious hour of Emmanuel's suffering, when he fell on his face, and three times prayed, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," and his sweat was great drops of blood falling down to the ground. It was not possible. There was, indeed, an answer granted to his prayer; an angel appeared unto him from Heaven to strengthen him, but it was to strengthen him that he might reach the cross, and might not die before he had there drunk to its very dregs that awful cup of trembling which Divine justice had measured out to sinners, and which was put into his holy hands as their redeeming surety! There was one way, indeed, in which he might have escaped, and there was only one. Could he had broken his covenant engagement to the Father as the surety of his elect, -- could he have given up his mighty and unparalleled undertaking, by which he was about to magnify the law, and redeem from its curse sinners who had dishonoured it, -- could he have retreated from that scene of conflict, where he was about to make an end of sin, and overcome the devil, and death, and hell, -- could he have returned dishonoured to the Father's bosom, -- then, indeed, his agonies might have been avoided. But his he could not do. His love to God and to his people, his truth, his oath, his glory, all engaged him to carry through the work which the Father had laid upon him. He could not, and he would not retreat until he had spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly. And if he must go forward, Justice was annexable, -- the Law was unchangeable, -- God was inexorable! The sins of his people had been laid upon him, and though he was the man who is God's fellow, he lay bound under the adamant chains of Divine everlasting justice, and he could not be set free until he had magnified the Law in all its unchangeable breadth and holiness, and had fully paid the penalty of his people's sins! And can we imagine for a moment,

that, if the Law could not be relaxed to the man who is God's fellow, it can be relaxed to poor guilty worms of the dust, such as we are – that God will punish his own Son and yet spare us? This is impossible; and the hopes that are founded on such a ground are desperate and impious.

But how, then, you will say, can anyone be saved? If the Law is thus holy and unchangeable, who can keep it? and if it must be kept, who can have hope? It is, indeed, true, that it must be perfectly fulfilled; and yet, mystery of mysteries! it is equally true that the guiltiest sinner out of Hell may be saved! How can this be? Not by the Law being brought down to meet the sinner, but by the sinner being brought up to meet and magnify the Law, as clothed and covered with the righteousness of Christ. The sins of men were laid on Christ, and the unchangeable Law condemned him, and humbled him, even to the death of the cross; and so, when the righteousness of Christ is put upon the sinner, the unchangeable Law justifies him, and exalts him to everlasting life in Heaven! It was no sin of Christ's for which he wore a crown of thorns, and in like manner it is no righteousness of ours for which we may wear a crown of glory. Thus it is that mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other. The Law remains unchanged and unchangeable; and yet, mystery of mysteries! the sinner who has broken it is saved!

Beloved fellow-sinner, the subject is so large, and has occupied us so long, that I can add nothing in the way of exhortation. But, let me ask you these solemn questions in the presence of God: Have *you* seen the Law to be holy, spiritual, exceeding broad, righteous, good, and unchangeable? Have *you* felt and acknowledged that you are under it, and that you are utterly undone? Have *you* confessed to God that you deserve to bear his holy curse in Hell? Have *you* fled from your own works, and embraced with all your heart the Law-magnifying work of Christ as your only ground of hope? If you have done these things, or if you do them *now*, through the Spirit, you are saved, and *cannot* come into condemnation. But if you have not this experience, and if you should never have it, it is impossible, infinitely impossible, that you can be saved. Beware, dear fellow-sinner, of begging at the door of Justice of mercy, or of bargaining with the Law, by doing what you can to fulfill it. The Law cannot speak a syllable of mercy; it will have nothing to do with prayers, and tears, and reformation: it has a promise for those who keep it perfectly; but it has a curse for all who do not. It will enter into no compromise; it will not meet sin half-way with a reduction of its righteous demands; it must have a perfect obedience, or it will inflict an everlasting curse. Thus, dear fellow-sinner, you are shut up to faith in the righteousness of Christ. Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. Look upon him as your surety, and you *will* be saved; despise him, neglect him, and you *must* eternally perish!

Praying that the Holy Ghost may savingly enlighten all who read these lines in the knowledge of Emmanuel, and entreating the prayers of the Lord's children, that, in the next Letter, I may be enabled to speak aright of the work of Jesus, the glorious foundation of a sinner's hope, which God has laid in Zion,

I am, Dear fellow-sinners, a lover of your souls, for the sake of Jesus,

WM. C. BURNS

Perthshire, July 1841.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 10

### TWO LETTERS TO THE INHABITANTS OF BALNAGUARD;

#### A VILLAGE IN STRATHTAY

1841

Note: The following Lines were printed without my knowledge at Aberfeldy. I have consented to allow them to be printed again, praying that Jehovah may condescend to bless any word of his own that is in them to those dear fellow-sinners who may read them.

Wm. C. Burns Perth, May 20, 1841.

LETTER - Aberdeen, November 17, 1840

My Dear Friend in the Lord,

I have long delayed writing to you, with the view of being able to send a short address to the dear people of Balnaguard; but finding my time constantly occupied with the Lord's work here, I am compelled at length just to send you a few lines to show that I have not forgot you, and to put you in remembrance of the Lord's dealings with you at the time that he was graciously pleased, in so remarkable a way, to send me to Balnaguard.

I was rejoiced to hear from Mr. Allan (The minister of Little Dunkeld, the parish in which Balnaguard is situated.) that there seems to be a *real* awakening among the people at your little village; and I have also learned from other individuals some farther particulars regarding the progress of the Lord's work among you. I am, however, very anxious to hear more *exact* accounts, whether good or bad, that I may be stirred up to give Jehovah praise for all that he is doing, and to wrestle with him that he may stay the hand of the wicked one, and carry on his own glorious and saving work, in opposition to all the power of sin, the world, and the devil.

I would warn such as have been concerned, even deeply, and constantly, against imagining that *conviction* is the same as *conversion*. The sinner is never safe, whatever experience he may have had, until he takes *refuge* in the atoning blood of Jesus from the guilt of his sins, and flees to the promise of the Holy Ghost for deliverance from its reigning, and indwelling power. Sin and Satan are *not* easily subdued, as everyone who enters on the Christian life is well aware. A Christian's faith finds no bed to rest upon but the infinite merits of Jesus, and the almighty power of the Holy Ghost. If the work is not deep, and divine, sinner-emptying, and Christ-exalting, it will not be lasting; and if it should last, it will be a lasting delusion, which, like the religion of the foolish virgins, will deceive the soul, and cheat it of the inheritance of eternal life. Oh! I would exhort all that are concerned among you to dig deep, and to lay the foundation of their hope for eternity on the immoveable rock of Immanuel's righteousness and grace. Every other foundation will give way when the billows of death begin to roll, and the storms of divine wrath burst forth on an ungodly world; but that blessed soul which has been brought by the Holy Spirit to seek Christ *all its salvation* and *all its desires*, will then be found safely resting on the Rock of Ages, and will rejoice amid the ruin of worlds, and the dismay, and horror, and destruction of millions of the unconverted. Let all, then, seek with the whole heart that the Lord would savingly apprehend them by his almighty Spirit, and give them such views of the glory and love of Jesus as will make the world appear an empty shadow, sin hideous and loathsome, and all

creature enjoyments as nothing; yea as dross and dung in comparison with Immanuel. He is the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely!

I was rejoiced to hear that several prayer meetings have been formed among the people. In holding these I would encourage them to persevere, always remembering that the Lord hath said, not only "where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst of them," but also when thou prayest enter into thy *closet*, and pray to thy Father who is in secret. Public religion, without closet fellowship with God, is hypocrisy, which may deceive the world, and deceive the soul itself, but cannot deceive a heart-searching God. Oh! let the dear people be *much* in secret prayer and meditation on the Lord's word, if they would be with Jesus and be like him. Write me soon, and I will write again.

The work of the Lord is going on here, to the praise of Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; though, alas! tens of thousands are still at ease, under the wrath of God. Oh! that the Lord would awaken them, and all condemned sleepers among you. Remember me to the people as their humble servant in the Lord.

In haste, Yours,

Wm. C. Burns

To: Mr. Cameron, Teacher, Balnaguard

Dundee, December 22, 1840

My Dear Friends in the Lord,

I cannot express the feelings of joy and praise to God with which I this day received a letter from Mr. Cameron, giving me an account of the Lord's work among you; and, though I am very much occupied in the work of Jesus here, I cannot but hasten to send you a few lines that I may express my longings after you in the bowels of Jesus Christ; and my earnest desire and prayer that he who hath begun a good work in you, may carry it on till the day of Jesus Christ. Truly the Lord hath thought of you when you thought not of him: he hath been found of them that sought him not: he hath been made manifest to them that asked not after him. Never did the Lord shew more clearly than in the case of your dear village, that he does not visit us for anything good in us, or because we are seeking after him. He saw nothing in you except sin and rebellion against his blessed and holy laws, and yet he came and called you to follow him!

How wonderful it is to think that all the meetings which I had with you at Balnaguard, and all the meetings you have had with others since, arose from the circumstance of my losing the coach to Grandtully, and being obliged to go a-foot. (When I passed this favoured hamlet, on the day referred to, the people were busy cutting down the abundant harvest; and little did I think, as I walked along, that Jehovah intended on that day to have an ingathering of souls into the kingdom of his Son. But so great was the anxiety that had been produced in the souls of many, at previous meetings, that some of the people came running and begged that we should have a prayer meeting, though it were but for half an hour. I waited wondering at the leading of God, which had brought us together so unexpectedly. In a few minutes the school-room was crowded: and when we prayed for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, nearly all wept together! It was, indeed, a season that I can never forget; and one which, I have little doubt, some will remember with joy throughout eternity. Ah! but there will be not a few, I fear, who may cry in hell, "Oh I that I had not been there. I rejected the Son of God, I resisted the Holy Ghost!" Alas, I shall this be always the case at such set times for favouring Zion. Balnaguard is six miles from Aberfeldy, and used to be noted for smuggling. – W.C.B.) The Lord has wonderful ways of working: his ways are far above and out of our sight; and he often hides his greatest mercies under a cloud of trials and disappointments. I am sure you often think of that day when we first met at Balnaguard, in the School-house, so unexpectedly both to you and me. Often do I

remember it, and often have I spoken of it to others as one of the most remarkable things that have occurred to me as a preacher of Jesus' Gospel. You remember that we sung the last eight lines of the seventieth Psalm, "Oh Lord in thee let all be glad," &c.; and our hearts were full when we knelt down and prayed, and then rose up to bid each other farewell. Oh! dear fellow-sinners, I often think on that day and cry, "Bless the Lord O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

I rejoice to hear of your prayer meetings, now amounting, I am told to six, since the boys and girls began to assemble together, as well as the older people. I remember once hearing a little girl praying in Dundee, and she wept and cried, "O Lord! I am a young creature, but oh! I am an old, hardened sinner." So I hope some of the young people at Balnaguard are feeling. Another in Dundee when asked if she loved Jesus, said, with tears running down her tender cheeks, "Yes." Why do you love Jesus? "Because he is the good Shepherd who gave his life for the sheep." It was a good reason indeed. Oh, that he may gather many among you, both old and young, as lambs, with his arms, and carry you in his bosom! May you lie as John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, lay at the supper, on the breast of Jesus. Oh that was a blessed place to be in! infinitely better than a king's throne! And yet the blessed Jesus invites us *all* to his bosom; and will case out *none* that come unto him. I am very anxious that, while you meet *together* for prayer and praise, and reading the Lord's Word, you should watch against spiritual pride, and hypocrisy, which we are in great danger of at all times, but especially when we are *beginning* the Christian life. Oh! if you wish to be the Lord's true followers, see that you be united to him by the Holy Ghost; seek after close fellowship with the Lord Jesus in secret; tremble at the thought of grieving the blessed Spirit; study the Lord's word daily and hourly as you have opportunity; make the *godly* your companions; come out from the world which lieth in the wicked one, forsaking all its sinful customs; and *wait for the coming of the LORD JESUS*. I would specially at this season entreat you to watch and pray against those snares which the devil, the deceiver and murderer of souls, will lay for you at the beginning of a new year. There is no time when the devil is more anxious to bind his perishing slaves with new chains of sin, than when they are entering on another year of their existence, knowing that, if he gets them to *begin* the year in his service, it will be likelier that they will continue to serve him to the end of it. Oh! remember in what way many of you spent the *last* New Year's Day. Would you like to spend another in the same manner? Are you not yet ready to renounce the *glass*, the *dance*, and the *song*? If you are not, you are none of Christ's and shall never taste the cup of everlasting salvation; never leap for joy on the shore of Immanuel's land; never join in the song of the redeemed in heaven! Oh! may the Lord enable you to stand the mockery that will be cast upon you being *singular*, and not like other people. May He cause you to find it sweeter to weep at His feet for sin, than to laugh, and dance, and drink, and make merry on the road to hell-fire with the ungodly world? Christ was mocked *for us*; shall we be afraid to be mocked for him? He suffered, and bled, and died on the accursed tree for us; and shall we be unwilling to suffer for him, even though it was to the loss of life itself. Hear what he says, "He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake and the Gospel's, shall keep it unto life eternal."

Mr. Cameron will write me after the beginning of the year, and let me know whether you have spent the New Year's Day as the followers of Jesus should. And, oh! if you would be afraid to sin were I at your right hand, remember that *the holy eye of God is ever upon you*, and that his heart is grieved when we leave the fountain of living waters, and hew out to ourselves broken and empty cisterns that can hold no water. "Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and *will not tarry*. Now, the just shall live by faith; but if any man *draw back* my soul shall have no pleasure in him." May you not be of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe unto the saving of the soul. In many places where the Lord has been pouring out his Spirit during this year, the people of God will be meeting on New Year's Day, at eleven

o'clock, A.M., and at six or seven o'clock, P.M. to pray that the new year may be a year of the Lord's great love and power in the hearts of sinners. Would you join us? I would wish much that you should join with us also on the last evening of this year, when so many serve the devil and go with *lightning* speed to hell! We shall then unite in thanksgiving and in prayer, trying to weep for those who are still going forward on the broad road!

You do not know how much I would like to meet you again. Pray that I may be brought to you soon, if it be the Lord's blessed will. Oh! let us pray for each other while we are separated; and when we meet, whether on earth or in eternity, may we rejoice together in the glory and grace of Immanuel, who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. - I am, in haste, dear friends,

Your humble and attached servant, In the Lord Immanuel,

Wm. C. Burns

To those of the Inhabitants of Balnaguard, who are setting their faces Zion-ward.

P.S. - Study Psalms 116, & 119, Isaiah 51:1-13, I Corinthians 6:14-18.

---

## Chapter 11

### CONFIDENCE IN GOD

1841

“I have seemed to see a need of everything God gives me, and want nothing that he denies me; there is no dispensation, though afflictive, but either in it, or after it, I find, I could not have done without it. Whether it be taken from me, or not given to me, sooner or later God quiets me in himself without it. I cast all my concerns on the Lord, and live securely on the care and wisdom of my heavenly Father. My ways are in a sense hedged up with thorns, and grow darker and darker daily; but yet I distrust not my good God in the least, and live more quietly in the absence of all, by faith, than I should do, I am persuaded, if I possessed them all. I think the Lord deals kindly with me, to make me believe for my mercies before I have them. The less *reason* hath to work on, the more freely *faith* casts itself on the faithfulness of God. I find that while faith is steady, nothing can disquiet me, and when faith totters, nothing can establish me. If I tumble out amongst means and creatures, I am presently lost, and can come to no end; but if I stay myself according to its holy and spiritual character, the Law must be brought down to suit his fallen nature. No error is more common than this, and there is none which more completely saps the foundation of the Gospel. It is beyond all doubt true that man is totally depraved, and that, until he is born again, he cannot command so much as one holy thought; yet it is equally certain that he is bound, absolutely bound, by Divine justice, to keep the Law as strictly and perfectly as Adam was in the day of his creation. *God did not deal with Adam as a private person, but as the head and representative of the human family;* and when he gave him the Law, he gave him with it a holy nature to be preserved and conveyed to all his posterity. We are ready to object to this arrangement because the covenant is broken, and we are involved in Adam’s guilt and ruin; but would anyone have done so, had Adam stood? Would we not have had infinite reason to admire God’s boundless grace in giving eternal glory to us so freely? And, had we been present on the day when God humbled himself so infinitely as to make a covenant with man, must we not have joyfully and thankfully approved of that covenant? And was it not then more righteous and gracious in the Lord to make that choice for us in our absence which we must have joyfully welcomed if present? *It is not the choice of God, but the choice of Adam that we ought to condemn;* and yet the very individuals who find fault with the first covenant, madly reject the second, and follow their first father in the paths of rebellion and apostasy from day to day and hour to hour.

And then consider, again, *the nature of that inability which man is under to keep the Law of God.* Were men willing and anxious to keep it, and yet prevented by some outward hindrance, such as the want of faculties or opportunities, it might with some reason be said, that the Law demanded too much. But is this the case? No! The reason of our inability is simply the greatness of our depravity – that we are desperately wicked, and full of pride, enmity to God, rebellion, impurity, and injustice. And shall the Law of God give countenance to principles so base and fiendish as these? Shall it consent to man’s rebellion? Shall it legalize iniquity and ungodliness? Fearful thought! What! shall the fall of a guilty worm shake the principles of eternal righteousness! Shall man’s willful enmity against the blessed God rob God of his right to perfect and constant love! Ah, no! Man may fall, but God’s Law and justice cannot be shaken. Man may become so depraved that he cannot love God, and cannot hate sin, but God cannot cease to demand that sin should be abhorred, and that his own character – the perfection of beauty – should be admired. Were he to retreat from these demands, and to wink at sin in any form, he would cease to be God – the glory of him who dwelleth in the light that is inaccessible would set in an eternal night! Ah! praise to the Lord, this cannot be.

There is One in the universe who cannot do iniquity, and who, infinitely rather than that his Law should be violated, his justice injured, his glory tarnished, would cast with indignation a whole world of rebels into the abyss of wrath! Heaven and earth may pass away, but one jot or tittle can in nowise pass from the Law till all be fulfilled. We may break a way to Hell through the Ten Commandments, which are set as a fence around the Pit to keep man out of it; but who shall break up a door through them into Heaven? The world may dream that God's law is relaxed, and may now be violated with impunity, because men have agreed to trample it under impious feet. We may dream that God can now bear our sins, because he has been so long accustomed to have his majesty insulted, his glory despised, his name dishonoured. But ah! sinners will one day learn that they are mistaken. They will learn this at the Bar of Judgment, if they refuse to learn it at the Throne of Mercy: they will be taught it by the Devils in Hell, if they are not taught it by the gracious Spirit upon earth!

If it had been possible that the Law could be relaxed, where would it have been so but in the Garden of Gethsemane? to whom but to the only-begotten Son of God? If ever Jehovah could have sacrificed the claims of justice to the cry of mercy, it would surely have been in that mysterious hour of Emmanuel's suffering when he fell on his face, and three times prayed, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," and his sweat was great drops of blood falling down to the ground. It was not possible. There was, indeed, an answer granted to his prayer; an angel appeared unto him from Heaven to strengthen him, but it was to strengthen him that he might reach the cross, and might not die before he had there drunk to its very dregs that awful cup of trembling which Divine justice had measured out to sinners, and which was put into his holy hands as their redeeming surety! There was one way, indeed, in which he might have escaped, and there was only one. Could he have broken his covenant engagement to the Father as the surety of his elect, -- could he have given up his mighty and unparalleled undertaking, by which he was about to magnify the law, and redeem from its curse sinners who had dishonoured it, -- could he have retreated from that scene of conflict, where he was about to make an end of sin, and overcome the Devil, and Death, and Hell, -- could he have returned dishonoured to the Father's bosom, his agonies might have been avoided. But this he could not do. His love to God, and to his people, his truth, his oath, his glory, all engaged him to carry through the work which the Father had laid upon him. He could not, and he would not, retreat until he had spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly. And if he must go forward, Justice was inflexible, -- the Law was unchangeable, -- God was inexorable! The sins of his people had been laid upon him, and though he was the man who is God's fellow, he lay bound under the adamant chains of Divine everlasting justice, and he could not be set free until he had magnified the Law in all its unchangeable breadth and holiness, and had fully paid the penalty of his people's sins! And can we imagine for a moment, that, if the Law could not be relaxed to the man who is God's fellow, it can be relaxed to poor guilty worms of the dust, such as we are -- that God will punish his own Son and yet spare us? This is impossible: and the hopes that are founded on such a ground are desperate and impious.

But how, then, you will say, can anyone be saved? If the Law is thus holy and unchangeable, who can keep it? and if it must be kept, who can have hope? It is, indeed, true, that it must be perfectly fulfilled; and yet, mystery of mysteries! it is equally true that the guiltiest sinner out of Hell may be saved! How can this be? Not by the Law being brought down to meet the sinner, but by the sinner being brought up to meet and magnify the Law, as clothed upon with the righteousness of Christ. The sins of men were laid on Christ, and the unchangeable Law condemned him, and humbled him, even to the death of the cross; and so, when the righteousness of Christ is put upon the sinner, the unchangeable Law justified him, and exalts him to everlasting life in Heaven! It was no sin of Christ's for which he wore a crown of thorns, and in like manner

it is no righteousness of ours for which we may wear a crown of glory. Thus it is that mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other. The Law remains unchanged and unchangeable; and yet, mystery of mysteries! the sinner who has broken it is saved!

Beloved fellow-sinner, the subject is so large, and has occupied us so long, that I can add nothing in the way of exhortation. But, let me ask you these solemn questions in the presence of God: Have *you* seen the Law to be holy, spiritual, exceeding broad, righteous, good, and unchangeable? Have *you* felt and acknowledged that you are under it, and that you are utterly undone? Have you confessed to God that you deserve to bear his holy curse in Hell? Have *you* fled from your own works, and embraced with all your heart the Law-magnifying work of Christ as your only ground of hope? If you have done these things, or if you do them *now*, through the Spirit, you are saved, and *cannot* come into condemnation. But if you have not this experience, and if you should never have it, it is impossible, infinitely impossible, that you can be saved. Beware, dear fellow-sinner, of begging at the door of Justice for mercy, or of bargaining with the Law, by doing what you can to fulfill it. The Law cannot speak in syllable of mercy; it will have nothing to do with prayers, and tears, and reformation: it has a promise for those who keep it perfectly; but it has a curse for all who do not. It will enter into no compromise; it will not meet sin half-way with a reduction of its righteous demoralizing; it must have a perfect obedience, or it will inflict an everlasting curse. Thus, dear fellow-sinner, you are shut up to faith in the righteousness of Christ. Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. Look unto him as your surety, and you *will* be saved; despise him, neglect him, and you *must* eternally perish!

Praying that the Holy Ghost may savingly enlighten all who read these lines in the knowledge of Emmanuel, and entreating the progress of the Lord's children, that, in the next letter, I may be enabled to speak aright of the work of Jesus, the glorious foundation of a sinner's hope, which God has laid in Zion,

I am, Dear fellow-sinners, A lover of your souls, For the sake of Jesus,

Wm. C. Burns

Perthshire, July, 1841

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 12

### TWO LETTERS TO YOUNG DISCIPLES OF THE LORD EMMANUEL

1841

Mr. Burns is constantly urging upon the people at home the great call for prayer on his behalf, and in his letters says:

“I desire a continued interest in the prayers of God’s people that my faith may not fail amid the difficulties of this arduous and honourable mission . . . . It is my desire and prayer that you may be countenanced by the gracious presence of Him, ‘who dwelt in the bush,’ and especially may be condescend to give light, quickening, and strength in all your prayers and plans for the evangelization of China . . . Oh! that it might please Him speedily to send forth many into this field, full of the Holy Ghost and faith, and that he might sanctify to his service, and increasingly prosper the labours of those who are already in the field. May the Spirit of grace and supplication be granted to the churches at home in connexion with this work, so that they ‘who make mention of the Lord may not keep silence, and give him no rest till he arise,’ and make his kingdom a praise and a glory in these vast and densely populated regions! May the Divine Spirit rest upon many among you, and fill every soul with love to Immanuel, with zeal for the advancement of his glory, and with compassion for China’s benighted and dying millions . . . I know that fuller details of what I have seen and met with, will be desired by some among you; but I think it better only to add, that the people of God have not only much cause, but also much encouragement from what is past, to continue in prayer for us and the people among whom we go. Let them do so, abounding therein with thanksgiving, and I doubt not that, from time to time, accounts will reach them from me, or from others, showing that a day of gospel light is beginning to dawn upon these so long benighted shores.

#### LETTER 1

My Dear Friends in the Lord,

One of the most critical periods in the religious history of a people, and of individual souls, is that which immediately succeeds a season of spiritual awakening. At such a time the impression of eternal things on the public mind is subsiding, the blessed time of grace, which has wafted many to the shores of Immanuel’s land, is setting back again, and society is returning to its wonted order and quietness – to multitudes, alas! the order of rebellion, the quietness of death!

In this state of things, the young disciple has often a deep and fearful struggle to keep his ground. His feelings are now become more calm, his sense of danger is less acute and piercing; perhaps the fire edge has been taken off from his conscience, unbelief is working within, and old habits of sin struggle to regain their power. The world around is moving on again as if God’s threatening were an empty sound, and Christ’s salvation a shadow, or a dream; while one and another of those who were seeking God are seen basely and madly deserting to the Devil’s camp. Satan struggles hard, by his temptations, to trip up the sinner’s heels, and give him suddenly a deadly fall. Even the Lord himself frequently, at such a time, as it were, leaves the sinner to stand upon his own feet that he may learn his weakness, -- live by faith and not by feelings, -- endure hardness as a good soldier, -- lay siege to the Kingdom of Heaven, and take it by violence. At this crisis, if ever, dear fellow sinner, you must live near to God, be filled with the Spirit, abound in the love of Jesus; resist the Devil, keep your feet above the world, nail the old man without mercy to the cross, and set

your heart on Heaven. This is the time to make God's service your business, Christ's presence your society, the Bible your study, the mercy-seat your dwelling-place. Common efforts, ordinary prayers, will *not* meet the case. You must watch, you must wrestle, you must fight, you must fear, you must make Emmanuel your fortress and refuge, if you wish to stand fast. An easier hold may support the drowning seaman when the wave is heaving to the shore; but when it turns, and sucks him back, a death-grasp, and a death-grasp only, of the rope, or of the jutting rock, will save him! Let each one, at such a time, look to his own soul, and cast himself with all his weight into the everlasting arms of Jesus. Thus will you ride out the storm, and make the port of Heaven, while many around you part from their moorings, are driven among the breakers, and go down!

I am often in an agony; God is witness, on account of many of you in different places, whom I suppose to be at present in these circumstances of trial and danger. I have therefore thought of penning these hurried lines, to accompany the following letter, which I have been asked to reprint, and which I send forth the more gladly, because I am prevented by manifold daily engagements from writing anything more suitable to your state. This letter was sent to Perth a year ago, at the time when that ever memorable season with which the Lord visited that place in the beginning of 1840, had come to a close, and when all things had to outward view resumed their former position, -- a multitude, alas! going forward heedless on the broad road to destruction, as before! some, who had been arrested for a time in their downward career, beginning again to ride post to hell! and not a few, I hope, having come out of the world, and beginning to learn the lesson that they must bear a cross on earth, if they would wear a crown in Heaven!

Oh! I wonder whether the Lord's people in Perth, Dundee, Aberdeen, &c. are following him *fully*; and whether the lambs of the flock, in those places where the work of the Lord has been more lately witnessed, are keeping near the Shepherd's tents. What do you say to this, dearly-beloved?

Look to yourselves; for behold! the Judge standeth before the door!

Again would I commend you all to him who keepeth Israel, and leadeth Joseph like a flock; and entreating your prayers that I, when I have preached to others, may not be myself a castaway,

I am ever yours in the Lord,

Wm. C. Burns

Glasgow, August 4, 1841

## LETTER 2

MY DEAR FRIENDS IN THE LORD,

I have felt the deepest anxiety about the state of your precious souls since we last parted, and have often wished to write to you; but, when I thought of doing so, I always felt your case so very weighty, that I was obliged to give it over, having no power to speak to you as I could wish. I cannot, however, delay longer to let you know my continual care for you in the Lord. "Now we live if ye stand fast in the Lord." "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

When I consider our Lord's wonderful and most affecting parable of the Sower, of the Tares and the Wheat, and of the Ten Virgins, with many other parts of his heart-searching word; when I look around me and see one and another going back to the world, and walking no more with Jesus; and above all, when I hear of some among yourselves who walk disorderly, and by their open vanities and sins, bring dishonour on the holy and blessed name of Jesus, I feel my heart almost ready to break with concern about you all, and would indeed be utterly cast down, were it not that I have the Lord Jesus saying, "*My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.*" They are in his hand, -- the hand of Jehovah, and yet the hand which was nailed to the cross, to redeem them; and neither the devil, with all his malice and cunning wiles; nor the world with its seductive smiles and bitter frowns; nor the old man, with his deceitful lusts and passions, can take them from him. But ah! my dearly beloved and longed for, how many of those who seem for a time to be Christ's sheep, listening to *his* voice and following *him*, turn out afterwards to be *wolves* in sheep's clothing! Christ's true sheep hear *his* voice, and follow *him*, they follow him willingly, they follow him fully, and they follow him constantly; whereas many that walk for a time among the sheep soon being again to listen to the voice of *strangers*, and follow *them* rather than the Good Shepherd, when they come to a point where they must make a choice, and either part with others for Christ, or part with Christ for others. When we begin to set our faces Zionward, we are often like a dog following two men who are going together upon the same road. You cannot tell, so long as the men go on in company, to which of the two the dog belongs; but when they come to a point where they must separate and go opposite ways, the dog will follow the one who is his master. Thus, have you not seen some around you who seemed to follow Christ while the crowd followed him, but who now, alas! when these have gone back to their old ways, desert Christ and go with the world? Oh! dear friends, is it not so with some of you? When you must sacrifice a lust or sacrifice Christ, which do you crucify? When you must part with a companion, or a lover, or a relative, in order to serve the Lord, which do you abandon -- your friend or your Saviour? I am sure you are beginning to understand somewhat better than you did, why the Christian life in this world is called a warfare. You are no doubt feeling that you have enemies without and enemies within, who seek your downfall and your destruction night and day. Do not be deluded with the idea that the way to heaven is everywhere strewed with roses, and that the enemies you have to contend with are either few or weak. The Lord has said, "*they are many, and they are strong, and they hate us with cruel hatred.*"

*How powerful and deceitful an enemy has each of you in your own heart!* "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." "The heart is deceitful *above all things* and *desperately* wicked; who can know it?" Oh, how it can paint the most hideous sins in the colours of innocence! how it can honey over with unhallowed pleasure pills of the most deadly soul-slaying poison! This enemy, dear friends, is far more than a match for all the saints that ever lived on earth, and it will assuredly ruin both you and me, unless the Lord make us by his spirit to detect its wiles, and enable us by his almighty power to overcome them. If you would overcome in the Lord's battle, oh! study deeply your own hearts, and flee to the infinite grace and power of Emmanuel, for refuge from them. And remember this must be a daily and an hourly work. The old man is not easily made to lay down his arms to Christ; he will fight after he has got many a fall, and many a severe wound; and even after he seems to be lying dead, he will rise again and renew the combat.

*The world also is the irreconcilable and deadly enemy of the Lord's ransomed ones.* It overcomes many by its ungodly example, and its ungodly spirit; and when the influence neither of its spirit nor example will prevail against us, it will try to win us by smiles, or terrify us by frowns -- to attract us by a blooming rose, or daunt us by an unsheathed dagger. You will generally find that its smiles, and fawning, and flatteries, are more to be dreaded than its scoffs, and jeers, and bitter calumnies. No one is so dangerous to the Christian as a

companion or friend, who is unconverted, but has many amiable qualities, and treats him with kindness and respect. Satan will tempt you to believe, in such a case, that there *may* be something *really* good in an unregenerate heart, and that you need not be so anxious as you may have been about a *new* heart, and a *new*, Christ-exalting, world-condemning, God-glorifying, flesh-crucifying life! Oh! beware of the wolf in sheep's clothing. Abandon the unconverted *as your companions*, if you do not wish to abandon the well grounded hope of escaping eternal perdition, and reaching eternal glory. In almost every case of open backsliding which I have heard of in this place (Kilsyth), I have found that the poor backslider never *fully* unrenounced his or her former associates, and thus was *gradually* drawn away by them again into former habits of ungodliness; and I have no doubt you have noticed the same thing among yourselves. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but the *companion* of fools *shall be destroyed*." "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

What shall I say, my dearly-beloved friends, of *the wiles and malice of the devil, the god of this world*? Alas! I am myself but little acquainted with these, through my own carnal blindness and security, and I am therefore little able to warn and direct you, from experience. But the Lord hath said, "Satan goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Woe to them that are ignorant of Satan's devices against the Lord Jesus, and all who truly follow him! Their ignorance is the surest proof that they are led captive by him *at his will*. Believer, he *will* watch his opportunity against you; and, when you are off your guard – perhaps when alone, or when in the company of those from whom you think you have not much to fear, he will labour to prevail against you by some of his manifold devices. I might say much more of these things, beloved, but my time is nearly gone; and I am afraid that, while I have been seeking to put you on your guard, and to beat to pieces a false, and awfully dangerous, security, it may be needful to add a word of *encouragement* to anxious and desponding souls.

Are there any of you *who have got such a view of your spiritual enemies, and of the dangers and difficulties that beset you on the road to Zion, that you are cast down, and ready to give up the contest*? To such an one I would say, While you have good reason to despair of help from yourself, or from any other creature on earth, or in heaven, you have *infinite* reasons for looking unto Jesus as the author and finisher of your faith. As the Captain of Salvation, he has already overcome, in the name of all his people, the devil and the world; and he has promised to give *them* the victory, yea, to make them *more than conquerors*! The thought of our guilt, and depravity, and misery, ought not to lead us to despair of *Emmanuel*, but only to despair of *ourselves*. It ought to drive us *to* the throne of Jehovah's grace, instead of driving us *away* from it. Presumptuous fleshly confidence is a soul-ruining sin; but unbelieving distrust of Jehovah-Jesus, is a sin unspeakably more heinous and hell-filling. It is precious to be taught that without Christ we can do nothing; but it is far, far more precious, to be led by the Spirit, with Paul, to *glory even* in our infirmities that the *power of Christ* may rest upon us. The first Gospel-lesson is to look for *nothing* connected with salvation in ourselves; but the second and the greatest lesson is to see Christ as "*all and in all*." When we are weak, then we are strong – weak as the worm Jacob in ourselves, but mighty as he was in Jehovah, to thrash the mountains and beat them small, and to make the hills as chaff. It was Jacob's sense of weakness that was his strength, when he wrestled with the Angel of the Covenant at Peniel and prevailed. We are told that he *wept* and made *supplication*. His *tears* and *prayers* prevailed with Jehovah, whose compassions are most deeply and tenderly moved in our behalf, when, like poor worms, we are lying helpless in the dust at his feet! When prostrate there, the weakest child of God may say, with David (Psalm 18:29),

"By thee, thro' troops of men I break,  
 And them discomfit all'  
 And, by my God assisting me,  
 I overleap a wall."

If you want to fight, and overcome, and receive the crown of life in the day of the Lord, which is *at hand*, oh! study his Word *much*, and, as far as you can, *alone*, and *upon your knees*! Watch and pray without ceasing. But, above all, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Behold the Lamb of God. *Live by faith upon the Son of God*. Behold him as your *only* righteousness, to atone for your guilt, and give you a right to eternal glory. Behold him as your *only* life, raising you from the grave of your trespasses to walk with him in newness of life, and to glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which are God's. Behold him as your *only* strength, saying, "Fear not, thou worm Jacob," &c. (Isaiah 41:14), and teaching you to say, "Thou art my King, O God! command deliverances for Jacob. Through thee will we push down our enemies," &c. (Psalm 44). Oh! let us think of Jesus, until our hearts are filled with adoring love to his glorious person, and with ardent humble zeal for his glory; until we hate sin with a perfect hatred, and have our whole hearts set on that holiness without which no one shall see the Lord.

Time would fail me, my dear friends, were I to try to say a hundredth part of what is in my heart. I must draw to a close. I would press upon you to study the concluding chapters of the Epistles, as your divine and blessed rule of life in the hands of the merciful and righteous Mediator. Pray over these for the illumination of the Holy Ghost, and for his almighty power to sanctify your hearts through the truth. Be much alone with God. *Grieve not the Spirit*. Rejoice in the Lord, and again I say, rejoice. Walk wisely toward them that are without, redeeming the time. See that you fall not out among yourselves by the way. Warn the unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men; and the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your bodies, souls, and spirits, be preserved blameless to the day of his coming. *Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it*. Brethren, remember me in your prayers that I may open my mouth boldly, to declare the mystery of Christ, as I ought to speak. I cannot write more, but I trust to come to you again, and see you face to face, when the Lord will, which, perhaps, may not be long. The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his; and let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved. May grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, be with you all. *Amen*.

Your humble and affectionate Servant in the Lord,

Wm. C. Burns      Kilsyth, August 11, 1840

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 13

### Anxious Sinner

1843

My Dear Fellow Sinner,

There are none in whom I feel so deep an interest, and to whom I am so anxious at present to speak a work in season, as the class of those who have been brought to feel their sin and misery, as apostates from the love and service of the blessed God, but who have not yet found salvation in Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant. Those who are in this condition remind one of a person who is under the power of a deadly disease, and is in such a state that the slightest change for the better or for the worse may bring him back to life, or lay him prostrate in the cold iron grasp of death. Ah! That is a time of awful interest! Every pulse, every breath, every feature is watched by the weeping family around the bed! It is true, that the case of the multitudes who are lying all around us cold and motionless in the grave of their trespasses, --as completely dead to the living God as the bones in the church-yard are to the living world, --ought to move the hearts of the children of God, and to make them cry aloud to Emmanuel, whose voice maketh the dead to live. It is true, also, that real Christians have need to cultivate a holy jealousy over themselves, and over all who seem to be alive to God, but who, alas! Not unfrequently droop, and die, and go down to the Pit. But still it is the anxious, alarmed, conscience-stricken, law-condemned, wrath-pursued sinner, who is seeking rest, but finding none, that ought to engage the first attention and the most earnest prayers of the ministers and people of God. The state of such an individual is so very critical, that the very smallest circumstance, to human view, may either raise him to Heaven, or turn him over the precipice of sin into the yawning pit of Perdition! Therefore, while I would desire, in the following lines, to declare such truths of God's word as may be useful to all, I shall more specially address myself to the case of those who are *convinced* but not *converted*. May the Holy Spirit breathe with quickening, melting power upon my cold heart while I write, and upon yours, dear fellow-sinner, while you read what is written!

Allow me then, solemnly and affectionately, to call you to consider the following circumstances in your case.

I. YOUR STATE IS UNCOMMON. The true people of God are but a little flock in this world, and in this land. We have many church-goers, many communion-attenders, many so-called Christians, but, alas! Few children of God, who have been born again of the Holy Ghost -- who hate sin, and love Emmanuel, and follow after holiness, and lay up treasure in Heaven. And alas! Anxious awakened sinners are even more rare. We may meet with individuals here and there who seem to be Christians; but how seldom do we see persons who seem to be under the awakening operations of the Holy Ghost! Men, in general, are at ease. Christians, alas! Are too much at ease, and sinners are at ease; and when an individual is brought to see his lost condition, he can hardly find anyone who feels like himself. Blessed be God, this is not so much the case in those places where the Holy Ghost has been lately poured out so abundantly upon the souls of sinners; and you may know perhaps a few around you, who are, like yourself, acquainted with spiritual anxiety. But still your case is uncommon. You meet with few that feel as you do, -- with few that think they have need to be so much concerned about the soul, -- and with some who are even disposed to mock at your anxiety. If you find this to be the case, do not be surprised, do not be staggered by it. It is a truth, an undoubted truth, though the world hates it, and would gladly conceal, because it cannot alter it, that the gate of life is *a strait*

*gate*, and that the way to Heaven is *a narrow way*. If you wish to go to Heaven in this day of general ungodliness and contempt of Jesus, you must not shrink from being singular, but must leave the crowd, and join yourselves to the little band of Christ's spiritual followers, who are wondered at, suspected, hated, and persecuted by the world of the ungodly, because their anxiety about salvation and their holy spiritual lives condemn the world, and proclaim aloud that it is lying under the wrath of God. Fear not, anxious sinner, to join the Lord's people, though they may be few in number where you live, and may be contemptible in the eyes of ungodly men. JESUS himself was despised, and hated, and persecuted, when he was on earth, and if they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more they of his household? Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you; and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Be not afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as grass. Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be afraid of their reviling; for the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool; but my righteousness shall be forever, and my salvation from generation to generation. (Study 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, and Isaiah 51.) Consider, again,

II. YOUR STATE IS HOPEFUL. You know that there is no hope of any person being saved who goes on in the paths of open sin; on all such the devil *reckons* as his prey. They bear the brand of Hell on their brass-lined, Heaven-defying brows. Neither is there any hope of the unrenewed professor, whatever be his knowledge, his morality, his privileges, his office, his standing in the world, or in the Church. Such persons, continuing destitute of the new birth, are as certain to perish as those who live in open sin. And, what is more, they are even less likely, to human view, to be awakened to a sense of their lost state than open and abandoned transgressors, because they have more to put asleep, and to keep asleep the conscience, until the fires of Divine Judgment rouse it up to do its office. ANXIOUS SINNERS are the class out of whom the ranks of God's dear children are filled up; and everyone who is under conviction of sin stands, as it were, a candidate for union to Christ and a place in the family of God. It is by a sense of sin and misery that the Holy Ghost begins his glorious saving work; it is thus that the way of Zion's King is prepared in the wilderness of the natural heart; and therefore, dear fellow-sinner, while, it is true, you are not yet in a state in which it is safe or blessed to remain, you are in a state through which all must pass on the way to glory. This ought to encourage you to seek the mercy of the Lord, through Jesus Christ, and to make immediate humble, penitent, and earnest application to Jehovah, who is seated on the Throne of Grace, waiting to be gracious to the chief of sinners. (Study Isaiah 55, and Luke 15). Consider, again,

III. YOUR STATE IS DANGEROUS. Alas! There are comparatively few, even in this the day of the Lord's great mercy to our favoured land, who seem to tremble at His word, and to ask in earnest, "What must I do to be saved?" and yet, among those who are brought under anxiety about their souls, many are not saved. You may be anxious, and yet not thoroughly awakened. You may be convinced of your danger, and may tremble with the faith of devils, and yet not be convinced of the evil and heinousness of sin as it opposes the law and the nature of the holy God, defaces the image of God in the human soul, and pierces the Lord of Glory. Alas! I have myself known many such cases. Some, like Felix, have *trembled*, but, like Felix, have *turned away* from Christ. Some have been, with Agrippa, *almost saved*, and yet, with Agrippa, will be *altogether lost*. Yea, some have gone farther than this. They have wept, they have prayed, they have read their Bibles, they have gone to prayer-meetings, they have forsaken their worldly companions, they have seemed to be entirely changed, and yet, after a time, they have returned as the dog to his vomit, and as the sow that was washed to his wallowing in the mire! Such a one has become, like Saul the king, "*another man*," but not, like Saul the Pharisee, "*a new man*." (See 1 Samuel 10:6-9) Sin has *not* been driven *out* of the heart,

but has rather been driven up *into* the heart. It lies hid for a time, but it is hid in the Citadel, and, at a convenient opportunity, it comes forth and again takes possession of the whole soul. Ah! Then, dear fellow-sinner, beware of thinking you are safe, because you have shed tears, and have been all on fire to get to Jesus, as you have thought, and as others may have hoped. It is not a sense of sin that saves a man, -- it is not repentance, -- it is not reformation, -- it is *Christ and Christ alone*; and, therefore, it is only when you accept of Him as your atoning High Priest, and yield yourself to Him as your Sovereign Lord, that you are safe, and cannot come into condemnation, but have passed from death to life. Oh! It is infinitely awful to think of being eternally lost, and of lying down amid everlasting flames, without a drop of water to cool the parched tongue. The only drops of water that are to be got in Hell are the briny, bitter tears of a repentance that comes too late! Oh! Strange, that any reasonable being can rest a single moment without the certainty of escaping such a doom. Mad, infatuated world that can spend its moments of reprieve and respite from the wrath of an almighty and eternal God in ease and carelessness! Yet there is something, were it possible, even more awful than this in the perdition of an anxious inquirer after the Saviour. Such an one has had the eye opened to see the approaching doom of the ungodly, his conscience hears the distant muttering thunders of God's vengeance, the awful stillness that precedes the forked lightning settles on his soul, he is on the very point of entering in at the gate of life, of taking refuge in the wounds of the man who is God's fellow -- in the clefts of the Rock of Ages, rent to afford a hiding-place for sinners in the day of wrath -- and yet, after all, he is not saved! He trifles with conviction, he loses his opportunity, he grieves the Spirit of Grace, he secretly rejects the Son of God, and he seals his own destruction! Ah, yes! And remember, also, that if you follow after sin, amid the arrows of conviction, and reproof, and warning from the Lord, your condemnation will be far more awful than that of those who have never been thus visited. The Gospel kills where it does not cure. We *may* refuse to know it so as to be saved, but we *cannot* avoid knowing it so as to be condemned. And if we despise the bleeding Saviour, and resist the Holy Spirit, we shall wish in Hell that we had been Hindoos or Mahomedans. Ah! There are none of whom Satan takes so desperate a grasp as those who had once nearly escaped from his chains. There are none who will endure so much of the wrath of the Lamb as they who "trample him under foot," and, as it were, make a way for themselves to the Pit over the bleeding body of the Son of God! Come, then, *now*, dear fellow-sinner, let *this* be the hour, *this* the blessed moment, or your cordially accepting Jesus, and passing from death unto life. He waits to be gracious; he is near, he is able, he is ready to save you. Oh! Yield the heart to him *at once*, and at once you pass from the number of those anxious souls whose case is dangerous and doubtful, to the number of those who believe and who are sealed by the Holy Ghost unto the day of redemption. Oh, sinner, where is your heart? Has Jesus got it? I cannot, I dare not, go farther till you yield, and put the crown upon Emmanuel's head. (Study 2 Corinthians 5:11-21, & 6:1-2) Consider in conclusion,

IV. MANY EYES ARE UPON YOU. This remark may perhaps at first sight seem strange to you. You may be unknown in the world, and few may seem to care whether you live or die, -- be saved or perish; but, my dear friend, you know that things of little consequence in themselves sometimes become of great importance from particular circumstances. Men of a contentious spirit will dispute as vehemently about a trifle as about a treasure. Their honour (alas! They have little) is at stake, and therefore they refuse to yield a single hair's breadth. So it is in this case. You know that, on this earth, the prince of darkness and the Lord of Glory are contending for victory and dominion, and that all men take part either with the Lord or with Satan. Every soul that Jesus begins to alarm or to allure is in danger of being lost to Satan, and that soul becomes a battlefield, on which Satan and Emmanuel contend for victory. It is of little consequence to the creation of God whether a puny work like me be saved, or be lost; but, when Satan and Emmanuel are contending about me, it is of *infinite* consequence whether God or the devil shall prevail, and have dominion. In this way every

individual who is concerned about salvation becomes important, unspeakably important, and attract notice not only on Earth, but in Heaven, and in Hell. The UNGODLY around you desire to see you coming back to their condemned company, and following them, in the downward paths of sin and vanity, to death and destruction. They would rejoice to see your tears dried up, your serious countenance laughing as of old, your singularity, as they call it, laid aside; they will try many methods to make you join their company, their dance, their glass, their song' and thus they would lure you with them to the Pit. Beware, O sinner! Avoid the *appearance* of evil, if you wish to avoid the *reality* of it; resist the *beginning*, if you do not wish to see the *end*. The *end* of these things is death! On the other hand, THE LORD'S PEOPLE, as far as they are like to Jesus, are labouring and praying that you may be savingly converted; they tremble lest you should ruin your soul, and dishonour the name of Jesus, by returning to the world; and oh! How they would rejoice to see you meekly, and purely following the Lamb, adorning the doctrine of the Gospel, and running for the crown of life. Ah! Shall their labours and their prayers be all in vain? Shall we who have preached and prayed for your conversion, stand up in the day of Judgment to condemn you to the flames? I shudder at the thought! But again, though you may be little conscious of it, SATAN is contending with all his guile and malice to ruin you. In this hellish work of deceit and murder, the devil seldom shows himself without a mask. If he did, he would scare away his prey. Oh! How could his willing captives still love his baits, and his flatteries, and his chains, if they saw him in his true character, as the roaring lion ready to devour their souls? The devil works unseen, that he may work successfully. He speaks by the voice of your own heart, and by the mouth of those around you whom you love, that he may speak with power, and lead you captive at his will. They that resist sin, resist the devil; they that obey sin, obey the devil, though unseen. And, more than this, while the devils plots your ruin, and seeks by every means, fair or foul, to keep you from giving your heart to Jesus, and ANGELS in heaven are longing for your conversion, and stand, as it were, ready to break forth into a shout of praise and joy, when you touch the hem of Jesus' garment, and are saved. Oh! Shall the golden harps of Heaven be never used in rejoicing over you? Nay more, to crown the whole, JEHOVAH himself has his eye upon you, and condescends so infinitely far as to be interested in your doom. Behold! He pleads, he waits, he beseeches, he commands you to embrace the offers of his free and everlasting love! Shall the rejection of the love of God consign you to the lowest Hell? Oh! Shall his mercy never bless and glorify your soul? Dear fellow-sinner, you engage the interest of Heaven, Earth, and Hell at once; and can you think that you are sufficiently alive to your danger? -- that you feel aright your need of *instantly* giving the heart to Christ? Shall *you* be less anxious to escape from coming wrath, and to lay hold on future glory, than the God of love, with saints and angels, is to see you saved? yea, than wicked men and devils are to see you damned? Oh! Madness to be lulled asleep by the deceiver and murderer of souls! To be cheated out of the inheritance of Heaven by those apostate spirits who never had an offer of a Saviour, and who grudge God's unspeakable gift to a dying world. Oh! How foolish will poor sinners look in hell, when the very devils tell them that they might have been saved, had they not madly been in love with death! It will make the pit tenfold more insufferably awful to lost sinners when they think that they might have been in Heaven, had they been wise in time, and embraced God's offered mercy.

Trembling sinner, have you heard the thunders of the Law at Sinai? Have you seen the lightning-flash of God's indignation? Oh! Then, look to Calvary, and behold the sword of eternal justice awaking against Jehovah's Shepherd, the man who is God's fellow! Behold EMMANUEL, a God-given surety, standing in the sinner's place, magnifying the holy law, satisfying offended justice, pacifying incensed holiness, and quenching the flames of wrath for all who believe in this name, and trust in his blood! Oh, dear sinner! delay not a moment, but look to Jesus and be saved. Look to him and wonder, look and live, look and love, look and be sanctified, look and be glorified! (Study Isaiah 53 and 55.)

Do you say, Alas! I try to look to Jesus, but I can obtain no view of his glory which will pacify the conscience or satisfy the heart? All is darkness – all is confusion – all is trouble. If it is so, beware lest you are speaking with *secret* insincerity, lest you are *secretly* rejecting Jesus, as he is *freely* offered to you from the Throne of God, and *secretly* keeping hold of some idol which he calls you to abandon. Beware lest you are making a righteousness of your anxiety, a saviour of your feelings or your faith. See that you consider Jesus as *all your salvation*; thus you shall find him to be *all your desire*. Go to the Throne of Grace, and humbly tell the Lord that you desire to be saved by Jesus – plead for the Holy Spirit to enlighten you savingly in the knowledge of him, and though he seem to disregard your cry, lay hold of the promises of mercy, trample unbelief under foot, resist the devil, and wait upon the Lord. At last, in his own good time he *will* bring you forth to the light, and you *shall* behold his righteousness; and you will then sing joyfully to his praise in the words of that blessed Psalm, which is so sweet to awakened souls, “I waited for the Lord my God, and patiently did bear, At length to me he did incline, My voice and cry to hear,” &c. – Psalm 40.

Dear fellow-sinner, if, instead of patiently *waiting* on the Lord, you are tempted to prefer the cordials and comforts of the world, which the devil will have ready at hand to help you – to help you to the Pit! – oh! Remember that the distress of an awakened soul is many leagues nearer Heaven than the ease and security of a sinner who is settling on his lees. Yes! the distress of a penitent is unspeakably better than the peace of a proud professor, or of a heart-seared profligate. It is infinitely better as an heir of Heaven to walk in darkness, than as an heir of Hell to walk in light! The darkness of the penitent will *soon* give place to the bright shining of the Sun of Righteousness, which will at last be perfected in that land of glory where there shall be no night forever! The candle of the ungodly will soon be put out amid that blackness of darkness which reigns eternally unbroken in the grave of dead souls, the prison of unclean spirits! Oh! poor sinner, *wait* on Jesus, for “the Lord is good to the soul that seeketh him, and they that wait on me,” he saith, “shall not be ashamed.” (Study Lamentations 3.) It is good that a man both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God. May *you* find it so, dear fellow-immortal, in your blessed experience, and rejoice eternally in the Lamb. I shall in the mean time commend you to the grace of the Lord Jesus, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit; and

I am, DEAR FELLOW SINNER, Your Friend and Servant, In the Lord Jesus

Wm. C. Burns.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 14

### SALVATION IS OF THE LORD - A SERMON OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF THE REV. R. MURRAY M'CHEYNE.

1843

(PREACHED IN ST. PETER'S CHURCH, ON SABBATH EVENING, APRIL 2, 1843, AND PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE KIRK SESSION. TO THE ELDERS AND CONGREGATION OF ST. PETER'S CHURCH, DUNDEE)

DEARLY-BELOVED BRETHREN,

The following pages are printed solely in consequence of your expressed desire, and not because I feel that they are either suitable to the occasion when they were delivered, or worthy of the infinitely high and glorious subject to which they refer. They will serve, however, as another memorial of that dear servant of the Lord who has been taken from among you to his crown, and will, at the same time, remind you of some of those great truths which, while I laboured among you as his substitute, in 1839, I sought to declare, and which I shall still declare among you as I have opportunity. It is my prayer that Jehovah may greatly sanctify to all of you his chastening rod, and prepare you all for meeting with joy, and not with grief, your lamented pastor, when he stands to give account of his ministry before the Great White Throne. His hands are pure of your blood. Look ye to yourselves!

I remain, your servant in the Lord,

Wm. C. BURNS. At Forfar, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1843.

P.S. – I could not give you the Sermon which I preached, but I have done what I could, with the aid of notes kindly taken by a hearer.

#### SERMON

Romans 8:30 – Whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and who he justified, them he also glorified.

The design of the Gospel is to bring many sons unto glory; and in this passage we shall first of all notice that glory to which God's children are at last brought. Now, we cannot speak at large on this; but we may observe that when God's people are glorified, *they will be delivered from all evil of every kind*; and, first, they will be delivered finally, perfectly *from all sin*. Yes, when they reach glory, there will be a final and an eternal separation between their souls and sin! This is a prominent part of the glory to which they are raised; and those of you who know anything of sin will understand what it is to be delivered from it – to be freed from its very presence – to have its last remains taken away from the soul, and the soul left in the state in which Adam was created, or rather in a higher state – a state of perfection, including in it some graces which unfallen Adam was a stranger to. The soul of the glorified saint will be possessed of all those excellencies which belong to the human nature of Christ. It will be rendered holy as God is holy, and pure as he is pure. The mind which used to be dark will now be full of the light of God's own Spirit. The conscience will be perfectly free from all deadness. The heart will be entirely purified, and will be centered on God himself. It will be fixed on God's excellency – on God as its portion. The will, too, shall then be entirely conformed to

the will of Jehovah; and thus the soul will be in all respects conformed to the image of God's dear Son. The *body*, also, will be delivered from all evil. The body of a child of God is subject to disease and death in this world, like the bodies of others; but when the glory of God's children is completed at the last day, it shall be raised up in glory, fashioned like to Christ's glorious body, and shall shine in union with the soul as Christ's body did on the Mount of Transfiguration, or as it now shines in glory at the right hand of the Majesty on high. This, then, is one part of the glory to be revealed in the saints.

Another and a still higher part of it is that *they shall see Christ as He is*. All glory centers in Emmanuel, as the only begotten of the Father, and the brightness of his glory – the Mediator of the New Covenant – the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world – the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who triumphs over all his enemies, and is exalted above all as the Head of His body the Church. This glory of Christ it is the present bliss of God's children to contemplate by faith, and as in a glass darkly; but when they reach the heights of heaven, they shall see Him face to face, and shall be to all eternity filled with the ineffable view of His glory, and more and more changed into the same image from glory to glory.

*The saints, when glorified, shall share also in Christ's triumph, and reign with him on His Throne.* If we suffer with him we shall reign with him. "To him that overcometh I will give," he says, "to sit with me on my Throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his Throne." The saints receive a kingdom – a kingdom that cannot be moved. The redeemed are kings to reign as well as priests to serve, and they shall reign with Christ forever and ever; and the Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne shall feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. Now, dear friends, will you notice this little word "He." "Whom He justified, them HE also glorified." The glory conferred on the saints is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord; and in as far as that glory belongs to the *character* of his people, and consists in their conformity to the image of Emmanuel, it is God's work and God's work alone. It is He that begins the work of grace, and it is He that perfects it. He carries it on mightily and wondrously from step to step, until at last the finishing touch is given to it and it is set apart as glorious and matchless, to be admired forever. Ah! how wondrous must be the work of God in the soul of a believer at his departure, when the old man is utterly destroyed, and the soul is left completely and forever free from the last remains of sin! This is the doing of the Lord. "Whom He justified, them He also glorified."

Now there are two great changes noticed here which must precede this glorifying. The one is *justification*, the other the *divine calling*. And, first, of Justification. We are here assured that God glorifies none but those whom he has previously justified. Now there are two things implied in justification. The one is that the sinner is made righteous, the other that he is declared to be righteous. Many have got the idea that justification is declaring a sinner to be righteous, and treating him as righteous, though he is not really so. But this is not the case. When God justifies, he makes the sinner righteous, and then declares him to be righteous – declares him to be what he really is. But how then is the sinner made righteous? On what ground is it that he is righteous, and is declared to be so? Not assuredly on the ground of anything in him, or that he has done or can do. No! The law demands perfection, and it will regard nothing else than that perfection which meets its demand. Such perfection can be found nowhere in the world as belonging properly and personally to any man; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; and yet God justifies men, yea he justifies the ungodly! But how? It is by their union to Emmanuel, the Mediator of the New Covenant, the magnifier of the Law, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, who hath finished transgression and made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, which is unto all and upon all them that believe. This righteousness is the ground – the only, the all-sufficient, the everlasting

ground – of a sinner’s justification; and when the sinner is vitally united to Emmanuel, whose work this is, he becomes in the eye of the Law and of the Judge not only righteous, but “the righteousness of God,” and being thus righteous, he is declared by God to be so. Nor let us wonder at this; nor the union of believers to Emmanuel is so intimate, that we are said to be members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. Nay it is even compared to the essential and eternal union of the three divine persons in the one undivided glorious Godhead! Now mark again that word “*He*,” “He justified.” It is God’s work to justify. God alone is judge, and therefore God alone can justify. But when God justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is God who, in the person of the Son, has wrought out and perfected that righteousness which is the ground of justification; it is God who, in the person of the Holy Spirit, reveals this righteousness to the sinner’s conscience, and leads him to embrace it as his only hope; and it is God the Father who, acting in the character of Judge, and sustaining the glory of the Godhead as injured by the sinner – it is He who imputes this righteousness to the soul, constitutes the sinner “the righteousness of God in Christ,” and declares this wondrous sentence both now within the conscience, and openly to all at the day of final judgment. And mark, again, the connection between the two – justification and future glory. It is intimate, it is inseparable. “Whom he justified, *them* he also glorified.” None can enter heaven that are not justified. This is contrary to God’s very nature; but it is equally sure that none who are justified can fail to reach the glory to be revealed. The work of Jesus redeems from iniquity: it redeems unto God; and none for whom his blood has been shed, and to whom it is divinely applied, can possibly come short of the inheritance provided for them. If there be a soul now present that is justified – mark, that *is* justified – not merely that *thinks* itself to be so – that soul *will* be glorified. Let earth and hell combine their power, they cannot keep that soul out of heaven.

And then, dear friends, there is to be noticed the other change which is here mentioned as preceding an entrance into glory. This is the “calling” of the sinner. You will mark that this “calling” is not that which Jesus speaks of when he says, “many are called, but few are chosen.” *That* refers to the outward invitation which is given to all to whom the Gospel comes; but this is that calling which is described as “high,” “heavenly,” and “holy,” by which the soul is turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Without this mighty call of God, Christ would continue despised, the sinner’s heart would remain unchanged, and Satan would retain his dominion. But God puts forth his mighty power. “As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.” In the days of his flesh, Jesus called whom he would, and they followed him. The dead in trespasses and sins heard the voice of the Son of God and lived; and so it is now. He calls the sinner with that power which said, “Let there be light, and there was light.” His call casts out the devil from the heart, so that he can hold it no longer: it breaks the dominion of sin in the soul, slays the enmity of the heart to God, unites the soul to the person of Christ, raises it up with him from the grave of trespasses and sins, creates within it a holy nature, begets it again unto God to be a kind of first fruits of his creatures, and implants in it all those gracious principles which make it like to God, and render it meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. This is indeed a high and holy calling and it is a calling inseparably linked to justification. “Whom he called, *them* he also justified.” We are not indeed to imagine that the work of God quickening the soul is in any way or in any degree the *foundation* of the sinner’s acceptance – *that* is Christ’s work *alone*; but it is by this calling that he is united vitally and eternally to Emmanuel as his righteousness. And not less connected is it with future glory than with justification. That life which God implants in the quickened soul is *everlasting* life. It cannot die, because Christ is its principle, and the Holy Spirit dwelling in the soul creates and supports it. And this mighty change is to be ascribed to Jehovah alone. It is not the work of the sinner. All that he does is to hate and fight with God until God changes his will by an exertion of omnipotence. It is not the work of ministers, nor of any outward ordinance. These are, indeed, employed as channels, but the

power is Jehovah's; and the very reason why he calls his chosen through such means is to show that the work is wholly his own. The treasure is in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. Neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase. Natural impressions are, indeed, made by particular instruments and particular ordinance; but all these come short of that life which is spiritual, supernatural, and divine. Outward means may embalm the dead, but cannot give them life. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit; and Jehovah is the only author of the new creation, as of the old. We may suppose, indeed, that because we have rendered this change necessary, we can ourselves effect it. But how vast is the difference between the power to do evil and the power to do good. A little child can easily take away the life of an insect or a worm; but all the creatures of God cannot give back that life when it is gone. Sin has accomplished a ruin which none but Jehovah can repair; the repairing of which in my soul is the greatest wonder of God's wisdom and power, as well as of his grace and love. Jehovah calls the *dead*. Jehovah justifies the *ungodly*. Jehovah glorifies the *children of wrath*. He calls, he justifies, and then he glorifies; and whom he calls, *them* he also justifies: whom he justifies, *them* he also glorifies. The work is his from its beginning to its close; and where he begins, he will carry it on to the day of Jesus Christ.

And now we must retreat a step farther back that we may reach the cause and fountain of that salvation, whose progress and perfection we have been endeavouring to trace. *Whom he did predestinate*, them he also called, &c. God worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will, and especially that salvation which is the greatest work accomplished in the history of time. The Mediator was set up from everlasting, and appointed to his glorious work before the foundation of the world. The covenant of redemption in behalf of the Church was made, and help was laid on One mighty to save, even from eternity. Yea, all the means through which men are brought into union with Christ, as well as the Spirit's own agency by which this is brought to pass, with the glory to which at last the Church is praised – all these were ordained from eternity, and are accomplished in the times appointed of the Father. Here, however, in the words before us, we are specially taught that the particular *persons* who are called and justified, and at last glorified, were chosen to be so from eternity. "*Whom,*" it is said, "*whom he did predestinate, them he also called.*" And this is a truth evidently taught in many places, and one that is implied in every other part of the Gospel. God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy. Jacob he *freely* loves, and Esau he *justly* hates. And who that knows what salvation is, can doubt that electing love lies at the foundation of it – particular, personal election? Does God call one rather than another, because he finds that soul better disposed than the other? No, surely. The carnal mind is enmity against him, and every elect soul hates and fights against God until the will is changed by an act of almighty grace. It is not of works, but of him that calleth. Who maketh thee to differ, O believer? True it is, you obeyed the call which others resisted; but why did you obey it? The Lord made you willing in a day of his power. And had you not been called in another way than those around you, you would, like them, have been lying at this moment loathsome and condemned in the grave of your trespasses. You came to Christ because the Father drew you. He drew you in the time appointed, because you were one of those who from eternity were given to Jesus; and all that the Father hath given him shall come to him. Him also that cometh unto him, he will in nowise case out! There is no effectual calling but that which is the act of God's creating will; there is no justification without that heavenly calling which unites to Emmanuel; and there is no future glory, except for those who are called and justified. All is thus to be traced back to that infinite love which alone has provided salvation, and which fixes upon those who are to partake of this salvation, not for their sakes, but for the glory of Jehovah, as the God of love. Nor can those who are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world fail to reach that glory which is provided for them. Whatever enemies may oppose their entering into heaven – whatever obstacles may stand

between them and the glory of God – they cannot but reach it. The purpose of God, according to election, *shall* stand. Whom he did predestinate, *them* he also called; and whom he called, *them* he also justified; and whom he justified, *them* he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Let us now mention a few general inferences from this great subject.

*How great God's salvation is!* -- This salvation takes its rise from the infinite ocean of the Father's love and compassion – it is purchased at the hands of Divine justice, by the manifestation of God in our nature, and his bearing his people's sins in his own body on the tree, -- it is applied by the agency of the Divine Spirit, and it will fill the eternal heavens with the halleluiahs of a great multitude whom no man can number. The scheme of this salvation is the center of Jehovah's eternal counsels, -- its accomplishment is the great event of time, -- and its completion will be admired and celebrated throughout eternity. Like God himself, this salvation is high as heaven, what can we do? deeper than hell, what can we know? the measure thereof is longer than the earth, it is broader than the sea. Oh! thou heir of glory, thou child of God, how little have you known of this salvation! How little have ministers said of it! When we enter heaven, it will seem as if we had never heard of it before. How shall ye escape who despise it – who neglect it? It has been all freely offered to you by Jehovah times without number, and yet you have preferred the world, or self, or sin, before it. Oh! what your loss will be ! How awful and how just your condemnation! Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

*Salvation is of Grace.* – Grace reigns in its eternal plan, in its purchase by the blood of Emmanuel, in our effectual calling, in our final glory. It is all free – free-electing love, free calling, free justification, and free glory! All is the gift of God! and thus it suits the case of the lost, who have nothing to commend them to God's love but that they are *enemies* – nothing that can invite the Spirit but that they are *dead* – nothing to recommend them to pardon but that they are *unrighteous* – nothing to give them a title to glory but that they deserve *eternal death*. It is suited for you, oh! lost sinner, and it is all freely offered to you. You cannot, indeed, know that you are one of God's elect, but none ever knew this till they came to Jesus. Begin with the *freeness* of grace, and *then* consider the sovereignty of it; take the doctrine of the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of the Romans, and when you have been condemned to die, and have received Christ as your righteousness, you will then turn to this chapter, and rejoice to trace all up to God's eternal electing love, and to say, "I love him, because he *first* loved me."

*Salvation is infallibly secured to all the seed.* – Were it left to the free will of fallen man to determine whether Jesus should reign or not, his whole work would be in vain, because all would reject him. God has, however, provided against the possibility of this by giving to his Son a chosen people as the fruit of the travail of his soul; and he hath engaged his truth and faithfulness in covenant to his Son, that these shall all be gathered unto him in due time. Were none elected, none would be saved. The people of God would perish like the world, and Jesus would lose his glory. Let this doctrine humble the sinners, but not discourage them. We must attend to the free offers of salvation first; and be assured that him that cometh, Jesus will in no wise cast out. His sovereignty does not limit his love, but shews its greatness. True, he might have saved all, but he does not, and for acting thus he has wise and holy reasons. He will show his wrath as well as make known his mercy. He will manifest his justice in condemning as well as his grace in saving. But remember that all evil is of the creature, all good of the Creator. It is on account of sin, and that alone, that sinners are

condemned; and the only reason why all who hear the Gospel are not saved is this, that they will not come to Jesus, but madly reject him, through enmity, pride, and love of sin.

*The glory of Salvation belongs to God alone.* – It is all of God, and therefore all the glory is his. The love which originated it is his – the righteousness which purchased it is his – the grace which makes it ours is his – the glory to which it leads is his – and, therefore, all the glory belongs to him. Learn, child of God, to trace all you are by grace, and all you hope to be in glory, back to Jehovah. If he hath called you, give him the glory – give it to no means – to no instrument – to no effort of your own. It has come to you through human channels, but it has come from Jehovah – it is a fruit of his free, fathomless, eternal love and compassion. Learn this in your own case, and in the case of others. You have lived in a wondrous time, and in a favoured spot. It is exactly four years ago this day since I first met you in this place, and what wonders have been taking place since that time. Many parts of Scotland have been visited of the Holy Spirit in a way unparalleled among us for at least a hundred years, and this place has not been passed over. How many ministers have preached among you since that time? how many sermons you have heard! with what fullness and power from on High the terrors of the Lord and the unsearchable riches of Christ have been set forth! Who has done all this? who has made this place to differ from others that have not been rained upon? Many among you have been impressed, who, alas! have trampled underfoot the Son of God, and have done despite – to the Spirit of Grace; and to such, if they repent not, there remaineth nothing but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour God's adversaries! But some among you have been saved – some of the young – some of the middle aged – some of the old – a few of the rich – and more of the poor. Not a few have been called and justified, and some are even glorified! Now, to whom does the praise of all this belong? Does it belong to you, O follower of Jesus? Does it belong to those who have preached among you? Ah, no! Salvation is of the Lord. Let no flesh glory in his presence; but he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. The Father sent the Saviour of his free love, and he draws the sinner to him of the same love. The Saviour is sent, the sinner is drawn, and thus they meet and are united – the sinner is saved, the Saviour is glorified.

And this great truth you ought specially to apply to your present circumstances, as bereaved of a faithful and beloved pastor, who three weeks ago stood in this place in full health, but is now stretched in the newly-closed grave beside us! In a case like his you have all need – yea, the people of God have need – to beware of glorying in men, and to see that, while you recognize the excellencies of his character, you judge by the standard of the sanctuary; seeing that the things which are highly esteemed among men are an abomination in the sight God. You must separate between what was of the flesh and what was of the Spirit in him; leave the shame of the one to the creature, and give the glory of the other to Jehovah, remembering what is said of Paul – “They glorified God in me.” You must not glory in the man, but glorify God in him. To do the one is idolatry, the most heinous of all sins, and the one which God will most awfully avenge. To do the other is to give to God that revenue which is his alone. Keep these things in remembrance while I bring to your recollection one or two of those genuine excellencies which have struck myself as evidencing the grace of God in your lamented pastor.

*He was eminently endowed with natural gifts.* – These, indeed, had he remained under sin, might never have remarkably distinguished him in a world where not many of the wise are called, and where the finest powers of intellect and genius are seen to be so often devoted to the service of Satan; but, when sanctified by grace, they contributed to render him what he was, and what I cannot describe – one of the most amiable, accomplished, and attractive among the children of God, or among the ministers of Christ. But I shall rather

dwell on what he was through grace. Many have admired his amiable and engaging character who could see no beauty in that which above all distinguished him, and will distinguish him to all eternity. I do not know – it is remarkable I never asked from him – the early history of God’s work in his soul, but it was easy to observe, and this I was struck with when I first saw him and heard him speak, in a missionary meeting at Glasgow, five years ago, that *Christ lived in him*. This is the hidden and mysterious fountain of all graces in God’s children. Christ is their life. He liveth in them. From this resulted that evident and constant nearness to Christ which marked his character and shone in his ministry. Christ and his salvation and his love were not with him as with many good theologians and well-informed professors – a collection of doctrines or mere principles – but he realized the presence and rejoiced in the love of a living Emmanuel, dwelling in him as his life. This appeared in him at all times, -- in private, in the family, in the pulpit, and in his labours from house to house. No one could be with him without feeling that he rejoiced in the presence of a living Saviour: and when he spoke to sinners they could not but feel that he commended them not merely to dead principles or an abstract salvation, but to him who is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last, who was dead and is alive forevermore, and hath the keys of hell and of death. From Christ as his life he was constantly drawing, as he fed on his word with great delight, and as he waited on him from hour to hour and from day to day, at his footstool and in his work.

As Christ was his life and lived in him, so *he lived not to himself* but to him who died for him. What could you find him engaged in that did not directly concern the work and glory of Emmanuel? It seemed to him as his meat and his drink to labour for him – vindicating his honour and commending him to a perishing world. And in all this he truly seemed, through grace, to seek Christ’s glory as his end. Alas! we may do much in connection with Christ and his cause, and yet please and exalt self in the whole. “Ye did it not to me,” is a word which will reach many who dream not of it, and consign them to a portion among the enemies of God, when they hoped to be among his friends. We cannot judge the heart; but our dear departed brother seemed peculiarly to have triumphed over that sin which holds so many captive. He rejoiced unfeignedly, and almost equally, in the work of God, as being HIS alone, whether he or another were the instrument employed in it. I had myself a peculiar opportunity of marking this which I would now allude to for God’s honour. You know that it pleased God, during his absence in 1839, to visit this people with his salvation in a remarkable manner; and doubtless my heart and the hearts of many of you were knit together at such a time in a peculiar degree. Coming back in such circumstances to a people among whom he had been blessed, and whose affections had gathered round him, there was much that met him to excite, and that in the case of one less sanctified would have excited, suspicion and jealousy. And yet, though others might be jealous or suspicious who were less exposed to the temptation, I never on one occasion, even in a look, could say that I discovered such a thing. The imperfections and sins which attached to much that was done at that time, were noticed indeed by others, and by many magnified beyond the truth; but from the first he rejoiced in all that was of God, and gave him the glory, seeming to leave it to others who had more delight in it, to seek for causes of offence: And indeed, from that day till the last when I parted from him, he acted towards me with an openness and tenderness which rendered his friendship the most endearing that ever I enjoyed, or can almost hope to be a second time favoured with. I record this to the glory of God, because it was one of the greatest trials of his character in public life, and one in which he seemed to be more than conqueror through Him that loved him.

In his ministry, from the very first *the sum and center of his teaching was Jesus Christ and him crucified*. All that he taught either spoke of him directly, or was taught in connection with him. He taught the law of God to lead to Jesus and shew the glory of his work. He dwelt on his glory, personal and mediatorial, his grace,

his love, his fullness, his suitableness to the case of every sinner, and his willingness to save. And when he opened up the duties of the children of God, Christ was their example, and Christ their strength, and Christ's glory their end. He spoke of Jesus with the solemnity and savour of one who knew and adored him, and with the fullness of an overflowing heart. In this he was a flower of Paul, and of all faithful and successful ministers of Christ. And, as you know, there was no view of Christ which he more dwelt upon than that which is strangest and most opposed to the carnal man, but dearest of all to the true Christian – his obedience and his blood as the surety of God's Church. He found Christ's glory in every part of the Bible – in every book, in every page; and from this enlarged acquaintance with the discoveries of him, of which his word is full, his exhibitions of him had a sweet freshness and variety and were brought before you as newly plucked flowers, fragrant with the dew of God's grace. In preaching of Christ, his dependence rested solely on the power of the Spirit. He knew from the beginning that men were *dead* – literally *dead* – in sins and that no means could quicken them without the agency of the Holy Ghost. And I think that his impressions of this grand truth became deeper as he advanced in acquaintance with his own heart and with the hearts of others. He therefore rejoiced in the Gospel as the ministration of the Spirit, and pleaded incessantly for the promise of the Father. These two truths – justification by the righteousness of Emmanuel and regeneration by the agency of the Holy Spirit – are, indeed, the very poles of the whole system of revelation; and they were certainly the truths to which all his doctrine pointed, and in which his life as well as his ministry was centered; and thus we may explain his success. Nothing will make up in the ministry of the Gospel, or in the life of an individual soul, for the want of the righteousness of Christ as the foundation of our acceptance. Along with this saving religion lives or dies. Nor will this be retained as a living doctrine, and produce living results, unless equally with it we hold fast the truth that man is *dead* in sin, and must be created anew by the Holy Ghost, partaking of the power of Christ's resurrection, as well as the fellowship of his sufferings.

Oh! if these grand foundations of our faith and hope were more fully declared and acted on, saints would be fed, sinners would be gathered, and God would be glorified. In this, as in other things, our departed brother was an example to many, although, let it be remembered, that he is not our standard. He had much to learn, doubtless, in regard to these things, and we are only to follow him as he followed Christ.

Which of you can forget the graces which he displayed in his ministry and in his life? To take an instance, he was eminently *faithful*. In public, he kept back nothing that he knew to be profitable. He feared not to tell the truth, whomsoever it might reach; and his faithfulness was not that which takes refuge in the pulpit, and in overborne by fear or flattery out of it. If there was difference, he was more faithful to individuals than he was to congregations; and whether in his letters, as some of us know, or in conversation, he would not suffer sin upon another, but was jealous over all with a godly jealousy, seeking to profit rather than to please, and yet to please while he profited, by uniting the most winning openness and tenderness with his fidelity. He was gentle naturally, and yet, as many of you know, he was bold as a lion when the good of souls and the glory of the Lord were at stake. Remember, for instance, the noble part he acted in connection with that fearful sin of Sabbath-breaking in which the Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway Company persist, in defiance of Jehovah, and under the dark shadow of his coming judgments! I remember also, on one occasion, having followed him when he went in – an unwelcome visitor! -- upon a company of young people as they danced in a place not far from this, and I can never forget the awful solemnity with which he warned and entreated them to flee from the wrath to come. Oh! how many of you, how many around you, have a testimony to his faithfulness within you this day, and shall know the awful power of such a testimony, when unheeded, in that day when you meet God's servant as the great white throne! Surely, sinners, backsliders! Ye have been

warned. Ye are witnesses that God's servant is free from your blood – ye are witnesses against yourselves, if ye repent not and believe the Gospel!

These are but single examples from among the multitude which his life furnished, and which the memories of many of you can supply, of the earnestness, fidelity, and zeal, with which he laboured, both among you and in places around in season and out of season, to bring souls to Jesus, and to guide direct, and edify those who sought the way to Zion. Were to mention all the features of his character, I would need enumerate almost everyone which should belong to a minster of Jesus Christ. I shall only, therefore, notice further, that he was a man of prayer – an Enoch, who walked with God, pleading not at set times only, but from hour to hour, for nearer conformity to the image of Jesus, and a saving blessing on his flock and on the world at large. In no respect is our loss greater than in this that he is no longer allowed to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus as an intercessor for sinners and for the Church of God. He came forth from his closet on many occasions with much of Jehovah's presence in his soul, and in his countenance. Now he has exchanged the throne of grace for the throne of glory. He has ceased to pray, and has, we doubt not, joined the eternal halleluiah of the redeemed, crying, Worthy is the Lamb who was slain! Salvation unto him that sitteth on the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever!

Those who knew not your beloved pastor may suppose that I have spoken in a manner stronger than was warranted of his graces and labours; but those who knew him will feel that it is not easy to declare all that the Lord had made him; and now, when we look around the Church of our fathers, in this the day when she is placed in the van of the Lord's army – the post at once of honour and of danger – we cannot easily fix the eye on anyone who is in all respects like him, or will fill his place. Our loss is great indeed; but we must remember that the Lord's grace was great in giving us so much to lose. And though he is gone, and gone from us at a time when he seemed peculiarly needed, it becomes us to be dumb with silence, not opening the mouth, because the Lord hath done it. May his death awaken those for whom his life was spent in vain! May the people of God among you, having seen him bearing the cross, and at last receiving the crown, follow in his footsteps, until you see him again in glory! And may we who are left behind him in the battle-field be faithful unto death, and, like him, receive the crown of life! To God be the glory. Amen.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 15

### COMFORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT; A LETTER TO THOSE AT LEVEN WHO ARE SETTING THEIR FACES ZIONWARD.

1843

DEAR FELLOW-SINNERS,

Now that I am removed from you I cannot forbear to send you a few lines of comfort and encouragement; and it has been my prayer that the God of salvation may enable me to speak a word in season.

Fix it in your hearts that you have been made to glorify God; that, by the entrance of sin, you have become incapable of doing so; that God's Holy Law condemns you; and that you might be righteously left by Him to perish forever under the overwhelming weight of His holy wrath on account of sin! These things you no doubt think of, but oh! I beseech you take hold of them with an undoubting, settled faith, and seek to have them written on the conscience by the Holy Spirit of God. Consider also that Jehovah has sent into this world His only begotten Son to seek and save the lost. The lost are condemned to the second death; they are the slaves of sin, and the children of their father the devil; -- and such we all are by nature, whether we know it or not. To save *such* Emmanuel came into the world. He shed his precious blood to take away sin, and He gives His Holy Spirit to destroy its power in the heart, to cast out the Devil, and to make us holy as God is holy, and pure as He is pure. If than any of you feel, or really believe, that you need a Saviour, consider that Jesus is a Saviour divinely suited to your very case -- to the case of the lost, and that God hath *given* Him to this world as His unspeakable *gift*. Are you willing that He should be yours? Are you willing that He should save you in His own way and for His own glory? If so, you may be assured that the covenant of life is even *already* sealed between your soul and God. *He* will not fail in His promise. He saith "*Hear and your soul shall live, and I will make with you an everlasting covenant even the sure mercies of David.*" -- this is of Christ. Remember dear friends that *salvation is Christ's work*. Christ *for us*, as our righteousness to justify us, and Christ *in us*, as our life to quicken, sanctify, and comfort us, is the sum of the Gospel. Do not try to save yourselves, or think of trusting in Jesus *after* you have done what you can in your own strength. Trust in Him *now*, trust in Him as you are, even as a *lost, undone, helpless, hopeless, sinner*, and according to this your *faith*, it *will* be unto you. Hold fast Christ's promise, "I will in *no* wise cast out," and He will in due time make it evident to your blessed consciousness that your faith *hath* saved you -- that you ever at peace with God by the shedding of His blood and that by Him you have access into that grace wherein you should stand and rejoice in *hope* of the glory of God; and this hope shall not make ashamed, the love of God be shred abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost *given* unto you." Oh! what a prospect! How rich and glorious is this thread of promise! who among you will refuse to go up and possess the land? Remember Caleb and Joshua, who believed the Lord *fully* and entered in! Remember the hundreds of thousands who feared the giants, and lusted for the flesh pots of Egypt, and whose carcasses fell in the wilderness! Have faith in God! Look unto *Him*, and be saved! Behold the Lamb of God who *taketh away the sin of the world!* *Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved!* Reject every other confidence as false and delusive, but have *no* doubts regarding the security of this foundation which God Himself hath laid in Zion. It is a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a *sure* foundation and he that trusteth on it shall never be confounded world without end! It is the foundation of that kingdom which cannot be shaken. It is Emmanuel the Rock of Ages on whom the church of the Redeemed is built -- the church against which the gates of Hell cannot prevail! Trusting simply and confidently on this foundation your condition and character will quickly and marvelously change. You

will be like the woman, who touched the garments of Jesus; -- she had been diseased twelve years, and tried all other physicians in vain, but when she heard of Jesus she came in the press behind Him saying "If I may but touch His clothes I *shall* be made whole! Oh! what a view she took of His fullness. Even His clothes would heal her -- a touch would be enough -- a touch from behind, when He did not look at her! she did put forth her finger, she touched Him, and *immediately she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague!* Thus dear fellow-sinner it will be with you in your soul and for eternity, if you simply trust in Jesus as a saviour -- in Him alone. Yes! if we could persuade even the vilest in your Town -- the atheist, the drunkard, the infidel, the unclean, the sin-breeders and soul murderers -- could such be persuaded to try the effect of *faith in JESUS* as the saviour of the lost, they would soon be so changed that the world would hardly know them, yea that they would hardly know themselves! Oh! "Come and see" we would say with Philip. "Taste and see that the Lord is good" we would say with David. Make the trial, and you will be made to exclaim with the Queen of Sheba when she came to Solomon to hear his wisdom, "The half was not told me."

A word more and I am done. See that your desire for salvation be strongest and uppermost. Let it swallow up all other desires, like the shafts of your coal pits which dry up all the wells around. See also that you reach the very point of a true turning to God in Christ. You may come near it and yet not reach it. Water has its boiling point; but if the heart is a few degrees below this it will not boil. Iron has its point of fusion, when it runs like water, but the heart may come near this and it will not run, but soon become harder than before! So with many hearts, -- they are warmed but they do not melt! But oh! precious change when the heart gives way under the heat of Christ's love, the Spirit of God blowing on it! Then it flows into the mould of the Gospel and is fashioned as a vessel of mercy prepared for glory -- a vessel of honour sanctified and meet for the master's use. That this may be the case with all to whom these lines may come is and shall be the prayer of their servant in the Gospel.

Wm. C. Burns

Abbotshall Manse, Kirkaldy, February 1. 1843

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 16

### China and the Missions *at Amoy*

1854

The staff at Amoy, of the English Presbyterian Church, consists of the Rev. W. C. Burns and Rev. James Johnston, with Dr. Young, who has just returned to this country in enfeebled health. Mr. Burns felt it necessary to accompany him home, so that Mr. Johnston is in the meantime left alone with the brethren of the American Mission and the London Missionary Society.

The name of Mr. Burns is associated with that revival work with which the Lord was graciously pleased to visit Scotland fifteen years ago. An arrest was then laid upon Scotland fifteen years ago. An arrest was then laid upon his setting out to the sphere of missionary labor to which at first he had devoted himself; and several circumstances have invested the mission with which he is now connected with a peculiar interest, and entitle it to a large place in the hearts and in the prayers of the people of Scotland. Though the brethren in England had resolved upon the mission in 1845, and collections had annually been made in their churches, yet no one could be found to enter upon the work; and having waited two years, many were convinced that it was time to turn to other quarters in search of an open door. Meantime Mr. Burns had returned to Scotland in the close of 1846 from his labors in Canada, and saw no special call to continue in this country. After having made the state of China for some months the subject of much thought and prayer, the consideration of the openings which were then for the first time presented for preaching the gospel to its perishing millions, so pressed upon his spirit, that at last he felt constrained to give himself to the work to which the Presbyterian Church in England had solicited him; and quite unexpectedly he appeared at the meeting of their Synod at Sunderland on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April 1847, saying, that he believed that it was the will of God that he should go next to China.

The Church, deeply impressed by the providence so marked and special, agreed at once to send him forth on his way. He was solemnly set apart to the missionary work the day after; the Rev. William Chalmers of London, who was born in China, preaching on the occasion, and presiding at the ordination of the first missionary sent out to that empire by a Presbyterian Church in Great Britain. The ordination took place in a church where Mr. Burns had often preached, and within the bounds of a Presbytery (Newcastle) where his labours had been abundant and had been much blessed; and it is a notable coincidence that Morrison was connected with one of the congregations of the same Presbytery; and his sister was then still living in Newcastle, and worshipping in the same church in which he had been brought up. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of June a meeting was held in London for the purpose of recommending the missionary to the grace of God for the work whereunto he had been called. It was held in London Wall Church, where that eminent servant of Christ – The Rev. Dr. Love, one of the founders, and the first secretary of the London Missionary Society – was long the pastor.

Mr. Burns reached Hong Kong in health and safety in November, where he remained two years and a quarter, devoting himself to the study of the language. In one of his letters he thus expressed himself: -- "You desired that three doors might be opened to me, -- the door of entrance into the language, the door of access into the country, and the door of admittance for the Lord's truth into men's hearts. The first of these has been opened in an encouraging degree already; and it now remains to seek by prayer and by actual trial that the other two doors may be opened also." Within two months of his arrival he was enabled to read the

Scriptures to the Chinese prisoners in the public gaol, and even to address them briefly, so that they understood; and while he remained at Hong Kong he made repeated tours of evangelization among the villages, with full liberty to make known the gospel of the grace of God, and meeting with scarcely any obstacle. It had been the design of the Church from the first, to send forth two together to the work – in accordance with our Lord’s example; and Mr. Burns hoped that he would shortly be followed by others. Accordingly, the Synod continued to look out for suitable agents, who, “next to evangelistic fervor, should have especial attitude in teaching.” But year after year, they had to report that their efforts had proved unavailing; and it was at length only at the meeting of Synod in 1853 – six years after Mr. Burns had gone out – that another missionary was ordained – the Rev. James Johnston. In the meantime, Dr. James H. Young, who had graduated as a physician at Edinburgh, and resided for several years at Hong Kong, offered his services to the mission, and commenced his labours as Mr. Burns’ colleague on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1850.

Mr. Burns had in the meantime gone to Canton, where he found abundant opportunity of co-operating in the work with the venerable Leang-Afa, and other native evangelists, and also Mr. Roberts of the American mission. How very encouraging it must have been for one from a far off foreign land to have been associated with the aged Chinese preacher who was in Christ before the Missionary was born.

He continued there for a year and four months; and under date, June 19, 1851, thus writes: “I have been happy in finding as many opportunities of preaching the word of life among this people as I have had strength to overtake. I have been almost daily, and sometimes twice or thrice a day, thus employed.” And again: --

“Were the instruction of the young a work for which I had an aptitude, I would feel tempted to join him (Dr. Young, at Amoy) without delay, and I trust that some one of God’s servants, whose sanctified taste and abilities lie in this way, may be soon drawn to occupy a field so open and promising. If you do not hear so interesting accounts from Canton, you must ascribe it in part to the defects of your correspondent, but still more it may be to the peculiar difficulties of this very important station – a station so difficult and important, that I believe no agent who is in any degree suited for it, and has a heart to love and labour for its proud and suspicious people, should be hastily encouraged to leave it. Lately, in the view of leaving these premises, we have been keeping the preaching hall open every evening, and the numbers and interest have been more than usual. Last Tuesday evening, when looking on an assembly of from fifty to sixty engaged listeners, while a native was addressing them before I did so, my heart said, “How can I leave these dear and precious souls for whom there are so few to care? I can now tell them of the way of life with some measure of clearness and acceptance, and so long as God gives me standing-ground to gather and address them I must go on to do so, leaving issues in His own hand with whom it is to bless and save.” Help us to maintain the combat in this great heathen city until its gates are opened to the King of Glory! Brethren, pray for us that the Word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified.”

But difficulties arose. No suitable place could be had to carry on the work, after leaving the premises referred to in the foregoing letter. The door was manifestly closed by God in His providence, and in a week from the date of the above, he left Canton, and proceeded to join his fellow-workman at Amoy.

A signal blessing has attended the work at Amoy. Audiences of people have been easily collected, who have listened attentively to the word of life from the lips of the native evangelists and missionaries. The inhabitants have shown the most friendly disposition, so that in his various tours through the villages, Mr. Burns has required only once to pay for his nightly accommodation, The Chinese, in their refusal to accept of

any remuneration for lodging, have given a beautiful exhibition of kindness, for which we are bound to give thanks, remembering them in our prayers.

A new edition of hymns, translated into Chinese, for use in worship, has been prepared by him, with the assistance of others. The Pilgrim's Progress has also been translated, and it is hoped will prove useful.

The progress of the work will be best gathered from the following extracts from letters which have appeared chiefly in the *English Presbyterian Messenger*: --

"*Amoy, May 16, 1853.* – Last month I had the privilege of paying a visit to Chiang-chew-foo, a large city in this neighbourhood, at the distance of about forty English miles. We left Amoy on the morning of April 13, and returned here on the 26<sup>th</sup>, being absent about a fortnight, nine days of which were spent at Chiang-chew, preaching to large and very interesting audiences both inside and outside the city. A week or two before our going, two native Christians, of the American Mission here, had visited Chiang-chew, and preached to crowds for a number of days, with much encouragement; and as they were purposing to go again, at the earnest desire especially of one of them, it was arranged that I should also go, although there was some reason to fear that, unless God should graciously open our way, there might be some unwillingness on the part of the authorities to allow a foreigner to pay more than a brief visit, or to preach at large to the people. To avoid difficulty as far as possible, it was arranged that we should live on the river, in the boat which carried us there, going on shore only to preach. On our arrival we immediately went on shore, and being at once surrounded by many people, we had a fine opportunity, within a few steps on our boat, of preaching the Word of Life, fully and without hindrance. We continued thus to preach on the bank of the river for three days, going upwards from our boat in the morning, and downwards in the afternoon, and addressing large companies for three or four hours at a time, until we had exhausted all the suitable stations near the river. We then went inwards, but still outside the walls, and at the very first station at which we preached, a man came forward and pressed us to go further on, and preach again opposite his house. This man the following morning came and was with us at worship in our boat; and when it began to rain, and our boat was more uncomfortable, the same individual opened his house to us, and here we stayed (making the man a small remuneration) for five days; and going on from this as our headquarters, still inwards, we enjoyed the fullest liberty, both within and without the city, or preaching to large and very much engaged audiences. I do not think, upon the whole, that I have spent so interesting a season, or enjoyed so fine an opportunity of preaching the Word of Life since I came to China, as during these nine days. The people were everywhere urgent in requesting that a place might be opened for the regular preaching of the gospel among them; and I am glad to say that the American Mission here have already sent two of the members of the native church to open an outstation in this important and very promising locality. Since our return here there have also three individuals come here at their own expense, to inquire further into the nature of the gospel. The native Christians with me were the same with whom I went last year in making some visits to the neighbourhood; and I have pleasure in adding, that they seem to be moved by love to the Saviour, and to the souls of their fellow-countrymen, in giving themselves to this work."

"*Amoy, June 6, 1853* – You have no doubt heard something, and of late more than a little, about the present rebellion in China, as also about the profession of faith in the gospel by a number of the leaders in this movement. Many have been the rumors to this effect that we have heard during the last two or three years, but of late the matter has become evident fact by the visit of the *Hermes* steamer to Nankin, and the Christian books brought to us from thence. These books exhibit much acquaintance with the leading principles of Divine truth, although accompanied with some things that are erroneous and dangerous; and they are

prepared in such a manner as to show that there are person among these insurgents who have both thought and felt on the great subjects of Scripture teaching. A part of the Book of Genesis printed among the insurgents is according to Gutzlaff's version, and the language generally used, in speaking of the Divine Being, is evidently founded on his publications. What the issues of this movement are to be it is yet impossible to foresee, but there is surely much to encourage the hope that all will work for the establishment of God's kingdom among this people. Surely this is a time when much special prayer should be made for china, and for those who, though wielding the sword of insurrection against the civil rulers, have yet the truth of God among them, and that conveyed in a very plain and practical form, though, indeed, also mixed with errors that may prove in the end very noxious.

"You will be surprised, doubtless, also to hear that Amoy has been for more than a fortnight past in the hands of insurgents. These are not the insurgents of Nankin, but the insurgents of this immediate neighborhood, who, though with no religious principle, have long been secretly leagued for the overthrow of the present dynasty, and have recently taken advantage of the times to rise as in a moment, and take possession of this and some surrounding places. Should they be able to keep their ground, they design to fall in with the leaders at Nankin. Amoy was taken by them on May 18, without bloodshed, as the mandarins and soldiers all fled; but on May 30<sup>th</sup>, the Lord's day, when the naval commander (who had been at sea on the 18<sup>th</sup>) attempted to retake the city with five hundred men, his troops fled at the first onset, and a number of their officers were then killed. It is expected that another attempt on the part of the Government, but on a more extensive scale, will soon be made to regain Amoy; with what result it is impossible to foresee. "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles [Amoy is also an *isle*] be glad thereof." "Clouds and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."

"*Amoy, October 13, 1853* – It is some time since I wrote you anything directly about the progress of the work of the gospel among us here, and, therefore, I now take up my pen to address to you a few lines. You are already aware that Amoy has been in the hands of a local body of insurgents for the last few months. The Government party have made several attempts to retake it, but as yet without success. The last of these attempts (in which they still persevere, and with rather improving prospects of ultimate success) has placed us in the midst of war for a number of successive weeks. The missiles of death have been often falling thick around us, and have struck and injured more than one of the missionaries' houses; and yet we are preserved in safety and in much inward peace. We have, indeed, cause in this matter to sing of mercy! The missionary schools under Dr. Young's care and my own had been so much reduced in numbers by the unsettled state of things among us, that when, in July, Dr. Young removed from the premises he formerly occupied, both the schools were united in one under the roof where I live. When Dr. Young had the premises he formerly occupied, both the schools were united in one under the roof where I live. When Dr. Young had the premises he formerly occupied, I had the use of the preaching hall there as often as I wished it, but never succeeded in collecting a good meeting there. Since he left these premises I have had no place to hold public meetings, and about a fortnight ago I began to feel painfully that I ought to be doing more than hitherto in the way of preaching the Word of Life among this people. I accordingly made some efforts to obtain a place suitable to be used as a place of meeting, and had hope of succeeding. I was, however, disappointed in this hope, and must have again delayed had not one of our missionary brethren, Mr. Doty, of the American Mission, with his usual kindness, invited me to make full use of their chapel, which is near the place I live, and which, a great part of every weekday, is unoccupied, except by members of the native Church, who are frequently engaged from day to day, in collecting and addressing companies of the passersby. In

consequence of this kind offer, so agreeable to my habits and feelings in regard to cooperation in the work of the gospel, I have been, during this week, holding daily meetings in the forenoon in this chapel, assisted by members of the native Church, especially by one in whom I have been long interested, and whom I have had the privilege of, in part, supporting as a colporteur, or exhorter, during the greater part of the last two years. Our meetings on each day of this week have been encouraging as to numbers, – from thirty to sixty, -- and as to attention to the Word preached, -- and as, in consequence of this place being in the hands of insurgents, there are many strangers here, going to and fro, the time seems very the time seems very favorable for scattering the precious seed.

“When I wrote in May, I made allusion to an interesting missionary visit which I had paid, in company with members of the native Church here, to a large city in this neighborhood – Chiang-chiu. I also mentioned that the American Mission here had the view of establishing, permanently, and outstation there; and were about to send two of their native assistants there for that purpose. The sequel to this proposal, which is of a very affecting kind, and very different from what we had looked for, I have not yet mentioned to you. About the middle of May, the native assistant, whom I have alluded to as cooperating with me here, went to Chiang-chiu along with another belonging to the same Mission, and rented, as a place of meeting, the house of the man whom I alluded to in my May letter as having, in April, received us into his house, and taken some interest in our work. They had gone but two days when the local rebellion broke out in this neighborhood, and had in Chiang-chiu but one Sabbath’s services when the insurgents reached that city. The man who had rented them his house took part with the insurgents, which led the native brethren to remove their lodgings to another place, that they might not be involved. When the insurgents had got possession of the city but two days, in consequence of their shewing a disposition to rob and plunder, the populace on a sudden rose *en masse* upon them, and put nearly all who were within the city to an instant death! How little did we suppose when in April preaching the gospel in these streets, that in the course of a short month they were to be flowing with human blood! At the time of this awful massacre both the native brethren from Amoy were within the city; and as being strangers, from the same part of the country as the insurgents, they were in imminent danger of being reckoned as belonging to them, and sharing in their dreadful end. The one who is now here early saw his danger, and with difficulty made his escape, by dropping from the city walls. The other, a native of Canton province, was more fearless, being in company with some friends engaged in business in Chiang-chiu. He also did escape at this time, although not without much danger; but having delayed to leave the city, as his companion wished him, and return to Amoy, he was the following morning, on a sudden, arrested by a band of the populace, and, despite all his friends could do, was dragged before the mandarin, and instantly beheaded! His companion having separated from him the day before this occurred, and with great difficulty made his way home to Amoy, it was several weeks before we heard of the affecting event. Nor was this all, -- the man who had rented them his house, having openly joined the insurgents, was seized in the street by the populace, and publicly beheaded! This was the melancholy end of one who, though not a man of good character among his countrymen, had a few weeks before welcomed us in our mission, joined us in all our services, and seemed to have, at least, the joy of a stony ground hearer, if nothing more. Since that time the people of Chiang-chiu city have been engaged, in almost constant fighting with the insurgent party; and although the insurgents have not been able again to recover the city, yet to the present hour it is so shut up, that almost no communication can be carried on between it and Amoy. The sufferings of its inhabitants have been, and still are, very great. A native of the city who had become interested in the gospel message, and who, as well as other two, came down to Amoy in April on purpose to hear it more fully, was also in great peril of being seized and put to death, like the others. His house was surrounded by armed men, and he only made his escape by getting through the roof,

and running along the tops of the houses; with difficulty, after some weeks of wandering, he got here, and has remained under this roof since; it being still unsafe for him to return home."

The following letter from Mr. Burns is dated Pechuia, (*White Water Camp*), January 16, 1854: --

"In a country market-town, the name of which I have given above, and with no better materials than a Chinese pencil and paper, I acknowledge your letter of November 8<sup>th</sup>, which reached me here on Saturday evening (the 14<sup>th</sup>). I left Amoy on the 9<sup>th</sup>, with two members of the American Mission Church, on a missionary tour, and since then we have been in this place, preaching on market days to a few among the thousands who then assemble to buy and sell, and on other days going out among the surrounding villages, which are many and populous. We are everywhere very kindly received, and our message is listened to with attention, and, in some cases, we may hope, with profit. What we need is the power of the Spirit of God on the hearts of speakers and hearers, that so many may be raised from spiritual death to that eternal life which is found in believing on the name of the Son of God. I don't know how long we may be out on this tour, but, if the Lord graciously give us strength, and open up our way, it is my desire to be much occupied in going about among this multitudinous heathen people, who are indeed scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd. This place is, I suppose, from twelve to twenty English miles from Amoy, about half way to the city of Chiang-chiu, which we visited in April, on the banks of a considerable stream, which flows through a rich and populous valley, surrounded by an amphitheatre of lofty hills. You have already heard of the death of Mrs. Dr. Young. Her latter end was very peaceful, and, we trust, truly blessed. Dr. Young is thus a second time left a widower. He seems to be much supported; and I trust that, as his first bereavement was an important means of sending him into the missionary field, this may be blessed to render him more useful in that field. He was proposing, when I left Amoy, to go on a medico-missionary tour to Chiang-chiu, and I have since heard that on Friday last he actually set out. I am delighted at this, and pray that he may be enabled to persevere in a course of such visits to different places, which, if connected with some outward trial, are more certainly connected with rich spiritual blessings to ourselves, and to this people. He is, I believe, accompanied by several native Christians, and among others I have reason to suppose, by one whom I have the privilege of, in part, supporting as an exhorter or colporteur, but who did not on this, as on former occasions, come out with us. Those with me are employed by the American Mission as colporteurs, and not at my expense. One of them was formerly the teacher of the school beside which I have been living at Amoy, but exchanged that for his present situation in the end of April last. The other is an interesting and very zealous man, whom I have accompanied before; I went specially at his instance to Chiang-chiu, in April, and now again he has come forward to prompt us to our present tour. This man was formerly a fortune-teller, &c., and now that he believes and publishes the gospel, he still retains, with good effect, something of the fortune-teller's taking address, united to much Christian simplicity. I have said nothing as yet about our fellow-laborer, Mr. Johnston, who, as you have already heard, arrived among us just fourteen hours before Mrs. Young's decease. We have had some pleasant intercourse since that time; but in the meantime, as you see, he is left alone, your only missionary in Amoy. He has got a good teacher, and is going on with the language, in which, in due time, I hope that he will be a proficient. He has also been preaching in English on board the war-steamer now at Amoy. I am glad to see that you still think of sending another laborer to China. *The harvest is indeed plenteous, and reapers of the Lord's own preparing cannot be too much multiplied.* The 'Pilgrim' has been well received by missionary brethren in different places, to whom some hundreds of copies have been sent to order. Five hundred were at first struck off, and at present 500 more are in the course of being made up. Formerly they cost eight dollars a hundred; now we get them equally good, and nearly two dollars cheaper."

The following letter from Mr. Burns gives the most cheering tidings, and calls for thanksgiving and prayer to God: --

*“Amoy, May 8, 1854 – It is now exactly four months since I first set out this season on a missionary tour; and you are already aware that God so remarkably opened the door in the place to which we first went, that we found it our clear duty to remain at that place as our headquarters for a longer period than we had intended – visiting the numerous villages and market towns within our reach, while we carried on regular services at Pechuia, our central station. The work there was so interesting that we felt it could not be abandoned, but as we were anxious to extend our efforts to one to two central positions farther inland, it was necessary that other agents should take our place in order to leave us free to go forward. Accordingly, when, two months ago, I returned from Amoy to Pechuia, an addition was made to the number of native assistants, and leaving two of these to occupy Pechuia, I proceeded on the 9<sup>th</sup> of March farther inland in company with the two native Christian companions with whom I had originally set out on the 9<sup>th</sup> of January from Amoy. The place to which we first went is a market-town, somewhat smaller than Pechuia, named Bay-Pay (Horse-flat), and distant from the former place, across the hills, about seven English miles. To this place we had been invited by several persons, and here we remained (well-lodged and free of rent) for eleven days, in the course of which we visited and preached at almost all the villages in the neighborhood, from thirty to fifty in number. We were almost everywhere favorably received, and our message listened to with attention, although there were no cases, as at Pechuia, of persons coming out and declaring themselves on the side of the gospel. While at Bay-Pay, we heard it reported that at Pechuia one family had publicly destroyed their idols and ancestral tablets, (the latter the dearest objects of Chinese idolatry,) and that another man had closed his shop on the Lord’s day, refusing admittance to a person who wished to trade with him. Both of these reports, so interesting to us, turned out to be true.*

*“From Bay-Pay we proceeded four or five English miles farther on to Poolamkio (South bank Bridge.) Here we were on the sea-coast, I suppose about fifteen miles south of the entrance to Amoy harbor. We were well received here also, and would have gladly remained for a week or two, proceeding still farther south, as we were invited to do, but our books, &c., were becoming few, and our lodging – which would have been very comfortable had we had sole possession of it – being partly occupied by opium-smokers and gambler, we resolved, after a stay of only four days, on returning to Pechuia. On arriving, we found to our delight that the work there had made decided progress in our absence. The two native Christians (members of the American Mission Church at Amoy) whom we had left in charge, seem to have been much aided in teaching the people. The preaching room had been crowded every night to a late hour by from forty to sixty persons, and those who had from the beginning shown an attachment to the truth, had evidently advanced in knowledge and earnestness of spirit, and resolved to obey the gospel at the risk of much reproach and opposition. In our absence the station had also had the benefit of a short visit from Mr. Doty of the American Mission. After returning from our inland tour, we continued our meetings at Pechuia with much encouragement, several members of the native church in Amoy having successively come out of their own accord to aid in the work. During the last two or three weeks, however, the aspect of things at Pechuia has been considerably changed; for while those on the side of the gospel seem to go on in a way that fills our hearts with thankfulness, and our mouths with praise, a disposition has been shown on the part of others to interrupt our meetings, which has obliged us at night to hold them upstairs, and more privately. The state of the weather also at this rainy season has prevented us from doing so much as before among adjacent villages. When I left Pechuia last Monday, it seemed that, including young and old, there might be about twenty persons who have declared themselves on the side of the gospel, but some of these are children, and*

two or three are women whom we have not seen – mothers who have received the truth from their sons or husbands. Among the number of those who are attached to the gospel are two whole families; a promising youth of twenty, early showed much decision, having, on the birthday of *'the god of the furnace,'* taken his god and put it in the fire. The idol having been but in part consumed, his mother discovered among the ashes a part of its head, and father and mother together beat their son severely; but some of the other Pechuia inquirers having gone to comfort the young man, and reason with his parents, their views underwent so sudden and entire a change, that in a day or two afterwards they, with their four sons, brought out all their idols and ancestral tablets and publicly destroyed them in the view of the people. The father I have two or three times met with, and he seems, along with his four sons, (an interesting set of boys,) to be in a promising state of mind. The other family is that of a respectable cloth-dealer, whose shop is in the same street with our lodging. This family has passed through remarkable trials, which seem to have prepared them for receiving the gospel on its first announcement, they having twice lost all their property by robbers; and on the second of these occasions having had their house burnt, to cover the robbers' retreat – when the whole family were obliged to leap from an upper story, and yet escaped unhurt! They are a very interesting family, and having in one point shown more decision than I have before seen in China, having (while yet only inquirers) shut their shop on the last eight Sabbaths, even although two of these Sabbaths were market-days. The family adjoining our house is literally divided – two against three, and three against two. The elder brother and his wife, oppose, -- they live by making paper images used in idolatrous processions, for burning to the dead, &c.; the mother, second son, with the youngest, who is a mere boy, are on the side of the gospel. The second son formerly made images with his elder brother, but has now given up his trade, and has begun a general business in one half of the shop which they have in common. It is curious though to notice that on the Lord's Day the younger brother's side of the shop is closed, while the elder brother's side remains open! This young man, when we were absent farther inland, went down to Amoy with the desire of being admitted into the visible church; and though he has not yet been baptized, the American missionaries, who examined him, were astonished and delighted by the evidence which he gave them of knowledge, repentance, and faith; and would have admitted him a month ago, along with ten others (Amoy people), had it not been that my two native companions, returning the day before to Amoy, urged the expediency of delay. As I do not propose, in regard to these people, to act differently from what I have always done – viz, confining myself to the work of teaching and preaching, and leaving the peculiar duties of the pastoral office to others whom I may in the providence of God be called to cooperate with, several other persons, eight in all, have gone down to Amoy to be examined by our American brethren, with a view to baptism. With most of these cases these brethren are most interested; and I have told them that I think the time is come when, for the good of the Pechuia people, they should take a more special charge of that place as an outstation. This they are in a position to do, having native agents whom they can employ; and, indeed, through whose labors especially it is (I only cooperating with them) that the work has been carried on there to its present point. They have been, as I wrote to you last year, anxious to open a station at Chiang-Chow city; but the door there is at present closed, and now in this near locality a door wide and effectual has been unexpectedly thrown open. I this morning met with Messrs. Doty and Talmage, for prayer and consultation on this subject; and, if the Lord will, they propose soon to go to Pechuia and take measures for the regular carrying on of the work there as an outstation. Two native brethren are still there, having remained in charge when I return to Amoy, and when there is need for it I shall of course go out again; but without more airy accommodation I will have difficulty, I fear, in remaining long there at anyone time, now that the hot season is again setting in."

Regarding these encouraging tokens, Mr. Burns might well write in another letter, --

“In *my own* circle of observation, I have hardly seen so promising an appearance of the coming of God’s kingdom since I came to China . . . . You will see, from what I have stated, that there is indeed much to encourage prayer and effort in behalf of this benighted people; and that we have also cause for admiring thankfulness to our covenant God and Savior. In my own experience, the Lord’s goodness is so great and unceasing, that, while friends in Scotland may look upon me as an exile, I feel as much at home here as I would wish to do on this side of the Jordan.”

And again, in reference to the great and effectual door that had opened up in that vast empire, he says, --

“I am glad to hear of the increasing interest taken among you in the great work of the evangelization of China. We need laborers of the Lord’s own preparing – simple, self-denied, and prayerful; and still more we need prayer – the effectual prayer of the righteous – the righteous in Christ Jesus.”

Mr. Doty’s letter in the “American Missionary Herald” accounts of the work of Mr. Burns’ in Pechuia as followed:

“By the urgent importunity of Chieng-Choan, one of our native Christians, who delights in a tour for preaching, Mr. Burns was induced to start with him and another brother, Tiek-Choan, on such a tour. They left this place the 9<sup>th</sup> of January. Their only definitely plan was, to go with the gospel to some region where it had not been heard. They went, by boat, to a market town on the mainland, about fifteen miles distant, called Pechuia (White-water Camp), which is a commercial centre for an extensive region, full of agricultural villages. Here they intended to begin work, expecting, after a few days, at longest, to go forward, making known the gospel message as they might have opportunity, and just where the Master might providentially lead them. But for two months continuously the brethren were shut up to this one place and the nearest villages, in holding forth day and night the Word of life. Almost at the very first declaration of the truth, some persons were interested, and became earnest inquirers. From that time to the present the work has been gradually gaining in importance. Mr. Burns has rented a small building, the upper floor for his dwelling, while the lower is a preaching place. This is visited by many persons, who come in on market days from all the surrounding region for purposes of trade. There are twelve such days in each month. Public worship is held on the Sabbath and every evening, and is attended by a goodly number of apparently interested listeners. Of a few, hope is indulged that they have really passed from death unto life. Numbers have renounced their idols. Some have burned and destroyed them. Others have given them to the brethren to be thus dealt with. Two of our native brethren are constantly employed in connexion with Mr. Burns.

“In March, Mr. Burns and two brethren made a tour of some weeks further in the interior, visiting some places to which they had been earnestly invited by persons who had visited them at Pechuia. While they were absent, two other native brethren continued the labors at the first place. At this time it was my privilege to make a short visit there. I found such an awakened interest and spirit of inquiry as I had never before met with among Chinese. It did seem as if the Holy Spirit was at work. The most marked cases are of young men of some education, and endowed with considerable zeal and energy. These are very active in efforts to awaken the attention of others. From the first there have been opposers to the movement, and recently there has been manifested a disposition to annoy and disturb the public worship. There are firm idolaters there, and the spirit of persecution is not wanting.

“Mr. Burns thinks the time is near when it will be an incumbent duty to gather those who give evidence of regeneration into the Church. One of these has already been with us at Amoy, and was examined as to his Christian experience and knowledge. Never in any instance have we met with a case among the Chinese

indicating more clearly the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart. He was not, however, then received into church-fellowship, it being thought more prudent that there should be some delay.

“For the administration of the ordinances and the pastoral oversight of the disciples there, Mr. Burns, looks to us. During the whole course of his ministry he has ever acted simply as an evangelist, and is unwilling to do otherwise. It is this feature of the case, and the intimate connexion of our native brethren with the work, which brings us as a mission into so close a relation with this wonderful visitation of God’s mercy. With our hearts and hands full as they are here in Amoy, we scarcely know what we are to do. Although those converts might be gathered into the Church here perhaps, yet for their own spiritual interests and usefulness, the proper place is doubtless their native town. In this case, pastoral oversight will be needful. This would be exercised by Mr. Burns so long as he remains in the place. But his desire and purpose are not to be tied down to any locality longer than he feels he has evidence of a special call. While this is the case, the most we could do would be only an occasional short visit. The burden of the work would devolve of necessity on native brethren.

Burr 6 1.

Retrospective notes of Discourse delivered  
June 30th (P.M.)

V. I. "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee O God"

This Psalm describes the experience of a backsliding saint seeking restoration; but may be applied also with a view to a sinner when first awakened. Since his case is in most respects very similar to that of a backsliding believer I shall 1<sup>st</sup> view it as applicable to a sinner, then as applicable to a saint.

1<sup>st</sup> While a sinner remains unawakened he seems to himself to walk at liberty, in plain paths &c. but when the Holy Spirit is given to convince him of sin 1<sup>st</sup> He obtains discoveries of his guilt. Previously his views of sin were superficial, general and did not affect his heart. he included others with himself, and so never felt as if he were the man charged by God as a transgressor. Now the law comes home to him with divine authority and power, and binds him with cords of conviction which he cannot break nor shake off. 2<sup>d</sup> This tangled his spiritual bondage. This he has naturally avoided if, but thinks he is free to do good, as to do evil, but when awakened he finds it far other wise. he cannot repent truly for his own. he cannot come to Christ. he cannot deliver himself from Satan's dominion. he can perform no duty spiritually and with his whole heart to God. 3. He is convinced of the reality of the wrath of God abiding on him on account of unrepented sin. Every sin becomes like an arrow in his breast wounding, poisoning and draining the soul. he hears the thunders of sinners, and is terrified with the lightnings of the fleshly law which he has broken. 4. All these convictions together bring the soul into depths which are as waters going over the soul, and threatening to drown it, or as a deep, dark, lone some and miry pit from which there is no escape prospect of escape. This sinner is like Jonah &c.

2<sup>d</sup> But the prop to the case of the backsliding saint we remark 1<sup>st</sup> That the covenant of grace does not provide ~~absolute~~ absolute provision for preventing the saints from falling into such sins as will bring them into depths of conscience. There is provision for the pardon of all sins of infirmity which cannot be avoided while sanctification is incomplete. There is also absolute provision made against the sin of final apostasy (Lec. 17. 11. 12.)

2.

But between these two extreme limits there is a wide region in which believers walk - in it there are many safe and heavenly paths, and many deep and polluting quagmires in which we may be in the utmost danger of perishing. &c.

2. That the sins by which believers fall into depths are either of a gross and open character e.g. the sins of David and of Peter, or they are sins of a more hidden kind committed with aggravation e.g. couples walking with God after special manifestations of His love and near communion with Him in the neglect of eminent opportunities of doing good and advancing His glory. Sins committed after special warning. All these and similar sins are aggravated in the case of believers by these circumstances, that the souls furnished with a principle of grace tending to oppose and to preserve it against the commission of these sins. That there is full provision made in Christ for the safety of all the believers wants which he is in the process and fully receive.

3. Such sins as have been mentioned & hinted at & speedily repented of and cleansed by the special application of the blood of Jesus may have one of two effects, they will either keep the soul in perpetual barrenness, dry, withered, and seemingly almost dead, or if God will lead to restore the soul to fruitfulness he will purify with heavy chastisement, and bring it for this purpose with deep waters of affliction either bodily or spiritual or both in such depths, the believer will love the rod and abiding source of reconciliation to God, will be displeased with doubting thoughts about its unkind and ungrateful treatment of a gracious God & that grief may be brought under discovery of sin unaccompanied with present and convincing views of God's mercy in Christ, so low as to be on the brink of despair, and so mourning under darkness many days. Satan always obtain liberty to harass the soul with sitting and privous temptations in such that the soul may despair even of life. These are depths indeed which fill the soul with gloom and horror of darkness, even tho' being still in the bond of the true covenant of sovereign grace its eternal salvation is infallibly secured. &c.

I would improve this subject for the purpose of

examining <sup>1. those</sup> who are true Christians, and who are not. Many think themselves X<sup>t</sup>'s people who have had any true work of the Law upon their consciences and hearts. But this is impossible, tho' it is a common delusion in this superficial and secure generation, when all that is deep, & spiritual, and really precious in religion is little in debate and life in exercise. He must have received the sentence of death thro' the Law before we can receive the sentence of acquittal and life thro' the Gospel. It is by the Law only, with its holy spiritual and imperatival demand that any one is shut up to the faith of Jesus, and all of you whose faith has not gone out of alarming dimensions of damning guilt are building not upon the rock but upon the sand which will give way beneath your attack, and bury you amid the ruins of the tower which you have spent your strength in building to put test and defend you.

2. I would call on X<sup>t</sup>'s to examine themselves. Many of you are not in depths of sin only because you are afraid because God is leaving you to yourselves. This because many sins of omission and commission are being upon your conscience unconfessed, or confessed superficially and imperfectly, or forgotten that so many are like the fig tree that go down to the pit. Oh better yourselves, and examine why it is that you are withered branches and which there are but few thorns, little fruit, great heat, few blossoms and worn eaten leaves. &c. But try to get quick and sinners who may be in depths, cannot now proceed to give direction how to escape. This however must be in great measure left to a future opportunity; and at present I shall only notice the following errors that are by applying to God and the prayer that follows, resting upon Jesus alone that show there is forgiveness with God.

2. B. CXXX. 2.

July 7<sup>th</sup>.

(I. Thes. v. 17.)

In considering the first verse of this remarkable Ch. we have been led to look into those depths in which unconverted sinners, and saints who have backslidden from God are all without exception lying, whether they are aware of it or not. These depths are indeed awful and full of danger and terror. The unconverted are when made alive within condition find

4.  
 that they are laden with sins of the most heinous nature, bound under the strong bonds of natural corruption and the tyranny of Satan, and exposed to the infinite wrath of the Holy God. When these things are in any degree discovered to the soul it feels itself in need like one who is cast amid the overwhelming waves of the ocean when he has no footing to stand on, and none at hand to rescue him from the drowning flood. These saints again, we have seen, tho' they have paid no providence for all their sins <sup>which</sup> thro' the imperfection of their holiness on earth they are always falling, and tho' they are secured against the sin of total and final apostasy from God, yet are in danger, thro' the power of the old man within them, the world around, the God of this world, of falling into all or any of those innumerable sins which lie between sins of infirmity on the one hand, and the sin of apostasy on the other, notwithstanding their being guilty of those that they are brought into deep waters. They may have committed some gross sin as David, or Peter, or they may have been guilty of sins which tho' in their own nature left place for amendment are peculiarly offensive to God by various aggravating circumstances in which they are committed; and for these the Lord withdraws the sweet and abiding sense of His reconciliation to them, gives them a sharp and affecting sense of their ingratitude and wickedness in sinning against so holy and gracious a God and Father, and perhaps leaves them for a time almost to despair of again seeing His fatherly face. These are the dreadful depths into which the saints have often fallen, & may fall again, and it is not of these that we are here taught by the example of the Belshazzar the way in which we may be delivered. Upon this part of the subject I had just before at the close of last discourse so far as might give direction to any who might at that time be in the circumstances described and might be praying for deliverance, and it is now my object to open up more fully this most interesting and precious subject that do the way may thro' the teaching of the Holy Ghost be made plain to all by which they may escape from the horrible depths in which they are lying, and obtain secure and eternal, and glorious resting place upon Jesus the rock of our salvation, and here we may observe





7

Means in this foolish attempt how will they begin to repent  
and confess, and being even pray for the Holy Ghost to remove  
his corruption, all in order that he may avoid a simple  
application to the blood of Jesus as his only hope, and  
a direct return to God with sovereign and gracious par-  
don of sin. At last however, the backsliding Saint,  
whom God intends to purge that he may bring forth the ripe  
fruit, is like the awakened sinner driven from all his  
refuges, and with mingled shame and joy returns to seek  
his Father's face. Thus my friend, you see, that both the  
awakened sinner, and the backsliding Saint can only find  
deliverance from the depths of their sin & misery, only from  
the Lord Jehovah. "Unto Thee have I cried" "Out of the  
depths have I cried unto Thee O Lord!"

II. But, second, we are taught by the words before us that  
it is by prayer in the exercise of prayer that deliverance  
from these "depths" is obtained from the Lord. "Lord,  
hear my voice, lest mine ears be a tentive / The voice of my  
supplications." Now if you are accustomed perhaps to  
think of faith in Jesus Christ, as the grace in which the  
sinner is particularly pardoned he is obtained, and  
in this you are right for it is by grace that a sinner  
is saved thro' faith (Eph. II. 9.) and without this faith in  
Jesus it is impossible to come to God with acceptance.  
But then you must remember that faith does not  
exclude prayer, "Whoever calleth on the name of the  
Lord shall be saved" (Rom. X. 13) Both are needful, and  
the one will not do without the other, Indeed prayer  
may be said to be the breath of faith. In the very act  
of believing on Jesus the sinner becomes a beggar at  
the door of God's free grace, and that faith which does  
not bring a sinner to his knees, <sup>that requires confession</sup> or to his face is but  
not only dead but alas dead, and leaves the soul  
as dead as before. "Propheta ne prayeth" was the declara-  
tion of Peter (Act. 13) the Lord to Ananias regarding Paul when  
he had called him to declare to the converted persecutor the  
pious intentions regarding him; and the same declaration  
is true of every ~~converted~~ one who comes a sinner from  
God when awakened from the sleep of death at first  
or rescued from the dangerous slumbers of carnal security  
to return from backsliding unto God from whom the soul  
may have revolted. But let us draw more particu-  
larly the characters which distinguish those prayers of the

8  
 awakened sinners and backsliding believers nothing which  
 prevail with God thro' the merits of Jesus but obtain  
 a full and precious pardon. These characters are very  
 clearly set before us in the Psalm before us. and first  
 1<sup>st</sup> This prayer is that of a ~~humbled~~ self-condemned  
 and humbled sinner. "If the Lord shouldst make  
 iniquity the Lord who shall stand?" These words discover  
 to us the springs out of which the prayer in our text  
 flows, [as a stream] The Psalmist justifies God and con-  
 demns himself in God's presence unjustly liable to be  
 brought into judgement and punished for his injustices.  
 and this character belongs to all those prayers which  
 we come off for acceptably to God. To enter into his  
 presence seeking pardon without confession of sin  
 is the very greatest insult to God's holy majesty.  
 and to confess ourselves to be sinners with the lips,  
 while our consciences are not keenly alive to our  
 just desert, and our hearts deeply humbled by  
 our iniquity is such a mixture of hypocrisy as the God  
 of truth and righteousness abhors and condemns,  
 and will certainly visit if it is not repented of, with  
 infinite and abiding wrath. Every man however who  
 is truly seeking pardon from Jehovah is truly conscious  
 of his sin, and sincerely humbled in sorrow of  
 heart on account of it. You remember the case of  
 the publican Luke XVIII. 13. He was one who came  
 to seek for pardon and actually found it; and obtained  
 the humility and penitence that marked his conduct.  
 He stood afar off, hardly daring to lift up his eyes  
 to heaven and smote upon his breast saying God be  
 merciful to me a sinner." Behold also the humility  
 of the woman of Sana (Mat. XXV. 27.) The Lord Jesus  
 called her a dog, and yet she does not give over her  
 entreaty but turns his very objection into an argu-  
 ment & claims the dog's portion "the crumbs that fall  
 from their Master's table." &c.  
 2<sup>d</sup> The prayer of the Psalmist is offered up in faith upon  
 God as the pardoner of sin. "There is forgiveness  
 with thee that thou mayst be feared." Without a  
 persuasion that God pardons the iniquity there can  
 be no acceptable approach to his presence; nor can  
 with any awakened soul dare to approach Him in  
 any other character. Then an awakened sinner

9.

or a backsliding saint entreats for pardon, it approaches  
 God taking hold of his name as the Lord God over-  
 abundant and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in  
 goodness and truth keeping mercy for thousands for-  
 giving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and shall  
 by no means clear the guilty: and casting all its  
 dependance on the glorious sacrifice of his one  
 son, as all sufficient to cleanse from guilt, to impure  
 the conscience from guilt, and as freely offered by  
 God to every sinner to whom the Gospel comes. This  
 is the plea which the returning sinner uses to prevail  
 with a holy & righteous God, this is the rock of salva-  
 tion which it stands to plead with Jehovah. If we  
 lose hold of this argument, we may cease to plead,  
 the case is hopeless; for we cannot pluck the fixed  
 stars from the sky, nor move the heart of God  
 without Christ as our mediator; but if we truly  
 lay hold of this, and cast away from us all  
 other grounds of confidence then we shall abound  
 by prevail with God. We shall then take hold of  
 the Lord's strength and make peace with him. *John 1:12*  
 5. It is this want of faith in God thro' Christ as  
 the forgiver sin, that many convicted sinners  
 come short of salvation. They believe that they are  
 sinners, and are thus filled with well grounded alarm  
 lest the wrath of God should visit them, but  
 they will not believe Gods readiness to forgive them  
 and love them freely thro' the death of his beloved  
 Son; and therefore they remain apart off, and restrain  
 prayer before God, or if they pray yet it is with  
 little hope of being heard. They deny the wrath of  
 God and thus are in the most imminent danger of  
 perishing thro' unbelief. If we then would be heard  
 we must cry to God not only with humble, and  
 contrite confession of sin, but with full confidence in  
 his willingness to pardon us as a God who delighteth  
 in mercy if we do but cleave to the free promise  
 of his grace in Jesus Christ the sinner, and plead  
 thro' him the merits of his finished atonement.  
 Many instances to illustrate this might be brought  
 from the Divine word. I may refer you again to the woman  
 of *John 4:4*.  
 3. The third character which we may here mark in the

10  
 prayer of the Penitent is earnestness and importunity. This  
 appears from the petition "Lord hear my voice, let thine  
 ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications" and  
 from the emphatic nature of the words which he  
 employs. He supplicates, and that too with his  
 voice, crying aloud with all earnestness of his soul,  
 and having thus prayed he prays again that God  
 would hear the prayers which he had offered. [This  
 holy earnestness of soul is commended in many  
 parts of Scripture, and we have many striking  
 examples of it.] Then the soul made truly alive  
 by Jesus Christ either at its first awakening  
 from the sleep of death, or when it awakes from  
 the slumber of carnal security after conversion,  
 and is convinced also that there is hope of the  
 living pardon of his sins, and reconciliation to him  
 it is stirred up to seek him with all its powers. This  
 great work takes precedence of all other things  
 that ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> soul first the Kingdom of God and his right  
 dominion, and then many worldly concerns may draw  
 his attention ~~but they are not to be~~  
 make any other <sup>other</sup> way to the great work  
 of obtaining peace with God. The sinner will neither  
 give sleep to his eyes nor slumber to his eyelids until  
 he obtains some good hope that the Lord hath heard  
 his prayer. He will like David (Ps. CXIX. 147) prevent  
 the dawning of the morning with his cries to God.  
 He will break thro' all obstacles, and shake off  
 all sloth and idleness at unwillfulness stirring  
 up himself to call upon God and give him  
 no rest until he hear and answer his intercessions.  
 The man of Cana, anxiety of men about worldly  
 concerns about natural life. if a man were to  
 give over labour, if that were needful, and too  
 for a man to be so busy that he might attend to  
 the concerns of the soul it would be most reason.  
 etc. etc.

Preached at Wainbowrie on Sacrament  
 Monday 8<sup>th</sup> July.

P. CXXX. 3. July 14<sup>th</sup>. N. B. P. CXLIII. 2. 11.

In discoursing upon the two preceding verses I have had occasion to allude pretty fully to the truth contained in this one. For in speaking of the depths out of which the sinner cries I was naturally led to describe in some degree those convictions of pain which make him feel that he is lying in these, and again in setting before you the nature of that prayer, which he presents to God for deliverance I was led to <sup>describe</sup> the conviction expressed in this verse as one of the springs from which that prayer takes its rise, and to describe its nature as far as was requisite in order to give a just idea of that humility and penitence with which it taught him to pray. I might therefore pass immediately to the consideration of that forgiveness which is set before us in the following verse were it not that the nature and the import of true conviction of pain is set before us in this verse in a light which has not yet been considered, and that it is of the utmost importance to set the truth of God regarding our guilt before the mind in every view in order that it may be prepared for welcoming with joy the glorious offers of free grace and mercy which are afterwards to be considered.

The language of this verse is formed with reference to the Judgment of God. David appears to have been realizing the transactions of that great, and solemn day on which he was to appear before the Judge of all, and receive his final sentence, and having weighed his own character and conduct in the scales of Divine Justice he found his righteousness infinitely deficient; his guilt unspeakably heavy; and under this affecting conviction he appeals to God and says that if he should bring his iniquity to the light and charge it against him, he could not endure the trial, but must fall under just condemnation, and be exposed to the inflictions of Divine wrath & curse. Now it may be useful for us in order to endeavouring to improve the conclusion which he comes first to put upon some of the steps which we may suppose he went in arriving at that conviction, and second to weigh what is contained in that conviction

12

itself. How may they suppose that he considered  
 first the character of the Judge by whom he is  
 was to be tried and the way of death  
 1<sup>o</sup> That this Judge is omniscient. It is frequently  
 happens that when men are brought before  
 him in Tribunals for their crimes, that the charges  
 cannot be brought home to the offender for want  
 of evidence, and that then he escapes the punish-  
 ment which he deserves. But it for Pleasures with  
 God the Judge of all. He is present in every place  
 at all times, and there is not an event that occurs  
 in all the vast universe of his dominion which he  
 does not witness and record in the book of his  
 remembrance. He has been with every one among  
 us from the very first moment of our being, and  
 has noted every thought and desire, and word,  
 and action. Many things we have done in dark-  
 ness or in secret places where no human eye  
 was upon us but there the eye of Jehovah looked  
 us, and marked our conduct. We have cherished  
 many thoughts and formed many designs in the  
 recesses of the heart which no fellow creature dis-  
 covers; but all these the Lord who searcheth the  
 heart and trieth the reins Ps. 7. 9. is more interested  
 by acquainted with than we ourselves. The Lord  
 searcheth us and knoweth us, he knoweth our down-  
 sitting and our uprising, he understandeth our thoughts  
 afar off. He compasses our path and our lying down,  
 and is acquainted with all our ways. For a there  
 is not a word in our tongue but to the Lord knoweth  
 it altogether. If we should say the darkness shall  
 cover us, even the night shall be light about us,  
 yea the darkness hideth not from him but the  
 night shineth as the day, the darkness and the light  
 are both alike to him. If then we are chargeable  
 with any iniquity, it cannot escape detection.  
 Pleasures will be our Judge at last is omniscient  
 now; and he will bring remembrance all that  
 we have done, with him being to the left - all  
~~that he had said and the heart of the people~~  
 the secrets of the heart 1. Cor. II. 5.  
 2 The Judge is spotless in Holiness. The holiness  
 of God surpasses his character as perfectly free

13

from all moral infirmity & ~~is~~ entirely constrained to it. He is not only separated from inward pollution but is utterly opposed to it. He cannot look on sin. This the King who scattereth evil with his eyes. His glories in Holiness. The angels, before their cry continually Nohy! Nohy! Nohy. In consequence of this glorious character Schorah is the discharge of the enemy of all sin, and will not allow any sin to pass unpunished.

3<sup>d</sup> But not only is he Holy but also Righteous. Righteousness is that disposition which inclines any one to give every being that which is his due. In a private individual righteousness is consistent with passing by offences without punishment which it requires that every one receive the good which he deserves. In a Judge however righteousness demands as much that the guilty be condemned as that the innocent be acquitted - He would not blame ~~but~~ condemn a private person who shall be injured by another should he merely pass over the offence; but that Judge who should take upon him to grant release to a criminal even upon pity or good will would hardly be thought fit for his high-eyed stern charge, and then it is with Schorah as Judge of the world according to the exact demands of the law, and the real character of the present trial, and to inflict punishment on the guilty, and to grant acquittal to the innocent. There is therefore our hope of a sinner passing or escaping this any lenity which he may expect to find in the Judge.

4<sup>th</sup> The Judge is Omnipotent, and therefore he is fully capable of executing the sentence of all offenders of his Majesty: however numerous they may be, however powerful as individuals, and united in their rebellion. Tho' he and join in hand the wicked shall not go unpunished. He doth killeth, and maketh alive, he woundeth & healeth and there is none that can deliver out of his hand. He doth according to his will among the armies of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the world - none can stay his hand or

14

from working or say unto them what doest thou?  
 These are the characters of the Judge. How full  
 of security and joy to the holy. How pregnant with  
 alarm and terror to all the guilty! Nothing  
 can escape his omniscience, nothing can  
 bribe his holiness, and nothing can pervert the  
 judgment of equity. Nothing can withstand  
 his omnipotence! These glorious attributes of  
 God head thus set on array against the sinner  
 may well arouse his heart to a just apprehension  
 of his guilt of damnation and make him cry out  
 Lord Who can stand?

II. But must we any consider the rule by  
 which Indulgences is to be given by God to  
 the sons of men. This is clearly made known  
 to us. It is the law of the ten commandments.  
 prescribing our duty to God & man. And must this  
 law be perfectly obeyed? Do these or all or none  
 for the fallen depraved nature of man which  
 cannot keep it perfectly. No! The law is holy &  
 just & good, and this we have lost by the fall  
 the power to keep it, its obligation remains  
 unchanged & unchangeable, the rights of God  
 & of our neighbors which it defines, and precepts  
 continue unimpaired, and cannot be altered  
 with violence being & are to the principles of  
 eternal righteousness, which are a transcript  
 of the natural precepts of Jehovah. Would we  
 have from the first moment of our being lived  
 the Lord on earth with all the heart & strength  
 & mind & our neighbors as ourselves without the  
 least interruption or defect we are charged by the  
 law as transgressors and must fall in judg-  
 ment. Yea tho' we had kept every command  
 perfectly during all our life with the single  
 exception of having omitted one duty or  
 committed one offence, we should for this  
 become liable to condemnation and be exposed  
 to eternal wrath. It is true that keeping the  
 whole law & not a part with any one point is  
 guilty of all. The authority and terror of the  
 Law given are as much connected with each  
 column and even the least of the is all the

as with the greatest worth all, and therefore it is  
 nearly the same to violate one as to violate all.

We have now adverted to the means by which  
 we may suppose the Psalmist arrived at the conclusion  
 contained in the verse before us; and we therefore  
 proceed to consider

secondly what is implied in this conclusion both with  
 respect to the corner and

1. It implies a deep and self-condemning conviction  
 of sin. This conviction appears both in the supposition  
 which he makes, and in the inference which  
 he draws. If thou Lord shouldst visit iniquity,  
 O Lord who should stand. This is as if he said to  
 himself I have considered the character of my  
 sins, and the rule according to which I am to be  
 tried, ~~and having compared these with my own character~~  
~~and am convinced that this is right~~  
 and the Law just, holy, just, and good, and therefore  
 I conclude that all which the Law the commandments  
 and which the Judge condemns is really iniquity  
 and deserving of punishment, and again when I  
 examine myself and other men by the standard  
 of the Law I find that there is some iniquity, not  
 one that my imagination of the heart of man is  
 only evil & that continually, and therefore I feel that  
 not only I can not stand a righteous trial, but that  
 none among all the sons of man can hope to do so.  
 Every transgression of the Law is sin, and not only.  
 I believe the present of man comes so far short of  
 obedience that none can stand before God if he enter  
 into a righteous judgment.

2 This conviction is a practical and operative one.

It is not a notion of the head, but a feeling of the  
 conscience and the heart which sticks up the sinners  
 to all the affections suitable to such a condition.  
 This appears from the sinner being brought into  
 depths by his views of sin, and from his being with  
 unfortunate earnestness to show abhorrence  
 Many individuals hold erroneous views of the nature  
 of sin in general, are convinced that they are sin-  
 ners and that they are guilty of this and that  
 particular sin, but then they are not essentially  
 affected by this belief. They are like David after



## Chapter 17

### ADDRESSES FROM A HEARER'S NOTES

1858

#### PREFACE

The following reminiscences of the evangelistic labours of my esteemed friend, Mr. Burns – which were so singularly owned of God in former years to the converting and quickening of many souls in various parts of Scotland – having been recently brought under my notice, it has occurred to me, that great service might be rendered to the cause of Christ by their being widely circulated.

In this conviction I have been confirmed by the warmly expressed opinion of many Christian friends; and I feel that there is perhaps no way in which I can more effectually commend them than by giving the testimony of one who heard them delivered.

“These addresses, whatever they may have lost in their present form, are faithful memorials of days of awakening. Many will value them for their plain-spoken earnestness; and some will recognize in them the appeal of power – the arrow which the Lord sent home to bring them to the feet of Jesus.

“Some of them are longer, because the speaker seemed compelled to press again and again on the vast audiences, assembled from great distances, the message of his Master. Others are shorter, having been compressed into the forty-five minutes which, in those days, working men could snatch, even during a snowstorm, from the breakfast-hour, to gather in the house of God around the open Bible. To how many a shop, or anvil, or clerk’s desk, or attic, was then carried the manna portion, to be fed on there with joy, the Day will declare.

“May it please the Master a second time to bless these comments on his own Word, and to stir up believers to remember before God the devoted missionary, who now in China stands face to face with an almost unbroken heathenism!”

God has already, in some places owned the labours of his servant there; but in others, as at the present time, he is made to feel how sovereign is the life-giving Spirit, and urgently to call on believers for earnest and persevering prayer.

We seem almost set down in apostolic days in reading the narrative of Mr. Burns’ arrest, given by Governor Yeh (see Note); or, in perusing the following epistle from the newly-gathered converts of the province of Fo-kien, addressed to Mr. Burns when last in Scotland. The infant Church at Pechuia had heard of his having left Amoy for Britain, and sent after him this affecting appeal for teachers: -- “They would write,” say one on the spot, “a sentence, and then pray; and then write another sentence, and then pray again.” Not many months before, they had bowed down to idols with the mass of idolaters around.

“Given to be inspected by Mr. Burns and all the disciples.

“We, who have received the grace of Jesus Christ, send a letter to pastor William Burns. We wish that God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, may give to all the holy disciples in the Church grace and peace.

Now we wish you to know that you are to pray to God for us; for you came to our market-town, and unfolded the gracious command of God, causing us to obtain the grace of God.

“Now, as we have a number of things to say, we must send this communication. We wish you deeply to thank God for us, that in the intercalary seventh month and thirteenth day, pastor Johnston established a free school here; there are twelve attending it. Formerly, in the third month, a man, whose name is *Chun-sim*, belonging to the village of *Chieng-choan*, heard you preaching in the village of *Hui-tsau*. Many thanks to the Holy Spirit who opened his blinded heart, so that in the seventh month he sent a communication to the Church at Amoy, praying the brethren to go to the village. They were and spoke for several days, and all the villagers with delighted heart listened. Also in the town of Chiokbey the Holy Spirit is powerfully working; the people generally desire to hear the gospel. The brethren and missionaries have gone together several times; and now, in the village of Ka-lang, there are two men, *Ch’eng-soan* and *Sui-mui*, who are joining heart with the brethren in prayer.

“Teacher! We, in this place, with united heart, pray, and bitterly beg of God to give you a level plain to go home, and beg of God again to give you a level plain quickly to come. Teacher! you know that our faith in thin, and in danger. Many thanks to our Lord and God, who defends us as the apple of the eye. Teacher! from the time that we parted with you in the seventh month, we have been meditating on our Lord Jesus’ love to sinners, in giving up his life for them; also thinking of your benevolence and good conduct, your faith in the Lord, and compassion for us. We have heard the gospel but a few months; our faith is not yet firm.

“Teacher! you know that we are like sheep that have lost their shepherd, or an infant that has lost its milk. Many thanks to the Holy Spirit; our Lord, morning and evening, comforts our hearts, [and gives us] peace. And in the seventh month, the twenty-fourth day, the brethren with united heart prayed, and shedding tears, bitterly begged of God again to send a number of pastors, quickly to come, again to teach the gospel. We wish that God our Father may grant this prayer, which is exactly that which the heart desires.”

Nine names are appended to this, being all the members of the infant Church at Pechuia, at the date when the letter was written, viz, autumn of 1854. Never did a more touching appeal come from a heathen land.

And now one of the members of that little church, Si-boo by name, is himself a missionary, labouring among the Chinese at Singapore, where a blessing is manifestly following his labours, for one who heard the gospel at his lips has returned to Amoy, and borne witness to his acceptance with his emigrant fellow-countrymen.

Let us not refuse to join these Chinese believers in pleading for their country, nor forget those missionaries who have carried them the message; going out, as one of themselves has expressed it, “not as mere adventurers, but as representatives of the Christian Church at home, in order to reap the fruit of their prayers.”

ROBERT MACDONALD

North Leite, January, 1858.

#### GOVERNOR YEH’S ACCOUNT OF MR. BURNS’ ARREST IN THE INTERIOR

YEH, High Imperial Commissioner, Governor-General of the Two Kwang Provinces, &c., addresses this declaration to H. S. Parkes, Esq., Her Britannic Majesty’s Consul at Canton.

I have before me an official report from WANG-CHING, Chief Magistrate of the district of Hae-yang, in the department of Chaon-Chow, which contains the following statements: --

It being the duty of your subordinate to act with Leseuen-fang, the Major commanding at this city (Chaon-Chow), in the inspection of the defenses of the place, we suddenly observed, whilst engaged in this service, three persons seated in a boat on the river whose appearance had something in it that was unusual. We found in their boat, and took possession of, seven volumes of foreign books, and three sheet tracts; but these were the only things they had with them. On examining the men themselves, we observed that they all of them had shaven heads, and wore their hair plaited in a queue, and were dressed in Chinese costume. The face of one of them, however, had rather a strange look; his speech in respect to tone and mode of expression being not very similar to that of the Chinese. We, therefore, interrogated him carefully, whereupon he stated to us that his true name was Pin-wei-lin (William Burns); that he was an Englishman, aged 42 years, and, as a teacher of the religion of Jesus, had been for some time past engaged in exhorting his fellow-men to do good deeds. In 1847, he left his native land and traveled to China, and took up his residence first at Victoria, where he lived two years, and afterwards in the foreign factories at Canton, where he remained for more than one. Subsequently, he visited Shanghae, Amoy, and other places, and there spent several years; wherever he went he made himself acquainted with the languages of the Chinese, and by this means he delivered his exhortations to the people, and explained to them the books of Jesus, but without receiving from anyone the least remuneration. In 1854, he embarked in a steamer from Amoy, on a visit to his native home; and in December 1855, joined himself to one of his countrymen, surnamed Tae, who was going to Shanghae to trade. "I accompanied him thither," said Burns, "in his vessel' but from Shanghae, Tae returned home again, whilst I remained there and engaged myself in the distribution of Christian books. In the sixth month of the present year (July), I left Shanghae, and took passage in a foreign sailing vessel to Shantow (Swa-tow), in the district of Chinghae. There I fell in, on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month (August 12<sup>th</sup>), with Le-a-yuen and Chin-a-seun, the two Chinese who have now been seized with me. I called upon them to be my guides, and we proceeded in company to Yen-fan, and from thence came on to this city, where we had it in contemplation to distribute some of our books. Scarcely, however, had we arrived at the river's bank on the 19<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month (19<sup>th</sup> August), when to our surprise we found ourselves under surveillance, and deprived of our liberty. We entertained, however, no other views or intentions than those which we have stated, and declare that these statements are strictly true."

Such is the account given by the missionary, William Burns, who, together with his seven volumes of foreign books and his three sheet tracts, was given over into the charge of an officer, and brought in custody to this office.

Having examined the above report, I (the Imperial Commissioner) have to observe thereon, that the inland river of the city of Chaon-Chow is not one of the ports open to (foreign) commerce; and it has never on that account been frequented by foreigners. I cannot but look upon it, therefore, as exceedingly improper, that William Burns (admitting him to be an Englishman) should change his own dress, shave his head, and assuming the costume of the Chinese, penetrate into the interior in so irregular a manner. And, although, when closely examined by the magistrate, he firmly maintained that religious teaching and the distribution of books formed his sole object and occupation, it may certainly be asked, why does William Burns leave Shanghae and come to Chaon-Chow, just at a time when Kiang-nan and the other provinces are the scene of hostilities? Or, can it be that a person, dressed in the garb, and speaking the language of China, is really an Englishman, or may be not be falsely assuming that character to further some mischievous ends?

I have directed Heu, the assistant Nan-hae magistrate, to hand him over to the Consul of the said nation, in order that he may ascertain the truth respecting him, and keep him under restraint; and I hereby, by means of this declaration, make known to him (the Consul) the above particulars.

William Burns, seven volumes of foreign books, and three sheet tracts, accompany this declaration.

*Heenfung, 6<sup>th</sup> year, 9<sup>th</sup> month, 2d day.* (September 30, 1856)

The two native teachers alluded to, a fortnight after Mr. Burns was sent off to Canton, were examined anew by the district magistrate, and because of the testimony which they bore to the truth of the gospel, and its power in contrast with the doctrines of Confucius, as the means of saving the soul from death, they were both beaten forty blows on the cheek. After four months' imprisonment, they have at least been set at liberty. Mr. Burns has resumed his labours at Swatow.

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER 1

### A RACE TO GLORY

"Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" – Hebrews 12:1-2

The Christian life is often compared in Scripture to a warfare, in which contending parties fight till at length one is crowned with victory. Here we find it compared to a race, the comparison being taken from the heathen games at which this mode of competition was usually practised in ancient times. All the language employed alludes to this, and gives directions for the running of the race to glory. No man can begin this race until he has entered in by Christ, who is the door; no man can run till he be within the strait gate, but when once he has entered, a race opens before him, and this race is to be run by each believing soul seeking salvation. At the end of the race, in olden times, was hung up the prize; and so in the heavenly race the prize of the inheritance is placed as the goal towards which we are to run. Let us not be ignorant as to who is to be the judge of the race. It will be God, the Judge of all, to whom we are already come by faith.

But not only have we the command to run, we are likewise told that it is a race *set before us*. The moment a man begins to live again from the dead, that path opens to him; it opens up at once, clearly and evidently, in the providence of God. We do not require to go a single step *out of the way* to find the race we are to run, nor to look around us as for a hidden and obscure path. As soon as we become alive to God He gives us the heart to run in His ways; and our safety lies in ever watching and waiting for the work He would have us to do, ready to catch at all that He gives us, and to grasp at what lies nearest our hand. Now, there are some who run out of the race; and even among Christians some run so fast at first as to lose their breath, and can run no longer. Men do not run thus when in a race. They measure the distance with the eye, and if possible keep up their strength to the end, that it may not run out just when they are reaching the goal. Oh! what an awful thing would that be. How hideous to be in sight of heaven, with its glory almost bursting upon you and its prize almost within your reach, and yet to turn back and be lost forever! Does it not make one *shudder* to think of that?

Remember, again, that you are to run this race with patience. This is a needful caution, for it is hard for us patiently to persevere in the race of God's appointing. It is often a cross to us to keep to the performance of present duty, to remain quietly within our appointed spheres, giving ourselves up into the hands of the Master we serve, and entreating Him to choose a lot convenient for us. Some people are never contented unless they are flaming in the eyes of the world, and making a noise in it. Ah! they forget that the concealed members are often the most useful ones. It would not do if a man's body were all an eye, or all a foot, or all a hand; each member has its proper place, and each part is useful in its own way.

But, again, we are commanded to lay aside every weight. No man would be so foolish as to load himself with a weight before he began to run, nor to encumber himself unnecessarily with what might be burdensome; but he would rather carefully weigh all he was to carry. "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." And if it be so, my dear friends, shall we who are running to obtain the crown of everlasting life, give up our hearts to idols or to sin? – shall *we* entangle ourselves with the affairs of this life?

We shall now mention one or two of those weights which must be laid aside by whomsoever would run the race to glory. The first is *the weight of unforgiven sin*. Oh! how many are trying to run with this weight of unpardoned sin upon them, and truly they run in vain. A poor chance that man would have in a race who insisted on carrying with him a load beneath which he could scarcely move. Yet many attempt this hopeless task in the heavenly race. Do you remember what John Bunyan says in his *Pilgrim's Progress* of poor Christian, who began his journey with the heavy burden of his unforgiven transgressions upon his back – how hard the journey was to him then! But when he came to the spot WHERE THE CROSS WAS, ah! the burden fell from off his shoulders into the gulf beneath, and how quickly, and joyfully, and lightly he went on in the narrow path that led him to eternal life. Whenever a sinner gets a believing view of Immanuel's Cross his guilt is sensibly removed, and with an unburdened soul he goes on his way rejoicing. No man can go a single step in God's way without this.

Among the many weights which oppress the believer, and which he is called to lay aside, it is *the world* which proves the sad drawback to most. Oh! the folly of cumbering ourselves with such a weight on such a long journey! It will not do; the world *must* be cast aside in all its unlawful observances. Little need have we to add to the load we necessarily carry within us by any outward ones. Believer, *is it possible* that the indulgence of the creature, or any of its passing pleasures, is to outweigh, with you, the importance of the work which has been given you to do? to mortify and subdue – not to feed and excite – the flesh, with its affections and lusts, living soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world, bringing all our lawful affections also into subjection to Christ.

Another burden which must be cast off is that of *sinful care*. Cast all your cares on Him who careth for you, seeing that He knoweth all your wants better than you do yourselves. If persecutions and reproach because of the Word arise, do not fear. You must expect that; and the time when the believer is so persecuted is often the very happiest time of his life. Why not be content to lose what the Lord of Glory never had? Though you were to lose property, houses, and lands, you need not complain, for the Lord had not where to lay His head; and why should His servant murmur at losing anything which the Master, when on earth, did not possess? "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." How little do any of us know of "resisting unto blood, striving against sin!"

Different ideas have been taken up of the exact meaning of the "sin which doth more easily beset us," the more general supposition being that a man's peculiar besetting sin is here alluded to; and that just as one wearing a long garment in a race would thereby be entangled and hindered, so the sin which is most apt to surprise a believer into falling must be, with the greatest watchfulness, avoided and laid aside. True it is that every child of God must be conscious of some sin which he finds the most abundant in his heart – some sin which gives him constant trouble; and against such he would do well to strive, so that he may escape its power. But the meaning we should be inclined specially to attach to the expression is rather that of inward depravity. Oh! how original sin besets a believer at each step. At every turn he takes, it reappears; every way he looks, it meets him; wherever he goes, it overtakes him. It has been with him from the beginning; it will remain with him to the end. But how, you say, is original sin to be laid aside? In one sense it is impossible to lay aside the depravity of the nature; it cannot be put off entirely *now*, but it *can* be laid aside in the way of being loathed, and abhorred, and detested as a filthy and abominable thing, on account of which you are a very horror to yourselves. And then depravity must not *reign* – it *does not reign* – in any believer's heart. It can be brought down in a very great degree, and it *is* possible for a man to pass through life without any outward stain on his profession.

We have alluded principally to the difficulties in the way of those who have entered on the Christian race; let us now speak of one or two of the incitements to run so that we may obtain. "Therefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses." The cloud of witnesses here spoken of refers, of course, to those saints of old, named in the previous chapter as those who had all died in faith, and then were, and now are, inheriting the promises. Many have believed that they are here called *witnesses* in allusion to the spectators in whose presence the ancient games were performed – onlookers who watch the race to heaven, and rejoice in the believer's victory over the world. Is not this a sweet encouragement, beloved friends? But what we should rather be inclined to suppose to be the meaning of the passage is, that the saints are called witnesses more because they are witnesses to God's truth than witnesses merely of the Christian warfare. They are witnesses to the Gospel – to God's glorious and unchanging truth – witnesses to this, that Christ died, and that God hath given them the victory through Him that loved them. They are called a cloud of witnesses because, being a multitude whom no man can number and taken from all peoples and tongues, they form one company, united in the Lamb. Oh! it is a bright, bright cloud, that cloud of witnesses; bright, because all in it are clothed with the blood-washed robe of Immanuel's righteousness; bright, because sanctified and purified by the spirit of divine light and glory; bright, because exposed eternally to the unclouded beaming of the Sun of Righteousness. And it is a *witnessing* cloud; it shines to tell of the faithfulness of the God of salvation, it witnesses to the love of Him who is the faithful and true Witness, and it testifies of the power of the renewing Spirit.

Believers, take encouragement from this; remember that its numbers were made up from the ranks of sinners like yourselves. And did anyone of them ever leave on earth an evil report of the God in whom he trusted? Did any ever leave this report – that He was unfaithful, or that He was not true to His covenant? Ah, no! There was never yet a child of God, however weak and doubting, that did not, at the end of his pilgrimage, raise his Ebenezer, and say "Hitherto the Lord hath helped me." This is well worthy of note, and well fitted to strengthen the heart of the weakest amongst you. No believer, however persecuted, tried, and downcast – however beaten down with fightings without, and well-nigh overwhelmed with fears within – leaves the world with only this testimony: that to him Jehovah has been a wilderness or a land of darkness. There was never one that did not add his voice to that of the cloud of witnesses above, and proclaim that He in whom he had believed was an unchanging and a faithful God. Each dying believer sets his seal, as he

enters glory, to this – that God is true; and leaves behind him in the world an additional testimony to the evidence which the Church already has within itself, that *whom He loves, He loves unto the end.*

And shall we who possess more of this evidence than believers in past times ever could have possessed, shall *we* begin to doubt Him? The light that shines upon the Gospel race today is brighter than it ever was before; the ground is better marked out; the path is better beaten. There are more believers at this hour than there ever were before; we mean, taking in all above and all beneath. Every day the number increases, every day it is greater than the last, because every day – by the power of the Divine Spirit – souls are added to Christ's church and kingdom of such as shall be saved. And oh! if the Old Testament saints were strong in faith, giving glory to God; if they, with only the dim light of an expected Saviour, seen through the types and shadows of the Jewish temple, if they could so clearly behold that city which hath foundations, that, by the faith and sight of Him who is invisible, they could subdue kingdoms, work righteousness, obtain promises, stop the mouths of lions, quench the violence of fire, escape the edge of the sword, out of weakness be made strong – they who had never seen Immanuel evidently crucified before them – they who had never beheld the unveiled glory of the Lamb that was slain; what should be *our* faith and light and love, whose eyes have "beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"? Oh! if Enoch had this testimony, in a day when there were perhaps but few believers on the earth, *that he pleased God*, how should we be serving Him unto all well-pleasing? If Enoch could walk with God in a day when there were few companions to accompany him, and when, as it were, there were but few traces impressed on the narrow way, how closely should *we* walk with Him *now*, when the path to glory is marked by the footsteps of so many followers of the Lamb; now, when they all have left their testimonies behind them to the faithfulness of Him in whom they have believed!

Let us take shame to ourselves for this – we have had nothing yet to try our faith, so to speak; nothing to put our love *to the proof*. Believers, are you sinking under the good fight of faith? Ah! you don't know yet what trials mean. You have not had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings yet, though no man knows how soon such things might come round; you have not been subject to bonds and imprisonments yet; nor been stoned, nor had to wander about, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; nor been forced to leave your homes for deserts and mountains, or for dens and caves of the earth. No, beloved; and yet those who suffered these things – even to being clad in sheepskins and goatskins, and being slain by the sword, or sawn asunder – they were just saved sinners, and nothing more. Though they were the men of whom the world was not worthy, they yet "received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect:" But they are perfect now. Yes, the Old Testament Church is made up now. The Old Testament Church is complete; it is above; it is a Church triumphant. And isn't that encouraging? Not a soul belonging to it left wandering on this desert world! Is it not sweet to think that these Old

Testament saints now shine a cloud of witnesses? Oh, yes! And since the saints of the old dispensation have been removed to the upper courts, thousands have entered into the glorious rest prepared and remaining for the people of God.

First did the Forerunner Himself enter in, and sit down on the right of the throne, having triumphed openly. Ay, and since then many a goodly company of apostles, and martyrs, and tried believers, having washed their robes and made them white in the Lamb's blood, have followed to the heavens. And what is *more*, beloved, I am persuaded that in the cloud of witnesses there are not a few redeemed ones taken from amongst you. Some who, not very long ago, delighted to join with us here in the precious services of this sanctuary – some who sang with us the praises of the Lord, and bent with us around a throne of grace – now

stand with palms in their hands around the throne of glory, saying "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!" Yes, beloved, I believe it. "Wherefore, seeing *we* also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." And then what follows? "Looking unto Jesus." Precious command! This *looking unto Jesus* is *all* the Gospel. It is precious to have the example and the victory of patriarchs, and apostles, and prophets, and martyrs to look to; but ah! that is but a small thing in comparison with the example we have in Jesus. Beloved friends, there's not a step of the steepest path to life on which His foot has not left a divine impress; there is not a step of the race that isn't marked with blood, that isn't marked with glory. The Forerunner did not ascend up on high without leaving us an example that we should follow His steps.

Christ is set before those who are running the Christian race in three different characters – as enduring the Cross, as despising the shame, and as set down at the right hand of God. One of the first sights the soul gets by faith of the Lord Jesus Christ is as enduring the Cross. He had a motive for so enduring – the joy of seeing sinners redeemed and saved by His blood. He looked back to the Old Testament Church already glorified, and He looked forward to us – to everyone who by Him should be saved. In that hour He saw *you*, He saw *me* – He saw an elect world depending on Him for salvation, and so He endured the Cross. Who can tell what a weight of wrath lay upon Him at that moment – more wrath than ever lay on any sinner, or on all the condemned; and yet, for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross.

If He had not done that there would have been no Christian warfare – no race – no way – no goal at the end – no combat – no victory – no eternal life. There would have been no promises, my dear friends; there would have been no commands – no threatenings. You have to thank the Cross of Christ even for commands and threatenings; thank Him that it is not an eternal sentence of woe that is gone forth; for, had Christ not endured His Father's wrath for sinners, there had been no need or room for threatening. Neither threatening nor command is now sent to the fallen angels; all they have to do is to drink of the cup of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. But for *us*, has Immanuel endured the Cross. He drank of the brook by the way, and now He hath lifted up the head. He hath ascended up on high leading captivity captive, and receiving gifts for the rebellious sons of men.

The first view you need to get of Christ, dear fellow-sinner, is to behold Him as a Saviour, but the next is as "despising the shame." None of His people follow Him closely, or follow Him long, without being in some measure conformed to Him in this respect; and it is not an easy thing to despise shame, or even to bear shame. But when you are, for His sake, cast out by the world, look unto Jesus as bearing the reproach and the shame for you. And oh! the believer's happiest moments often are when he is loaded with the reproach of the Cross, for then he most clearly sees the great High Priest passed into the heavens, who sympathizes with all his griefs. The sympathy of Immanuel! What a support; what a glorious consolation! Sympathy is always sweet when anything grieves you very much. If you are suffering, for instance, under a bereavement in your family, and your friends come and show that they feel deeply for you, it consoles and soothes you. It alleviates your distress when their tears mingle with yours, and you feel that if anything could comfort you, *that* would do it. But yet human sympathy is an empty thing. It cannot fill the blank, or heal the wound, or dry the tears of sorrow. But the sympathy of Jesus is not empty. Oh! beloved friends, it is precious, precious, precious! True, He is passed into the heavens, out of His people's sight, but yet He is near to them. And that sympathy of His is no ideal thing; it is no imagined comfort. It is a sympathy worth the having, for it is deep – deep – deep as His godhead, and yet tender as His manhood. Some believers seem to feel as if His manhood had been lost in the glory of His divine nature; but His heart and His feelings and His sympathy

are just as much those of a man as when He walked by the Sea of Galilee. The sympathy of Jesus is human sympathy – it feels for a fellow-man; and He feels for His own people, and counts all that is done to them as if it were done to Himself. He is a merciful and sympathizing High Priest; He knows their trials, and He remembers that they are dust.

This is just the reason why the very happiest moments of a believer – the moments when he has most actual joy and confidence – are often those in which his cup of anguish is well nigh running over, and when reproach and calumny and persecution have seemed to be striving which shall wound him most, just because at these moments the heavenly Sympathizer in all his sorrows has been more sensibly near to him, pouring His divine consolations without measure into his soul. See to it, my dear friends, that you beware of trying to despise the shame, unless you be at the same time looking unto Jesus. Your heart will soon fail if you cease to behold Him as the endurer of the Cross and despiser of the shame, who is now seated at the right hand of God.

Weak believers, be encouraged by this – that the victory is gained. It is not to be fought for now; it is finished – it is complete; and our head is above. Christ is above, not only accepted of the Father, but set down forevermore at His right hand. Yes, He is enthroned above, far above all principalities and powers and every name that is named, and He does not forget for one moment the Church on earth, which He hath purchased with His own blood. “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me,” was His language upon the earth; and “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” was His language from the highest heaven. Little does the world think how near He is to everyone of the least of these, His brethren. Little does the world think that whosoever toucheth one of them, toucheth, as it were, the apple of His eye. But what affecting proofs have we of this? Do you remember Stephen? Did Christ look on with indifference at Stephen’s martyrdom? Was He an unconcerned spectator when Stephen stood for *His* name’s sake in the midst of his enemies to die the death? Ah, no! Favoured Stephen! The persecuted multitude were doing their worst, and Stephen was about to die when he lifted up his eyes to heaven. And what did he see? Heaven opened. Was not that a sight worth seeing – an open heaven, a heaven prepared for him, opening to receive him? Beloved friends in Jesus, would not that be a sight worth dying for – an open heaven? I think an open grave wouldn’t frighten us if we saw at the back of it an open heaven; nor a burning stake, with an open heaven beyond it. But this was not all that Stephen saw, though, truly, of itself it would have been a glorious sight. Whom did the opening heavens reveal to Stephen? A redeeming Saviour; the author and the finisher of his faith; the glorified One! Yes, He was just going to put the finishing stroke upon Stephen’s faith; He was just going to make Stephen perfect, and to raise him to His throne. Was Jesus the same, of whom it is here said that He endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God? Yes; when His people suffer, He suffers too. He could not sit on His throne while a faithful martyr suffered. We are not called to die for Christ, but let us witness for Him, though it be in sackcloth and ashes; and we do not know that the day shall never come – even in our time – when men must lose their lives in this world if they would keep them unto life eternal. The martyr is likest to his Lord. Every believer is conformed in some degree to His image, but none are so fully conformed to it as those who die for His sake. Yes, the martyr, in living and in dying, is likest to his Lord. Perhaps no one ever died for Christ’s cause to whom He did not appear in His love.

But do all obtain this view of an open heaven? Do you think that if the men who were stoning Stephen had seen heaven opened, they would have seen what he saw? Do you think if the kings and judges of the earth who set themselves together against the Lord and His anointed, saying “Let us break their bands

asunder, and cast away their cords from us" – think you that to them the opening heavens would reveal Christ standing at the right hand of God? Ah, no! they would see another sight. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." Oh! could men but see *before* them, when they are going on in their rebellion, how the mighty God smiles at all their opposition. If you could see heaven opened, unbeliever, and Jesus, the crucified one, against whom you are fighting, sitting on the throne of universal dominion, you, too, would see another sight from what Stephen saw. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh." Is there not one heart melting under the word to-night? Are you all determined, without exception, to reject Christ, and to make the excuses of corrupt and deceived hearts? Is Christ not to find entrance into one soul tonight? It is with tears that we speak thus. Must we go unto Him that sent us and say, "They will not come in"?

Must we leave this favoured city and turn unto others? Oh! beloved, you've got many a warning, many an invitation, many an entreaty in this place to come to Christ, and you have rejected them all – everyone, everyone. Are you doing it still? Are you rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ, the Father's unspeakable gift, again to-night? Is it possible? Know you not, then, what will be the end of them that obey not the Gospel? "That they all might be damned who believed not the truth." Yes, yes, brethren, fellow-sinners, it is the truth and no lie that we speak. If you reject Him to the end – it may be if you reject Him now – you will be damned. Yes, and you will go down – down – down so fast that none can stop you, and so fast that you can't stop yourselves, into the pit of eternal vengeance – to the devil and his angels. Oh! are we to leave you thus? Can we leave you? Would to God that poor sinners were seeing their awful condition, and fleeing from the coming judgment! Brothers and sisters, it might well melt the coldest heart to come among you time after time, and see you hardening under the preached Gospel, and well-nigh deserted by a striving Spirit, and piercing the heart of Immanuel by resisting His love. Truly, when we think of it and remember the days that are gone by – the days of the right hand of the Most High – the countless warnings since – ah! but *you* must think of it too, or the compassion of fellow men will do you little good. Let conscience testify for God this night. Are there not men and women here who have heard the Gospel so long that their ears are tired of listening to it, and who yet have never surrendered their hearts to Christ? You have a place forevery idol and every lust, but you've no room for Christ – none; and you cannot plead ignorance.

Are there no drunkards here? Yes, I believe it. There are men in this place who have been warned, and warned, and warned till ministers can warn no longer, of what their drunkenness will bring on – ruined body and soul. You know well what I am saying, sinner, and yet you go to the public-house wilfully and constantly to court destruction; ay, and come into the very House of God with the smell of drink upon you. What can we, then, say to you drunkards, or to you unclean, or to you Sabbath-breakers, or to you liars, or to you whose sins we cannot name? Know you not that no drunkard, or unclean person in heart or in life, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of God? Know you not that the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone?

Some of you go to the theatre, to get the knife put to your very souls, and to shorten, if possible, your path to hell; or you go and join in the dance and the song, and sing those pernicious ballads that fill the mind with impurity and sin. And you go about as joyously as if no curse were hanging over your head, or as if no pit were ready to receive you. Is this going home to the hearts of any? Are there none who feel that they have been actually persevering and delighting in sin in the very face of light, and of love, and of conscience? Charge yourselves with it. I charge you in the sight of God, who shall judge the quick and the dead, and

before angels, ay, and before devils who have marked your downward progress with care and with fiendish joy. I charge you with it as you shall appear before the great white throne – young men, young women, answer to your names. Is that not true? Is it true? Do I speak thus that I may harrow up your feelings? No, but because we dare not leave you rejecting Christ, despising the Holy One, treasuring up unto yourselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of God's righteous judgments. Will you not now give up your drinking and your songs, the theatre and the dance, or will you dance down to hell, where you will dwell with devils, among lost souls? Confess your guilt, dear young men. Will you not be any more found amid these scenes of vice and sin or on the race-ground – that encampment of Satan around your poor city? You will not be condemned for breaking the law, nor for Sabbath breaking, nor for drunkenness, but you will be condemned on this awful ground of rejecting Christ. Unbelief is the sin that will sink you into the lake of fire, from which nothing can save you but receiving Christ; and He is willing to receive you. If you but knew Him you would believe *that*. We proclaim to you again, in the name of Jehovah, that Jesus – His unspeakable gift, even Jesus Christ – is free to-night to each sinner within these walls. anyone who wills, whosoever will, let him come; let him accept it this moment. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; believe, receive Him, and be saved. Does anyone say that he does not know what we mean by receiving Christ? My dear friends, there is nothing more simple. It just means that you are to open your hearts to Him – to act faith upon Him – to say, "Come quickly" – to cry, "Help thou mine unbelief!"

Do you not understand it yet? Take an illustration. Do you understand this – what it would be to possess a thing without having it in your hand; to possess a thing at a distance – a thing you had never seen? If a friend were to say to you that he had made over to you some particular object, would you not consider it as much your own before you saw it as after? If I met you in the street and said I had a book for you, had put your name on it, and that it was lying ready for you at home, and bid you come for it, then if you went from me and met anyone you would say, "I've got a book; the minister has given it to me – it's mine"; and you would feel *that*, though the book were still at my lodging. Or if you had no shelter for the night, and I met you, and said "Come to my lodging to-night – there is room for you there," and then you went into a house, and anyone asked if you had shelter for the night, you would say "Yes, I've got shelter; I've got it; I'm going to a house where I'll get it." And you say *that* without ever having seen the house, or knowing much about where it was, if only you had directions to find it. Or if a hungry man were told to come at a certain hour for food, he would say "I've got food," though he had not seen it. And this is just what a sinner feels when he has accepted Christ as the gift of God. He feels his need of the Saviour. God says "Here is my beloved Son; I give unto you eternal life and all things in him." And so the sinner says "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." And then he feels, and says "*Christ is mine* – the Father hath given Him unto me; eternal life is mine, and none can pluck me out of the Father's hand." Now, is not that blessed? Is it not simple? Simple and free as air to every soul under heaven, and to every sinner in this house to-night, to be his to all eternity – *a free gift*. The very word *gift* implies freeness. Will you not accept it, and take the gift from the Father's hand? Cry to Him now and He will answer you. Do you say you are too vile? What! too much lost to be saved! Is that possible? Can it be? Beloved friends, have you no reason? By saying you are too vile you just say this: "I cannot take God's righteousness, because I've got *no* righteousness; I cannot take salvation from Christ, because I'm unsaved; I cannot pray, because I have not got what I need from God yet; I cannot eat the Bread of life, because my hunger is not satisfied, nor drink the living water, because my thirst is raging still."

Apply that to the previous illustration. I meet a man wandering about, without house or home, and offer him a lodging. He says "Thank you, sir; but indeed I have no lodging, so I cannot take it." I meet another,

starving with hunger, and say "Here is bread; take it." He says "Oh! I would be so thankful, but I have not a morsel of bread; I cannot take it, for I have none." Or if one were dying of thirst, and you gave him drink, and he were to say "I cannot take it, for I have no water." What should we say to them? "Man, how foolish you are. I don't ask you to take lodging from me because you have lodging, but because you have none. I didn't offer you bread because you have bread, or water because you have water. I offer you them because you have none; that is my very reason – my only reason." Or if you went to a diseased man, and offered to run for a physician, and the sick man said "Oh! I can't see the physician, because I'm not well!" I should say "Man, that's why you need the physician – because you're ill and dying, and will soon be gone unless he come to you." But no man in his senses will meet you with reasoning like this. Never was such a thing heard of when temporal need and temporal mercies are in the question. It is left to the spiritually hungry to cast their food from them, for no other reason than that they are too hungry to take it. It's left to the sin-sick soul to shut its door on the physician who comes to heal and save it. Don't imagine that we overdraw the picture. For what else does the sinner virtually do, when he meets the offers of pardon with the sorrowful assurance that you need not speak to him of pardon, for he has never got pardon; that you need not offer him all things in Christ Jesus, because he has as yet got nothing from Him – no bread on which to feed a starving soul; refusing water because he is too thirsty to drink it; and when you ask him to cover his filthy rags with Christ's garment of salvation – as we now entreat every sinner within these walls to do, and as in Christ's name, and as ambassadors of God, we now command you to do, saying "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (and, sinners, oh! do it now) – he says "I can't take this clothing, because I'm naked; I can't take Christ's garment, for I have none." What does this mean? If you knew your own hearts, it just means this, "*I am not willing to give Him my heart.*" Seek, beloved friends, to yield it up to Him this night. Wait on the Lord continually.

You say "I don't see Him; I cannot behold Him." Oh no! for He's passed into the heavens; but He lives, He lives to save you and to fight for you, having gotten the victory. Join Him, and you will be on the winning side. It is a great encouragement to an army to go on fighting if they know they are to get the victory. How should it not encourage you to know that Immanuel has conquered, and is now set down on the right hand of God, and is offering salvation as a free gift – for it is as free in the nineteenth century as it was in the first. Oh! if I could but tell you how free it is. I know well that this is all foolishness and without meaning to the natural man, but still if God reveal it to your souls this night, it shall not be so to you. If you would accept of Christ, you would find this to be a new world to you. The sun would shine doubly upon you; the moon would shine upon you, as you go forth this night, as it never shone on you before. All creation would be your friend, because its Creator's smile would rest on you forever. Strange it is that such doubts and fears still harass us. Strange it is that you cannot behold the unclouded glory of the Eternal Sun. But it has always been so, and it is so still, although at this time there is more light upon the road than there ever was. Do you recollect how Bunyan expresses that when he speaks of the Slough of Despond? How the king's servants had, at his command, been continually trying to fill it up with cart-loads of promises, and yet it had never been made firm ground. So is it with the path to glory. Successive generations have traced on it the marks of joy, and confidence, and hope, and of final triumph in the God of salvation, but still it is overshadowed with doubt, and uncertainty, and darkness, and shrouded by the fear of death. Yet lift your eyes above the intervening mists; believe in God's love; look unto Jesus! His merits and blood are a sure foundation. They are strong enough to bear any sinner here, and if you would come over and plant your foot on them, you would find that there is a good foundation for the heavenly race, and one on which you may safely fight the good fight of faith, and overcome the enmity of Satan and the world!

A sore fight you will have with the world. How sharp-eyed it is to the sins of God's people; how quickly are their failings detected, exposed, and cried down. The least slip in their hard race is marked and noted. And when tempted by their enemies into an open sin, it is never lost on the sharp-sighted world; such an outcry is raised about hypocrisy and pretence that you never hear the last of it. And why does the world expect God's people to be so holy? How does it raise such a high standard for them, and marvel that men of like passions with itself should ever fall or stumble? Why does the world watch believers so narrowly? If one of themselves sins openly, that is no wonder to them; they feel no surprise. They never expect to find a holy Atheist or a holy Deist; when *they* do wrong it is considered a very light matter, and quite natural. But ah! if a saint walk inconsistently – if but a single blemish be found on his profession or a stain upon his character – it is soon noticed. True, they have often too much room to speak thus of God's people, but what does their anxiety to do so prove? Does it show that Christ is not worthy of confidence, or that He cannot keep His people holy? No! The world's anxiety to find fault just proves that Jesus *is* a holy and an all sufficient Saviour. Does it not prove that Jesus lives? It does, it does. Does it not prove that the Spirit is a sanctifying Spirit? It does, it does.

Oh! brethren, I have often myself felt that when, through the prevalence of sin and the depth of unbelief, I have scarce been able to believe *that Christ is living still*. That very opposition of the world to Christ's people – that very outcry that is raised when they sin – that eagerness that is so evident to lay any sin at a believer's door, and to spread it and triumph in it, as if they had really got a victory through the man's fall – I say, that very shout of joy that follows his fall – has convinced me and made me feel what a reality there must be in the being of Immanuel – what an almighty power in His arm, to save – what a boundless grace in His Spirit, to sanctify! If the very unbelieving and God-denying world expects *that* grace in His people which they would never look for in themselves or in the world around them, shall *you*, believers, think so lightly of the power of the Spirit of God, as not even to expect *that* from Him which the world expects all His people should possess? How it should also warn you *to beware how you act!* Remember that many eyes are upon you, and many snares are about your feet, and many hearts will triumph in your fall, and try to cast the shame and disgrace of it upon your great High Priest. Walk wisely then, and remember that if a saint in walking through the street do but cast a side-look at any vanity, it is treasured up and remembered, and charged upon the spotless name and on the holy cause of Christ, who is your King.

You need not attempt to keep your garment white, or your profession unstained, in any other way than by looking unto Jesus. Look to Him continually, and do not fear what man can do unto you, nor that you yourself will be left openly to disgrace your profession or bring reproach on Christ. When you do lose sight of Him do not despair. Remember that night when Christ sent the apostles out upon the sea, and let the storm arise, and tried their faith by not going to them till the fourth watch. So has His Church since then been often left. Many, many a long night she has toiled and watched under the seeming frown of an absent Saviour. Did she watch in vain? The morning dawned, and His love was revealed. You who feel as if you were seeking Him in vain, plead on till the fourth watch. He will come walking on the waters; and when He does come, do not refuse to recognize Him, as Peter did. Receive Him; open your hearts to Him that He may come and dwell there forevermore!

[June 1907]

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER 2

### THE PRECIOUS SAVIOUR

“Unto you who believe he is precious.” – 1 Peter 2:7

There are very few people who would not agree with the apostle when he says, that Christ is precious to believers. All who have been educated in a Christian land, however incorrect their views, and however dead their hearts, have a notion, at least, that but for Christ they could never get to heaven; and few or none would therefore contradict the assertion, that He is a Saviour to be valued.

But when one comes a little closer, and asks professing people why He is precious to them, and in what degree, the answers to this question are indefinite and vague. It is not of Christ *himself* that most professors will speak. Some will say they need his righteousness, others that they hope in his death; but ah! the genuine child of God alone can say, from the very bottom of his heart, “To me Christ is precious.” The heart is so very deceitful, my dear friends, that a man’s attachment to Christ may be nothing more than a name, without his being aware of it. Most people’s knowledge carries them the length of a certain desire to have his merits and his blood laid to their account in the eye of God, while their hearts are yet entirely strangers to the words of the text. Christ’s righteousness cannot be separated from himself, and nothing but faith in a living, conquering, reigning Jesus will save the soul, -- a faith that clings to him above all in his character of a King, willing and able, yea pledged, to root out and destroy his people’s iniquities. Neither can his righteousness be separated from his presence in the believer’s soul; He only becomes “precious” by personal acquaintance, and, therefore, He can be so to none who live habitually at a distance from the mercy-seat. Faith brings about a very close connexion between the soul and him, and this is kept alive mainly by a sight of sin. In a word, we must know Him as our *own* Saviour, while it is not self-interest alone that makes us love him. It is something higher, -- it is excellence seen in the Lord himself that draws out the heart. No mere report of others about him will do, -- He must be seen, believed on, and embraced as the portion of the soul. We must get such a sight of him, as would enable the soul to sing that sweet psalm of thanksgiving to Jehovah – Jesus, --

“I love the Lord, because my voice  
And prayer he did hear;  
I, while I live, will call on him  
Who bow’d to me his ear.”

If you are not God’s children, you can scarce go through that psalm without faltering and feeling a sad blank, and an inability to fill out the words with your own experience.

But now to apply the subject more directly, we shall briefly notice a few characteristics in believers themselves, which seem to show that to them Christ is precious.

Innumerable marks might be given, but here is a distinguishing one, -- *Christ is the object nearest to a believer’s heart*. He dwells in the soul, nearer than any creature, -- more closely entwined round the heart-strings than aught beside.

Has Jesus ever got this near place to your heart, dear fellow-sinner? Has He got a deep seat in your soul? -- is He reigning there as Lord of the conscience? Do you welcome him in all his grace and love as a God and Saviour, willingly submitting yourself and all others to his sway? Who in this congregation knows anything of his drawing near *thus*? There is a deep conflict in that hour, -- a conflict that will hardly end without

leaving some traces on the soul of a Divine hand at work, -- traces not well to be mistaken, nor lightly to be forgotten. Sin is cast out *then* from its vile dominion – the world is put down, -- every idol falls, and lies smitten and broken. The affections of the regenerate soul are set on things above, they cluster around the Lord Jesus; its desires are fixed on his free salvation, and cannot rest amid the fleeting vanities of time. Now, my dear friends, what are you saying to this? Does no counterpart to such a transaction as we have described arise in your memory? If not, to you Christ is not precious.

The second mark of the believer's value for the Lord Jesus, is, that *he puts no society in comparison with his presence*; no other company has such sweetness or such power to refresh and comfort and purify the soul. Here is a sure and unfailing test to detect the unregenerate. Some of them seem to take pleasure in religious society, others appear almost willing to case in their lot with the people of God; but then they stop at that, and are satisfied without anything more; but ah! God's true children cannot rest there, -- whether alone or in company, they must have the presence of Jesus. Solitude loses all its sweetness, and the company of the most godly becomes insipid and profitless, unless the Lord be found in both. Try yourself again, dear fellow-sinner, -- do you know anything of this? do you know what it is to meet spiritually with Christ? I fear many will answer Yes, without knowing what they say; and even those who do understand its nature, fall far short of that blessed fellowship with the Father and the Son, which the apostle spake of. Oh! we have all indefinite ideas of this at the best. You think it is merely some kind of feeling; *no*, -- it is deep, real, personal, spiritual in its nature; it is the very life of the soul, and it brings down actual, rich, and gracious blessings to the needy sinner who has found true access to Jehovah.

The third proof of the estimation in which Christ is held by his people, is, that, *for his sake, and for the love they bear him, they give up all known sins*. Fellow-sinner! try yourself here. What sin have you given up for Christ? A deep-rooted love for sin reigns in every unconverted soul, -- deluded men inflict severe penances on themselves that they may obtain a free license to sin afterwards; yes, and the world sets at nought present peace, -- rejects salvation, -- seals its everlasting doom, all to gratify its thirst for sin. Oh! how precious then, when a soul is really brought to mortify and deny all ungodliness! I know *you* cannot do this. Ah, no! 'tis beyond the power of man or angel, -- no hand but Jehovah's can do it. There can be no casting out of sin, till God comes near and does the work for us. Christ must be precious indeed, before the love of iniquity, which is born and brought up with us, is weakened and yields. Employ the Physician himself to do it by his almighty Spirit, and He will bruise both sin and Satan under your feet.

The fourth proof that we shall now mention is, that, where Jesus is precious *his ordinances are highly prized* – we shall value his word, alone and in the family, as well as in the house of God. Not because we have received as a tradition that it is profitable so to do – nor merely to follow the example of godly parents, nor because it is a good and universal custom to take it up at certain times. No; but because it is the channel of living waters from the upper sanctuary, and a Divine means of meeting with Jehovah, and of feeding on Christ by faith. And so also with his house, this table, his sabbath, we shall not wait on these merely because it is a statute for Israel forever, that men should thus them as meeting-places with an absent Lord; above all shall we love his day because it is a proof of his resurrection, the standing witness in all ages that He came and died for men, and the sure token that, after appearing like a criminal at Pilate's bare, and meeting an accursed death, the surety was set at large by Divine justice, and rose from the grave. "Why was this change made to the first day of the week," the believer will say within himself; -- "the Jew still keeps the old day, and why am I now keeping the Lord's day, if not as a seal of my justification in the Beloved?" Let infidels answer that, and tell why the Christian world keeps that first day of the week; where in the book of history

could you find a surer proof of his divinity? Ah! there is a testimony *here* that he is the only begotten of the Father, and this makes the Sabbath a precious day to the believing soul, and makes him desire to see all open violations of it arrested and put down, that others, as well as himself, may learn to use it as a time for rising beyond all that is seen, to the things within the veil, and for laying the soul anew by faith on the great foundation stone.

Again: *God's people are precious to the believer*, and in some aspects this is also a distinctive mark, though we shall not dwell on it, as each one can easily apply it to himself; we would only say that they are often *most precious* to a genuine believer when they have nothing else to recommend them; he may almost be apt to turn away from them when they are found in ease and prosperity, under the smile of the world; but when he finds them in prison, naked, poor, forsaken, -- ah! the heart of the child of God is drawn out of them in love, he sees them as they will be seen at the last great day with all the Lord's beauty shining on them.

Another mark that Christ is precious to believers is that *they are longing for his second coming*. The way to heaven is to be *in* Christ -- and heaven is to be *with* Christ, this is what makes it "far better to depart," and what enables them to "hasten unto the day of God."

Now what say you to all these marks of value for the Saviour? Not that your opinion of him will make any difference. The preciousness of Christ stands eternally separate from your judgment of him, and it has been attested by multitudes now in glory, and by thousands now on earth: but is he precious to *you*? -- as a Redeemer -- as a Sanctifier through his Spirit poured forth? For we speak not of a name to be found in history, or of a dead man like the false prophet, whose followers still speak of what he was on earth, though I fear that the Lord Jesus is little more than this in *your* hearts -- carnal professors.

No, but we speak of Him who liveth and reigneth -- dead, but alive again, and giving evidence at this hour in men's souls that there is a King in Zion. Oh! the blindness of poor sinners, that they can see no beauty in him. We look up to Jesus, and to the eye of faith he seems "the chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely" One. We ask to you, and you say there is no beauty in him. Whence is this? The god of this world hath done it. Lay this to heart, fellow-sinner; be alarmed; say, Alas for me! that He should be so precious, and that I should not feel it! Ah! my dear friend, would you like to taste and see that He is good, -- you need no title to obtain it, but that He is God's free gift to a dying world. Jehovah is testifying, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation." Only believe on him, and you will find him to be like blind Bartimeus, and remain at his footstool until He bless you. It is high time to be up and awake. O that there were some among you becoming persuaded that there is a *reality* in Jesus -- no fiction, no mistake, no overdrawn picture, but a real, divine, glorious Christ, ready to become your Intercessor with the Father -- your friend in life and death -- your all in all to eternity. If I see not *that* in him, I am lost; if you see not that in him, you are lost; but ah! you need not remain so. Do not despair -- do not limit him -- put him to the proof, for there is nothing he loves so well as to be tried and trusted by a poor hell-deserving sinner -- do it at once -- do it now.

And you, believer, press on. Do not think you know enough of Him. Oh! what is any discovery you have made compared with what is in him! Paul had seen much of his glory and tasted much of his love when he said, "That I *may* know him." Paul could say in the same breath, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Yet it seemed to him that but a drop from the ocean had reached his breast, and so he adds, like one who as yet knew nothing of him, "That I *may* know him." Ah! Paul felt that all he had seen was but a chink opened to let Immanuel's glory into his soul. His glory!

Oh, it will be the subject of eternal anthems. Make it all your boast now – be concerned for his glory – hate all that would intercept the shining of his countenance. Let sin be bitter to you. Let error be shunned. Error dims him, sin offends him; call upon him, then, in sincerity and truth. Let us now draw near to him in prayer. Fellow-sinners! will you not join us in seeking his face? Seek *now*, knock *now*, ask *now*. He is rich to all that call upon him; and his heart-satisfying, enduring riches will begin to flow in upon your soul from the hour when you first can call him precious.

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER 3

### SIN CONDEMNED

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” -- Romans 8:3

The word “flesh” in this verse seems to stand for the nature of fallen man, and shortly expresses what we might in other words call, man’s nature forsaken by God’s Spirit. The Lord Jehovah having left his place designed for him in the human heart, his place is taken by another. Sin has its seat in the flesh. It reigns there unopposed in the natural man. It has many and varied manifestations; on these we cannot enter – they are innumerable. They are as many as the man has faculties; and, in short, in all the ways in which man is now capable of thinking and acting, he is sinning. The word “flesh,” then, as here used, does not refer to the body, but just to man’s whole nature destitute of the Spirit of God.

This gives us a very deep view of sin, and shows us how firmly it is entrenched, and how securely lodged in the heart; and there is no form in which it appears so much *to be sin*, or so utterly vile and hideous, as that spoken of in the seventh verse, where it is said that “the carnal mind is enmity against God.” There are, indeed, some aspects in which it is more easily detected, but here is a form of it which prevails universally in all who have not been made free in Christ Jesus. What an opening up is this of the state of man’s mind! “It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” It can submit to no control, to no government, however just and wise and good, but must of necessity continue to rebel and to widen hourly the breach between the soul and the Lord God who made it, thus rendering it an impossibility that any natural man should, at any moment, or by any act, please God. “They that are in the flesh cannot please God.” Ah, my dear friends, if our eyes were opened, this would indeed seem a fearful statement, and one calculated to shut up every sinner present to the faith of the Son of God.

But let us now consider the means which *cannot* deliver from this awful state. The law of God, the statute-law of the kingdom, written by the Lord himself – unerring, perfect, holy, Divine – of this law it is said, “What the law could not do.” To what is it then declared impotent? To condemn sin in the flesh. True, in one sense it does this; the tables of the old covenant were written for this. The law discovers sin, forbids it, passes sentence upon it, threatens eternal death upon the commission of it, pronouncing a fearful curse upon the smallest violation of the commandment, and in this way sin is condemned; but the impotence of the law lies in this, that it cannot condemn sin with power to destroy; it *can* condemn the *sinner* to death, and it can hold him fast, so that no creature may deliver; and it can carry out the sentence by destroying him, and causing him to suffer forever, in the name, and by the authority of God, whose minister it is; but this is all

the law can do; and ah! brethren, there is little hope for a poor sinner here. The law cannot help him against his sins, it cannot even drive the love of them from his bosom; and though it brings sin to the light, and exposes it there to all the commands, and the curses, and the threatening with which the law is armed – instead of dying, *it revives*. This is what is meant by these words, “The law entered that the offence might abound.” Paul tells us something of a sinner’s experience when this holy law comes into contact with him and his iniquities: “For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died;” not *sin died*, but *I died*.

There is a great difference between the sinner being condemned, and sin being condemned. Ah! there is no view of sin that shows its dreadful satanic power more than this, or that proves the difficulty of rooting it out of the heart more than this, that even God’s holy law cannot do it. A law, holy, just, and good, approving itself to the sinner’s conscience, armed with awful sanctions, holding in its hand life and death eternal, speaking with the voice and authority of Jehovah: what could be stronger? what more likely to influence and be obeyed by intelligent creatures? And yet, when this law comes into direct contact with sin, it is found to be “*weak* through the flesh.” There is something in sin that turns aside the weapon, something so stupefying that every warning is of no avail.

Oh, fellow-sinner! are you awake to this? Do you know that your heart is so ungodly, so desperately bad, that it makes the most perfect instrument that God can use or devise ineffectual? Oh, it might terrify men out of their sleep, to hear that they are yielding complacently to the dominion of that which is so vile, so polluting, and yet so strong, that it can neither be transformed nor subdued, nor extinguished by any of the workings of the holy and mighty government of God. What an awful thing to be a servant of that which can only be put a stop to by shutting it up in hell forever to die the second death! Oh! dear friends, this view of sin might teach you many lessons of your own helplessness. Men think that sin will bow to *them!* and that *they* can tame it down by reformations, and good resolutions, and efforts of their own! It does not bow to the very law of God’ so that at Mount Sinai, when just given, and before Moses had time to bring it down to them, the poor Israelites set about making a golden calf!

And now let us inquire, how it is that the law has no strength to condemn sin. The first reason is, that it can provide no *remission* for sin. It comes seeking obedience, and when it finds not that, it goes no further – it pronounces a curse. It is this that makes it so worthy of God; it never makes a compromise, nor lowers its demands, and yet all the while pursues the sinner for payment, his conscience being on the side of the law, and witness against himself. You see, then, that unless a way could be found in which sin could be remitted, man must continue to flee farther and farther from God, and to increase in enmity to him. But, secondly, the law is weak in respect to this, that it possess no *sanctifying power*; although it *commands* obedience, it provides no gracious power to *create* obedience. The law was suited to man in a state of holiness, but it can have nothing to do with any works that are not perfect, -- it turns away from all such. Ah! if men knew and realized this, how differently would they listen to the gospel! In most people’s experience, I believe, the gospel is virtually regarded as unnecessary; spoken about, it is true, but merely spoken about, because there is no much about it in the Bible, and not from any deep heartfelt need of it in the sinner’s bosom. This arises from their ignorance of the law; they do not believe in its stern, uncompromising character; they do not believe that it gives no help to an awakened sinner, and that no provision is in it to enable him to return to God. Viewed at a distance, the law looks as if it might destroy sin; but when it comes near, and shows the sinner a true picture of himself, sin rises and rebels, and becomes exceeding sinful indeed; every convinced

soul is brought to acknowledge this, and to say that the law is “weak through the flesh,” and can do nothing to bring him nigh to God.

Let us not contemplate for a little *the means which do accomplish* the final destruction of sin. It would seem that none could be more mighty than the law, which holds death and life, blessing and curse, in its righteous hand; but the Lord appears, and the simple glorious means are this, that God sent his own Son. This is the beginning of a sinner’s hope. *God sent his own Son!* Beloved friends, what an awful thing must sin be – how fearful its power – how wondrous the work of condemning it, when Jehovah took a way to do it so altogether without example or parallel in the universe; *not* by the curse of the law, *not* by any works on man’s part, but by his own Son sent in the reality of human nature, but only in the likeness of sinful flesh and of fallen man. Mystery of love! Great without controversy; and yet this is the only means sufficiently powerful to condemn sin. Do you ask how this intervention of the Son of God condemns sin? By exposing its vile, unalterable, malignant nature, when it can neither be weakened, condemned, nor destroyed, but by so unheard – of a means as this, even the sending forth of Immanuel in the likeness of the rebellious creature, to be marred, and bruised, and slain in his room. Surely sin is condemned thus, and sentence passed on it as evil, when Heaven must give up the only-begotten Son before it can be destroyed.

But not only does the sending forth of God’s Son show, in a clearer light than the law can do, that sin is an evil and bitter thing – it passes a sentence of death on it, and slays it by satisfying the law: “The strength of sin is the law.” We think by nature that the law is the death of sin, whereas the law is so much the strength of sin, that it not only provides no sanctifying power in itself for the sinner, but it stands by, as it were, to see that he gets no relief from any other quarter. The very grace of God cannot reach him, because of this offended, dishonoured law. Even had the Lord, to speak with reverence, desired to give man his Holy Spirit, He could not give any of his glorious blessings to one lying under the sentence of death, for the law stands in the way.

Supposing a destroying serpent were in your house, and you took a sword to slay it, but a beloved child was in the way between the serpent and you, so that you could not strike the one without piercing the other, you dare not destroy the object of your love in order to slay the reptile. Thus the Lord cannot give his Holy Spirit to subdue your sins, without first satisfying the law; *that* were to give life at the expense of his own holiness; and so the law stands at the sinner’s side, crying, “Pay me that thou owest!” But oh! when the Son of God came down, and appeared to take the sinner’s place, there was no longer any obstacle to God’s giving the Spirit to destroy sin in his heart. The evil of sin was held up, and the law, which is its strength, was taken out of the way, while the gift of the Spirit was provided for the sanctification of the very vilest.

He endured the curse of a broken covenant, and then the way was opened for the descending Spirit. *A way opened!* O how wondrous is this new and living way! The lost sinner beholds it, and begins to commit himself, soul, body, and spirit to Jesus, and to rest his hope of a free, full, final, pardon, *not* on anything he can ever do, but on the Surety of the covenant; and then the Spirit of Jehovah comes freely forth to glorify Jesus and renew the heart, and to nail sin to the cross, not dead, but under sentence; and every time the Spirit puts himself forth in the believer’s soul, is a fresh intimation given to sin of coming death; and then the law is loved, and gloriously set up in the soul; and now it is that the believer, who flies to Christ, and finds that there is no condemnation, can testify that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made him free from the law of sin and of death. True, there is a constant fight; but then he will be more than conqueror soon, and meanwhile he walks after the Spirit, he makes deliberate choice of all that the Spirit suggests; and though the flesh trouble him, it is not he that is running after the flesh but the flesh that is walking after him;

it will continue to oppress and pursue him, so that he is ever crying for deliverance, but he will be freed from its very presence when he is gone to be present with Immanuel.

And now, what should the unconverted learn from all this? The unconverted – who are they? how may they be known? They are those who are “after the flesh,” and unlike the believer who flees from sin, and escapes as for his life, they walk after it, and seek its gratification all the day long, in some form or other. True, you will not allow this – you consider yourselves above yielding to the lusts of the flesh; you do not like to hear men thus divided into two classes; you would rather not be troubled with hearing so much about conversion and a new heart; but oh! brethren, the line would need to be put very plainly down in these days, when men do not know their own faces in the glass of God’s word. You are running on in sin with the world – pursuing it – devouring it, though God is warning you, and sounding his awful threatening in your ears. If this be true to you, you are not converted; your own consciences tell you so. The man who is walking after the Spirit does the opposite from this; hating the body of death which drags him down, and mourning when he is overtaken by it, he groans for relief, longing after God, crying for grace, seeking the extermination of sin. Who among *you* are doing this? Who among *you* are resisting sin unto the death? *Only as many in this house* as are led by the Spirit *now*. Ah! dear fellow-sinner, sin is no trifle. Its guilt is no trifle. Its power is such that none but the Spirit of Jehovah can kill it, and emancipate the soul. Your resolutions will not do this, friends cannot do it for you – your own will cannot do it – knowledge cannot do it, and your refuge is therefore in the crucified Lamb! *There is no other refuge* – none. Yet don’t be deceived here, fellow-sinners! Some think they are hidden there, who are only *sleeping* on a *notion* about grace and the blood of Jesus. They are cleaving to the covenant by flatteries, and there is too much of that in these professing days. Oh! but is there in this house a poor sinner lying burdened and groaning under the load and power of sin? Look then here! Lift up your eyes, and see what a provision! Look to that great, glorious Redeemer! Hear Him! What is He saying? “*Come unto me;*” and you will come; you will value him, and you shall find salvation.

All God’s people know what it is to be convinced of sin and to flee to the hiding-place; but I would ask you, believers, is this your *present experience*? If you are not realizing it, go to Jesus now – go as for the first time. Ah! do not go back to walk after the flesh. Are you resting in the warfare? Are you looking with more toleration upon sin, and with less alarm upon that vile God-dishonouring unbelief that makes you doubt his word; are you fainting, beloved, and saying you need rest! Ah! but this is *not* your rest. This is the time for pursuing the enemy, and for disputing every inch of ground with Satan – for wrestling, and fighting, and watching, and it will be so *to the end*; and your rest will come yet – a long, long, eternal Sabbath rest above. Oh, is there any soul here who is becoming *slothful*? I fear there are many, many such; many who are lazy and idle in fighting against sin. “*Be not slothful;*” up and be doing; the day is coming when the battle will end, and you shall have rest. Sin is yet to be destroyed. It is now a criminal in confinement, waiting for execution. The hour of final victory is nigh at hand, and when it comes there will be no wandering thought, no vile affection, no body of death.

And what does all this teach us with regard to contributing for Christ’s cause on the earth? how does it bear on the object of raising means to send the Gospel to the poor heathen in distant lands and dark corners of the earth? You know well that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord;” so that it is utterly impossible for one single soul among these perishing millions to enter glory. If it *were* possible, the law must leave heaven when such a one entered; or rather, brethren, it would follow the sinner into heaven, and pluck him from the very presence of Jehovah, down to the pit of destruction. And if this be true of every man in a

Christian land – of the most amiable, virtuous, generous man, who knows not Gospel holiness – WHAT’S TO COME OF THE HEATHEN? Who ever heard of a holy heathen? True, the men of the world are pleased with many of them, and would almost rather see them remain heathens still; but ah! the servants of Christ feel very differently; and you who are believers belie your profession, if you would not give all you had, yea, and your own selves also, if others were not ready to aid and to carry forth the Gospel among them. Look abroad – look not at tens of thousands merely in this land; but look yonder and see MILLIONS – millions perishing – rushing on, in darkness, down to the pit.

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER 4

### THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION

People often speak of the new man and the change of nature, as if it were some incomprehensible work upon them, apart from any of their ordinary faculties and feelings. And so, in one sense, it is. But although the introduction into the soul of a new element of life, which is a part of the Divine nature, must make a man altogether a new creature, still the essence of it is a moral and spiritual thing, -- it is done through the will you have already got; it is done through the very same powers and affections which, till the change comes, you have been throwing away upon the creature and upon vanity.

Remember this, to be like God and to be with God, is heaven. Heaven will certainly be a very different place from earth, -- a change as complete, perhaps as is possible; and yet how is it described? Not otherwise than we should describe the life of faith on earth. It is said that there “his servants shall serve him; that his name shall be in their foreheads;” and much more is told of the joy, and the lights, and the glory of its inhabitants; but, oh! it is all resolved into these two things; being *like* God, and being *with* him – “We shall be like him, for we shall see him as He is.” And these are nothing more than the full effects of the law of the Spirit of life. It is in these that the believer’s heart already finds rest amid a jarring world, and not in any miraculous difference between the state of his heart and yours, except in so far as it is a miracle when any soul begins to seek the Lord instead of the creature, and holiness instead of sin. And oh! believe it, there is no peace but here; there is no joy but in seeing his face; there is nothing satisfying to the soul’s need but the Lord’s fullness. Everything but godliness has a curse in it. Riches and pleasure are sweet to the natural taste: but, ah! there’s a hidden curse hanging about them. Let a child of God take up his heart more with any object than is lawful, or let him carry along with him in his race more of the world than is just enough to help him quickly through it, and he will find in it something unsatisfactory; and the more enjoyment he has in the temporal blessing, the more pain will it probably cause him, either through fear of losing it, or in the actual loss of it. The happiest state of a believer on the earth seems to be this – that he should have *few wants*. If a man have Christ in his heart, and heaven before his eye, and only as much of temporal blessings as is just needful to carry him safely through life, then pain and sorrow have *very little to shoot at*, -- such a man has very little to lose. To be in union with him who is the “Shepherd of Israel,” and to walk very near to him who is “a sun and shield” – oh! that comprehends all that a poor sinner requires to make him happy between this and heaven.

A special characteristic of the children of God is, that they have received the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit gives them liberty of access to the throne of grace, and teaches them to

call him who sits on the throne, "Father!" Ah, yes, beloved friends, here is the commencement of the mystery of their union with the Father of their spirits – they receive the Holy Ghost, as the Spirit of God's only-begotten Son. Glorious privilege, to call him "Father!" Mysterious union, that unites us to the Lord! Marvellous birthright, to be fellow-heirs with Christ Jesus! Little is this considered by some of God's people. Alas! that they should have the easy way of at any moment calling the Lord of glory by this name. Why does the world complain of the familiarity of many of those who profess to know God, but because they too often speak to God in a way that is inconsistent with his glory and majesty as the King of saints? See, then, that this reproach be not cast on his name through *you*, but seek to draw *really* near to the living God, and rejoice in the privilege of approaching the place of his holiness. Ah! the world has no conception of the nearness of access enjoyed by the Lord's children. The world knows not that there is such a thing as pressing in to the Holiest of all by the blood of Jesus, and laying hold of the horns of the altar; and yet how near do his children sometimes get, when, like Abraham, they make their request, and get an answer; and press yet closer, and again and again urge their petition in the Father's ear, and again are heard! How wonderful were the fruits of this in Abraham's case when he pleaded for Lot – Lot who had openly chosen the well-watered plain of Sodom in preference to the fear and favour of the Lord, and whom one might have thought the Lord would have forgotten, buried, as he was, among the fearful and enormous iniquities of the cities of the plain; and yet, listen to these marvelous words: "*I cannot do anything till thou be come thither.*" Moses was another instance; how often he came near to that presence in the wilderness, lying forty days and nights upon his face, or saying, "Show me thy glory;" or, pleading for rebellious Israel, "If not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book."

"Great fear in meeting of the saints  
Is due unto the Lord;  
And he of all about him should  
With reverence be adored."

All who come near to him must learn the cry, "Holy, holy, holy!" and the nearer they get to his seat and to his presence, the more they will fear him. Not that this is inconsistent with the spirit of children; such holy fear just *grows out* of filial confidence when this is based on a right apprehension of who our *Father* is. Said for us if any fear could take from our lips that tender word, *Father!* and that one word, when used aright, when used as Immanuel ever breathed it, when used from the feeling that we are indeed one with himself, when it springs from the triumphant joy of that challenge, "*Who shall separate?*" ah! this word draws down the hatred and the bitter scorn of the world. There is nothing which the world more hates than the evidences of this childlike spirit, because, when ungodly men come among the Lord's people they are constrained to feel in this way, "These people have acquaintance with God, and we know him not as they know him." What can their own formal prayers appear beside such ardent supplications, such breathings of heart after God as are too deep for utterance? Rutherford used to say, "Children don't need a form when they come to speak to their father; and who can make a form to contain the groaning of the Spirit?" Sometimes God's people scarce know what to plead for, and yet they just pour out their whole heart at his feet, and ask him to give them all they need.

These are some of the first-fruits of salvation. Are they not sweet, are they not precious? Is not pardon precious? Are not peace, and joy, and hope, precious and heart-satisfying? And then there is the Spirit bearing witness with our spirits – the spirit of adoption; there is the daily death because of sin, and the glorious everlasting life of the soul begun because of righteousness. Yet these are only first-fruits; these are not what the possession of the inheritance will be; glorious things are left till the resurrection. Suffering is the portion of believers now, and a sorrowful heart or a diseased body is often all that the world can see to

be the lot of their inheritance. But the child of God need not fear suffering; indeed, he need fear nothing, if only he be found serving God in the place and in the way where God would be served by him.

On the contrary, we need expect no comfort and no enjoyment when we are found deserting our post. What do you think were the prophet's feelings when the question was put to him, "What is thine occupation, and whence comest thou?" Ah, Jonah, Jonah! I think these words would cut him to the very quick for Jonah was a prophet of the Lord, and his occupation was to go whithersoever he was sent on his Master's business; and now he is flying from his work, and flying from his God, when this rebuke arrests him. Foolish Jonah! what ruin to his peace did this one sin produce! Oh, beloved brethren in the Lord's work learn from this that the only happy as well as the only safe way is to breast the wave at once; never to question, or hesitate, or doubt; never to flinch from sorrow or persecution, but at once boldly to cast yourself into the midst of the sea of troubles at his command; to push off from land, and then *there you are*, ready to go wherever the Lord may send you. At that time it was to Nineveh. But no matter where; all over the earth, so as his command is but with us.

You see thus the need for our taking care of what we are about. We may be miscalculating altogether as to our future course. We might wish to build tabernacles to last awhile; many of God's children are saying, "I shall die in my nest." Are we not in the wilderness, beloved? This is not our HOME. It is not the place to be building dwellings in, or sitting at ease in. On! leave that till you get home. The pitching of a tent is all you need till you come to the city *which hath foundations* – the New Jerusalem. Happy saints! Happy believers! even here. But, oh! happy ye who are gone thither, who stand tonight before the throne!

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER 5

### REFUGES OF LIES

"Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we bid ourselves. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place." -- Isaiah 28:15-17

We shall endeavour to notice the description here given us of those who believe themselves to be secure, and yet are not so; who make a profession of religion, but yet are not the children of God. They are persons who imagine and feel themselves to be in a state of security, and yet are open to God's judgments – persons who are quite content with their state, and who yet, when judgment comes, will not be safe. On these grounds they are contented: they have a vague hope, they do not well know how, that they will be saved.

There are very few, for instance, in this assembly who are at this moment actually taking to themselves the sentence of death; there are also, perhaps, few who would expect to be saved were judgment now to come; and yet there are, perhaps, fewer still who expect that when judgment does come they will be

condemned. The great majority, therefore, are resting in some kind of hope which they would do well to examine – they know that they are not ready *now*, and yet they expect to be ready *then*.

There are those who have a true assurance arising from their being now built on the true foundation, and who have a hope which will never make them ashamed – a peace that will never leave them, and which, instead of being destroyed in the day of trial, will then be increased and confirmed. But then, as we before remarked, there are others who have a strong assurance, and one which enables them to go on through this world with very great confidence, who yet at last, when judgment begins at the house of God, will be found to have made lies their refuge, and who shall be swept away. God has said, “The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place.” Now it is to you we speak – we address ourselves to this class – to those who have made a covenant with death, and with hell they are at agreement, -- to all who have a vain hope of being saved when death and hell shall come.

The question at present then is, whether you belong to those who are to be secure at that day, or whether you belong to those who shall be swept away and destroyed, having made lies their refuge. Plead, my dear friends, that we may now be enabled to preach the Word with all boldness as we ought to speak it; for, as one says, a minister should never preach without the persuasion that the truth he speaks can no more be denied or come down, than the throne of the Eternal itself can be shaken. Preaching thus, power will accompany the Word and believers be established in the faith, as it is said, “Let not your faith stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” Remember this, that it is God himself who will soon be Judge. The matter will be taken out of the hands of ministers and people, and the Lord will separate between the foundation of sand and the only sure foundation he hath laid in Zion.

But, not to lose time, we would at once direct your attention to one or two of the refuges of lies in which men are hiding themselves. And the first of them is this: Men imagine that they will be saved although they are not regenerated. They imagine that they will be saved, and yet if the question were put to them, “Have you been born again?” they would instantly shrink from giving an unhesitating answer. They will say, when they are asked, that they have a great confidence of being at last saved, but then they have a confidence of being saved stronger than their confidence that they have been born again of the Spirit. Now it is quite evident and certain that when a man has a confidence of being saved, stronger than his confidence that he is born again of the Spirit, that man is deluded and is hiding in a refuge of lies. His hope is a false one, because it rests upon a God-dishonouring lie, even on this – that a man may enter the kingdom of heaven without being born of the Spirit.

To press this subject home at once, we ask, Is *your* confidence of being saved stronger than your confidence that you have passed through the great change which the new birth produces? These ought in every case to stand upon the same ground, and they should rise and fall together – that is to say, that if a man have the certainty that he is not born of the Spirit, he should at the same time have the assurance that he will die eternally. Ah! but is this the case? Is it so? or is it not rather a certain fact that there are many, many who have *very little* confidence that they are born again, who yet *have* a confidence of being saved at last, though they do not quite know how? – in plain language, such of you are then saying, I have a hope that God’s word, where He says, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,” *is to be found out to be a lie at the last*.

But, not to remain longer on this, many are taking refuge in another such lie, and it is this: They think and say that they *are born again*, although they shrink from testing their new birth by the simple Scripture marks

of regeneration. There is nothing more common in the world than for men to slur over this matter. If you press it home upon them and prove clearly, even to their natural understanding, that they are quite inconsistent in their views, they will answer, "Well, we cannot deny it, we cannot explain it, but still we hope, or we believe, that we have been regenerated." Ah! this is one of the most fatal and fearful and soul-destroying doctrines of the Church of Rome, and one of the most dangerous heresies that is spreading in a sister Church. Men say, we must have been regenerated; and when you show them that they really never could have been regenerated, they turn round and say, "Oh! but we must have been regenerated, because we have been baptized." But this is not confined to other churches or to other lands; it is common among Presbyterians – it is common in many that shrink from the very name of Popery, or of Puseyism, to have this idea; but, ah! they all shrink from Scripture marks of a true change of heart. They virtually hold the baptized world to be regenerate, and very many among you who are now present do so. They look at a Christian land, and at baptism, and at the communion, and they say that in the midst of all these Church privileges a man must surely be regenerated. Ah! but try them by their fruits: "Can a good tree bring forth evil fruit, or can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit?" If you say that to them, they immediately draw back and answer, "Oh, but it is uncharitable to be judging in that way of the character of others." And then, if you go on further and say, "Have you received the Holy Ghost? Are you led by the Spirit? Do you walk in the Spirit? Do you truly and heartily hate all sin? Do you no more love the world? Do you crucify the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life? Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ? Is Christ to you the pearl of great price?" Ah! when you come to them with these touchstones, they shrink from them and are silenced – they cannot answer. If you deal with them in *general terms*, they will go along with you as far as you choose; but they will not stand particular trial – they cannot, they dare not. If you take texts that cut, as it were, between the joints and marrow, and pierce the conscience to the quick, they will start, and shrink, and fly aside in an instant.

My dear friends, I do not say these things from hearsay or report; I have again and again met with people, who say that they have been baptized, and therefore regenerated, by receiving baptismal grace, communicated through the successors of the apostles; but then whenever you come to try them with particular texts, a striking difference in their confidence is manifested, and they begin to tell you that with them it is *matter of faith*, and that we should charitably think well of all. Yes, but then *fruits are not matter of faith*: fruits are surely what we see before us, and you know that it was Christ and not man who gave us this text – "By their fruits *ye* shall know them." True it is, that we cannot always judge by these. True it is, that we may often judge of believers as if they were not; and we may often be deceived by hypocrites, and judge of them as if they were believers; and true it is, too, that at the day of judgment, when many shall bring forward" their works as an evidence of regeneration, and say, "Lord! Lord! have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name have done many wonderful works?" that the Lord shall say, "I never knew you: depart from ME." But the true root of the matter is just this, that a man's regeneration is disproved when there is something that is dearer to the man than Christ – when there is something that is nearer to his heart than God and God's truth. All confidence in such a case is false; it is a refuge of lies – a refuge of deception and delusion.

Oh! in our Scottish Church it is quite common for men to shelter themselves in these lying refuges – quite common for a man to say, I have been baptized, and admitted to the communion; I pass for a Christian, both in the Church and in the world. Christ's ministers take me for one of God's people, and so I must be one of them. Ah! but go on a little further, and press them a little nearer; they don't like to come to close quarters – to close, heart-searching tests; they fear even man's judgment. What a poor confidence must it be that cannot

stand the scrutiny of a fellow-worm! Oh! if any avoid this – if any say, I'm afraid of God's ministers, how will you stand the searching glance of the holy God, when He takes the matter into his own hand, and lays judgment to the line, and equity to the plummet? How will you bear *that*? If you cannot bear God's simple word *now* in the mouth of a perishing fellow-worm, how will your countenances gather blackness when He speaks the word of his power with his own mouth? Oh! if you are afraid to meet the eye of some minister, how will you ever meet Jehovah with his eye of fire? This, too, is a refuge of lies that will be swept away by the hail, and destroyed with them that are hidden therein.

Now we have mentioned two of these. O that you would judge yourselves in this matter, that ye be not judged of the Lord. Do you ever hope to be saved? Yes, you do; and do you think you are a new creature? No, you do not. Therefore you do not think that you are now a new creature, and yet you do hope that you will be saved. Yes, you have a hope, and it's built upon another hope, and that hope is, that God's Word will be found untrue. Well then; we have just to say in answer to that, that whatever becomes of any creature's hope, God's Word shall be found true: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." But then again you say, "I hope I am regenerated." Do you, my dear friends? – but then what proof can you give? Now, here you would like to get the question dropped; and if we were speaking personally to you just now, you would say – "Oh! but you should be charitable; don't be judging too severely, not looking too narrowly into other men's matters; leave that to God and to their own consciences." Ah! my dear friends, but do you know that a person who walks much in the Spirit, and whose heart is right with God, will never feel in this way to any, even towards the meanest and most ignorant. No; he will, on the contrary, always be thankful when anyone comes to him in this way – he will be glad to get help in the awfully momentous matter of searching out his own heart – he will be glad to get help to seek out the leaks and the holes in the sides of the vessel, for he knows he has to make a long and perilous journey over the sea in it. Yes, he would be thankful if even an enemy were to find out a leak in the vessel before the storm comes. There is nothing better for us than thus to be assisted to discover the roots of bitterness that are about our souls, and the inconsistencies that mingle with our profession of Christ, so that we may walk wisely toward them that are without.

But, thirdly, many people are in the practice of making another excuse, which we shall merely name, and it is this: they say, "It's quite true that we don't belong to those people that are 'the saints;' we are not exactly so scrupulous as they are about many innocent things; we are not so full of peculiar ways; and it is true that if *they only* were in the right, or if they only could be saved, we should not have much hope; but then we hope that there's an easier and a plainer road to heaven than that." Now, it is true that many of you may be saved without belonging to anyone particular party; you may be quite unconnected with them, and yet you may be saved. For instance, there may be a class of persons whom you consider too religious, and too strict, and too particular in their ways: you may be saved, and many of them may be condemned. We do not, therefore, ask what party you belong to, or whether or not you belong to any party at all. What I ask is, Do men take knowledge of you *at any time* that you have been with Jesus? If you live entirely among men of the world, do they clearly see that whatever family you belong to, it is to *a different family from them?* that the spirit which breathes in you is a different spirit, that your sorrows are different and your enjoyments different? Be not deceived. If your fellow-sinners and companions, among whom you dwell, have never had occasion to remark this difference of heart, and of conversation, and of end in life, you may take it for granted that you are not one of God's people.

Do not shelter yourselves under the thought that because you see people go further than you think necessary in some instances, that therefore in *no* instance is a broad line of distinction to be drawn. God's people *are* marked, my dear friends, they always must be marked by his holy image. Likeness to Christ is not an empty, fruitless thing; union to him is not a light matter. Union to the best party among believers is not necessary to salvation; union to the best, as we call it, party in the Church is not necessary either; but union to Christ *is* necessary, whatever side you take on any disputed point. Oh, let your chief care be, not so much to clear yourself of the necessity of taking one side or another, but to be clear on this point, -- that whatever congregation you belong to, or whatever cause you espouse, you make it evident that a change of heart has taken place, and that a change of life is flowing from it. Make it visible to all men that you have something more about you than mere morality, something *quite beyond morality*. The world itself will put up with morality, and outward decency, and propriety of conduct; they have got many moral men among themselves; they do not object to it.

You may not go to the profane or the immoral lengths that some do, and yet you may belong to the world after all; there is, you know, the respectable world and the esteemed world. There are many, like the inhabitants of Sodom, who live in crime and iniquity, openly seen; but then there is the polite world and the vulgar world, the refined and the polished world: -- yes, the world that will be soon *politely ruined*, and who will go in thousands, politely, to the pit. And then there is the fashionable world, and the world of pleasure, the honourable world, the respectable world, the decent world, and the sensual world too. There are many, many different departments in it, but it matters very little after all to which men belong, so as you are far from God and have no hope of heaven. You know that there may be many of these upon both sides of the Church; every such question divides men, while, alas! it does not separate between the precious and the vile: but in both parties the world will hate those who are the true children of God. The world will very easily know a man not to be of itself if he be constant in communion with God, and if he have God's own mark set upon him.

For instance, my dear friends, you that consider that you really are the children of God, perhaps you were in some party last night, which you required to be present at, among relatives and friends, and there was a great deal of mirth and amusement going on at it; you joined it, not for the sake of that, but for some other cause. Now in the midst of all that vanity, you might not be reproofing anyone, you might be quite silent, you might be quite calm and cheerful, and yet there would be something that would make your ungodly acquaintances feel not quite at ease. They would feel in their hearts in this way: Well, that person goes a great length and does not seem displeased, but he or she *is not of us*; we cannot tell what it is, but there is something different. This feeling is quite evident in the very constraint often, or restless uneasiness, of the ungodly in the presence of a true believer. Now, does not this just illustrate what we have been speaking about? Know you not, that if ye were of the world, the world would love its own? O yes! *it would love its own*; but because, and it may be, only and simply because, ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Ay, and it will hate the most amiable, and the most gentle, and the most affectionate oftentimes, just because there is that tells of another Master than the world serves, and that acknowledges One who is Lord of the heart and the conscience. It is not the gentleness, and the meekness, and the amiability that they hate, it is *a something behind it*, which they can see quite well, testifying for God.

So it was with the Lord Jesus. Oh, had it been *possible* to conciliate the world, Christ's example would have done it, for He went out and in among them, continually doing good, and speaking words of love, and performing marvelous miracles, and the world liked this in Christ -- that was all for its good; and if it had

seen nothing more, it would have loved Jesus too. But, ah! the world saw, *beneath* all that, HOLINESS TO THE LORD written upon all his words and actions, on his very features, as well as his walk and conversation among them. The world could not bear that; it could not endure to see all sin regarded with perfect abhorrence, and God's law performed and vindicated before their very eyes; to see God's law, and not the world's opinion, set up as the only holy standard for man's life. The world acknowledges, *as it imagines*, God's law; but oh! what place does it get from the world? The law they obey is made up of part of God's law and part of man's – that is to say, God's law is respected and obeyed whenever *man's will* goes with it; and when they clash, public opinion judges of the question and decides the matter. That is what the world approves; but if you meet them with a "God hath said," "Thus saith the Lord," as your only reason, and your only authority, the world cannot brook that. This was what Christ did, and they hated him.

We have no given you one or two marks by which to try yourselves, and I would therefore charge everyone here present, of whatever rank, and in whatever circumstances you may be – man, or woman, or child, husband or wife, man of business, old, young, rich, or poor, to examine yourselves. I ask you, as in the sight of God, does the world see anything in you really and essentially different from itself? Does it see anything in your words or actions opposed to what it finds in itself? Is this the case or not? For we do assert with confidence this truth, that the world cannot long associate, or intimately become acquainted with any child of God, without coming across, before long, something in that child of God which it never found in itself, and which it would never look for in itself. Oh! the world sometimes detects the shallow professor; even the blind world does this.

For instance, did you never see one such, sitting perhaps in a mixed company, and conversing with a real child of God? That professor will chime in with all that the true believer says, and will agree with every word of it. Well, but the moment the latter leaves the company, and the professor is left alone with some man of the world, who, perhaps, has a half-sneer upon his face at what has been going on – Oh! I daresay you have remarked such cases, and just noticed how the professor will, as it were, try to get off, and if he doesn't say anything, he makes it evidently appear, by his look at least, that he is saying – "Well, I spoke in that strain, or I did so and so, just because that man was there, and I could not do otherwise." Oh! we surely need not say that such a man as that is merely using religion as a cloak, and that he is trusting in one of the refuges of lies, which the hail shall sweep away, and destroy forever.

Professing Christian! does the world take knowledge of *you* that you have been with Jesus, or no? Does the world show a dislike to you because of a difference which exists between it and you? Or does the world love you? If so, it loves you because you are its own. Christ has declared again and again, that the friend of the world is the enemy of God, and you are the friends of the world. The very world itself in a Christian land openly calls itself the friend of Jesus! And what a refuge of lies is this! We do not exaggerate when we say, that in this very city multitudes lie hidden in these lying refuges, and sleeping in them the awful sleep of death! And oh! we feel indeed that if any of us have escaped from these fearful delusions, it is not we that have done it – it is because "I have chosen you." The snare is broken, and we are escaped.

But again: another refuge of lies in which men are concealed is the following, and we would entreat particular attention to it, as being one of the most deceitful, and one of the least apparent. Some people have got as it were beyond the former refuges of lies, -- they are not deceived by them. They have given up a great deal more than most people, and are outwardly living much as the godly do, on the whole. They have got a name to live, and they think that they are really going to receive victory over all their sins. They do get

an apparent victory over many of them; but ah! there is some idol in the camp, -- some secret sin which they are holding fast by their right hand, and with all their power, and which they will not let go.

And we have not a doubt that thousands are ruined eternally by this alone. They are so often warned by the children of God, and so often entreated by gospel messages, and so often reproved by the holy example of many around them, that at last they are as it were hemmed up to living like them, being thus surrounded on every side by some outward fence against open sin. They have given up many sins, and sacrificed many of their evil ways, and to all appearance may be living very correctly; but then there is one sin remaining in which all the strength of temptation lies, because it is one in which all the strength of sin is concentrated. You know this, that if sin be shut out in some one particular lust, and if in that you refuse it gratification, it will concentrate itself in the one which you indulge. Just in the same way as when you have a reservoir for water, you can keep every other part dry, because all the water runs immediately to that part where it can flow freely down; and, therefore, suppose that a man be, however secretly, a drunkard, then he may be very scrupulous in many other things, but all the strength of his love of sin will flow into that channel where it knows it can get gratification. And thus with the sensualist, he may be refined, and scrupulous too, in all outward acts; but there may be, and there often is in the bosom of man such a sink of impurity, and of unholy imaginations, that all the power of sin flows into these, and feeds within itself upon unholy thoughts and unhallowed desires.

Our object is simply to illustrate this truth, that when a man is once really given over to the power of any known, cherished, presumptuous sin, that then the whole strength of sin in his nature flows in that direction, and needs not to seek any other in order to ruin a man's soul. For instance, is worldliness the snare, is deep-rooted love of the world the leading feature in a man's character? Then all the power of sin will show itself in that form, and he may not be distinguished for anything more than an inordinate cleaving to the world; still sin is concentrated there, and fills up, through that, the whole soul. And then another man is proud; whatever befalls him is employed to satisfy his pride, whatever he does shows how proud he is, and so in his case the power of sin is concentrated in his pride, which swallows up and engrosses every feeling of the soul. Then self-righteous is another such ruling sin, and oh! it shows itself in many a specious form, feeding upon the most opposite substances, and deriving strength and power from all. How true it is, that if one sin be allowed and cherished and encouraged, then the whole power of the law of sin gathers itself up, and prepares for the attack, and it will soon bear down upon you with awful force, and carry your soul away. The soul is very much like a citadel, not wholly secure at every part. The enemy advances and begins to reconnoitre, and marks where the weak point is. It matters not how many gates are barred, or how securely they are protected, if one stands wide open; and the least skilful commander knows this, so he watches his opportunity, musters his men, brings the entire force to bear upon the weak side, and though all points may have been defended but that one, he will advance and seize the citadel as an easy prey; the inhabitants will be borne down at once, and brought to a surrender. Thus it is with the souls of some present.

Oh! that you would now begin to inquire, what is the lust that is holding my will captive -- what is the sin that is ruling me with an iron hand? Perhaps it is some idol sitting on the throne of your affections, and usurping the place of God; you find it no sacrifice to deny yourselves other things, because you are, it may be, partly insensible to them, and it is this idol that you fall down and worship. Or, perhaps, it is some forbidden pleasure, -- something that you cannot bring yourself to give up for Christ, and yet it will not come into subjection to his holy law. Perhaps it is self-glorying, -- perhaps you cannot consent to be nothing, that Christ may be all, -- perhaps you cannot give up your will and lose it in his, -- perhaps it is pride, --

perhaps it is some attachment which you have formed, and which you are unable to give up, but which is swallowing up all the energies and the powers of your soul, -- or perhaps it comes from your desire to retain the world's good opinion, and the world's esteem, on account of which you cannot think of giving yourself wholly and unreservedly up to the service of God. My dear friends, you may be influenced by one or by more, or by all these sins, but don't know being to deal falsely with yourselves; if at one single point you indulge and allow any known sin, at however small a point, *you are ruined there. – ruined!* -- Yes, a half-mortification of sin is ruinous; it's a refuge of lies, and if you feel that this in any degree comes home to your conscience, all your religion is vain; it is just made up of refuges of lies.

Take a practical lesson from this. Do not put it off. I know that the natural heart shrinks from such an inquiry. Men are afraid of God's coming to search out their hearts; and why? Oh! it's not because they are secure; it's because they know that there is some secret, hidden iniquity, that they dare not have exposed. It is just as if a man had got a thief concealed in a house; he would tremble when the search commenced, and would take the officers into any place or every place but the back-chamber where the thief was lying. But dear fellow-sinner, the day is coming when you will be searched, -- the day is coming when all the secret sins you have ever committed will be known, and when that sin which you are cherishing and covering up, will lie exposed and found out. Oh! then, why not now? -- why not get it detected now, and pardoned now? Ask this question of your own conscience, -- Am I one of whom the world takes knowledge that I have been with Jesus? Are you one of those whom the world approves, -- are you one upon whom the world smiles? Does it say of you, "He is a good man, we never disagree?" Ah! do they? If unregenerate men say of you that they never knew a better man, and that they approve of all you do, and agree with your views, it is at least *very suspicious*, -- your election of God is very doubtful, -- your place among his children has much need to be tested and examined before you hold your title good. Ah! if you are not too strict and too holy for the world's notions of what is needful, you cannot be one of the Lord's children. Again, is there some particular idol to which you are giving a place in your heart? We speak not only of people, but of preachers too. Yes! there is many a one who preaches about idols, and denounces idolatry, and exposes it in others, -- many a one who is a holy man in the world's eye, and in the Church's eye, and yet *an idol reigns within*, -- an idol of jealousy, or of envy, or of distrust, idols that will at last arise and destroy them. They hide in a refuge of lies; the hail shall sweep it away, and the waters shall destroy the hiding-place, if before the last day they flee not from all these and find a refuge. Oh! my dear friends, everyone who is sheltering himself in any false refuge shall be *swept away* -- one wide-spread desolation shall carry them all away.

But thus saith the Lord, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a precious corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth shall not make haste." And this day is this foundation laid in your sight. Come, then, from every lying refuge, come near to him who is now brought near to you. Christ the Lord is ready now. He calls you to himself, and entreats you to forsake all lying refuges, and to come and build upon God's foundation. The Lord is ready, ready still, ready in spite of rejection and neglect. This day recalls to my mind the time I last addressed some of you -- since then three years have passed away -- since then you have been called by God's long-suffering, and by the riches of his sparing mercy, anew and anew to take your refuge in God. and, after three years He is as ready to receive you, and as ready to pardon, as ready to save to the uttermost, and to cry in your ear at this moment, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Ah! if you are saying, "I cannot believe it, my heart is so awfully depraved, I have resisted so long, I am so hard-hearted, so fearfully led captive by a perverse will, and by an unbelieving heart, which departeth continually from the cistern of life, from the fountain of living waters, I dare not come, I cannot be received now, it is too late -- impossible." But you have nothing to do with that; what He says is not what

you have to do, or what I have to do; but "*Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone; he that believeth shall not make haste.*" -- "*A new heart will I give you, a new spirit will I put within you.*" -- "*I will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.*" And now may God abundantly bless to the souls of all, the preaching of his Word among you!

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER 6

### SAVED BY HOPE

It is a peculiar complication of trial when we have to labour on through much tribulation, and yet see no fruit of labour. It is then that we get at the meaning of that expression – *saved by hope*. We require to have this hope in exercise, living on the future, looking forward to the crown – at the coming of the Lord.

Look forward, desponding labourers, to the universal establishment of His kingdom, but above all, to His own second coming. Take courage, and He will strengthen thine heart! Blinded sinners cannot wait for their portion: they *must* be at it; they must have it *now*. This explains the fearful declension of multitudes from the ways of God. One goes away, and walks no more with Jesus; another turns to the world's esteem; another must have its amusements; another grasps its degraded pleasures, and drinks them up like water; another becomes a Demas, and says, "I must get my fill of *this* world at all hazards, and if I get the other too, so much the better." Brethren, where is Demas to-night? What's the world to Demas to night, if HE HAS LOST BOTH WORLDS!

But there is another class of persons who cannot wait God's time, and who must have something more in possession than He would appoint. They will not wait simply for light from above, and so they run hastily into any set of opinions, and become formalists, approving doctrines which the Lord's poor ones do not like, and too often they end in teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. Little confidence is to be placed in such professors; I would rather take the judgment of some deeply-taught believer, whom the Lord is chastening and teaching out of his law, than of the greatest divine who is not deeply taught within. Such poor ones know the Shepherd's voice, and they will not hear any other. Bring as many arguments to them as you like, and tell them that what you are trying to prove is as clear as day; "Never mind," they will say, "it's not the Shepherd's voice!"

When those who are not truly established in the ways of God hear anything new that seems to suit their fancy, it is all plain and easy to them; they take it up at once; they think they can at a glance see what is right and what is wrong, or what is scriptural. The Lord's people are seldom so ready to give an opinion, but are found creeping out of sight, and hiding themselves in him. Every kind of new doctrine does not find an entrance to their hearts; they know *what is what* in the preaching of the gospel. They have some clear notions in their heads and hearts about saving truth that will not accommodate themselves to novelties. It's not every kind of gospel that goes down with them.

Few of us come to the pulpit to speak of the things which they have both seen and heard at the Lord's mouth. On the other hand, we could envy the teaching which He gives to some. They are kept down and down, and get safely into port; whereas the tall mast and sail catch the wind and lead into danger. The best ballast for the vessel is a sanctified heart. This is the security of his weak and despised people, who, as a

minister said to me lately, when they have not the fulfillment of the promise to live upon, are contented to live upon *the unfulfilled promise*. These are they who have learned to live upon *the unfulfilled promise*. These are they who have learned to live by hope.

All do not thus wait. Some look backwards, and say, There's no use waiting; and some go away altogether. Truly humbled souls will wait on to the end, watching for the Lord's word, looking upwards, in the darkest night, though it be with fainting hearts, and weeping eyes, and mourning consciences, -- lying down at the posts of his doors, at the gates of his mercy. Some men's faith stretches the longer it is tried, and grasps the promise closer, and will *rather die than disbelieve*. Believe it, the *vessel* that contains the blessing is widening and widening, that it may come down at last in a mighty flood upon the thirsty ground. *I cannot wait*; that's Esau's voice. He sees Jacob with a mess of pottage, and sells his birthright.

Sometimes a voice comes to ministers, saying, "Stop working; no good will come. Give up, let men alone; they deserve it! *Let them sleep!* Let them perish!" That's the devil's voice! All he wants is to get us set to sleep, and the best way to attain his end is to reason thus within us. Think you that he would take this trouble were it not that he knew -- and Satan knows it well -- that *the Lord liveth*; that He rideth upon the heaven in our help? Yes, *He liveth ever*, and that is what Satan dreads; He liveth to bless and save his people, and to make them wise to win souls for Christ. "The Lord liveth; and blessed be my rock: and let the God of my salvation be exalted."

Though it were to come to this, that any child of His were to look around, and with a bursting heart were constrained to cry that Christians are asleep, and ministers lifeless; and though the fainting spirit found not so much as *one* living soul who was getting grace to trample on sin, suffering, and persecution, for the Lord's sake, still, with a sleeping Church and ruined world all in sight, what could he do but say within himself, "Cease thou from man; cease thou from man!" -- and point faith's finger to the open heaven, exclaiming, "The Lord liveth; and blessed be my rock: and let the God of my salvation be exalted." Although thousands should find in his finished work only a rock to split upon, and a stumbling-stone, yet "He is the rock, his work is perfect."

Hang, then, on his word of promise. Believe it to the last. Turn not back to your lusts; turn not back to the world; turn not back to self-righteousness. Wait patiently; wait long. If you wait to the end, it will be to confess anew that you are ashamed of your unbelief, and of your low, hard thoughts of him; it will be to be convinced anew that He is just the same covenant-keeping God, and that He never can take back a promise He has given --

"Oh! but the counsel of the Lord  
Doth stand forever sure."

That word, that name of his, is a strong tower, and a living refuge, eternal in the heavens. That word will stand; and when the world is all going to pieces, it shall endure, it shall save, it shall bless every soul that believeth on the Lord Jesus. To some people, the life of hope is a very wearisome one; it is not full enough of present enjoyment to their taste. Humbled souls take a very different view of the matter, knowing that it is the Spirit that quickeneth us to wait on the Lord, and taking delight in the thought that he helps us to it, and keeps us up when we are ready to sink down and fall.

It is not an amazing thing to see a few poor creatures, despised and trodden down by the world, -- which looks at them, saying, "They'll all soon go to pieces; they will give up that strange fancy, and be like one of us again:" -- to see them year after year remaining united and like-minded, steadfast as a rock, waiting and

persevering to the end? Nothing drives them back, or makes them ashamed of their hope. One of their number, who was, perhaps, the most tried of all, proved this; and he has been handed down as an example of suffering patience to all generations. See him robbed of all he had, and left desolate and naked on the earth. All that afflictions and losses, added to Satan's temptations, could extort from him was, "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not received evil?" See his faith in God, and Job had less outward reason for trust in God, perhaps, than any of his saints ever had. He had feared God all the day long, and yet, without apparent cause, he lost all – family, property, possessions – and now his own body was brought under the rod till it became loathsome and painful in the extreme; his friends spending their strength to try and convince him that he was a hypocrite; all that was left was this wife of his, bidding him curse God and be done with it. But did Job either curse God to please his wife, or give up his integrity to justify the accusations of his friends? Ah no! Job knew and felt that there was something within that diseased body which the worms *could not destroy*, and some principle of life which *death couldn't reach*, abiding in his poor afflicted soul; and, therefore, he could defy them all with this, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." How many of you are like Job in this? How many of you have that precious confidence in him that He will not, *cannot* lie, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his mouth? Who has the faith that will cling to his word when all else is failing, and rest on his promise when all beside is untrue?

Pray for us, brethren, that we may neither shrink from duty nor from trial. Can we expect his blessing, if we shut up our labours within bounds which He has not prescribed? Most of us in the ministry are like soldiers living comfortably in barracks during the time of war. Let us not try to escape from the work He gives, or the message He sends; otherwise, we shall be the sufferers. Jonah had to take a very round-about way to Nineveh, from this sin. He did not expect to have to go through the bottom of the sea to it, but still to Nineveh he came, to preach in that great city the preaching which the Lord bade him.

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER 7

### THE GOOD GROUND

"But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." - Matthew 13:23

Men's hearts are, in the parable before us, compared to soil; the word is compared to seed; and Jesus Christ primarily, and his ministers and servants after him, are typified by the sower going forth to sow his seed. There are here four descriptions of hearers mentioned, and although we have on former occasions endeavoured to explain to you the character of three of these classes, we shall again, before proceeding to the fourth, briefly notice them also.

First, we are shown that "when anyone heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way-side." No husbandman would willingly deposit his seed on a highway, or on a beaten path; but should it fall there by accident, it could not possibly take root. So it is with careless hearers; the word makes

no impression, and they retire from the house of God just as they came into it, -- except that they are more guilty than before.

The second class is like the "stony places; the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended." This class, my dear friends, includes many who suppose themselves to be Christians; having been only slightly convinced of sin, they have *taken unto themselves* peace and false confidence. The seed sown in such "stony places" springs up quickly of necessity, and has no root, so that it as quickly withers away. We would remark in passing, that the great want in such cases is that of the conviction of the understanding: we must *understand* before we can believe or feel. The danger of setting up a certain standard of intensity to which we think our feelings and emotions should rise is indeed great. In fact, it is very often the case that such feelings, when produced, turn out to have been the fruit of mere excitement.

Some persons, seeing in others much visible agitation and anguish of heart under conviction of sin, immediately begin to try to excite their own feelings *not* from seeing sin in a strong light, *but* from seeing that the anxiety of others is genuine. They then work themselves into a state of agitation, counterfeiting what in the other case is the work of the Spirit of God. We earnestly beseech you to beware of this and especially at a time when the mighty working of the Spirit of the Lord upon many, leads to much of such *unreal* excitement. Don't try, I beseech of you to work upon your feelings; don't try to excite them further than your judgment carries you: wherever true conversion takes place, people *will* feel; but remember also that it is possible to experience much emotion from causes quite independent of a saving change. Deceive not yourselves, then. Let your judgment be convinced; let your reasoning powers be exercised. *Believe*, and then you will feel. Don't force your feelings; that's not necessary. Understand, and you will believe; believe, and you will feel. Your feelings, so to speak, will master *you*.

Remember, however, that it is also very possible to err on the other side. Some people, called prudent, deny the necessity of feeling altogether; they call it enthusiasm and fanaticism. Convince the judgment, they say, but for any sake do not allow the feelings to be moved. This is just as wrong and unscriptural as the other error: such persons do not distinguish between feeling and enthusiasm. Yet there is a wide difference between the two. Ah, my dear friends there will be no enthusiasm at the day of judgment, but there will be much feeling then, Let a man once be convinced of sin, and, going a step further, let him be convinced of what salvation is, and *tell him not to feel!* Ah, but he will not be able to obey you; no, not though it were to gain worlds. Let him see the arm of divine justice bared, and the sword of vengeance suspended over his guilty head. That man *will* feel, that man *must* feel; he will not require to work up his feelings by fictitious means. Try then to wait upon the Lord until you become really convinced of sin. Pray earnestly for true conviction; and then the balm of Gilead will be sweet, and lasting too, when it falls into a newly-probed wound. The good seed of the word will not be withered in you as in the case of those who, received it with joy and without understanding, lose its power whenever temptation arises. The difference between the unprofitable and the fruitful grains may not be known now, nor known indeed till the day of trial, when every man's work shall be proved of what sort it is, and when such as are found wanting shall be cast into everlasting burnings.

And now we come to the next class of persons named. "He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful." The seed is prevented from coming to perfection by the interference of sinful care.

Men say, "We cannot free ourselves from the world, we cannot throw away the riches which have been given to us;" and, my dear friends, who ever said you should? Who ever dreamed of that? It is not said that the world must necessarily choke the word in the heart; we have been placed *in* the world, and we are to "use this world *as not* abusing it." It is not the actual riches in themselves that do this; it is not the possession of them; it is only their deceitfulness. "If riches increase, set not your hearty upon them:" we should not despise such gifts of God any more than we should trust in them. The figure puts it in this light: -- The soil has been sown, and the seed is springing up and promising well; but being more prolific in the production of thorns than of the seed, the former soon gets the upper hand, and destroys the latter. Riches, and earthly vanities, and cares of this life, holding the chief place in the heart and the affections, the weaker principle is of necessity obliged to yield, and is finally exterminated.

But there yet remains one class more: a class to which may God grant that all here may yet belong. "He that received seed into the good ground is he that beareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." Let us direct our earnest attention to this description of the true hearers of the word of God, who hear it and "believe to the saving of the soul."

The first mark is that *they hear the word*. Of those unhappy men who enter not into God's house at all we say nothing here, but we would anxiously press on those now present the truth that it is possible to go to church *without hearing*. If you go to a Popish church, you won't hear. You will not hear the gospel there in its fullness and freedom. If you go to a Unitarians chapel, you won't *hear*; and, what is more, if you go to a Presbyterian church, where *the full gospel* is not preached, you won't hear there either. When we speak of the gospel not being preached, we mean where Jesus Christ and Him crucified, is not made the sum and substance of all doctrine, and all righteousness, and all hope to the sinner. If you go to such a church, when there may be one within your reach in which Christ is reached with scriptural fullness and freeness, and set forth with life and power, *you do not hear*, and the safety of your soul, must to say the least, be a peradventure.

But it is also possible to go to a church where Christ is thus preached, and yet not to hear. *The man that sleeps in church won't hear!* And it is possible to go with the ears closed and the heart untouched; possible to hear the most precious truths of the blessed Bible declared, and yet *not to hear* – not to believe – not to be converted, and this because the Holy Spirit is not given. Still it is our bounden duty to hear, and to allow others with whom we have influence to hear. Ah, brethren, why is the permission to attend the house of God denied to so many? Why, for the few paltry services which we might receive during the time from our domestics, should we keep them from Divine worship, or refuse to let them attend meetings when they wish it? We know of some masters who have forbidden their servants to attend, and we have heard of others who permitted them to go out several times, so long as it made no impression, but who, as soon as the servants became alarmed about their eternal state, and began to follow their usual occupations with a heavy heart and downcast countenance, shut the doors of their houses, and would allow their poor servants to go out no more. This is sad; just when they were beginning to feel their need of a Saviour, of a peace that the world does not give, and when, humanly speaking, by coming again they might have found that peace which their souls were seeking, all the opportunities have been take away. Far, far from us be it to say, that all who come here shall find Jesus Christ. Ah no! dear friends; would this were the case! But we say such persons, or any others, *may* find Christ here; may, in a blessed hour, discover that which, once believed, once felt,

*saved the soul.* And if this is possible, if this is daily happening in the case of many, surely, surely, those who detain any from these opportunities are guilty, and responsible to God.

Masters of families, we speak *to you*, and hesitate not to tell you that you are highly culpable, if, when you see your domestics touched by the word of life, you keep them from any means of grace, on the plea that they are becoming unfit for their labours. You are the servants of Satan, working for Satan's hire. Your servants may for a day or two be laid aside in measure, and unable for their work. But wait a little, and see how they will do their work then. If they are converted, we know that you will see a change. At – during the revival of religion, for two days no work was done, no labour was attempted, not a loom was touched; every shop was deserted; there was but one cry heard, -- “What must I do to be saved?” Worldly labour seemed neglected. But do you ask, “What is – now?” Every account we receive from thence bears glorious testimony to our present subject. We heard this confirmed accidentally through some of the warehouse correspondents in the neighbouring city, who say, “The men of – do double work now.” There must be numberless proofs of this in every place where there is any vital godliness.

No servant is so much sought after as a godly servant; none to whom even worldly men like to confide their possessions so well as to Christians. Tell me, worldly man, the head of a young family, wouldn't you prefer to have a Christian in your nursery, to care for your little ones? And why is that? Ah, because the godly man's a trusty man, and you know very well that while you might be in doubt about trusting others in your absence, a godly servant will obey you when you are away, exactly the same as if your eye were present on the spot. And, oh! I can say for myself if the poor testimony of a sinner saved by grace is worth the having, that I never served man faithfully till I knew what it was to love my God. *When* will a man do his duty so perfectly, and when will his eye be so single, and when will he throw his mind into his work so fully as when he does it with heaven in his eye, with Christ in his heart, with the world beneath his feet, and with the love of God his Redeemer flowing through his soul! Is it not natural that when anxiety concerning eternity is first felt, a man should be filled with distress until his views of God's salvation become clear? Is it unreasonable that the sinner should be overcome when he finds himself under the condemnation of the law? Do not wonder then if your servants or children should be for a time unable to take an interest in ordinary occupations. Give them every opportunity of becoming wise unto salvation; and, in the end you will see how good it is that they have been afflicted, even in as far as your worldly interests are concerned. Should they employ a longer time in devotional exercises, do not murmur at that. Think you that the abounding of prayer will bring evil on your dwelling? If your child should in all things act under the guidance of a Father in heaven, think you that *you* will be less honoured and obeyed as its earthly parent? Why reproach it for serving you with tenfold zeal, or for loving you with an infinitely higher affection?

What allowance you make, my dear friends, when a son or daughter returns at daylight from a ball, or from one of your late parties, full of life and gaiety! You are glad to see them happy and enjoying themselves. “Poor things,” you will say, “it's just what I used to be so fond of myself at their age; they are just like their years, and every time of life has its own enjoyment.” But were the same child to come home late from church, -- “Oh, there's something quite wrong; it's out of the question; it can't be tolerated.” And, oh! further still, should they perchance have been deeply affected by something heard there, is there a decree at once that never shall they enter it again?

Do not, however, suppose, from anything we have said, that the mere comprehension of the plan of salvation, with the natural faculties, will suffice to save you; for this purpose, it is true, every faculty must be employed, but there is a far higher understanding which is indispensable. Why can the natural man not

comprehend the things of God? Because he has not the Spirit of God. Thus even when the faculties have given their assent to a doctrine, the heart yet refuses its consent. My dear friends, if you have not the Spirit of God, you will not even know what I now mean, you will not even consent to the fact that you do *not* understand me. Were you to tell the philosophers and theologians, who profess to expound Scripture, that they did not know what they read; "What," they would say, "not understand the Bible! We have studied and taught the original tongues in which it was written; we are well acquainted with the first Greek authors; how, then, should we not understand the dialect of the unlettered fishermen of Galilee, or the simple language of the Apostle Paul?" Such men as these, after having studied and critically examined the Oracles of Truth, and having facilitated the same study to others, by means of deep research and hard investigation, see no difficulties in the Bible, and yet they may never have come in the spirit of little children to learn the truth as it is in Jesus. Many of them, alas! by their very explanations and interpretations of Scripture, show that one beam from the Sun of Righteousness has ever lighted up the sacred page.

And so with you, till the Spirit comes. He breaks the shell of the nut, and gives the kernel to the humble believer. Dear fellow-sinners! you have not reached the kernel yet. The Bible possesses no attraction for you; it is dark; it is uninteresting; it is *unread*, save when a sense of duty forces you to take it up; and then it is laid aside, unmeditated upon, unthought of, *unloved*. But, let the Spirit shine into the heart, let him remove the scales from a blinded understanding, to which hitherto every beauty and every glory has been as darkness, and oh! then the night has passed away, the sunbeams glance over every page; one wonder after another springs into being, one truth is revealed to the delighted understanding, while another and another follow in quick succession, until every leaf seems radiant with the brightness of heaven, and streams of grace and glory beam from every line. The Spirit breaks, as it were, the surface of Scripture, tears off the veil, removes the covering that is on the face of all people, and then the humble Christian goes forward to new and rich discoveries of truth in the inspired volume.

I lately visited a poor woman in Edinburgh, who was afflicted with occasional blindness, which has visited her sixty times with seven years. She is confined to bed from another complaint, and on the bed of sickness has she found the statutes of the Lord to be indeed her song in the house of her pilgrimage. She remarked to me, that once, after sixteen days of blindness, she in the morning discovered that sight had returned; she lifted her Bible, opened it, and turning a page to begin to read, her eye caught the word JESUS in the large letters. She looked, but found her sight was gone again; and so she laid down the volume. Her sight had never since returned when she spoke to me. "But," she said, "I saw enough that morning for many mornings – for all my days here; that word was enough; it was my meditation then, and if I never see again, I need no more." To this poor disciple the Lord had unsealed the Scriptures. Plead with him that He would reveal it so to you. The word has often seemed to me like a clear sky at the hour of sunset; when one looks at it just as the sun is disappearing, the blue sky is unbroken by one twinkling star; at length one appears; we gaze on, another shines; and while we look, another and another, and hundreds more start upon us, till at length the whole firmament is crowded with worlds of light.

But we find here another mark of the true reception of the word into the heart. The time is so short, that we cannot enter at length into the evidences of regeneration, or the numerous fruits of the Spirit, which are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." One thing we may mention again as being indispensable to the existence of the Spirit's work on the heart – conviction of sin. No real faith or hope can be in us without that, because it is the first thing that arraigns us at the bar of God, and forces us to sue for mercy. We have already entreated you this night to examine your souls. *Search out*

your sins, and a sufficient number will be brought to your mind to overwhelm you at the very idea of having to bear the consequences of them in your own person. Brethren, do pray for this conviction of sin; if you have hitherto been indulging a false confidence, and living happy in it, *leave it! leave it!* Oh! cast it away! It will avail you *nothing* at the day of judgment. Sum up your sins, and write "*innumerable.*" *This night* have them searched out. *This night* have them blotted out, through Jehovah's infinite grace. *This night* have them forgiven. *This night* have them forgotten; and oh, brethren, we cannot, though the hour be late, we cannot let you depart without once more offering Jesus to your acceptance.

If you leave this house to-night without Christ, you had far better not have come here. To-morrow it may no longer be granted to you to accept him. But oh! *to-night* is yet ours, *to-night* is yet given us. Tonight we have yet the permission to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to every creature. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Oh! is that command hard to be understood? Do you want something more simple still? Then we say to you, *Trust.* You all know what it is to trust a person, to confide in a person. You know, if you had a sum of money, which you wished to be taken care of, and if you knew a man of power and of untarnished honour, you would understand what it would be to trust that person, and to say, "Take this money, and keep it for me till a future day." Then act so towards the Lord Jesus; his power is boundless as his love, and he changes not. Commit your soul into his hand, or if you have not strength to do this, at least say, "Lord, take it, take this heart and keep it." The will is all He wants. He has been knocking at the door of your dead hearts for long. Do you not hear him knocking now? Give in, give in; He calls. His Spirit calls. Surely you will not let him call in vain. And now is it possible, oh, is it possible, that after all you have heard in this place, and after all you have been hearing during your past lives, is it possible that any deluded soul is saying, "That is not for me; I have been too guilty – too depraved?" What, brethren, you are at that again! How often shall we refute – how often shall God refute that mad, willful delusion, and you believe it still? Away with it. Oh! how often must these proud excuses for not coming to Christ be combated? Be sure that pride makes you say, "I'm too guilty, this is not for me." Who told you, sinner, that this is not for you? Who, who but the god of this world! Ah, could I find out the sinner on this earth who is most abandoned, most profligate, most desperately sunk in crime of the deepest dye, could I find that man in this assembly, I would carry the message to him, and say, "It is for you, it is for you. My commission is to all, but *pre-eminently* to you."

The Lord gave us the precedent for this. Arisen from the dead, having borne all that man could suffer, and all that One more than man could suffer, at the hands of the Jews, whom did He select as the first subjects of this salvation? To whom did He send his ambassadors? Ah! brethren, it was to these very Jews, these very murderers, these very Satan-possessed, Satan-serving Jews. Salvation by his blood was to be first declared to the men who had caused that blood to flow, "*beginning at Jerusalem.*" Oh, my dear friends, surely none of you will now say that the gospel is not for you. Come in to Jesus, come in, come in or perish! Say, "Into thine hands I commit my spirit."

Where are the dear souls who are doing this? Delay not, you who are just coming to Jesus; you, who in self-despair are saying, "Lord, I come: save me!" Happy, thrice happy souls, He will not reject you; your souls are safe; your trust is secure; you have committed your spirits into the hands of a most merciful Saviour, who changes not. We have every reason to believe, that not a few happy souls have, during the last few days and weeks, been emancipated from Satan's thralldom. We dare to hope that some inroads have been made by the Spirit of God on his infernal sway. Why then, beloved, should this not happen to-night also? Why should not this night a blow be given to his kingdom, which should be felt through all its parts?

Come in multitudes to the Lord Jesus! If you are still hardened, ask of him a willing heart. "Ask, and it *shall* be given you; seek, and ye *shall* find; knock, and it *shall* be opened unto you." My dear friends, I testify to you, that in the case of everyone who refuses to be saved, that word "shall" in the promise, will be a dagger in your heart to all eternity. What will your feelings be, if you ever lift up your eyes in torment, and think "I *might* have been saved, for the promise was, 'ye shall find' but *now* – IT IS TOO LATE!"

O that such may not be the doom of anyone of us! Come now, come before you leave this house, and now join in earnest supplication to the God of all grace, that He would receive you. Come before him, pleading *in* Christ's name, and for Christ's righteousness' sake, the fulfillment of the full, free declaration of Jehovah's purpose of mercy: "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way, and live;" while ye obey with sincerity the command, "Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER 8

### THE THRONE OF GRACE

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:16

We considered this passage in part on a former occasion, and endeavoured to explain the meaning of the expression, "throne of grace." We say this throne to be clearly distinguished from all others – such as the throne of justice, the throne of government, the throne of glory; and we also showed the necessity for this.

Some people entertain ideas of the grace of God which would make it impossible for him to exercise it without compromising some of his attributes. They imagine that, in order to show mercy to fallen man, or to rescue a son of Adam from ruin, God must stoop from his eternal throne, and descend from the eminence of his infinite holiness and purity. It is not so. The Holy One *can do just*, and yet the justifier of him who believeth on Jesus. A throne of grace has been raised. Yes, Jehovah dispenses the rich gifts of his grace and love from a throne as pure and as rigorously just as the throne of justice itself; and when He grants free grace to any sinner, he does it *as a King*.

Sovereign grace, thus understood, does not compromise a single attribute, nor sully on perfection of the Godhead. What is the *foundation-stone* of the throne of grace? On what is it raised? On JESUS. He is the corner-stone; and without him, upon whose perfect obedience and finished righteousness the throne rests, it could *never* have been set up; but now, just as the different colours of light meet and blend in the rainbow of the heavens, so do the Divine attribute circle round, and have fresh luster reflected back on them by the cross of Christ. And how is this? Because, when the holy God pardons a sinner, He does not look upon the guilty one, -- he looks on Jesus. The nearest type to this manner of pardoning sinners is to be found in the Jewish dispensation. The mercy-seat was placed in the Holy of Holies, where none but the high priest might enter. The cherubim stood above, and how were they employed? Looking in toward the mercy-seat, which they covered with their wings. Does not this throw light on the expression, "Which things the angels desire to look into," even "the mystery of godliness," God manifest in the flesh? The mercy-seat was sprinkled with

blood by the hand of the priest; and what does this remind you of? Ah! my dear friends, were the throne of grace not sprinkled with the atoning blood, it never could be ours to approach it; but it *is* sprinkled – an ever-flowing stream of cleansing laves its golden seat; and when the sinner approaches that throne, God does not look upon the guilty being before him, but on the blood on the mercy-seat. The eye of his justice rests on that blood, and is satisfied; and it is just when the sinner comes into the presence of God, smiting on his breast, and not daring to look up, but looking to the blood on the mercy-seat, to which God is looking also, that his eye meets that of Jehovah, and he is forever reconciled. Is this not simple? It is not clear? Justice finds complete satisfaction in the blood of Christ. Holiness finds complete satisfaction in the blood of Christ. Truth finds it, and purity. And, oh! dear fellow-sinner, why should not you? Do not, however, seek to reverse God's order in this; do not ask "grace to help" before you ask and get "mercy" to pardon. If you ask for grace to make you *better* before you ask for mercy to pardon, you will *not* obtain it – you cannot expect it.

God's gifts are free. He gives not his Holy Spirit to dishonour Christ: he gives it to *glorify* Jesus. Come first for pardon. Come first to the blood of Jesus, and *then* you will receive the Spirit.

Are you all convinced that you *need* mercy? Are you all convinced of sin? Some of you will say, "Of course, we are all sinners." Is *sin*, then, a light thing – a thing of course? Then, my friends, *death* is a thing of course – *judgment* is a thing of course – *hell* is a thing of course. But this is not the view which many take of it. They seem to think, that as sin is a thing of course, therefore *pardon* is a thing of course. Is it so? Ah! "the soul that sinneth *it shall die*;" and who shall revoke the decree? "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Have you offended? Have you ever lived for a day without loving the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind? If you have YOU ARE GUILTY. Let conscience do her work. She accuses you – she drags you to the bar. Deliver yourself at once, and without reserve, into the hands of justice. It is not yet too late. Now there is mercy – now there is full pardon. Stifle not conviction: if you do, you will soon find yourself before that bar, from which you shall not depart without condemnation, and where you shall hear the decision which is without appeal passed on your guilty souls. Give in, then, give in; you *have* sinned, you *are* heavy laden' come and accept freely-offered rest.

But some among you say, "Sin does not oppress me; I have no heavy burden of transgression; I am not guilty." You are not guilty; or rather, you do not feel your guilt. Then woe to you if you do not feel it, for you are not seeking to have the load removed. Poor sinner! if it does not oppress you, it is just because you make no effort to relieve yourself of it; you do not try to disburden yourself; you are quietly submitting to the load; you are laying your neck to the ground, and there you lie unless the Spirit of God awaken and deliver you. You know that though a man have a great stone attached to his neck, still if he lies down and puts his head to the ground, he will not even be aware of it. So with you. You have a burden enormous as an Alp, but you have never sought to move it, and so you are not sensible of its weight, though it be of adamant, and bound to you with chains of iron. But once try to *move* it; try to get free from the bonds of slavery, and you will see it is impossible. You are unconscious of the burden: that makes it all the more dangerous – *that makes it fatal*.

Believe me, then, it were as possible to move all round the globe, attempting to drag one of the Alps after you by the strength of a human arm, as to set out for heaven with a load of unpardoned sin upon you. But you are not required to set out with that load about you. Pardon is offered – peace is offered – grace is offered; not indeed on other terms than God's; but we are here this night as ambassadors from him to a

guilty world – we are here to proclaim to you the gospel – to proclaim it, not to *sell* it – not to take anything for it. You have nothing to give; and we offer it full and free to all – to each, whatever his past character, whatever his crimes. 'Tis as free and as full as sovereign love and grace can make it. An now, are you going away with your load? Surely you dare not. Dear fellow-sinners, we are now before a throne of grace; the rent veil is behind us – the mercy-seat before; come then, let us come together; if you fear that you cannot believe, then think of the pardons which so many have been lately obtaining, and will you not all accept them? Say you are willing to take them at God's hands, and you are freed, pardoned, saved! Once more I press on you to delay no longer. "As ambassadors for God, we beseech you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." *Be ye reconciled!* Do you not yet understand the simplicity of this? I fear many of you are staying away till you are made a little better – a little more fit to be pardoned, and then you think you could approach a throne of grace. What a contradiction! Oh, it would not be a throne of *grace* if such preparations were necessary – it would not be free, unlimited sovereign grace; ah, no! Why will you yet persist in these pride-devised preparations and conditions, which you think are to entitle you to approach the Lord? Oh, would you but learn to look at Christ, and not at yourselves! Do you expect satisfaction from anything within you, sinner? Is it possible you are looking *there* for that which is to make you acceptable to the Holy One? Dear friend, you must renounce yourself before you can be pleasing in the Father's sight. Why, why do you not joyfully accept the permission and invitation to look out of yourselves *altogether*, far beyond to Immanuel, who saves his people from their sins?

Far would we be from advising poor sinners *never* to look inwards. Without this you could not learn how impossible it is for you to do anything for your own salvation. If you are not sure yet whether you are dead in sin or not – *look within!* If you want to see a sentence of awful condemnation passed on all you are and have been – *look within!* If you want to be terrified by sights of corruption – *look within!* Ah! it is by doing this that proud self-satisfied sinners begin to learn that a dreadful malady rages in the soul; that it is contagious, incurable, and ends in the second death. *But why look longer?* Ah, beloved! do you think it helps to cure a sick man, to brood over his malady, and to be so taken up with it that he forgets to send for a physician? Surely not. All he needs is once to know that he has a violet distemper in him – he loses not a moment in meditation on his disease. They were absurd – that were folly. Sick, he calls for the physician, thankful to take everything he prescribes; fearing death, he uses remedies as quickly as he hears of them. Now you should act in this way in regard to your souls.

Has anyone here discovered that he or she is a *sinner* – that you are *guilty* – that you are *condemned* – that you are *lost*? Oh, does not that discovery satisfy you? You are convinced of sin, but is it *to stop here*? Is it not an amazing proof of your desire to trust to something in yourselves, that your very *convictions* are a *comfort* to you? Some people cherish their convictions, cling to their convictions, get attached to their convictions; and *there they stop*. Ah! is one look of your heart not enough? You have been convinced of sin – happy for you that you have been so; but surely you must see that conviction is only a blessed step when it ends in conversion; when it is the first on the path that leads to Jesus. Now that you are convinced of sin, do not stop there! Have you seen your vileness, your wretchedness and misery? then come at once. The new and living way is the only way of approach now. Blessed be God, 'tis paved with the righteousness of Jehovah-Jesus, "the way, the truth, and the life." Approaching, then, by this new and living way, consecrated by the Holy One himself, coming *in* Christ and *by* Christ to the Father, look to the blood on the mercy-seat, and let your hearts be filled with love, and your lips with praise. Can you not love? Look to Immanuel on the cross and in the garden, and your heart will melt ere long – looking there you will be saved, and looking you *must love*.

Why are you not *all* to be saved? Why is *one* to leave this house to-night with his burden of sin, when he may *now* have it removed? You came here Satan's bondsmen, will you not go forth the freemen of the Lord Immanuel? You came in clothed with filthy garments. Believe, and you shall go forth in the white robes of the Lamb's imputed righteousness! You *may* leave this place the sons of God – heirs of glory, pardoned, saved. And will you not? God out as you came in *you cannot*, for if you reject Christ you are more guilty than before. But then you *need* not do this, nor again go away without Christ, and in him you may have all the blessings of complete redemption, if you will – *if you will*. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may *now* obtain mercy, and find grace to help in this our time of need.

## I.

Sound, sound the truth abroad,  
 Bear ye the Word of God  
 Through the wide world;  
 Tell what our Lord has done,  
 Tell how the day is won,  
 And from his lofty throne  
 Satan is hurled.

## II.

Far over sea and land,  
 ('Tis our Lord's own command,)  
 Bear ye his name;  
 Bear it to ev'ry shore,  
 Regions unknown explore,  
 Eter at ev'ry door, --  
 Silence is shame.

## III.

Spped on the wings of love,  
 Jesus, who reigns above,  
 Bids us to fly;  
 They who his message bear  
 Should neither doubt nor fear,  
 He will their friend appear,  
 He will be night.

## IV.

When on the mighty deep,  
 He will their spirits keep  
 Stay'd on his word;  
 When in a foreign land,  
 No other friend at hand,  
 Jesus will by them stand,  
 Jesus their Lord.

## V.

Ye who, forsaking all,  
 At your loved Master's call,  
 Comforts resign;  
 Soon will your work be done,

Soon will the prize be won,  
Brighter than yonder sun  
Then shall ye shine.  
AIR.,--National Anthem.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 18

### NOTES OF ADDRESSES

1869

#### PREFACE

It is no longer the ocean that separates us from WILLIAM BURNS. His last utterance in the comfortless little inn of New-chwang, "THINE IS THE KINGDOM, THE POWER, AND THE GLORY, forever AND EVER, AMEN," he repeats now in heaven at his Master's feet.

During the twenty years which he spent in China, nothing was more eagerly greeted by the eyes of the few friends, with whom he had time to correspond, than the sight, at considerable intervals, on the morning of mail day, of a letter from his hand. His consecration to the Master was so rare and so complete, during the years of his great work as an evangelist at home, that the sight of his handwriting reminded one to the last, that there are some who do illustrate the word, *Man's chief end is to glorify God*. The handwriting was unchanged by so many years constant use of his adopted and much-loved hieroglyphic, and the signature of his last letters was exactly that which he used to affix in his youth, to the tracts he gave to anxious inquirers, accompanied with the assurance of his interest and prayers.

In one of his letters he expressed gratitude for our having preserved and sought to circulate portions of his addresses. (A former series of "Addresses by the Rev. William C. Burns, from a Hearer's Notes," was published ten years ago. [1858]) He felt it to be "supplying his lack of service" to his own countrymen. It is a privilege now, by publishing a few of these addresses in a collected form, to keep his words from falling to the ground. It was more his habit to study his *subject* beforehand, than to compose his *sermon*, and his writing style must not be judged of, by the notes of *extempore* speaking taken at the time without his knowledge. Yet these addresses, whatever they may have lost in their present form, are faithful memorials of days of awakening. Many will value them for their plain-spoken earnestness; and some will recognize in them the appeal of power – the arrow which the Lord sent home to bring them to the feet of Jesus.

Some of them are longer, because the speaker seemed compelled to press again and again on the vast audiences, assembled from great distances, the message of his Master. A few are short, having been compressed into the minutes which, in those days, working men could snatch, even during a snow-storm, from the breakfast-hour, to gather in the house of God around the open Bible. To how many a shop, or anvil, or clerk's desk, or attic, was then carried the manna portion, to be fed on there with joy, the Day will declare.

The reader will bear in mind that such was the desire to hear the word preached during the period when most of these addresses were delivered, that nine to twelve services were often held weekly. Extempore preaching alone could have adapted itself to embrace all the wants of the time.

The characteristics of the work of grace during the years 1839 to 1841, were thus noticed in an address from Mr. Burns' own pen, bearing date

September 1, 1841: - -

“Perhaps you have heard of the wonderful things which the great God has been doing for us in Scotland. The servants of Satan have reviled God’s blessed work; and I wish to tell you something of the truth about it. You know that many people come from the church the same as they went to it; the Word does not touch their consciences, and they remain under the power of sin and Satan, of death and hell! This used to be very much the way among us until lately; but the God of love has visited us, and poured out his life-giving Spirit upon the dead souls of men. In some places you might see the solemn sight of hundreds weeping for their sins, and seeking to give up their hearts to Jesus. And, ah! what a sweet change has taken place on many! The high looks of the proud have been brought down; dead formalists have become living Christians; worshippers of Mammon have been changed into lovers of God; the blasphemous tongues of the profane have been made to sing God’s praise; drunkards have cast from them the cup of devils, and have taken the cup of salvation; unclean persons, who used to be the slaves of lust, the drudges of the devil, the very dregs of humankind, are not sitting at the feet of Jesus; and some, who were ringleaders in every form of sin, are now bold and open, and unflinching in the service of Christ, even as they once were shameless, brazen-faced, and steel-hearted in the service of the wicked One. Many, who formerly were dead in sin, are now living in the grace of Jesus, in the love of God, in the communion of the Spirit, and in the hope of heaven!”

At the present time, when many are stirred up to lay hold on the God of Pentecost, there is a special interest and pleasure in looking back to those days of his right hand, -- days which, during succeeding times of deadness, it became almost saddening to recall.

The instruments then employed were ever made to feel, that the entire power which accompanied the word resided in God the Holy Ghost, honoured as the living Jehovah, specially addressed in believing prayer, and shed forth in glorious power. Mr. Burns was only in his twenty-fifth year in 1839-1840, and did indeed ascribe all the glory of the effects of his preaching to God alone. The written word was magnified. Sometimes inquirers would tell that what had been used to awaken them was the scripture read or the psalm sung. The sanctuary was felt to be the house of God indeed. Reasons and excuses for absence, at other times insurmountable, how quickly they gave way! Daily labour was got over in time; and through the winter dark, or by the moonlight on the snow, eager hundreds were pressing to its gates, some still like burdened CHRISTIANS, others rejoicing in the Saviour newly found, and careless ones, who came from curiosity alone, had to sit and think, silent and still, for an hour in the crowd, till the service began. That solemn stillness was often followed by such requests for prayer as those which have become so common now, -- believers asking prayer for unconverted relatives, and awakened sinners asking it for themselves.

And when summer saw the services transferred to country and remote highland districts, like scenes were witnessed, like work was done. Not in churches, for these would have contained but a small portion of the listeners, but on the mountain side the gathered thousands worshipped. One ferryboat on one occasion had carried eight hundred hearers across the water by breakfast time. From a circuit of twenty miles they came. And the half-reaped harvest fields deserted on bright September afternoons, told that men and women, employers and employed, were intent on the momentous issues of that seed time for eternity.

The world outside called it a passing excitement. Many within the church stood doubtingly aloof, nothing all defects, and saying, “Will it last?” Very faithfully were inquirers themselves warned that everything about the work which had its rise in man only, must pass away; while all that was divine *must* last and outlive the grave, being sealed at death and confirmed at the judgment. The young among them were pointed to the fair blossom of 1840, covering the fruit trees, and asked, were we to come back in autumn and count the ripe apples, how few would they be in comparison of the blossom that cold winds

will nip and blow down?" Or, away among the mountains, "Look at the young seedlings in the thick plantations, and say how many of them will stand in the forest of a hundred years."

But the question, "Did it last?" needs not to be repeated now. Deathbeds have answered it, lives have proved it, its fruits have been carried away and tested on many a distant shore; and the district visitor, going the patient rounds of now nearly thirty years, has discovered, for hopeful converts fallen away, many more, who, unheard of in the day of revival, date impressions back to that time of blessing. A question nearer to the point might be, Does the God of the spirits of all flesh ever draw near to visit a congregation or a community without lasting fruits being produced, without leaving each soul, who comes under the influence or hears the report of it around, either awakened and quickened, or blighted and hardened? "I will be as the dew unto Israel: his branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree and his smell as Lebanon." "They knew not that I healed them." "Master, behold the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away."

Since 1847 Mr. Burns labored among the Chinese, to whom he found free access, even in districts where the protection of treaty did not reach; wearing their own costume, and possessed of several of their dialects, he was free to do the work of a pioneer. God did wondrously, in some places, own the labours of His servant there; but in others, he was made to feel how sovereign, in His working, is the life-giving Spirit, and urgently to call on believers, for earnest and persevering prayer.

May it please the Master, a second time to bless these comments on His own Word, and to stir up believers to remember before God the devoted missionaries who still in China stand face to face with an almost unbroken heathenism! May it not be humbly hoped that some who read this little volume, may be led to inquire how far they can aid in the work of that mission field, and by persevering, true payer, hasten on the day when the Stone cut out without hands, the Corner Stone of Israel, shall smite the image of China's idolatry?

At a meeting of the China Mission, recently held in Edinburgh, the following tribute to Mr. Burns was paid by the Rev. James Johnston, formerly his fellow-labourer in China: --

"From the nature of the work for which he was specially qualified, and to which he entirely gave himself, -- that of a pioneer or Evangelist, -- he could not expect to reap the fruits himself. His work was to break up the ground and sow the seed, not to gather the harvest. No man in this age, so far as we know, has so entirely devoted himself to this self-denying work.

"Again and again has our departed brother labored for years in some dark and unpromising field, and just when the first streak of dawn and unpromising field, and just when the first streak of dawn appeared on the horizon, he would leave another to enjoy the glorious sun-rise, while he buried himself in some other region sunk in heathen darkness. Again and again have we seen him thus, in prayers and tears, sowing the precious seed, and as soon as he saw the green shoots appear above the dark soil, he would leave to others the arduous yet happy task of reaping the harvest, and begin his appointed work in breaking up the fallow ground. The full extent of his great life-work will not be known until that day, when 'he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together.'

"The faith and patience of this devoted servant of God is an example to the Church, and to every labourer in the Lord's vineyard, teaching us not to live upon the stimulus of a present success, even in the conversion of souls. No man enjoyed so great success as he did, or thirsted for the salvation of sinners with more

intense longing that he, yet have we seen him labouring for seven years, according to his own testimony, without seeing one soul brought to Christ; yet labouring on only with increased diligence and prayer, until he saw, as he shortly did, the awakening at Peh-Chuia, which reminded him of Kilsyth. His influence in this way has been extended over a larger field; and with his strongly-marked individuality, he left the impress of his character and piety wherever he went. Missionaries felt it, and blessed God for even a casual acquaintance with William Burns; converts felt it, and have been heard to say, that they got their idea of what the Saviour was on earth, from the holy calm, and warm love, and earnest zeal of Mr. Burns' walk with God. We bow to our Father's will in his removal on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April.

"His grave stands on the borders of the great kingdom of Manchuria, the advanced post of Christian conquests, beyond the northern limits of China, with the following inscription, in his own words: --

To the Memory  
Of the  
REV. WM. C. BURNS. A.M.,  
MISSIONARY TO THE CHINESE  
FROM THE  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN ENGLAND  
BORN AT DUN, SCOTLAND, APRIL 1<sup>ST</sup>, 1815.  
ARRIVED IN CHINA, NOVEMBER 1847.  
DIED AT PORT OF NEW-CHWANG, APRIL 4<sup>TH</sup>, 1868.  
*II. Corinthians: V. Chap.*

"The little mound casts its shadow over many lands; for where is Burns not loved and mourned? But his life is the Church's legacy, and loudly calls to self-sacrifice and devotion to the cause of Christ, and especially the cause of missions. His indomitable spirit beckons us to the field of conflict and of victory, while his four last converts, the conquest of his death-bed, stand like sentinels by his grave, and long for the advance of the Church's hosts.  
Bonskeid, *December 1868.*

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER 1

### PRESSING INTO THE KINGDOM

(Preached in St. Leonard's Church, Perth, in the midst of the Remarkable Work of the Lord there, March 30, 1840.)

"THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS PREACHED, AND EVERY MAN PRESSETH INTO IT." – Luke 16:16.

Without detaining you by noticing a number of things to which it would be necessary to allude, in order to shew the exact meaning of the expression, *Kingdom of God*, as considered with reference to what precedes or follows it in the passage, we shall consider the words of the text in their simple meaning.

First, what is meant by the kingdom of God? And second, what is meant by pressing into it? The kingdom of God is preached when Christ is preached, and then only. Wherever Jesus Christ is shewn to be the Son of God with power, to be an all-sufficient Saviour, a glorious Redeemer: wherever he is preached as

Christ crucified, as Lord over all, as King: wherever His authority is supremely acknowledged, wherever He is adored as a Sovereign ruler, His kingdom is preached, and men are invited to enter it.

When the kingdom of God is preached to *you*, you are invited to subject yourselves to Christ's authority, and to become faithful and devoted servants of Emmanuel.

And now, what is meant by *pressing into* the kingdom? Let us seek to have a simple, but exact and spiritual view of this. Some persons find that their faith is darkened, and that difficulties are raised to their believing in Christ by the figures which are often employed. They say, "I know I am to press into the kingdom, but what does this mean? I see no open door before me." My dear friends, it simply means that, overcome by a sense of your own weakness, and feeling that you cannot have any hope of salvation from yourself, nor from any other, you throw yourself entirely on Christ's power, acknowledging yourself a willing subject of the King of kings.

You know that it is to press into any place where there is a great crowd; you do not stand listless at the door, you push your way, you press in and you enter. So it is with the kingdom of Christ; you see and feel that you must be in or you are lost, out forever, banished to eternal darkness and torment, and therefore you press, you fight, till divine grace has subdued your proud spirit, and made you to enter into Christ's kingdom by Christ, the way, the truth, the life.

We shall now mention one or two things which ever distinguish this pressing into the kingdom. First, there is *a supreme desire* to enter. The Christian has many pursuits in which he must engage; but when a man begins to feel the necessity of being into the kingdom, these at once take a subordinate place, and become of very second-rate importance. His choice is to be saved, to enter, and to belong to Christ.

Many make this a desire among other desires. They say, "Well, we wish to be saved, we wish to get an interest in Christ;" but then that is not their *only* wish. They wish to be rich and great, to be esteemed and honoured, and – they wish to have Christ too. Dear friends that will not do. No, if you wish to have all these things, and after them to have Christ, or if you wish to have Christ just in the same proportion, or even still, if you wish to have Christ as a first object, but *must* have these other things along with Him, Christ will never be yours. You must either desire to have Christ before all, above all, alone, or you must be contented to do without Him altogether. Now I am sure there are some of you, who, if you could get a half Christ, Christ's merits, and a few of your own along with them; if Christ would but take a middle place, would consent to reign with other kings, to divide the government with Satan, with riches, with man's good opinion, or even with your own, *you would have Him*, and gladly give Him a second, or even an equal place in your heart with the world and vanity. Christ will not consent to this. He must be *all* or *nothing*: -- king, sovereign, ruler, governor, or absent altogether. Now, what is He to you? Is He on the throne? or only on the footstool? This is a question which may shew you whether you are really pressing in.

Would you be contented to give you all for Christ, and take Him alone? If possessing Him were to deprive you of all have, and all you hope for, would you bid adieu to that *all* – and to the Christian it is a *little* all – and say, "Come, Lord Jesus Thine be the kingdom?" if not, it is because you know nothing of Christ, His character, His person, or His love. He is nothing to you. The believer, who has begun to learn the value of Christ, does not find difficulty in determining whether to give up one thing, or two things, or many things for Christ, and whether he should still be repaid for so doing. He is not always hesitating and calculating whether Christ will make this or that loss to him. He has Christ, thrice blessed portion, and in Him, all. He would not seek earthly riches or honours, even if he could get them. All he has, all he is, is

already Christ's – by purchase – by free surrender – and by wonderful, glorious exchange. All that Christ has is his too; he is a joint-heir with Christ. He gets all *from* heaven, returns all to heaven, and the heart that is already at home there, has not much time for earthly pleasure.

We do not mean to say that the Christian refuses this world's comforts or enjoyments when they come in his way. They, too, are sweet, and why? Because they are a proof of Christ's goodness, love, and tender care. But we do say that the believer will not be very anxious or careful about them; nor will he have either pleasures or profits which Christ does not give him. He will not receive gains in a business unlawful, or in ways disapproved by the Lord. He asks for nothing, but *what Thou wilt*; can enjoy nothing, but what he can enjoy in Christ, because without Christ it were no enjoyment to him. Does he receive any temporal gift, -- an estate for instance – he does not rashly give it up, to takes it back to Christ, and says, Thou has sent this, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do with it?

The difference between his unconverted and converted states lies here. Before, he considered himself master of all he possessed. "I have earned this; I have labored for it, I have got it, and *it is mine*, for my gratification, my amusement, my use." But now, he is changed from a master into a servant, he looks on himself merely as a steward, who has received so much, whether it be fortune, time, or talents, from Christ, to be used for His glory; and his only wish is to be a faithful, prudent steward, serving Christ in all things. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee?"

And now, no false friend, no open enemy, neither a lying devil, nor a hostile world, neither terror without, nor treachery within, shall be able to take Christ out of your heart, nor to prevent your entrance into the celestial city.

Choose Him alone. This is what Enoch did, what David did, for he desired none in heaven but Him, what Peter did, for he said, Lord to whom shall we go? What every saint is joyfully constrained by his love to do. Some would take Christ if they might even be allowed to choose the time when he should be their all, if they might do it in the church and the closet, but not in the world. But if you are His, you will choose Christ to-night, Christ to-morrow, Christ forever; Christ in the closet, and in the family; Christ in the shop, and in the market; Christ in the church and in the world; Christ when you are with the godly; Christ when with the ungodly and profane; Christ in the hour of prosperity, Christ in the hour of adversity; Christ, when the world smiles, and says, as it sometimes seems to do, that *Christ is good*; and Christ when the world frowns, and says that Christians are mad, and that Christ hath a devil. You will take Christ with you to the humble cottage, and to the lordly mansion; Christ among your poor and despised fellow-sinners; Christ with the nobles of the land; Christ in the drawing-room – I do not say Christ in the ballroom, for if you go there, you must leave Christ behind – I do not say Christ in the theatre, for you must get Satan to go with you there – but Christ in life, Christ in death, Christ in the day of judgment, and then – ineffably glorious hope – Christ to all eternity.

We have tried to shew you that to have Jesus for a portion is the believer's ruling desire. Secondly, a *firm resolution* is necessary to the attainment of this, as well as of every other great object. When a crowd is rushing into this church, for instance, and you stand aloof, and make no exertion, you must remain without. But you try to be first, you force your way, you succeed, and secure a place. If you would enter by the golden gate of mercy, you must *resolve* to enter, and not to be disappointed. Some say, "I wish to get in but I need not go to the entrance, it is closed up, *there* is one barrier, *there* is another impassable." Now, such a wavering, doubting soul as that will never enter: *that* is not pressing into the kingdom. No obstacle must

terrify you, or drive you back. They are not of *His* creating whose it is to open, and no man shutteth. Submit to Jehovah Jesus; will He disappoint you? No, He will direct your way, support, strengthen, and comfort you. He will guide you through the narrow straits of repentance into the open sea of faith, with its wide-spread views, its gilded distance, and its boundless prospects. Nor *there* will He leave you, but traversing its waters along with you, and pointing your course to yonder brilliant coast; He will at last bring your little bark into the haven of eternal rest.

Young believer! that sea is not always smooth; the sky overcasts, and though your course may be for a time through the still cool waters, difficulties will come at last. There are sacrifices to be made, trials to be suffered – sometimes agonies to be endured, for it thy hand offend thee cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. If thy right hand causes to offend, it must be sacrificed, great as the sacrifice may be. Here the religion of many is over, they never get this length. Many would take Christ if they might have Him without His cross. Someone says, “I would accept of Christ, but my business is not a lawful one, so I cannot come;” that man’s business is the right hand which he ought to cut off, but will not. Another says, “I would press into the kingdom, but if I were to become a Christian, I should lose all my employment and my customers.” “If I were to begin to be religious, I should become bankrupt,” as a man said once to me. No man ever became bankrupt by believing in Christ. Such as these have a right hand – a right foot – that they cannot sacrifice. Another says, “I have married a wife, she will not come with me, and I will not go without her.” And how many a wife says, “I would go, but my husband will not; I must wait for him.”

You see, then, that *all* is to be surrendered for Christ. If any of you who are servants, find it impossible to serve God in the situation you occupy, you should even leave your places to follow him. Specially, any business that is unlawful, or where your gains are got by doubtful means, is to be given up – forsaken; and the dearer such a *right hand* – such an idol – may be to you, the more certainly necessary is it to cut it off. There are some who go a considerable length in this, and yet fall short. They will part with the left hand, but “we *cannot* spare the right,” they say. And so you are to be contented with the loss of Christ, to keep a right hand, a right foot. Oh! what madness. We don’t *deny* that the process is painful – agonizing sometimes. Those who have never had to suffer it can scarce be Christians. Who will say it is not painful to give up a darling lust? to lay down at Emmanuel’s cross a long-cherished idol, which has insensibly remained, perhaps when we thought that all our idols had been cut off and died at his feet? To give up the loved society of one who has been ever dear and affectionate, and has stood by us in distress – to give up the favourite companion of early youth, or the friend of riper years, because that companion and that friend refuse to be the friends of Jesus! Trials like these, and there are trials harder still, must be borne, if we would follow Christ.

To break off with a rude shock from a vicious habit strengthened by years’ continuance, to crush a passion which has come to rule us with an iron hand, to be roused by such a sense of coming vengeance amid our follies and our crimes, as tears us from our tyrant’s grasp – feeling that Christ can never come to rule in the same bosom, then to begin to oppose them, to check them, struggle with them, grapple for the mastery, -- trials like these are fearful to flesh and blood, -- flesh and blood *alone* never bore them. There we feel our weakness, and there it is that we learn to take *all* our strength from the arm on which we lean; encouraged by his promise, “My grace is sufficient for thee.”

And those only, who have made the proof, have the least idea of the consolations imparted by Christ to His obedient followers. The bitter sacrifice yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Sweet, *sweet*, SWEET

to make a sacrifice for JESUS! High, pure, lasting enjoyment flows in. The bitterness soon goes, and nothing remains but a sense of His love, and the peace – passing all understanding, that is attendant on one smile from Emmanuel. Never, never did one of His beloved saints; whom He has purchased with His own blood; undergo the pain of amputating a limb for Him; without also experiencing the abundance of His consolations, and the fullness of His love. The limb is off, the pain will soon be gone; the strength is exhausted by the wound, but Emmanuel comes with the oil of consolation in His hand; he applies the balm of His own eternal love to the afflicted soul, raising it up once more, and putting a new song into its mourning lips, even thanksgiving to our God.

Has He been thus coming near to any of *you*? Who has been cutting off offending members? Who has been exclaiming with Ephraim, “What have I to do any more with idols?” I know some present have, within the last few weeks, or even days; and was it not a hard struggle, was it not severe? It was severe. But, dear brothers and sisters in Jesus, you are still weeping, are the consolations of God small with you? No, no. But keep steadfast, keep steadfast, the battle may be nearer than you think; you are not yet in your Father’s house; Satan is in the bosom still, he once reigned there; Jesus holds his place now; but though unseated, his malice and his rage burn yet the more, and, though a dying, he is not an inactive foe. He will be all the more anxious to distress and torment you because his time with you is short, and because he has lost you as his prey. The world, though now it seems to have lost its hold, though it no longer entrances you, though you are no more its slave, the world is what it was before, and all too soon will it intrude into the bosom that is now insensible to its charm and tinsel pleasure.

The flesh is not yet dead, though it is crucified. It struggles, and will struggle on till death is swallowed up of life. The evil heart of unbelief, which so long kept you from Jesus, and the passions which have been calmed for a while, will rise again.

Return now to the last part of the figure employed in the text by which we have been illustrating our subject. The plucking out of a right eye, implies that even the most tender and delicate parts of our being are to be sacrificed. The eye being the beauty of the countenance, and the most precious part of the body, its loss disfigures and deforms; and even among inconsiderate and wicked companions, exposes to derision and contempt. The agony, too, attendant on the extraction of an eye, has perhaps more of torture in it than anything that can be suffered; and yet this expression is not thought too strong. Even those *cruel mocking* which are so much dreaded, are to be patiently endured and even gloried in, for the reproach of Christ is better than all the treasures of Egypt.

He is another distinguishing mark of the true believer. He alone receives courage to quit himself like a man, and to be strong in the Lord. These are fair weather Christians, who are godly among the godly, but whose devotion disappears when they enter a profane or worldly circle. They set out fair for heaven, as they and others think, but the first time the sky lowers, and the black cloud appears, they recoil from the dangers of the passage, and draw back. At a time like this, especially, there are many such; they present a fair outside, and a deceiving attention to the things of heaven. Friends and relations are setting out for heaven, the day is fine, the sea is calm, the sky cloudless, -- they go on board the vessel that is leaving for a distant shore; they admire it, and think they would almost like to go too; but no sooner is the vessel in motion, than they cry, “Put me on shore, put me on shore.” They are landsmen, and they get afraid; miserable turn-coats, two-faced hypocrites, men that hoist different flags, sailing under English colours when they come near an English man-of-war, and raising another flag when the enemy comes in sight. They have a godly face and a profane face, just as it happens to suit; they assume the one whenever they are with Christians, and talk of

sermons and ministers, nay, sometimes talk of Christ; but as soon as the scene changes they have a suitable face for the ungodly, and join in the jeer and the laugh, mocking and scoffing just as others do. How different do some appear to their minister when they meet him, compared with what they are in the family or the work shop?

In conversing with a stranger one day on the subject of religion, he spoke with much apparent feeling about very serious and interesting things. That man is surely a Christian, I thought; he fears God. Soon after I met him in a shop where he was well known, and where he was transacting business. He immediately spoke to me as he had formerly done. When he left the shop, the master of it said to me "Is *that* man serious?" I merely answered, "You should know." "I could not have thought it; he seemed till now to be as careless as others, and not more particular about honest dealing, but ready to take an advantage where he might."

At this point you will discover a true believer. He does not change his colours. He is the soldier of Christ everywhere. He carries his high character with him, and sustains it all through. When circumstances oblige him to mix with the unconverted devotees to this world's pleasure, his bearing is the same or even more marked than when among his fellow-Christians. A light word kindles his indignation though he be silent. If the reproach be on the name of his ever dear and glorious Redeemer, he takes no part, he is like an individual unelectricified in a room where all the rest of the party are so. He hasn't got hold of the *chain*. The scoffing or ill-natured *hit* stops at *him*, -- he does not catch the smile that flies round the circle when the name of *saint* is mentioned with a sneer. All his wish is to be a saint. It matter not to him what men say or think, if only he be doing, from love to Jesus, what he believes Jesus would command him to do, so that none can be long near him without perceiving the despised mark of the Lamb. You may sometimes read on his very brow the stamp which the seal of the Spirit has impressed there. Whether does he pray most, think you, when he is going to visit at a house where Christ is honoured, or when he must go to one where the fashionable votaries of this world dwell? Ah! it will be the latter. He will not try how far he can *alter his style* among them; his *look* will speak when his word cannot, for he is tender of his Saviour's honour among unbelieving men. He watches for an opportunity to bear witness to Jesus; he would rather bear all the mocking that a *world* could heap on him than let a breath of contempt fall upon his Lord, remembering that *him* will the King of kings confess before his Father and the hosts of heaven.

Dear fellow-believer, who has lately come to know him, the tempter will assail you, in an unguarded hour he will be upon you, and you will deny Christ almost before you are aware, if you do not make up your mind to pluck out this right eye, and so to *press* into the kingdom.

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER 2

### COVENANT MERCY

(April 6, 1840, a Farewell Address given in St. Leonard's Church, to the Converts gathered in during the Revival in Perth, after three months labour there, on his leaving for Aberdeen.)

"For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." -- Isaiah 54:10

This promise is threefold. God has given to His church love and peace. These blessings come to the saints through God's covenant. These blessings and that covenant an everlasting. Jehovah confers on his people mercy, peace, and kindness. He shews mercy, free, sovereign, unconditional, not connected in any degree with what he finds in the sinner, but flowing from God alone, being His prerogative, peculiar to himself. He sheweth mercy; the Lord is merciful and gracious. How much is contained in that golden sound, Mercy, mercy!

Believer, what does it bring to your mind to hear of mercy? Ah! it is sweet when you are weighed down with a sense of guilt and sin – when you see yourself all but lost, to hear of mercy. You feel how deeply you need it, that if there were no mercy with Jehovah, you must perish. You found out your need of mercy when first you saw your sin to be transgression against an infinitely holy God. When the sinner begins to learn something of what Jehovah is, somewhat of the perfections of His glorious nature and character, he is overwhelmed, he cannot conceive any possibility of salvation; such is the distance separating the holy Creator from an offending and unholy creature.

If in this world we were, but for an instant, to see sin as God sees it, we should die, the sight would drink up our spirits; but this is not permitted, sin is not yet unveiled to the eye of the believer, his capacities are not made to sustain the revelation of the glory of God. He sees mercy now, but in a dim light. Ah! but in heaven *how* glorious, *how* amazing, *how* overpowering! It will be the anthem of the redeemed, "There is mercy with God." New harps they will need for this song, every new. You know little of sin, you that have seen it most. You have seen but the smallest part of it, and God sees it all, and looks at it with an infinitely holy eye, from the least to the greatest of it. It seems wonderful to you to have pardoning mercy extended to your heinous sins, and the least of them looks heinous be held by the light of God's word. Ah! what will you think of mercy when you reach the blessed shore of heaven!

Unbeliever! Your eye rests on the sin you committed last. It looks blackest. But God sees each offence, since ever you began to sin, in its full enormity; his eye sees no difference, time does not change guilt in his sight. The sin of last year is as vivid as the one you are now committing. Old man! The sins of sixty years are all as vividly before God as those of twenty, and everyone of them seems to him more black than any sin was ever seen to be by man. You are a vile object in his sight. One sin, and another, and another, on to millions, with their aggravations, rise in the dark catalogue of crime in God's reckoning book against you. Believer, such a catalogue once stood there against you, but there was mercy with God. On that word your hopes are built. Do you not see the glorious sovereignty of his mercy, full, because blotting out all sin, even the greatest; free, because unmerited, unpurchased, unconditional, and offered to all.

It is sad to hear how some of God's people speak of mercy. From the way in which God is generally pleased to bring them to Himself, they seem to think that their convictions and repentance must come first, and then afterwards the pardon of God through Christ is given, thus putting their tears and humiliation as almost a condition appointed by God.

This will never give you an exalted idea of the sovereignty of God's mercy in Christ; oh never! Dear believers, brethren in Christ, forget *yourselves* altogether: look beyond yourselves. Look back as far as you can into eternity, and hear Jehovah by an act of grace proclaiming your pardon, choosing you, in spite of everything in yourself, as an object of mercy. He waited not to pardon you, till He saw you beginning to melt at the thought of His love, or to repent at the thought of your sins. He pardons like a God. He loved you while you were still in your sins, and set His heart to deliver you. He loves you now, and He *will* deliver you. He loved you long before the foundations of the world were laid, and He will love you on. Had it depended in the slightest degree on you, where had you been now? Not saved. He loved us just because he loved us. He shewed us mercy because He *will* have mercy.

There are different ways of shewing mercy. You may do it in a kind way, or you may do it as a tyrant would to a slave. Now, the Lord's loving kindness is gloriously manifested in His mercy. His children do not always trust Him for this: they oftentimes dishonour Him, by accounting Him a hard Master and not a tender Father. Some of you suffered much at the beginning of your course from the fear of condemnation and conviction of sin. You judged the Lord's dealings as harsh and cruel, and you said, "Surely His purposes towards me are not good, He cannot love me, or I should not suffer thus." But what are you thinking of His dealings *now* when you are lifted out of the miry clay and standing on the rock? Are you not singing, "He hath done all things well?" and now you would not wish to have been without any of the suffering you had to endure. He has brought you by a way that you knew not, just that He might reveal to you the more brightly the purposes of His love.

The paths through which we are led seem often crooked, and rough, and dark while we are in them, but when we have come through them, they look at straight and the path will yet be seen to have been the shortest, and safest, and easiest that we could have taken. So shall it appear when we reach heaven. There are many dark providences in the course of God's dealings with His people, which they will never understand in this lower world, but which shall yet draw from them the eternal hallelujah; everyone of them will then lie unfolded to the eye, replete with loving-kindness.

The beautiful figure in the beginning of our text makes all explanations regarding the stability of the covenant unnecessary. Since the flood, these hills have not changed. Immutable, they stood looking down on our fathers' graves, as they soon will look down on ours, seeming to mock at man and his concerns, and to tower over his littleness. But these very mountains will pass away, while the elements are melting with fervent heat. Your souls, believers, will then be entering into the joy of your Lord, standing secure at Emmanuel's side, in the kingdom which cannot be moved. The mountains shall depart, but the covenant of peace shall not remove. It remains immoveable from the nature of the contracting parties. It was the nature of the contracting parties. It was formed between the Father and Jesus the Prince of Peace, whose goings are from everlasting. Doubting believers! you would not be so full of fears if you would think more of this. You vacillate, and change, and waver. The covenant has nothing to do with *you*, you are not one of the contracting parties. All you have to do is to become interested in it, by believing that Emmanuel has satisfied divine justice and reconciled you to God, and then at once to rejoice in the well-ordered covenant.

See what confirms the covenant. It is the authority of God. It is Jehovah's seal. It is, "Thus saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." Is He man that He should lie? How often, believer, do you think of the Lord as if He were one like yourself? supposing that when *you* change Eternal Love fluctuates. Look back and see Him loving you in a past eternity, for no reason but That He set His heart upon you. Look forward and see Him receiving you with glory. Not even sin can change His love to you. Will a believer sin because grace

abounds? When a man comes within an approach to that, it only shews that he has nothing to do with the covenant. But you believers, who would rather die than pierce Emmanuel afresh by sin, to you we say, that the sin you have committed never can have changed the nature of an everlasting covenant: you can never fall away from the covenant if once you have an interest in it. You may fall in the covenant (and in a way to destroy your present peace, and bring down Jehovah's chastening hand), but you never can fall *out* of the covenant.

If sin grieves you, if you forsake it, His kindness shall yet return to you, the covenant of His peace shall not be removed, saith the Lord, who hath mercy on thee. Mercy was needed to predestinate you; mercy to elect and call you; mercy to justify you; mercy to begin the glorious work of sanctification in your soul; and mercy shall open the golden gate of glory. Mercy pardoned your first offence; but for mercy the least of them would have sunk you into hell; and no more than mercy was required to pardon the blackest ever committed by man. How can you lose a part in a covenant whose very pledge and bond is mercy! There is no room in it for a repenting sinner's perdition. Mercy never condemned a man when justice had been satisfied. That no doubts may remain, and as if to prevent the very possibility of fear, it is the LORD WHO *hath mercy* that sends the message to you.

Believer, will you try to live as in sight of that great white throne, and you will rejoice? Why live so far below your privileges as to be cast down or distressed at anything that can befall you here? Anticipate heaven! Look forward, forward. Get on a very few years by faith, bound over them, and you are beyond this sphere or mortality, and earth has passed away. Rise far, far above mist and shadow, cloud and darkness, and get into the ethereal blue sky of God's eternal love. Won't that make you holy? Ah! no man that lives much in heaven, can look on sin without abhorrence.

In parting with you, we have no farewell to say but this: Come to Christ *now*. Let him reign over you. And *you*, dear lambs of the flock, keep *close* to Christ. Ah! you were never so happy before; continue, then, ever where you are, sitting at the feet of Jesus. We *shall* meet at the great white throne; till then you need none other arm around you but Christ's to keep you from falling. You have Christ – you have heaven. Blessed portion of the saints! Thrice happy are you; in due time you shall rise to glory, and so shall you be ever with the Lord.

As His redeemed, you will have a high place there. Angels have but the angel's place. Glorious they are, and they excel in strength; but you will be nearer the throne than cherubim or seraphim, for you are joint-heirs with Christ. What a glorious destiny is your! To His angels he hath given their places, their offices, their beauty, their glory, and they serve Him day and night. To you He has given His Son – even the Only-begotten, the unspeakable gift. It is one of the most glorious of his titles now, that he is *Saviour*; and angels have got a new song unconceived of even in heaven till Jesus died, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," and they hymn the anthem with a wonder ever new. Look up, and sing with the countless multitudes. Their names were once as unworthy and as vile as yours, but they were written from all eternity in blood, in the Lamb's book of life. Will it not be heaven to be with Jesus, who washed your sin out in His own blood? To bask in the golden rays of a sun that has even now risen upon you?

Might we but hope that we should *all* meet on the right hand! We shall *not* all be there. Such a thing never happened yet. Who in this vast assemblage consents to that awful thought? *Who* is saying, "I shall not be there, I shall be on the left hand?" Can it be? "I am determined to go to hell." Not in words, but practically, has it been said by many in this city, who have openly opposed this work of God. Many have

mocked it; some now present have mocked at it all along some here have, perhaps, come to mock again. Will you mock at the day of judgment? Will you mock the Judge? Dear friends, they do not mock in hell. And you mistake much if you think you can hurt God's servants by mocking them, or retard God's work, or keep one penitent out of heaven. The everlasting arm is round each trembling believer; you hurt no one but yourself, and you will feel this bitterly to all eternity.

Some members have been taken out of *your* family, and you are left. You, man, have to say, I am yet a drunkard. You, I am dishonest still. You, I am a Sabbath breaker still. You, I am a swearer still. You, I still am unclean; I have been warned, I have been entreated, I have held out against everything; I am unchanged, I am filthy still.

It will be sad from hell to look back to nights like these, when so many were converted savingly around you, and came under the power of the Spirit of our God. It will be sad to remember *how near* Jesus came, and how you all but touched Him in the passing by – to remember that it was *there* and *then* that you refused His love. To you, dear fellow-sinners, we say no more. We have sought to present to you a law condemning, a God incensed, justice provoked, hell opened, Jesus a Saviour – *and He is waiting now*.

Many there are whom we cannot reach: who put themselves at a distance from the word, and seek to encase themselves in worldliness. There are the proud, the rich, and the great; there are ladies and gentlemen that will not be awakened till judgment, -- impervious to the darts of terror, deaf to the sweet calls of Emmanuel's love. How sad it will be for you, my friends, to find out that your name has been omitted in the Book of Life! Many a viler name than yours will be found in it. There are many now in hell who has not committed half the sins that some now in heaven did. Many a larger and blacker account than yours you will see blotted out with blood. Many whom you have despised as criminals, as profane, you will see passing into glory when you are going away to make your bed in hell.

I was struck to-night on coming here, to find the multitude standing without the locked gates, because the church was full, and as they stood, some wept that they could not enter the sanctuary. I thought of the awful sentence to be pronounced when the *door* is *shut*; and I told them they had got a better sermon to-night than they could have got in church. "Take Christ away with you; the heavenly temple is not yet full."

In parting, dear young believer, remember these lines, --

"Satan trembles when he sees  
The weakest saint upon his knees."

He is never more disappointed than when his temptations drive men to Christ. He, then, is the means of driving a soul to its fortress, its security. Prayer is strength. No Christian can thrive without being much alone with God. None who are so can do otherwise than thrive. Fight by prayer when you are fainting. As to your companionships, try to be most *where you will be nearest to Jesus*. Young Christian, be much in your closet, and He cannot forsake you. Pray for us! Pray for your minister. Some people seem to think it is casting a *slur* on their minister when they are told to pray for him. No godly minister will despise his people's prayers. It was a *slur* that was cast on Paul; and the minister who is too proud to ask the prayers of the saints, is too proud to be honoured in the conversion of souls.

Conclude by singing these verses, --

"Our souls, we know, when He appears,  
Will bear His image bright,

And all His glories full disclosed  
Shall open to our sight.

A hope to great and so divine,  
May trails well endure,  
And purge the soul from sense and sin,  
As Christ himself is pure.”

\*\*\*\*\*

### CHAPTER 3

#### THE LIMIT SET

(The sermon – of which the following are but fragments – was preached while Mr. Burns was a guest at Bonskeid, in the church of Tenandry, which is situated in the birch wood overhanging the Pass of Killiecrankie, on Wednesday evening, September 9, 1840. This service lasted from five o'clock till nine, beginning early for the convenience of those who had long distances to walk home; and continued late because the hearers hung upon the preacher's words until the sun had set and the full moon had arisen. It was a memorable night in the history of many.)

“Again, He limiteth a certain day, saying in David, ‘To-Day,’ After so long a time; as it is said, ‘To-Day’ if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” – Hebrews 4:7.

The words here quoted are, as we see from the text itself, from the book of Psalms. They form part of an exhortation to the church in Israel from Jehovah, the Head of the church, warning them from the fate of their unbelieving and rebellious forefathers, not to abuse His longsuffering, nor to presume upon His grace by hardening their hearts through the deceitful nature and soul-blinding influence of sin.

An offer of mercy had been made to Israel. All the day Jehovah had stretched out his hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people, who had, through unbelief, refused to enter in, having not only killed the prophets and stoned them which were sent unto them, but crucified the Holy and the Just one. And, my dear friends, having persisted in this, they were given over to a reprobate mind, God swearing in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest. Ah! it is a fearful thing when God gives a man over; when, while yet the short day of life in this world lasts, the day of grace has fled, fled forever; when the long-suffering Emmanuel ceases to knock at the door of the heart; when the last striving of His Spirit is over.

My friends, your day of grace has lasted long many are the offers of pardon and reconciliation, many the declarations of grace and mercy, many the proclamations of forgiveness and of peace that have been repeated in your ears – again and again. They have come by ministers, by religious friends, by conscience, -- ay, and by the very Spirit of Jehovah Himself, in the hearing of your outward ear, and in the hearing of your inward heart; and yet, through unbelief, are you sitting here this very evening in your natural state, dead, unpardoned, impenitent, unchanged; exposed to the thunders of vengeance, without a covert.

“Again, He limiteth a certain day.” The idea which these words convey is inexpressibly sweet and comforting in one sense, though truly awful in another. We may just suppose a case. A man is going fast

along a road – a rebel and disobedient. His master says to him, “If you *stop* and *turn*, before you come to such and such a point, I *will* forgive you.” Yet the man refuses, persists, and runs madly on. The kind master, unwilling to see his servant ruined, in his love, as it were, extends the point of turning, stretches the limit, and places the boundary line of life further on.

So it is, beloved friends, with your God. A thousand times has he removed the line which finally excludes from his mercy; every sermon he has extended it; every Sabbath has seen it still distant. And this night again he limiteth a certain day – a day of mercy and pardon, a day of love and grace. But this day may be the last. His long-suffering does know a limitation and an end. It may be that God is saying of you, impenitent sinner, that if to-day you turn not, He shall swear in His wrath you shall never, never enter into his rest. “To-day, after so long a time.” Ah! sinner, can you stand that? Listen how He pleads with you, *after so long a time*. You know it has been long; long has He waited, pleaded and besought you, and yet you are keeping Him at the door of your heart.

“To-day if ye *will* hear His voice.” The word “will,” should be more correctly rendered “shall,” expressing merely the possibility or event of hearing God’s voice, and not, as is often thought, the inclination or willingness to hear it. For instance, thousands never hear God’s voice. These words are therefore used in the sense of, *If ye shall hear*, *If ye shall be permitted* to hear his voice. And, in a sense, these words may be addressed to all of you. Ah! there are many here who have never yet heard God’s voice. Thousands are dying daily who, though a preached gospel has rung in their ears from the cradle to the grave, have never heard in their hearts a single word of God. There is nothing which man is naturally so unwilling to listen to as to the words of God. He will listen with avidity to anything else; he will listen to his friends, listen to tales about his neighbours, listen to evil, and listen to good. Yes, he will come to the church and listen to the minister – few are unwilling to do that; he will come to the courts of Jehovah, saying, “I must go and hear a sermon; I wonder what the minister will say to us to-day.” And so long as the minister tells him something new, so long as he goes on fluently, the man will be quite pleased, and even, perhaps, talk with his family about how the minister pleased him, and what the minister said. Ay, but notice the difference when the minister happens to rehearse in a people’s hearing the words of Jehovah HIMSELF, the reading of *His* word is listened to with a sleepy carelessness that shews the man regards it not; and then, if the minister happens to quote a passage from the word of God, ah! you may see by the man’s expression that it’s a sort of interruption to the thread of the discourse, an uninteresting, though, perhaps, necessary intrusion of what is merely used to shew that a fact is correct or a doctrine true. Friends, don’t your consciences tell you that what we are saying is true? Don’t deny it. You know you feel it; and yet, what madness is this!

Suppose that one of the inmates of the palace of our Queen were observed paying particular attention whenever any of the attendants or household spoke, but whenever the Queen spoke, seemed inattentive and wishing the interruption were over, -- such a thing was never heard of; and yet, Sabbath after Sabbath, and year after year, do you come into the house of God, and listen to his servants, but the Master of the house you will not hear. You will listen to the words of any of his creatures, but when Jehovah speaks, it’s not worth your while to pay the deference you do to a fellow-mortal. His voice may be heard by you to-night; the ears of the deafest sinner in this house may be unstopped, if he will not persist in hardening his heart against the strivings of the Spirit.

“If ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” The heart of man is hard as stone. It cannot be softened by any natural process. It never can be melted. It is possible, so to speak, to break it in pieces, just as by violence you may break any hard substance; but, ah! it won’t melt, it won’t bend, it won’t yield but to

the fire of the love of the gospel. The mere outward hearing of the word won't do it. It may seem to have an effect, but the man does not hear the word as the voice of God. The heart is like the hard anvil; when struck by the hammer there is a great sound made, and some sparks are emitted, but the anvil is hard still. But still, my dear friends, hard as our hearts by nature are, it is possible to make them harder still. *Harden not your hearts*. True, we received them at the first hard as adamant as to any capability of loving God, and their nature is unchangeable but by the power which creates us anew in Christ Jesus; but then there is a second hardening of the heart already hard. There are various means which tend to this: -- as,

First, -- *Indifferent hearing*. We have already spoken of this, but it is so important, that we would seek to impress it still more upon you. It is an awful thing to shut the ear against the voice of God. You do not know how few ways be your opportunities. There may be some before me to whom *this* is the limited period, whose day of hope is quickly sinking down to the night of despair; but to whom Jehovah is still, though for the last time, saying, *Harden not your hearts*. How do you know sinner that He is not saying that to you, and yet, there you are as thoughtless and as unconcerned -- as deaf as ever. It is awful when a soul thus begins to harden under the repeated strivings of the Spirit, and the gracious calls of the gospel. Some of you here are in that state. Fellow-sinner, don't harden your heart against another call. You say, "It is hard already." I believe it well; yes, hard as these rocks under your feet, but don't let it get harder still. Poor sinner, you remember the day when it was not quite so hard, when it could shrink from sin, when you thought it could even melt at the love of Emmanuel? Ah! you say, "I remember when it was not so icy cold, and insensible as it is now. I remember when a father's frown could move me, when a mother's tears could make me weep, and when a mother's prayers could touch my heart. I remember when the sermons which I heard used to impress me and fill me with alarm and sorrow; but now, the minister may say what he likes, it's all one, you'll never make me feel now -- nothing, nothing can soften a hardened sinner's heart." Ah, yes! dear fellow-sinner, *something can*. If God speaks to you, *then* you will feel, and your heart will begin to break, and your eyes begin to weep. Oh! that God would speak home to your conscience. If any of you feel that He is doing so, harden not your hearts.

Again, *Sinning against light* hardens the heart. Persisting in any course of sin, or in any habits of sin, and yielding to temptation when conscience and the Word of God clearly and distinctly point out to you that what you are doing is wrong, opposed to the will of God, and in direct disobedience to His law. Nothing hardens the heart more than sin, felt to sin, and yet persisted and delighted in.

Further, *the rejection of Christ* hardens the heart. Indeed, nothing is so hardening as the rejection of Emmanuel. True, it does not make *His* heart the less full of love to you, or the less willing to receive you. Ah, no! for though you have kept Him waiting long, He is waiting still. But every fresh call to come to Christ, every new offer of mercy that you reject, just adds another link to the chain with which Satan binds you, and makes it the less probable that you will ever be taken from his grasp.

Have I received Christ, or am I rejecting Him? Answer this to yourselves. You say, "Of course I am a Christian; I acknowledge Christ as my Saviour; I have always done it." Friend! you deceive yourself. A faith *of course*, is no faith at all. Have you received Christ, or are you rejecting Him? Perhaps you do not know what the term means. Were you offered Christ on one hand, and everything else on the other, would you take Christ before all, or part with Him and take the world? Do you love Christ or your earthly possessions, your lands, your houses, the best? Which would you part with? Would you part with your dearest companion on earth sooner than give up Christ? Would you part with father, mother, sister, brother, lands,

*all*, rather than part with HIM? If you would, then you have taken Christ for your portion; you are not rejecting Him.

And are you trusting to Christ alone, or to duties half, and half to Christ? If the latter, you are rejecting Christ. Would you like, as I know some would, to have Christ for your Priest, to satisfy divine justice, without having Him for your Prophet and King? If you would, you are rejecting Christ.

But what is it to receive Christ? To be willing to take His righteousness for your whole salvation, to take Him as your Priest to plead for you, your Prophet to instruct and guide you, in the path of His commandments, and your King to govern you, by setting His throne in your heart – *that* is to receive Christ. Are you doing this? Have you ever done it? Are you willing to do it now? Ah! how little value does the poor blind world set on Christ! Is there not something marvelous in the little value sinners have for a Saviour?

If you were told to-night that all the lands that surround your dwelling were your own, would not your heart leap for joy? And yet there is a greater treasure offered you to-night, full and free, not only for the asking, but for the mere will to receive it. Ah, yes! Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, is offered to you. He knocks to-night, He asks you to-night, He asks you to open the door, and says, "If any man hear my voice." See the distinction again made here. *If any man hear MY voice.* everyone in this house hears the preacher's voice declaring in his ear the word of Jesus; but are any hearing his voice in their hearts? Is Jesus speaking to you, beloved friends? If He be, harden not your hearts; for He says, "If any man hear My voice, *and open the door*, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with Me." Who is yielding to Immanuel's still small voice of love? Which of you is saying, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly?" Your heart is ever open to words of kindness – open to the voice of parent and friend – open to the love of a wife, a husband, a child, a brother, a sister; but, oh! it is closed against Immanuel. Why is it so? For what is so natural as that the heart of the creature should be open to the Creator, the heart of the sinner to the Saviour? Are we not to get one soul for Christ from your lovely glen? We would fain get one from these mountains. The scenes you dwell among are lovely scenes. The mountains and the valleys, the rocks that surround you, are beautiful indeed; but there is a sight that is lovelier still. No sight in the universe is half so lovely as the sight of a soul fleeing to Christ – coming with its whole burden of sin, casting it on Him, and taking refuge, and finding safety in the everlasting arms. Open up to Him these sealed hearts; let them go out towards Him, and take Him for your portion now and forever. If you reject Him now, the consequence *may* be, that the Spirit will no longer strive with you; or if, in infinite mercy, the offer be made to you a few times more, and you reject Him still, the consequence *must* be, that you, through unbelief, shall not ever into His rest.

Before parting, we shall repeat in your hearing some of the words of God. Listen for once to God's own voice. There are souls present, who to this night have never once known what it is to listen with solemn awe to Jehovah, -- to that word which is law throughout the universe, law to angel and archangel, to winds, and waves, and storms, aye, and to the very devils in hell.

Believers! Will you now begin to pray for the outpouring of the Spirit, that before we part it may be granted, and that many souls may yet to-night be given to Christ.

The first word of God which we shall repeat, is this – "*Ye must be born again.*" What think ye of this? Man, woman, child, are you *born again*? The words, "*ye must be born again*" *mean something*. What *do* they mean? They are either to be rejected as foolish, vain words, without any meaning whatsoever, or they have a

meaning that some of you wish they had not, an awful meaning; for they say that you are lost. What language could Jehovah use to convince you of that truth, stronger than the language he has used, -- *ye must* be born again. *You must*, old hardened sinner; *you must*, young beginner in sin; *you must*, that are rich; you that are poor; one and all, unless already regenerated. You *must* be born again. Now, what do you say to this? There are hundreds now before me that know nothing of the new birth but the name; many who rejoice that the people in this neighbourhood have too much common sense to join the weak, woman-hearted men, who in other places are weeping for their sins, and joining themselves to their Saviour; many who laugh at conversion, and call it all vain talk, and hate the very name of saint. But there is another class to which we would speak, -- those who expect to be saved, because, say they, "We know we are Christians, and what more would you have?" They are good neighbours, kind to those poorer than themselves; they do their duty, and think it the height of uncharitableness in anyone to hint at their not being Christians. My dear friends, have you ever known a thorough change of heart? No; and yet you are quite at ease. Then yours is truly an awful case. In danger of hell every moment, and yet you are deceived. We know not what to say to you, to convince you that you are an unsaved sinner. Christians! *you* have much to answer for, in the way you help to deceive these poor perishing souls. Ah, yes! in that day, many a one will be crying out to those Christians who have lived near them, and been much with them, without ever warning them of their danger; many a poor lost soul, believer, will be crying out to *you*, "Why did you not warn me? *You* knew what my end was to be, and I didn't know it, and yet you never told me. Why did you let me rest before you had persuaded me, or driven me to flee to Christ for shelter from this storm of wrath?" We cannot bear to think of the multitudes who are daily settling down, at peace and sure of heaven, without a single warning word from Christians. Believe me, friends, there is nothing so fatal to a poor soul as, while unregenerate, *to be set down as a Christian*, -- above all, to be acknowledged as such *by* Christians.

Let no man's opinion be your warrant for heaven. Let your only warrant be a warrant taken from the clear declarations of the Word of God. One of the plainest of these is *ye must* be born again. How little man will be satisfied with in a fellow-creature! A man happens to be stamped a Christian at some period of life; he at least believes that he is one; he goes on measuring and measuring his practice, his conduct, his words, with the short crooked line of a fellow-creature's corrupt example, or the low deficient standard set up by fallen man. He never thinks of trying himself by the measuring line of the sanctuary. You think, perhaps, that ministers are all Christians; and that none require to live so much to Christ as ministers do. Leave that to Rome and the apostasy, -- leave *her* to speak of priest and of pope, but give ye glory to the Lamb, who hath made you all kings and priests to God. There is not a poor saint among you, that may not join with the Redeemer in ascribing eternal praise that *he* or *she* I made a priest to the living God, to offer to Him sacrifice continually in the land where there is no temple. Ah! but *every minister* is not a priest to God. People seem to think entering the church converts a man, -- that he is born again when he enters the sacred office. But it is not educating a man for the ministry, -- it is not sending a man to college, and putting a gown on his back, and putting him into a pulpit, that will make him a Christian. There is many a minister that is not a Christian; many a learned expositor of Jehovah's word, whom that word will never save; and many a one who says to you, "IF YE SHALL HEAR HIS VOICE," who never yet himself heard the voice of God.

Then, by man's way of estimating, there is much less religion needed in a rich man than in a poor man to make him a Christian. Very little, indeed, will do in a marquis, a duke, or earl; a very little *patronage to religion* from one such, sets him down to be a Christian; and how little will do in a landlord! If a landlord sometimes says a word to you about the fear of God, if he is known to read the Bible, and to go to church,

he's a Christian, there's no doubt about it; indeed, to appear at a humble prayer-meeting, would be a thing too much to expect from him, even as a Christian.

This is the ruin of many in the higher ranks. If a young person, for instance, has been the subject of impressions, and sees it right to retire a little from the world, and thus come under the notice a gay companions as one who is going to become a saint, he or she gets the name for a very small outward profession, and is at once marked as a Christian; and, having got the name, is received by Christians at once as such: -- and, though at first the individual may be very doubtful as to his or her *claim* to the reality of the name, a title to it becomes so easily confirmed by the opinions of other Christians, and especially that of Christian ministers, that the individual at length becomes quite at rest on the point of his being *indeed* a Christian; and when that point is once settled in a man's mind, and when the consistent discharge of outward duty appears as its fruit, I can tell you that it is not *man's word* that will convince such as one that he is still a child of wrath. Ah, no! you cannot conceive how a man's heart gets hedged in, and in, and in, and round, and round; while every year that is unstained by the commission of gross iniquity, -- nay, perhaps adorned by a series of actions that present a fair face to the eye of the community, -- sears his deceived heart till it becomes impervious to conviction, and, as it were, sets him beyond the mark or man's arrows. We can't get at you, consistent, sober, honest, amiable professor, hypocrite at ease in Zion! We can't say a word to you to which we shall not get a scriptural answer, everything we say falls on this side of you. "We like that preaching," you say, "it's honest, it's plain; I hope my neighbour took that word to himself, it suited him; that sermon was well fitted to arouse the sleeping." Oh! that we heard you saying, "It suited *me*, it suited *me*." Blessed be God, the most secure among you is not out of the reach of the arrows of the Mighty One. No, sinner, if the omnipotent Spirit of Jehovah shoots at you but one arrow, you will not escape; you will quail, you will fall, and cry for mercy and pardon, -- not for this man, or for that man, but to ME, a sinner.

Do not seek to cover up your sins with the varnish of hypocrisy, -- the fine gloss that pleases men. Men-pleaser! men-followers! the flames of judgment will melt the varnish on your fair faces, and make it run down, till the black hideous deformity be made visible to an astonished universe. Cast it all away now, and come as poor burdened ones, to receive mercy.

Some of you scoff at the call to turn. All we can get from you is, "Not yet, not yet." The oldest among you says "Not yet." Young men say, "Not yet, not yet, not yet; we are too young to be made saints of. Life is short; we may surely take the good of our youth. You would not have us spend our bright, light-hearted days in weeping and mourning; you wouldn't put us yet into the strait-jacket of a Christian's scruples, or oppress us with the weight of the Christian's cross." Dear young friends, there are many of your own age, who could tell you, that when a soul has cast its own yoke on Christ, He makes it feel His yoke easy, His burden light. There are young men and young women in other places, who, at no distant period has taken up that cross, and found that Christ, as He laid it on them, at the same time, as it were, took off the weight of it, by bearing it along with them. And now they go rejoicing all the day in the God of their salvation.

You are not too young to be lost; not too young to fall into the galling, soul and body-binding, chains of Satan's prison-house; not too young to be shut up with devils in the pit; -- so that, just because life is short, I entreat you to join yourselves to Jesus. Stop and think! Stop and tremble!

Hear now another word of God, -- the last to which we shall direct your attention. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be

red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Have you ever believed that? Heard it you have, times without number; but have you received it – have you set to your seal, that God is true when He speaks thus? And when the devil, or your own heart, has tempted you to disbelieve this, by saying that your sins are too many to be pardoned, thus giving God the lie, have you said, "I will abide by this: let God be true, and every man – every oppose of His truth, whether man, or devil, or my own heart – *a liar*."

If you have thought, that in speaking to you this night, we have been wanting in tenderness, believe that it is, so to speak, against our will. All night we could speak on to you of the love of Christ, for it is boundless, fathomless, unsearchable, inexhaustible, an endless theme for saved sinners here, an endless theme for the glorified above; but however hard for us to speak or you to hear, we *must* tell you the whole truth, and *speak it out*. Let this word of the living God make up for all want of tenderness in man: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow." Glorious words to be repeated in a poor sinner's ear! And we would say to you, who may have been led by the Spirit for the first time this night to hear the Word of God – who can no longer hold out against the truth of the former words of God, repeated in your hearing, but who are now convinced of sin; that you must no more harden your hearts at this declaration of love, than you must when, in the light of the Spirit, you bend to the truth, that you must be born again, created anew in Christ Jesus.

No verse in this book seems more fitted to affect the heart of the sin-burdened soul, than this full, unconditional declaration of a free pardon. If terror will not move you, then cry out in wonder, "Who is a God like unto thee that pardoneth?" Nor can you bring out one sin, dear fellow sinner, which may not be completely sunk out of remembrance in the ocean depths of love. You say your sins are many. Listen to Emmanuel's voice – "Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven." They are of crimson dye. That shews you are the very person Jehovah invites to "Come and reason." They rise in mountain height around you; the prospect is darkened; it is the night of death and despair! Then *you* are *the* sinner God invites. A crimson sinner, a scarlet sinner, a black sinner of the darkest shade! God knew that you would be made to feel that; He knew that no less than an invitation, a free welcome, a joyous reception, to a crimson sinner, would suffice to reassure your unbelieving, distrustful heart, and He tells you that your sins shall be made white as snow. In Christ there is merit to justify the most hell-deserving of our race.

If any among you are now so weighed down under a sense of sin, that you cannot look up, we praise God on your behalf. Happy, happy are you! Happy souls that are trying to convince God that your sins are too black to be washed out, that your load is too heavy to be removed; the God of love will convince you that He *can* justify you, and yet be just. Happy souls, that are lying at his footstool, and reasoning thus, "Lord, I cannot ask for mercy. Oh, my sins, my sins!" The God of love will open your eyes, and shew you a fountain flowing on Calvary that can cleanse such as you, -- a robe of righteousness that can cover you, -- *so cover you*, that His own eye shall rest on you with delight, as it rests on the imputed righteousness that shines upon you. Ah, yes! when the Spirit shall have fully convinced you of sin, and fully shewn you the depravity of your own heart, He will convince you of sin, and fully shewn you the depravity of your own heart, He will convince you of righteousness, a righteousness that is divine. We leave with you, mourners, a passage in Isaiah 30:18, "And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for Him. For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; thou shalt weep no more: He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer thee."

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER 4

### I AM DEBTOR

[Preached November 28<sup>th</sup> 1841, in Edinburgh, to the Congregation of the Rev. A. Moody Stuart, then absent in Maderia, whose place Mr. Burns supplied.]

“I AM DEBTOR BOTH TO THE GREEKS, AND TO THE BARBARIANS; BOTH TO THE WISE, AND TO THE UNWISE.” – Romans 1:14.

Paul had a strong desire, as it appears from the context of these words, to convince the Church of Rome of two things; -- first, of his own commission to preach the Gospel; and second, that he had a very warm heart towards themselves – not only that he had a call to preach to them, but a very fervent desire to do this work. “Oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto), that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.” One reason he had already given, -- he longed to impart to the believers there some spiritual gift; to the end they might be established. But although he expresses this desire, and although the work of establishing believers in the faith is one of the chief obligations laid on every ministers of Christ, yet there was no man less willing than Paul to build on another man’s foundation; and, therefore, he greatly desired to have some fruit among the Romans as well as among the other Gentiles. He had got many a bright gem among the heathen, but he earnestly desired some jewels for his crown of glory from among this people. This desire was very natural to one who had such a warm heart towards the cause and kingdom of the Lord Jesus as had the Apostle: his heart had learned to stretch itself forth to embrace, in the bowels of Jesus Christ, the whole lost world.

We behold in Paul, a notable example of zeal for the Master’s cause, -- a very different thing from the zeal of corrupt nature. There *is* such a thing as zeal in the natural heart, and it can sometimes exist in a human cause for a long life, without apparent abatement or declension; but true zeal is quite different from this, and is only to be found in a child of God. It cannot stand, or breathe, or act, or move, far less *endure*, except in so far as Christ Himself breathes, and acts, and moves in the soul. To believers now, it is indeed, a wonderful sight to look back to the grace that Paul got in this respect, and to see how zealous, active, and persevering he was in the Lord’s service. Yet, while looking back to Paul, let us be careful to remember that it is not in ministers alone that this zeal should be found. It is just as much the part and character of *private* Christians to be very jealous for the honour of the Lord of Hosts. There is much zeal in the world, and there is nothing so easy or so pleasing to the natural man as to be zealous in a cause, the glory of which is to revert to himself; so much so, that Christ tells us of the Pharisees, that they would compass sea and land to make one proselyte, who, when gained over, they made twofold more the child of hell than themselves. We have had many a proof of this, in the exertions made since the days of the Pharisees, by men who have had the Pharisees’ spirit. How much will they do – how much will they give – how much sea and land will they compass to make a few proselytes! Even to the Jews, Paul bore witness that they had a zeal of God, though not according to knowledge. Therefore, my dear friends, you must search out your hearts well, and bring your motives to the light; for we know that zeal for the spread of any merely human opinion – or even for the spread of any spiritual truth, which is not of a primary kind – is no evidence that we are of the number of God’s people. A zeal to gain over men to argue on doctrines, -- so dark and incomprehensible, perhaps, that God has seemed to place them on a secondary scale, and to the belief of which He has evidently not called all

men, -- a great and mistaken zeal for the spread of particular doctrines or tenets, or of peculiar views, or of sects, -- does exist, without having grace for the spring of it. But there can be no true zeal, having the glory of God and the salvation of sinners for its only aim, without the grace of God in the soul. Oh! how much would be done for God, if His true servants had as much zeal in His holy cause, as professors often have in the propagation of some peculiar opinion.

We come now to the *mainspring* and reason of all Paul's zeal for the Romans and all other Gentiles. "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also." I AM DEBTOR. What is his meaning here? Does Paul mean by this, that the Gentiles had done anything for him? some services that merited return? No; for though he might have laid claim to much as the due reward of his services, he determined to be chargeable to no man; and he says, "Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more." How was he, then, their debtor? He was so on two grounds. The first of these was *the state in which the Gentiles were*. The second, *Christ's dealings with himself*. He was debt to the Gentiles, because he saw the whole Gentile world lying in sin, -- condemned, depraved, enslaved, carried away captive by the Devil at his will, disobedient, and so under the curse of God. This was one thing that brought Paul under a debt, a vast debt of obligation to them, so that he could say, "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians." How so? Because he was not like Cain, saying, "Am I my brother's keeper?" The Gospel taught him, on the contrary, to love his neighbour as himself. He deeply realized that since the Lord had freely saved *him*, he was bound to be as tender and compassionate for others as of his own soul. How strongly he felt it towards the Jews, these wonderful words bear witness, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

We learn from this, that all Christians are debtors to those who are without Christ; that they should be moved by compassion for a perishing world, to go forward with this as their prevailing motive, that through grace they have become debtors *to all men*. And if this be binding on every follower of Christ, how much more on ministers of the everlasting Gospel? Oh! that they felt it more. If we had but more of the grace of God, we should. When ministers have little grace, they cannot feel this, just because they do not see the danger of others. They see men more in the light of being inhabitants of the world, than as going on with speed to death, to judgment, and to hell. But ah! where a true minister of Christ *does* get a view of the lost condition of mankind, *he cannot get over it*. A heavy weight lies on his bosom, which nothing can remove. He has great desires after the salvation of the soul, and cannot rest without *pulling* sinners out of the fire, while hating the garment spotted with the flesh. Thus he becomes debtor to the whole world.

But the thought of what Christ had done for him, as well as the peculiar way in which He had called him, made Paul feel this. Even at the time of his conversion, the Lord had told him that he was a chosen vessel for this end; making him to know that he was converted for the very purpose of bringing souls to Emmanuel. He got his commission as an ambassador of Christ at the very time he received a pardon. His charge to declare the Gospel of Jesus was written, as it were, on the same parchment with his own pardon -- written on the very charter of his salvation. Every way he was bound and obliged to preach the gospel. Not as a condition of his pardon. God forbid! Ah, no, it was all from love! -- love to God and man. He had nothing left to glory in, the utmost he could ever *do* could not acquit the debt of love. It was laid on him as a solemn duty by the God of salvation, so that he was not only constrained to preach, but to say -- "Woe is me if I

preach not the gospel." This feeling of imperative obligation to declare the truth, did not belong to Paul alone every man that has the grace of God within him feels it. There is no such thing as a monopoly of grace; her language and her charge to all is, "Freely ye have received, freely give." "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let *him that heareth* say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Like the woman of Samaria, who left her water-pot and returned into the city, and told them that were in it to come and see a man who had told her all that ever she did; so we see that when one hears of Christ, he tells another, and brings another, too. A man is *bound* to do it – he cannot *help* it – he cannot contain it within him; a necessity is laid on his spirit, and woe is him if he preach not the gospel.

The apostle says something more than this, -- "I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and the unwise." The meaning of this seems to be, -- if I were free to make a *choice*, I might choose the barbarian or I might choose the Greek, I might choose the wise or the unwise; but Paul says, *I am debtor*, and you know a debtor has no such thing as a choice to make to whom he will pay his debts. The debtor knows this, and the believer feels it just in the same way. "Whatever my calculations may be, or whatever I might myself desire, the question is not, *what would I like*, but *what is my commission*, -- what are the objects of my embassy? It is not *my choice* that I have to do with, but *God's commission*, -- what instructions does it contain?"

We would fain impress this important, solemn truth upon God's children. Believer, do you feel this? Do you know what it is to feel yourself *a debtor to a lost world*? Have you ever thought of what *object* Christ had in view when He brought you to Himself? what design He had in calling you? It was certainly, in the first instance, to save you from perdition, but that was not the only end. It is possible to think too much, or, at least, too exclusively, about your own case. In one sense you cannot do that; woe be to him who seeks to pull the mote out of a brother's eye, when a beam is in his own. But yet a believer must remember that he is called to know Christ, not only *to be safe himself*, but also that he may be a witness for Christ in the world. Ah! think of this; don't be selfish in the matter of salvation, and remember above all, that his is not a thing which you may or may not do, just as you like. Some people do much in this way, just because they have a liking to it, and because the employment suits their taste – and it is a happy thing to feel that; but there is a far more unchangeable foundation for a believer's labour in the Lord's vineyard than that. The man is no longer free to like, or not to like; *he is a debtor now* – a debtor to do it *fully*, and *constantly*, and *unceasingly*, and *devotedly*, whether he likes it or not. Think of it in this light, and then you will be going and hasting to tell your friends, and all whom you know, of these precious things of God. Oh, if this were fully felt, *and felt universally*, how many would be preaching whose mouths are dumb through sloth and idleness! There would be fewer preaching as a trade, and more preaching as *debtors*, forevery believer would then have a voice with which to sound the praises of the most high God.

There is often a very great mistake made in this way among believers when speaking of each other. They say – How much such and such a one does for God and for souls, seeming to think that it is a great grace in that man whereas the truth is, that when once a man becomes a Christian, his ceasing to declare Christ is a very fearful shortcoming in simple duty. The *command* is to preach the gospel, and to cease from it is disobedience. The *obligation* is to preach the gospel and how dare he be silent? A minister is just as guilty if he cease from this, as if he left an earthly debt unpaid. For instance, such an obligation is laid on me as one of Christ's ministers. Now, it is not in the least left to my choice whether or not I am to preach continually the gospel of Christ. The world can claim it – believers can claim it – woe, woe is me if I preach not the

gospel. As to my liking it, that is another thing; if my heart is with the work, then I shall have my reward. See the fulfillment of this when God gives the commandment for it, --

“The Lord Himself did give the word,  
The word abroad did spread;  
Great was the company of them,  
The same who published.”

If we are to be useful in God’s vineyard, we must not take it into our own hands to direct how or where we are to do His work. We must not go upon our own conjectures, but walk by God’s rule. Oh! that we all felt that we had no liberty in this matter. When once a man has given himself to God, he has given away all right to this. It *is* left to a man’s own choice whether he will give his heart to Christ or not; but when he *has* given his heart to Christ, it is *not* left to his own choice whether he will shine as a light in the world or not.

If the believer be a debtor, he is bound continually to seek opportunity to speak to those around him, that he may win them to the Lord. We are very apt to make a choice in this, but, ah! guard against it, if you would get the blessing. Did you never feel, in giving away a tract, or in speaking to anyone, as if you had a choice in the matter? You felt as if in one case you were likely to succeed, and not in the other. This is a great error, and may keep you from doing much good. If such be the duty of all Christians, how careful should elders and teachers be to be instant in the work committed to them.

Believer, have *you* no ungodly companion, whom you might try to bring to the knowledge of God? Remember, you are a debtor, and bound to do it. How many there are who, even if they instruct their children, yet neglect their servants. In how many houses, where godliness is professed, have the servants never had a question directly put to their consciences that might awaken them?

There is fearful guilt lying on the heads of many in this matter; and why is there so great an unwillingness to anything of the kind? Just because if masters were to do this, it would have two effects. They would themselves require to live very consistently – to watch their own actions, and guard their own words and looks in the presence of their servants; and a second effect would be, that there would be many more of the inmates of such households brought to Christ, attracted by holy conversation, and their likeness to Christ. Ah! if parents lived thus holy before their children, there would be another effect; it would be this, that they would not so often go down to the grave leaving unconverted children behind them in the world; or, what is as bad, if they do live, seeing the ruin of sons and daughters given over to vanity and folly. If parents took this more to heart, it would save them many a pang, and many a dark hour.

And neighbours have also a duty belonging to them, too often, alas! forgotten. How few think it necessary to speak a word to an unconverted neighbour, although they know they are guilty in being silent. What excuse do they give? “Oh, that it would be meddling, and interfering with other people’s matters.” And *so it would* be meddling, unless you did it from love to Christ. But, my dear friends, if you were to do it, and to do it in a kind, humble, and gentle way, your neighbours, however bad they might be, would thank you for taking a kind interest in them. Oh, be jealous of your motives for silence, for there seems to be about some Christians so much restraint and coldness, that if a neighbour or acquaintance were willing to receive instruction from them, he could hardly get it.

Were you never ashamed, in some companies, to recognize Christ as your Master? You love to wear the white robe in the closet, or even, perhaps, in the family; but ah! it is far too white to walk with in the world: it would give you too much singularity of appearance there. Said it is, when a believer is ashamed, in any

point, of the Gospel of Christ. Were you never tempted, when giving tracts away, to distribute them among the poor; yet to be disinclined to give them to the rich, thinking them less likely to get good; and did you never, when you had overcome the false shame, find that the *unlikely* person was the only one who got good? Did you never feel as if the devil were tempting you back from those very acts which God has been afterwards pleased most graciously to bless? Oh, we speak from self-experience; for often have we been left, especially in the preaching of the Gospel, to regret having chosen for ourselves. The place to which we may have gone with the greatest repugnance, thinking that, from some circumstance, the probabilities of success were small, has been the very one where God has helped us. It may not be gratifying to our fallen nature to believe it, but what we have to learn is, to do the work of *servants*, and not, as we might choose, the work of *masters*. Let every Christian remember, in conclusion, that *he is a debtor*; -- a debtor to the Lord Jesus Christ; a debtor to a fallen world.

And now, unconverted fellow-sinners, do not these considerations, which we have sought to impress on the minds and bind on the consciences of believers, apply very forcibly, if indirectly, to you? Oh, it is no proof of the love of God towards *you*, that He has made all his true people feel that they are *debtors* to *you*, that they may bring you to the knowledge of Christ Jesus? Many a debt you owe to God, though you never dreamed of trying to pay one of them. And yet He has not only counseled, and besought, and commanded his quickened people to take every means in their power to turn you; but He has laid on them *a woe*, if each one of them do not, in his different sphere and way, preach the Gospel to you. It is not wonderful that, as soon as they believe the Gospel themselves, they cry out under the weight of a fearful responsibility lying on their souls, "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians; both to the wise and to the unwise"?

Every converted soul, from the hour of its conversion, is commissioned to seek and to save that which was lost. Try, then, to praise the Lord for this. Try to wonder at his goodness, that, instead of taking his dear children home, when first they come to Him, He leaves them in a world of enemies, that they may seek for you. He might transplant them at once to their eternal, blessed home with himself in glory, as soon as they had tasted of his love; but He leaves them amid sorrow and trial, in a vale of tears, that they may be ensamples to you, as Christ is to them; nay, more, He lays woe upon them if they preach not the Gospel. Ah! how much easier for them if, as soon as they could call Him FATHER, they were to reach their Father's house, and get the smile of his reconciled countenance -- if, as soon as their souls were lighted at the Spirit's fire, they were allowed to burst forth into the flame of glory, with which redeemed souls shine in the kingdom above, instead of having to shine so dimly, as at best they do, while only lights in a world that knows them not? Yes, but *what would the world be without them?*

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER 5

### THE SECRET PLACE

[Preached in St. Leonard's Church, Perth, February 8, 1942. The visits which Mr. Burns paid to Perth, from time to time, were eagerly looked forward to by the converts there and in the neighbourhood. On each of these occasions, the church was crowded long before the time; careless relatives and acquaintances were led by believers to listen to the voice which had been the means of calling themselves to the feet of Jesus. Such was the affection entertained for Mr. Burns by the many young men of Perth who had been thus blessed, that, on the night preceding his appearance before the Presbytery of Aberdeen, -- the hostile party of which

sought to deprive him of license, -- they spent the night in prayer, that God would overrule all for His glory, and uphold His young servant.]

“Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be over past. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.” Isaiah 26:20-21

Read in connection, Exodus 12:22-23. Notice here, first, A duty enjoined, and also a particular occasion for this duty, arising from that which God is about to do. Such an exhortation is always suitable; but it is specially so at those times when appearances arrive of God’s displeasure being poured out against a people and against a kingdom; and when a nation’s cup of guilt is so filled up to the brim as to be ready to run over.

“Come, my people, enter into thy chambers.” Three views may be taken of this word, one agreeing with that text in Matthew: “And thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet,” etc. And, again, it may be understood in the sense of the passage read from Exodus, which tells of the blood being sprinkled on the posts and the lintels of the doors; and also in the light of those passages which speak of God as a hiding-place: “He shall hide them in the secret of his presence;” etc. These views, however, express the same thing. Entering into the closet is only useful in so far as we enter thereby into the secret of God’s pavilion; and it is only by entering into the secret of God’s pavilion that his people can ever be safe from their enemies.

Now when do we enter into the secret of God’s pavilion? How do we enter there? We come to the Holy God, as to one who is a Spirit, possessed of infinite perfections, the just, true, and gracious God. His presence is called *the Holiest of All*. This expression denotes, perhaps, the nearest possible approach to God.

*How* do we come to Him? By the blood of the covenant; and with all *boldness*.

Now I fear we often think that we can come without this blood; or rather without any deep sense of our *need* of it. But what is the reason of that? Simply that some of us do not know God at all; and that we never yet have discovered either our enmity to God, or God’s contrariety to us.

Now, beloved friends, the very first effect which the knowledge of God has upon a man, is to make him feel that he is full of enmity to God, and that therefore he cannot and dare not come to God. He trembles at the very mention of His name: he never can hear it with joy until he has been sprinkled by the blood. This approach by Christ’s blood is clearly shewn forth in the Passover. The blood on the lintel kept the destroying angel out. This is just a picture of the covenant of grace. Sprinkled with this blood, we can draw near to God. It is not natural to fallen man to come near in this way, and it is only when sin is weakened within us, that we can do so. But when God by his Spirit draws us, *then* we come by his way, and have boldness to enter into the Holiest of All.

But then, remember, that makes us *humble*. No soul that ever entered there remained proud, either toward God or man: and this just belies the approaches to God that some people say they make. If they find it a natural and easy thing to come into the secret of His presence; -- if they find that their nature goes quite along with it, and they can enter there at all times, without difficulty, -- this proves nothing but their ignorance of God.

The effect of the least knowledge of God's blessed perfections is to drive a man to the blood of Christ, and to make him set a high value on that precious blood. *Now* it is that this blood having been applied afresh to the conscience, he comes a poor, rebellious, God-dishonouring sinner, to present on the altar his body and soul a living sacrifice.

Again, when a believer goes into his closet, he requires to have this blood of sprinkling applied to his conscience, and that blood he presents to God. But before he can do this, the enmity must be slain by the power of God's Spirit: and this is one of the tokens of God's eternal covenant with his Son having been ratified, that the believer feels this within him, as one of its glorious fruits.

True, the enmity is only so far slain; it is not yet extinct. Believers know this: and when we come into our closets, do we not often bring with us that awful distance of heart, which dwells even in God's own people? It can never be destroyed while sin remains in them, and it can only be subdued by the sprinkling of the blood of the Lamb.

Now, if there are any present who never have known what enmity is; and who find it quite an easy matter to come before Him in prayer at all times; what does this prove? That they are living near to God? It just proves *this*, that such people know nothing of God.

It is when a man entering into his closet, and from that to the secret place of God, meets for the first time with Him as a righteous God in Christ, and when God at the same time meets with the sinner as a returning and believing child, saying, Abba Father, that the sinner is reconciled to God, and united to the Saviour.

And what follows? Only the same thing again and again till his dying day. The duty of Christ's religion is in fact just this, that the believing sinner cannot help from day to day coming, and coming always newly, and yet always in the same way, to his reconciled God and Father in Christ Jesus.

We have dwelt on this because it is ever to this same daily duty of coming to Himself in Christ, that God directs men, when He is about to call them to trial and suffering, and would prepare them to endure such.

This is the only preparation that a believer needs when days of persecution are at hand, or when they actually arrive. It is not some new, unheard of thing that they need, some new duty they are called to. Ah, no! blessed be God. Or if you call it new, it is only in this sense that it is to be performed with new zeal, with new strength, with new desires of attaining to the enjoyments of God. So that when He says to His people, "Come, my people, enter into thy chambers," he is just calling them to closer communion with Himself; to more frequent coming to the blood of Christ than before, that they may become more lively members of a living Head.

If we do not make this blessed use of communion with God; if we do not use God's perfections as a refuge and a hiding-place, then the closet is useless to us; it must be a first step to the secret of God's presence. This has been the refuge of God's people in every age.

We entreat you to cultivate secret prayer. Oh! seek never to enter the closet without giving into the presence of the Holy One, to have dealings with the Lord God. Taste the sweetness of casting yourself by faith upon the perfections of God as reconciled in the cross, for your only refuge—with Christ's sinless obedience as your covering in his sight.

And it is just by obedience to this very command that every justified sinner is sanctified and prepared for a state of glory, and perfected by degrees into complete conformity to the image of Emmanuel.

Ah, yes! beloved, -- and it is by this very process -- humbling as it is -- that *you*, believer, are to be strengthened, and emboldened, and prepared for times of trial, of suffering, and of death.

And in the day which is coming -- a day of wrath -- a day of trouble and distress -- "a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness;" -- What will you need then? When the cup of a nations' sin is filled up, and when "the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity," -- What will you need? Just what you have been needing all the while: to be hidden in the secret place of the Most High God!

If you wish in that day to be secure, under the covert of your holy, holy, holy God, from the storm of the Lord's anger; then you must much in the Lord's presence. This must become more precious to you than it is, and then you will better understand the duty, as well as the privilege, of entering into your chamber and shutting to the door, until His indignation be over past. Alas! when times of trial come, many die away, and fall back, and are burned by the scorching rays of persecution, just because they never got power to come to God, and take refuge in Him from all danger.

But let us not forget to say, that many who do come into the closet, and who are God's children, enter it and leave it just as they entered, without ever so much as realizing the presence of God.

And there are some believers who, even when they do obtain a blessing, and get a little quickening of soul, leave the closet without seeking more. They go to their chamber, and there get into the secret place, but then, as soon as they have got near to Him, they think they have been peculiarly *blessed*, and leave their chamber, and go back into the world.

Now this is calculated to draw us back again into sin: at least, by this we may lose many glorious advantages that we might otherwise gain over it. It is just by perseverance in prayer that we get the shelter we need.

Fix your minds upon this, that in that Day what will constitute safety will not be the profession of godliness, -- though that be good in itself, -- not zeal for Christ's cause, not *anything* but the being hid in the secret of God, and a more solemn, secret, personal, sensible union, or rather confirming of the union between them and Christ.

We know that in such times many shall be blown away as the chaff, who were not so esteemed before: and the reason will be that they are not acquainted with the Holy God with whom they have to do. Beware, believers, of this; try yourselves by this balance of the sanctuary, that you be not judged of the Lord.

Oh! how is it that His own people have so little perseverance? How is it that when they do enter into their closets to be alone, they are so easily persuaded to return empty away; instead of wrestling with God to pour out His Spirit, they retire from the closet without the answer, and submit to it *as being God's will*.

We must not let the evil deepen, until we sink into a state of backsliding; or make up our minds to bear it, or withdraw to some believer and *talk* about it, and then rest in a hope that we are living, just because we seem to feel that we are dead.

This is a melancholy view of the case; and yet, believer, can you not bear witness to its truth in your inmost conscience, that there have been times when your complaining of deadness to others was a real comfort to yourself, and a sort of satisfactory proof to you that you were really alive unto God?

That is a husky, shallow religion, which leads you to be always going to ministers to complain of your deadness, instead of taking it to God, and lying with it all about you before the mercy-seat; casting your dead soul before Him, doing violence to your sloth, and wrestling humbly, but earnestly – till you find an entrance into His holy presence.

Many are active enough in labour, and try to *do* much for God, as they think, but as to their prayers, where are they? Few indeed, and often dead enough. You go through them as a necessity, but they are soon over. But what does God say? “This is the will of God, even your sanctification.”

That blessed work would advance more rapidly, if, instead of laying the case before a friend or minister, you were rather keeping it to yourselves, and lying at God’s feet till you conquer in His strength, and then contending with the pride which is growing out of the victory.

I read lately, in the life of an eminent servant of God, an incident illustrative of this. He was in the ministry, and one day two of his brethren came from a long distance to see him. To their surprise, he received them coldly, and would scarcely speak to them. When they saw this, they took leave, and as they were going, instead of asking them to remain, he bade them farewell, saying, “You will wonder at the reception you have met with to-day; but I have been two hours this morning seeking access to God, and have not obtained it, and I have much need to be alone.”

This was one of the mighty wrestlers of the last century, who stirred up themselves to lay hold on Jehovah’s strength; like the widow before the unjust judge, taking no denial, but, by their continual importunity, getting power with God, and prevailing.

If you dwelt in His presence you would be pressing forward to gaze on His holy perfections as so many chambers of safety for your souls. You would look on His power as your defense against the enemy. You would hide in His omnipotence, you would repose in His faithfulness, you would live upon His love, and take refuge in His very holiness, made yours in Christ Jesus. Strange refuge this for a guilty sinner! You would not be content with a mere knowledge *about* God. You would know Him as I AM THAT I AM. You would hear a voice say, “Come, my people, come and make my perfections your refuge, and my presence your dwelling-place: make me your fortress, your buckler, your high tower.” You would be found studying His character *as revealed in His Son*; getting fresh discoveries of the glory of Christ, learning the worth of the atoning blood, and the depths of His unchanging love; daily crying out with him of old, “Wash thou me.” And you would be daily going more *out of self* and *into Emmanuel*, “in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace.”

No man, who is a stranger to the fountain opened for sin, can be a Christian. No one who is a stranger to closet religion can be a Christian. No one who is without communion with the living God can be a Christian. No man who is not forsaking every known sin can be a Christian. No man who refuses to discover to be sin, that which God’s Spirit in His word has discovered to be Christ-dishonouring, can be a Christian. No; sin cannot live in the chambers of God’s people, it cannot be carried into the secret of His presence, it cannot be indulged in the holiest of all. Those who are holding their idols to their hearts, and setting up their sins as stumbling blocks before their eyes, are not Christians, but hollow professors and self-deceivers. Where will

they be in a day of trial; when false refuges are wholly swept away, when all that is not hid in the secret of His pavilion, shall be devoured by the overflowing scourge? Friends, when God's wrath shall sweep over every place but *one*, -- and *that* the secret of His own pavilion, -- what will you do *then*, if you are not there, -- if you have not obeyed this invitation, "Come, my people, enter into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be over past?"

In application of this subject, we call upon all of you who are still strangers to God, to believe that His scourge will soon sweep over this earth. Some of you think you can be safe at a distance, without delight in Him, or communion with Him. Fellow-sinners, what will you feel at the day of judgment, when you find yourself so far from God that when you call He will not answer. Because, when He called you, you would not hear, but tried to hide in the darkness of your own mind, in the darkness of a dead world, and a deceitful devil, and so remained a stranger to His love.

Poor formalist! whither will you flee when you see Him face to face? And you who are regarding iniquity in your heart, where will *you* turn to? Forms and ceremonies won't screen you from that tempest. They will not make a break-water to the billows of His wrath. Even the most scriptural and sound belief will be worthless to you, if you have not made it *your own*. What would a mere good creed be at the day of judgment? The visible church will be no covert then. What avails the union of a dead member to a living body, if it never was connected with the life-giving head? A profession will not shelter you from the glance of the eye of fire. You may profess Christ till death, as many have done before you, and never know His gospel as the power of God. You may rank among God's people, you may appear to belong to the sheep, even till the day when the sheep shall be separated from the goats, but no longer; you will be on the left hand then. You may pass for Christians among Christians, among men, and under the eye of ministers. You may pass for such before the session; the elders may add your name to the communion roll. Yes; sad though this may seem, it is too often the case, that men's hypocrisy eludes the eye of ministers, of elders, and of God's own people; and yet they are hypocrites *still*. Have you met with God who is light, and in whom is no darkness at all? Have you met with God through the sprinkling of the blood? Is His Holy Spirit within you, getting the mastery over sin, and the victory over temptation? Or are you cleaving to that which he is urging you, or once urged you, to cast away, even after you had promised, as in the sight of God, to forsake it?

Yes, you *shun* the light lest your deeds be made manifest, while you make a fair show before men, cleaving to sin in your heart, and yet coming to the people of God, and to the ministers of God, and asking concerning Him. Truly you will have a fearful end: for God says of such, that "every one which separateth himself from Me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to inquire of him concerning Me; I the Lord will answer him by Myself; and I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people, and ye shall know that I am the Lord." (Ezekiel 14:7-8)

Not union with the visible church, not a profession of godliness, not a form of religion, not prayers and fastings, not good works, not tears and repentance, will save the soul in the day when earth shall disclose her dead, and shall no more cover her slain. Nothing less than the shelter of Christ's blood, in the secret place of Jehovah, the pavilion of Him who is Almighty, will cover the sinner *then*. But blessed be God, though judgment may overtake us in a false security, and surprise us in an imagined faith, with a hypocrite's hope, it cannot follow us to, or overtake us in, the secret of God's pavilion. Ah! the roaring lion cannot come under that shade; he cannot find you there, feeble believer! Death and hell cannot shoot their arrows within the

veil. The law cannot bring its summons into the holiest of all, nor the avenger of blood pursue. And why? Because it is sprinkled with the blood of Jesus.

Death will soon be here. Since last we met, many, many have been summoned to the bar of judgment, and have got their sentence sealed; and we wait to hear the voice that is to call us to Himself. Not knowing when we may again be permitted to entreat you to return to God, we would the more urgently plead with you to be reconciled to Him now by His son. Are you dealing with the blood of Christ? Do you only make use of it to keep you at a distance from God? or, as some do, to despise God and His law altogether? If so, you have never had it applied to you at all – never. Christ's blood avails nothing except in so far as it brings you near to the Father of your spirits. Christ's blood is just *a holy path to a holy nature*.

We would address a word of caution to God's people, and it is this. Always seek in religion to feel and realize more than you express to others. Do not dwell on past experiences, as it were to comfort yourselves under the want of present grace; or speak of the experience to others, when the grace is almost gone. Ah, beloved! if this be a snare to any of you, you have need to learn to say with Paul, "This one thing I do; forgetting those things which are behind,; &c. (Philippians 3:13) Press toward the mark, not *your* mark, or any man's mark, but God's mark. And what is God's mark? Perfection: "Be ye also perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:48) Have your eye fixed *there*. Some never look so high as God's mark.

Your faith has many a victory to gain. Faith is a battle – a mighty warfare. It is a fight against all that is natural to you, against everything around you – that you may live on *Christ alone*. Faith is a trampling upon all, a despising and hating of all that comes between you and a fully revealed Christ – a suffering the loss of all things to win Christ, and be found in Him.

Be not surprised to find obstructions in the walk of faith. You will find them every hour. It is no slight grasp that must be taken of the kingdom of heaven in order to make a man safe amid the ruin and the wreck of a perishing world. Believe me, it is not with folded hands and drowsy consciences, and hearts full of the cares of this life, but denying ourselves, taking up the cross, bearing the reproach, and by following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, that we shall enter the kingdom.

Young men! I see multitudes of you around me, and I rejoice at it. Ah, brother! will you not give your heart to Christ now? If you are troubled and kept back by the fear of man, we entreat you to remember for your encouragement, that *God is known in Zion's palaces for a refuge*. These are the words of the royal psalmist, who knew well what it was to need a refuge, and to find it in His God in many a trying hour. Our God cannot be truly known, without becoming a refuge. He is willing this hour to lead you the first step to the secret place of his own pavilion. There, everyone of His perfections is pledged to protect you; and if so, what have you to fear? What power can you fear when hidden in Omnipotence? What wisdom or what device of the enemy, when Christ is made unto you wisdom, and sanctification, and complete redemption --, when your Counsellor shall be the mighty God?

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Come under the covert of the Rock of Ages, get your soul sheltered here, and rejoice at once in the knowledge of this: that the guiltiest creature may dwell in the holiest place without any injury to the character of God. Our Great High Priest entered into the holiest of all, and he carried in with Him His own blood as an eternal sacrifice for sin; and He hath, by one offering, perfected forever them that are sanctified. It is high time to get the mark of the blood of the Son of God upon your foreheads.

This is no season to be drawing back, when we see men, in defiance of God's commands, about to lay their hands on our beloved Sabbaths. Ah! who can contemplate such a probability without trembling, -- who can see these bulwarks of religion shaken, -- who can look to the dismantling of these blessed fortresses, which are truly the strongholds of Scotchmen? Who can see the ungodly, for the gain of a little money, approaching to attack the citadel, and not tremble? -- or quietly listen to the iron wheels that in their speed are trampling down the Fourth Commandment? Soon your privileges may pass away. You may yet be under a dead, world-serving ministry, who will sell the truth of God for a pulpit and a place, and sing to you a siren song of the road to the pit. Is the Lord's work going on among you? Are the fishers of men getting fruit of their labour? or are their nets only made heavy by the stones or worthless fish that are drawn up? Plead with the Lord for Scotland. Ask that the length and breadth of the land may receive abundant showers of the Holy Ghost, in answer to the laid-up prayers of our witnessing forefathers. It is encouraging to know that in many places, abroad and at home, God's blessed work is going on still. Glorious work, which has gone on in spite of every opposition for eighteen hundred years, and shall go on till time shall end!

And now, before we close, let us once more entreat you who are unconverted to turn to Jesus. Could ministers but give you some faint idea of Christ's willingness to save you! If any soul here can declare that it is willing to receive Christ, let it know that Christ is yet more willing to save and to bless. He does not wish you to remain an hour longer a stranger to his love. Why did he suffer? Why did he die? Oh! not merely that he might be glorified in your destruction. True, he will yet be so, if you continue to reject and despise him, but that is not what he is seeking *now*. He did not need to leave his throne in glory to seek that. He need not have left the Father's bosom in order to have the glory of this world's condemnation. He could have got that by leaving the world alone in its sins, and under the curse of God. And for what then, did He leave His Father's bosom, and bleed and die on the cross -- but just to be able to say, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." Is no one going to obey that call to-night, and to come, crying, "Lord, save me, I perish"? Christ is in the offer of every soul in this place, to-night. The Father's unspeakable gift is within the reach of everyone now. Blessed be God that a willing people still flee unto Him in the day of His power. Jesus *has* a day of power, even in this lost world. He has "an arm that's full of power." Believer! can't you set your seal to that? Have you never felt your soul drawn out after him, drawn forcibly -- drawn irresistibly -- drawn by a power that you have not got, a power that man never exerted, and that angel does not possess? Fellow-sinner, seeking salvation! is the devil whispering in your ear, "If you are to be saved, you will be saved; and if not, *your trying will do no good*"? Be sure that *God* is saying to you, "Return." Oh! is no sinner returning to-night? Are none crying out -- "Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord, our God."

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER 6

### EVE OF THE DISRUPTION

[This Address was given on the evening preceding the Disruption, by Mr. Burns, in the church of the Rev. A. Moody Stuart, just before the Disruption ministers assembled in it to arrange their courses for the morrow. At the close of Mr. Burns' Address, we observed, in walking past St. George's, that the door was open. The Rev. Dr. Candlish was about to dissolve one of the Societies connected with his Congregation. As only a few auditors were present, it may be interesting to insert here the last brief and striking words spoken within its walls by the revered minister of St. George's.]

The woman of Samaria asked our Lord concerning the Jewish worship and her own. From His answer, it is very evident that Christ's great object was to enlighten this woman's mind in the matters which most concerned her. In times when important controversies agitate the land, men are constantly making them a shelter in which to escape from direct personal drawing near to God in Christ. Thus we see that when the Lord came to close dealing with the soul of this poor woman, she turned off His searching words by asking His judgment on the great controversy of that day. It is much to be feared, that this is just what men are doing in Scotland now. They shift off all inquiry as to the state of their hearts and consciences, into the taking up of a side, and embracing of a principle: and though the side be the Lord's and though the principle be good, yet it is plain, that if this be all the length to which their religion goes, it cannot save them. It is hard to see them holding fast a truth which condemns, while they let go a truth which might save them. For this truth they contend, that Christ is the King and only Head of His church. But then, that is a truth in the order of God which grows out of this *first* truth, that Christ is the King and the Head of each man who believes. If a man blindly holds the second, and neglect the first; if he contend that Christ reigns in the church, while he has never yet been enthroned in his own heart, -- the truth he holds will *not* be silent; no, but it will speak to condemn, it will arise in judgment, and strike him *dumb eternally*.

Let believers beware of this in days like these; let them plead for a great outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord (as we are this night met to do) upon all the church, and especially upon the body of ministers and elders now assembling. It is easy to perceive that, if these trials, which are at the door, do come, without a great measure of the Spirit along with them, the most fearful consequences will ensue. Where will minister *be* who do not receive that, when they lose the influence belonging to their present position? They will either get influence by *carnal* means (and they *are* to be pitied who get it in that way), or they must get it by being men evidently full of the Spirit of their Master, and publicly *owned* by Him, as those who are winning many souls to Christ.

But though we must mark the dangers of times like these, and though we must declare that this principle, that Christ is Head of the Church, only arises out of the first principle, that Christ is the only Head and lawful Lord of each soul whom he hath bought with a price, we dare not neglect this truth for which the Church of Scotland is now contending, and for which all God's faithful people in the land are called to be the witness. Christ did not neglect to set the woman right in her inquiries regarding the true worship: he told her that salvation is of the Jews. Some in the present time say that this truth ought to be kept back, because men will substitute it for the truths regarding their own salvation. My dear friends, we sin and err when we withhold one of God's truths to give place to another; and we dare not call it a secondary truth. This single truth is worth a thousand worlds. It is of more importance than the salvation of all men. It is more precious than all creatures, for it concerns the honour, the crown, the kingdom, and the glorious person of Emmanuel, who is head over all things to the church. Therefore let us *hold it fast*. But do not make the holding it a test of salvation; many who defend it, are not the Lord's; many who adhere to it, adhere not to the kingdom set up in the heart where Jesus reigns.

Plead for God's ministers who are going forth. Plead that they may be like the company of the early Christians, who were filled with the Spirit, and who went about publishing abroad the gospel of the kingdom. If our ministers were but men full of the Holy Ghost at this time, they would be a light to Scotland, to Britain, and to the world. Scotland could not hold them. Britain could not contain them. The field would be the world. Oh, there is danger, lest the prospect of a settlement in some parish with a few people should be the means of dragging them down from the position which God has given them. The

command is to preach the Gospel to *every creature* in the *whole wide world*. The Lord has given them wonderful light hitherto in the ways of His commandments. Plead for more of this. Plead for *humbling* to us all, ministers, elders, and people. Plead for this much forgotten and neglected work of God's convincing Spirit, even humbling, because of His hand upon us. If a time of blessing be near at hand, it will be given. Oh, that our Assembly were like the assembled hundreds of years ago, which was indeed a Bochim, a place of *weeping*. But where are our tears? How few are gathering into God's bottle. Where are the tears of ministers, preachers, elders, and people?

The following is an extract from the prayer: --

"We roll the case of the whole church upon Thee. Pour out Thy Spirit of grace on Thy ministers now assembling in this place. Pour it out upon elders, upon preachers, and upon all holding more private positions in the church. Lord, pour it out upon the students of divinity. Raise up such a race of young men in Scotland, so full of Thy Spirit, so devoted to Thy service, as shall put all of us to shame, and make us begin to doubt our being born again, and begin to ask whether, indeed, the Lord himself hath given us our commission, to preach the gospel of His Son."

In closing the meeting in St. George's, Dr. Candlish said, -- "I have to request, that on the conclusion of this meeting, those who take an interest in the St. George's Indian Missionary Association, remain to pass a resolution which the office-bearers of our society have put into my hands. It is to the effect that the St. George's Association be this night dissolved. It is evident, brethren, that the dissolution of an Association like this, must remind everyone of the winding up, now night at hand, of many other similar associations; nay, that it is the immediate forerunner of the breaking up of this congregation in its present connection. It is a thought as solemn as it is difficult to realize, that this night we are on the very eve of an event which is to bring about so many momentous consequences, and the sounding of which will be heard more or less distinctly to the utmost bounds of Christendom, even the event of the disruption of our National Establishment. We can now speak of it as a thing certain, in so far as we can speak of any event not yet past, that to-morrow's sun will behold its godly structure rent in twain; that before the setting of to-morrow's sun, scenes will be enacted, which will find the Establishment of the country as the company of two armies; and to prevent this, I believe that nothing short of a miracle would be sufficient. We are very apt, when living in times like the present, and in circumstances such as those in which this night we stand, very much to underrate and underestimate the magnitude of the results of these events which are passing around us. Unable to grasp a comprehensive view of these in all their extensive bearings, and surrounded and engrossed by the passing and trivial occurrences of ordinary life, such events often produce a far deeper influence on the minds of those who behold them from a distance, than they do upon the men who are themselves the actors in them. Be that as it may, be our insensibility ever so great, the truth, I believe, is this, that to-morrow will see the spectacle of the consummation of a great revolution in this land, the effects of which, as I before said, will *not* be experienced in this land *alone* – a moral and a religious revolution, the greatest that has taken place since 1688, if not the greatest that has taken place since the grand revolution of the Reformation. We are familiarized with hearing such an event spoken of as an everyday occurrence is spoken of; and we almost begin to listen to the recital, of what a few years ago were unheard of transactions, with coolness, and sometimes with apathy. But, brethren, I ask not, 'How do Scotchmen look on the scenes passing around them?' but I ask, 'How do men of other *nations* look upon us?' I do not say in England. England has her faithful ones; but, alas! over her there is come a cloud of awful delusion and heresy. But cross the Channel, or cross the Atlantic, and how do men there look upon us? I speak of the serious, the

thoughtful, and the religious men of other lands. Brethren, they know the value of these principles for which we contend, and they see that, though not indeed *too* dearly bought, that yet we are willing to sacrifice to them our earthly all; and they look on with intense interest to see what will be the end of this momentous struggle. And the eyes of our own countrymen are beginning to open. If they resist not the light, they will soon believe, what the people of the living God have been too slow to learn, that the world and evangelical religion must soon part company. A state of things was coming about in this land, for which no provision is made in the word of God, and therefore we might have foreseen that it could not last long. Evangelical religion was beginning to be fashionable, -- at least a profession of it was in no way inconsistent with fashion. It was finding its way, esteemed, unopposed, and sometimes flattered into the drawing-rooms of the great; and the purest form of the religion of Jesus had begun to be dandled on the lap of this world's ease and favour. Such an order of things could not last long. The law of God forbids that it should be so: the enmity of Satan renders it impossible: and so to rid himself of these obnoxious truths, he usually employs two means, of the practical working of both of which the British empire offers abundant proofs. The one method -- perhaps the most effectual, and the most like to that which would deceive, if it were possible, the very elect -- is that of introducing, through the channels of pure religion, a spurious substitute for it, assuming its appearance, but wholly destitute of its essentials, nay, full of the most soul-destroying delusions -- these being the most dangerous, the more imperceptible they are, and the better they are concealed. That is the one weapon used by the great deceiver to destroy the power of the truth. The other is very different in many of its features, for it consists in the open persecution of the woman's seed by the serpent, and through his willing agents upon the earth, and in the raising up of a storm of opposition to the truth when faithfully preached. Both these methods are now employed in these lands; the former in a sister church, the latter in our own country. This war seems to be but beginning, -- what shall be the end thereof?"

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER 7

### THE LORD PASSING BY

[The following address was delivered in the Free Middle Church, Perth, on the evening of Sabbath, February 12, 1844. It is given as it was delivered; the previous addresses are considerably shortened from the original notes. It is believed that some readers will like to possess one specimen with that redundancy of expression and repetition of the same line of thought, which was customary with Mr. Burns, when he did not feel that the first part of his address had told on the consciences and laid hold on the hearts of his audience. Sometimes, on such occasions, when the circumstances did not admit of continuing the service longer than the usual time, he would shut the Bible with a look of sadness, as though he feared that they had met in vain. At other times, he would patiently go over the ground again, in varied words, until those before him were hemmed in and shut up to realize the truth which he declared. That overawing sense of the Lord's presence, without which he never was satisfied to conclude a service, filled the place or hung over the assembled multitude on the hill side, nor did it depart till sleeping souls had awoke and taken the first step on the way to heaven.]

"I PASSED BY." -- Ezekiel 16:6

This chapter contains a figurative and wonderfully exact representation of our state as sinners, and also a real representation of the Lord's covenant. The first truth we notice is that contained in the third verse, describing the birth and origin or parentage of those addressed, -- teaching the great truth that we are depraved; wholly and utterly so, lying under the curse of sin' because, *first, we are cursed in our birth*. The Canaanites were the people of the curse, while the children of Israel were ever made a blessing. This infant, then, was born in Canaan, and its father was an Amorite. Verily this is true; our father hath sinned, and in him we have broken the divine covenant, individually and personally, offended the divine majesty, lost the divine image, and entered this world the children of disobedience; not as the children of our Father who created us, but of our father who degraded us. Here God reminds his own people of *what they were*. This chapter loudly tells us to "look unto the rock whence we were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence we were digged." One look at that will shew us that we were indeed as a child cast out in the day of its birth, -- lying in all our natural pollution, to the loathing of our person, Ah, brethren! the nature of man is utterly and entirely polluted. The works of the flesh are these, envying, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like; and "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." Confess now to the Lord and to yourselves that you are in a state of pollution.

But, *secondly, we are also in a state of rejection*. As an infant thrown away, -- not pitied, or blessed, or cared for, -- so is man by nature cast out from the presence of God, and separated from him forever; his transgressions having brought him into a state of rejection and disgrace, whence none can draw him forth. Again, we are *in a state leading to death* -- certainly ending in the ruin of soul and body, should not be found to deliver. The margin expresses it as "trodden under foot," -- cast out, without any to pity, and there ready quickly to die.

Such are some of the views which this supposed case gives of the state of man. You see that each of us is by nature under the curse, because he is born of those who are themselves under it, and because, in the person of Adam, their representative, the entire human race has broken the divine covenant, and cast off the allegiance of God, rejecting Him as their Father and Head. This is a truth of which the word of God is full. It is not so much declared as a separate truth, as it is bound up in every other truth.

Men are fond of speculating as to the origin of evil, but no countenance is given to this in the Word of God, where we are simply told that man is depraved; and we see it in Cain, who was born in the image of his father Adam, and of his father the devil. There never was one born among the millions of the world that did not go astray, speaking lies from the beginning. Our mouth is as that of a serpent; we are as a deaf adder we cannot hear the voice of the living God. See what a view the Lord takes of our state as he sitteth in the heavens, "God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God." And what report does He give? Ah! how it might *lay our pride*, for it is the very same He gives to-night of this vast assembly, -- "Every one of them is gone back; they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." This description extends and applies to the youngest and the last of Adam's posterity, -- to men of every rank, age, and condition. There is not one on whom the traces and marks of the fall are not written and engraved; and if you or I wish to understand the nature of our guilt, look at it as the iniquity of a reasonable being, and the rebellion of a responsible agent.

But, alas, alas! my dear friends, polluted creatures with polluted tastes, and eyes put out by sin, do not and *cannot* see their pollution. They are oftentimes, -- and indeed always, except the Lord be striving with them, -- blind to their degradation. Yes, "there *is* a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not

washed from their filthiness." Still, whether you believe it or not, there is in every heart among us a depth of evil, sufficient to pollute and to defile a whole universe.

How does our *ungodliness* pollute us! What polluted creatures does our *pride* make us! I believe that *it* is the sin which, if possible, is more polluting than any other, and yet it is the one which we are always longest of confessing. Sinner, do you know what a proud heart is! Have you ever discovered that you have one within you? Believe it now. And, then, what a proud people we are taken collectively, how hardened against the fear of the Lord, how we cast off His yoke, and disown His right to reign over us, trampling, if we durst, as it were, on His forehead; setting at naught His counsel, and refusing to hear His reproof. Brethren, we are lost creatures, lying polluted by sin, and deservedly abhorred by the holy God. Yes; and that sin is *ours*; remember, *it is your own*, -- flowing not from outward causes to *us*, but out *from our own hearts*; we are lying in *our own* blood, and that is what makes you and me so vile, so abominable, so loathsome, in His eye, -- deserving to be cut off and cast out forever; and yet proud, yet rebellious!

And oh! the helplessness of this state, no man can help us: ministers cannot help us – godly friends cannot help us – parents cannot help their children – the head of the human race could not have helped his descendants, at least except by pointing through himself as a figure to the second Adam, even the Lord from heaven. That was the utmost that by his own example he could do. It is the only way in which any lost sinner can seek to help another – to point to the Lamb of God. We are cast out by man, we are cast out by our first father, by all on earth, into the open field, unhelped, unpitied, friendless, unprotected, lost, and left to be destroyed by that roaring lion, the enemy of souls; and last of all, unable to help ourselves. Poor, helpless, hopeless sinner! this is a faint but fitting emblem chosen by the Divine Spirit to represent your case and mine – for all, all, all are lying in this fearful state.

Blessed be God, a remedy has been found. Not that we mean to say that the evil has been *cured*. Far be it from us to preach a gospel that is to put all things right in the world, and produce universal quietness, and order, and peace; for however free the gospel offers are – and they have been free to all the world for ages past – multitudes have perished eternally. The gospel offer comes too late to-night for many in your city; thousands have gone from thence to the place of darkness, and are lost beyond recall; and I fear it comes too late for some here, because they will not receive it. What follows, as to the way of salvation, is given in God's own manner, and in his own appointed order. He looks down from His sanctuary's height upon fallen, ruined man, and sees him living in open rebellion against His righteous rule, and in a state of apostasy, resting under the curse; being polluted in his mind as well as his condition by continuance in sin; while no one thing connected with him, except it be his misery and ruin, is fitted to attract the regard or the mercy of the Lord. Nothing is to be seen about him but what is the loathing and the abhorrence of all holy creatures, and, above all, of the Holy One of Israel. The sins of the unrepentant are even objects of loathing to those who are written among the living in Jerusalem, as well as to holy angels.

These, then, are the objects which meet the Lord's eye; and, lo! while you expect to see swift destruction coming forth upon them from His presence, and while you look to see Him cast the sinner into hell and to the blackness of darkness forever, a voice speaks in mercy, and it says in majesty – I passed by! The Lord descends from the heavens, and draws near to the poor, lost, outcast, dying sinner, lying still in his "own blood," and He saith unto him, LIVE! And oh! it is no empty sound, no merely merciful word of pity, when the Lord says to a sinner, "*Live*," for at the sound his heart has turned to God; he complies with the call of wondrous grace; he turns, he listens, he obeys; at the Lord's reproof, his heart yields, he gives in, while the Lord pours out His free Spirit upon him.

And then, when the soul has been made alive, what follows? "I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine." The poor sinner deeply needs such a covering; for, at the same time when God comes thus to give us covering, your soul and mine are naked, having no kind of covering of our own by nature, but needing both to be washed and cleansed from iniquity by the Lord's own hand, and to be clothed from head to foot. Therefore, when Jehovah thus gives life to a dead sinner, He leads him away to the fountain of His dear Son's blood; and once made white and clean forever there, He clothes the naked soul with the perfect righteousness of his Well-beloved. Nor does he stop there, He makes a full-promise for time and eternity, -- "I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine." In the day in which God calls any sinner, He enters into a covenant with him, and the first thing He engages for, comprehends everything – He engages to be the sinner's *all in all* – "I will be a God unto thee;" and when He says that, does he not indeed say all? *foreverything* is bound up in that – that Lord cannot say more.

But there are two promises which He makes to the soul especially in that solemn, blessed day; the first is, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;" and the second is, "I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them." And then it is that the soul, being quickened and made alive indeed unto God, and *enabled* as well as *inclined* by His power to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, hears in his heart a voice which whispers, "Thou art mine." "I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine." And oh! the Lord *never* gives up the right that He takes over the soul in that day; come what will, oppose what may, that soul is kept by the Lord, as His own peculiar property, to all eternity.

In order that we may all get a fuller view, than I fear we are yet doing, of this, let me call you to fix your minds more particularly upon some of the points, already named, a second time. And first, let me entreat you to consider well the source whence this salvation springs. It is not from the creature, not from man himself, in respect either of merit or power. Merit! how can it be, when all that he ever can appear in God's sight is loathsome and abominable – oh, no! There is truly nothing to attract in poor, fallen man; all that is to be found in him, "that is, in his flesh," is opposition to God's law – opposition to His being – opposition to His will – opposition to His glory. Our carnal minds are enmity against God, enmity against His law, enmity to His holy perfections, and enmity to His sovereignty.

It is no merit in man that draws forth His love. What, think you, could tempt any man to look upon a poor cast-out infant, such as the chapter we are reading describes? What but love could move him? Oh! surely naught but the purest pity and the tenderest compassion would lead a man to take on himself all the care and trouble needful to relieve, to save, and then support the poor and outcast little one.

And it is nothing, nothing but love, unbounded, unmeasured, incomprehensible – it is nothing but divine pity and compassion – it is nothing but the infinite yearnings of an eternal love that moves the holy Lord of heaven to pity *you*. This may well bring down your *pride*, believers. This may bring down your proud countenance and your high looks, when you think how for many a day, in your nature, in your character, in your conduct, in your heart, in your life, you have been grieving and provoking your Creator and Redeemer; that you have been abominable in His sight – a withered branch, a degenerate vine. Your state, has not been a whit less hateful to His sight, nor your sin less heinous, than that which moved him to destroy the old world entirely and forever; not a whit less heinous in His sight than the sin of the fallen angels who are cast out forever from His presence – aye, the sin that provoked the thunders of His wrath *then*, is more hateful in sinners now.

Ye that dwell under the gospel, *one* such call would tenfold increase your guilt above theirs. If you had never heard the gospel, your case were different; but you have heard, and heard for years upon years, until your guilt has become awfully aggravated. Yet, if any are getting a view of their natural pollution, and feeling that by nature they are a *sink* of evil of every kind – that every monster-form of sin that ever grew out of a creature’s heart has its seeds and its like in yours – that you never heard of any sin being committed that has not a counterpart in you, were temptation to blow upon corruption – and that you conceive hourly sins, more than you have the means of setting out. Oh! if you are indeed crying to the Lord in words like these: -- *I cannot look upon myself; if the Lord’s people even could see my heart they would turn away amazed from me, and ministers would have nothing to do with me; could any fellow-sinner see me as I stand in God’s sight, he would not speak to me, how much less the Holy One of Israel.* Take courage, it is a creature in that very state, in so far at least as words can describe a lost sinner’s state, it is on such -- YES, ON SUCH – that the God of love hath turned His eye, and to whom, in passing by, He says, LIVE, LIVE.

Do not think that you must make yourself pleasing in the sight of the Holy One of Israel to be accepted by Him. Fellow-sinner, He knows your state, and He does not make it better either. It is when in thy blood He speaks to thee. He repeats it, “Yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, LIVE.” These words *do* spring from His own infinite love – from His everlasting, free, unsought mercy – from the infinite yearnings of a heart of overflowing loving kindness. And then observe, He does not wait till you go to Him, till you learn His ways, and *love* to seek His face. He would wait long enough if He did; He would wait forever.

Would anyone possessed of reason expect the poor infant that we are likened to, to rise up and walk, or to wash and purify itself. Ah no! The benevolent individual, who saves it, feels in this way: -- If I don’t go to it, and go *now*, its strength will fail, and its soul will perish. This is what the Lord sees in each one of us, and so He comes to the sinner, approaches, as it were, quite close to him, and whispers in his heart, “Come, now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” It is in a marvelously attractive, winning character that the Lord appears at this time. The work is wondrous. It is saving – it is Godlike in the self-moved nature of its origin, in the sovereign freeness and spontaneous bestowal of its gifts. For, see, again, the great, the glorious, the holy, the compassionate, the divine Deliverer descends, draws nigh, comes up to where the poor sinner is lying forlorn, cast out, miserable, hopeless, dying, perishing eternally; yea, and polluted, too, and almost dropping into hell, on the very verge of the second death; and Jehovah saith unto him, LIVE. Ah! sinner, whence is that? What does it mean? It is the forthcoming of *eternal compassion*. It is the bursting forth of the waters of divine, unending life! It is the drawing of the cords of everlasting love! It is the gentle yet omnipotent constraint of the bands of the man Christ Jesus! The Lord has come nigh, the Holy Ghost is given, the sinner is saved, and the Saviour is glorified.

Well, you say, and this is all true; but what is that to me? I, who am covered with sins, everyone of which deserves eternal fire, each of which makes me a fit subject for the second death, each of which cries for the holy, righteous, and unmingled vengeance of the Lord, -- what can I do? My dear friend, I allow it, -- *you can do nothing*. The Lord takes all that into account; yea, *He tells you that you do not see half so much guilt in yourself as He sees*. Well, but what does He do next? He points you to the fair, white righteousness of the Lord Emmanuel, and says, “Behold the Lamb!” People of God, *you* know well that speaking will not save, and hearing will not save, unless the Lord comes. Prophecy to the breath that it may come upon us in this hour.

Another view which we wish to impress upon you, though we have in part described it already, is, *that the sinner is helpless*. Many think that they can, at their own pleasure, rise and walk. My dear friend, let me

ask again, was this poor infant able to rise and walk? Did it even know him who came to save it? Could it thank him? Could it raise its infant wail aloud? Or could it send forth so much as one despairing cry for pity? No, no! And, believe it, could Jehovah descend to this, and promise to give you eternal glory for one motion towards Himself, you would be lost. There is nothing between you and perdition but the forbearance of an infinitely holy God. The Lord waits not until the sinner can come to Him; He comes up to the sinner. *Are any longing for His presence?* and do you yet feel that your heart is like a stone? The sinner feels that he is chained and bound, and that the devil has him, and will ruin him; and, moreover, that all the creatures in the world cannot save him; and so the Lord, hearing his cry, and seeing his despair, comes near to help him.

Believe this. A heart *less full of tenderness* than His would do the same. You may suppose that if one with like passions to ourselves were passing in any direction, and hearing a faint infant cry, would he not stop? Yes, he turns aside, he pities, and he saves. Faint emblem, that little sufferer, of the case before us; faint is the view it gives of Him who comes to save; faint type and shadow of the love that is everlasting. Oh! that you, perishing souls, were looking out to-night for the deliverer! I know you cannot pray to Him, as you call it, *acceptably*. Oh! but he wants you to pray *miserably*, to pray *desolately*. He sees in you a returning rebel. You have hated Him; you have fought against Him; the very heart, and hands, and mouth, and soul, and strength, and youth, or riper years, that are His own gift, and which He created, that with them you might ever love and glorify Him, *you used against Him*; and with the very comeliness which He had put upon thee, and with the powers which He hath given thee, hast thou served the devil, drunk up sin greedily, and dishonoured thy God.

Oh, is your heart softening? is it *even to Him*, to this God of salvation, against whom you have sinned, that you would *come*? Do you look to Him? do you cry to Him, “undone, ruined”? The Lord only answers, LIVE. And in this new and eternal life which *He begins* in you, from first to last He will be honoured, and you will be humbled, while you praise Him in an eternal song! Yes, thousands of such vile sinners are now around the throne, making the arches of heaven ring with the praises of the King of saints and the Saviour of sinners. And then the thought, that it is nothing else that attracts the Lord but just this, that “God is love.” No other account is given but just “when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.” It may be that the Lord is now passing by. It is not unlikely that He may be saying, Live; for wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, He is in the midst of them. Sinner, are you not afraid lest He *pass by you*, and pass away without looking upon you? for eternity is at hand, and heaven’s gates are barred against the unregenerate. Are you, then, seeking to attract His eye?

People of Perth! the Lord has been saying, Live, to many a one in the midst of you. He did so gloriously four years ago, and some of those remain unto this present, and some are fallen asleep. Many of you allowed that season to pass away; you were *afraid* He would say, *Live!* You were *afraid* He would pluck you out of the fire and from a yawning hell, and take you from the devil! Fellow-sinner! He may yet pass you by; for He passes by multitudes, and leaves them to perish; and yet, yet, He has set His heart on a happy few, and saved and blessed them. He has been passing through Scotland for more than three years *evidently*, and the crown is flourishing upon His head yet; in our beloved land, our new churches tell *that*, and testify that He is the Lord of all. Oh, then, brethren! will you not submit yourselves to Him? Perhaps you are sitting in some quiet corner, and conscious that *you* are one of whom nobody is thinking; and it may be so; but Jesus is thinking of you; will you not say to Him, “Save, Lord, I perish.” The poor world knows it not,

sees not that He is passing by; but will *you* not look to Him? He sees you in your blood, sees you to be vile, and black, and ungodly; so vile that perhaps the people of God – some of them – would not like to have much to do with you.

Is there one such among you? Let us trace his feelings. He first begins to say, *Where is God?* and then the truth is awfully revealed to him that it is no delusion; that there is a God in the earth; and when he hears that God saying to him, LIVE, he cannot believe it. Still the sinner is drawn, and begins to think again. Young men, are there any of you who stop here, and cannot say even *that there is a God?* It is a great point gained when a man can do that from the heart. Oh! that ministers came into the pulpit in the strength of that belief, something would breathe around them that would shake the infidelity of others. It is a blessing when this great truth is set up; for then the sinner begins to bend to the authority of the word of God, and feels that His throne may shake before one jot or tittle of that word will fall away. Many a hard battle he will have with the devil before this be grated; many a fall and many a blow from Apollyon's sword; but then the love of the Lord Jesus comes in here; and, dear fellow-sinners, if there be one present in such affecting circumstances, that love *will* draw you from Satan's power. You say, "I am unclean," and so you are; but He will put you into the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness; and if you tell Him that your sins are "red like crimson," He will shew you that the blood of His cross cleanseth from sin of every dye. And then, if you doubt again of the sufficiency of the sacrifice, or of Emmanuel's ability to save. He will shew you that He who was the Man of sorrows, is the Man who is Jehovah's fellow too, and thus He will answer every question, and remove your ever doubt. What but the spreading forth of these glorious truths was the means of the Reformation? And what will be the means of converting a single soul, but just the same truth, that Christ hath died to save sinners?

There are many who would stop short of this, and yet who like to come to get their feelings moved, Sabbath after Sabbath; while week after week finds them back again at their worldliness and mammon worship. They always take care that the truth will never reach so deep into the heart as that the citadel shall be taken. Oh! that you would now simply say, "Lord, I perish, save thou me." When that cry ascends, an answer comes; and, ah, then there is a bond formed, which neither time, nor death, nor hell, can ever rend: and when he ties the eternal knot, believe it, nor death nor hell can break it. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" What! shall persecution? No, persecuted believer, even you may raise the song, "Who shall separate?" For why? Will not the Lord save and guard His own truth? The saints may be imprisoned, ministers silenced or banished, God's people may be *hung up* for the truth's sake, but the truth itself will not be hung up or stifled. No, it will spread, it will run, it will be glorified in times like these. The truth of Christ, and the saints' union to Him, will bloom on the gibbet, and spring up into beauty and renown from their open graves. What! think you they will bind Emmanuel's truth? Will they fetter His love? Will they limit His glorious sovereign grace? Will they draw a bolt before the great Breaker? Ah, no! He hath opened the two-leaved gates, and now devils, and death, and tribulations, are like captives at His chariot wheels. The Breaker is ascended on high; He is on the throne now, and if any of you are receiving Him into your hearts, you will soon get the reward of His chosen; you will have your feet on the neck of the old serpent soon. Oh! then, now, when He is passing by, will you not quickly join yourselves unto Him? Our time for repentance will soon be over; all our meetings will soon be over; and when *the great meeting* comes, and when we stand face to face in the presence of the Lord, and all you have ever heard comes fresh into your memory, what will be the feelings of many a gospel hearer then?

Observe, it was not the crowds that attracted the notice of the Lord on the day when he passed through Jericho; the individual who got good from Him was a poor blind man. Fellow-sinners, *you* have no knowledge of who is this night present to bless us. It is Jesus of Nazareth. *You* have never discovered Him, but this blind man did. Bartimeus had heard of Him, and, doubtless, said within himself, "Well, if I lose this opportunity, I may never have another; I can't see Him, I can't go to Him, but I'll cry." And so he did cry, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." The disciples did not like this, it was against their ideas of the Lord's dignity. The procession was too fine to be disturbed by the cries of a beggar.

And how much like this is the present state of things. Our congregations are in too good order to be troubled by anxious souls! Propriety would not allow it! Oh, my dear friends, if you begin to seek the Lord, many will cast cold water upon your anxiety. They will say, "What! are you going to be serious?" For I believe that there are multitudes who would rather see their friends going on to the brink of the precipice of perdition, than seeing them becoming grave, and solemn, and heavenly-minded, condemning a careless world by their hold words and lives. Better that an anxious soul should meet with enemies than with cold-hearted professors who are full of the spirit of the world. Let all such precious, and it may be, hidden ones, look much to the High Priest who sitteth in the heavens. This will please Him better than anything. If any poor sinner is saying, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me," He will hear that cry. He did not attend to the crowd that followed Him. He stood still. Ah! this is what He does at all times. He *waits* to hear the cry of the penitent. Call upon Him; do it secretly; He knows what you are thinking, and He says, "What wilt thou that I do unto thee?" Bartimeus said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Oh, that you would offer up this prayer, and then, not only would you receive your sight, but you would receive pardon, you would receive justification, indwelling of the Holy Ghost, deliverance from the world, and deliverance from Satan's yoke.

Take another instance: remember the poor woman who, though diseased, went to Him in the press. She did not hesitate. She was bold. She knew her necessities, and she knew His ability to save. And, oh, if you would follow her example, you would be, like this woman, immediately healed. For the Lord said, "Who hath touched Me?" Peter said, "The people throng Thee, and askest Thou, Who touched Me?" The Lord took no notice whatever of this interruption, but went on, "I perceive that some one had touched Me, because virtue hath gone out of Me." Oh, brethren, can He say at this moment, "Somebody hath touched Me?" Is there anyone who is hardly able, for the crowd, to get within hearing of the word, who is in some quiet place crying out to the Lord? Then virtue is going out from Him; that sinner is saved. Let me be that woman, that man, that child, rather than the wisest or the greatest of this world's children. Many will sit for hours listening to the preaching of the word; they will never complain of being "kept in," as others would call it, and yet they refuse to spend five minutes *alone with Christ*. Ah, brother, will not begin to do this? it is being alone with God that is the beginning of salvation to many; that is what the devil is afraid of; the last place he likes a sinner to go to is his own quiet closet, entering in there when none observes, putting in the bolt with a look that shews you are one who has *something real to transact there*, that you have something to do with God. Ah! Satan well knows that in many cases there is virtue going out of Emmanuel then. *Then!* did I say? Oh, there is virtue going *always* out of Him; fullness of grace dwelleth in Him.

That fullness is going out at this hour to the poor Hindoos, to the Chinese, the South Sea Islanders, the Kaffirs, and the Hottentots, and among the darkened thousands on our Continent. Oh, yes, in these last days of ours, He is drawing all men unto Him. His own ancient people, His beloved Israel, are beginning to look after Him; and some few of them are seeing in Him the promised King of Sion. People of Scotland! where is

the Lord who hath been so honoured in this land in days gone by? Have His martyrs not foretold of days of His right hand to come? "The covenants, the covenants will yet be Scotland's reviving!"

Blessed be God, such reviving is not wholly gone from the midst of us. Ah, no. There are green spots yet where His dew descends. Do none of you know this? Don't some of you know what it is to have a fireside that is made happy by faces on which the light of His countenance shines? And how sweet at night to hear the melody of joy and health, and the song of praise, when other sounds are hushed. These families are like a little heaven below. Oh, picture of heaven, indeed, when the voices of parents and children blend in praising the Shepherd of Israel and the King of Sion, when all is love, and peace, and kindness, and not a jarring word is heard, nor an angry look is given. What a blessing such a sight might bring to the stranger that beholds it! I shall suppose some such one coming to take up his abode in such a family, it might be, even for a single night; he marks it all, and feels the beauty of it, and says, "Well, I wish I could be longer there;" or, perhaps, he says to himself as he departs, "I love that holy joy; I will go and put their religion to the trial:" and there, perhaps, begins the return of that wanderer to the fold.

Will none here, in like manner, bethink himself? Do you really believe, my dear friend, that God lives? You know that many people, without being professed infidels, do not in the least believe the children of God, when they say that there is such a thing as going away to be alone with God, making a request according to the will of God, and getting an answer to their prayer. They think that any idea of that kind is produced by the friction of mere feeling upon the heart; that it is an empty delusion or imagination. Well, but suppose one of you gets a step further than this daring infidelity, and the question is seriously agitated, within you, whether God *is* or *is not*. This is the hour, it may be, of your first real prayer; you go away into a secret place, whether in your dwelling or in the open field, it matters not; and your first impression is, *there is a God, and I will call to Him*. Satan says immediately, assuming, as it were, the garb of prudence or of common sense, "What! who are you speaking to? Nobody hears you, you are speaking to the air!" And then your own evil heart rises up and joins with him. Many a man thinks he believes in God, just because his faith is so purely nominal that Satan has never thought it worth disputing. *His* are prayers that never go higher than the back of the chair he kneels at. But, ah! if he took courage and, resolving to get at the truth, went away to pray, *a thousand voices* would cry within him, There is no God, no God! And some would give up the search here, and swallow the devil's lie, and be ruined eternally. But then, some would not do this, the awakened sinner would not be so easily put off. He feels, as it were, that there is something *at the other end of the line* that he is casting upwards, and he will not let go his hold. And then, perhaps, he remembers something about that word of truth, which is called the lamp of the wanderer's foot, and so he opens his Bible. Here again, Satan will perhaps meet him, and will likely whisper, "I am sure you have read that book all your life long and never got any good by it; it never then can be the word of God." Ah! but, my dear friends, Satan's lie won't pass so easily now that he has been *proved a liar*; and being resisted, he will perhaps flee. So the man goes on' some word of promise meets him, and, as he reads, he comes to more; and there another light has risen to cheer him onwards, till he finds in Emmanuel matchless fullness for his every need. And then he joins himself to the Lord's dear people too, and unites with them in the work and labour of love, which they have to finish ere the "night," which is at hand, "cometh," and ere they hear the knock of the Judge who standeth before the door.

Oh, are you all "watching unto prayer," beloved? I think some at least, are surely doing this. I am sure there were some who rose early this morning, perhaps "a great while before day," to plead with the Captain

of the Lord's host that He would come forth this day in the midst of us, "conquering and to conquer." *Persevere*, beloved in the Lord, "in due time ye shall reap if ye faint not."

We would entreat everyone of you to imitate the example of those who went round the city of Jericho. They were to compass it seven times; once would have done as well had the Lord appointed it so, but He teaches His people *perseverance* by these means; and then, at last, when Jericho did fall, what was the occasion of it? Nothing but the blowing of trumpets of rams' horns – a weak breath. Oh, how the foolishness of man is used to work the purposes of the Lord! In the same way can he make a single sentence, pronounced by a little child, effect what no persuasion or eloquence could accomplish. When the wall of Jerusalem was to be rebuilt, every man went and builded opposite his own house. You that are a husband, begin this night; when you go home, speak to your wife tenderly and solemnly; beseech her to begin to consider "the things that belong to her peace," and do not give up for one refusal. I confess that I often feel tempted to do this. I often say, "I'll give up preaching, why continue it?" And so, when you go home, you may be tempted to say, "It's all very well for the minister to tell me to speak to my household, but it is useless to attempt it." My dear friend, remember the blowing of the rams' horns. And let another take a servant apart and the brother his sister.

When the Lord does give the word, *great is the company* of them who publish it. everyone will then speak to his neighbour, and the friend to his friend; or you, dear children, to your companions at school. Why not begin at once to seek to convince them and lead them to Jesus, imploring the Lord your Shepherd to work by you. He can do much by the testimony of a little child, saying simply what it knows of the evil of its heart, and of the faithfulness of Jesus. Such a testimony makes those around begin to inquire, What am I? Am I saved? What ground have I to hope if these things are true?

The moment a man trusts God's promise, he is a child of God. The moment he takes the Lord at His word, and believes His testimony concerning His Son, that moment he is safe. I remember being struck with an anecdote told of Napoleon Bonaparte's review of his troops. – In passing, we might ask, Where are Bonaparte and his armies now. So passes the glory of the world! -- During the review, the emperor's horse became restive; in trying to quiet him, his hat fell off; a young *lieutenant* happened to pick it up, and when he restored it, Bonaparte said, "Thank you, *captain*." The young man took advantage of the word, and immediately said, "In what regiment, sire?" "The Guards," answered Napoleon. The young man did not wait; he went and took his place. The other officers said, "What right have you here?" He said, "I am a captain of the corps." "What, who made you that? Where is your uniform." Ah! he had *the emperor's word*, and he wanted and needed no more. Brethren, imitate this little incident in the more solemn matter of your soul's salvation. Are you a sinner? Are you in the ranks of the condemned, fallen men of this world? Oh! do you hear the Lord's voice telling you that you may be saved, and saying, "I will be a Father unto thee, and thou shalt be my son" or daughter? Do you doubt Him? Will you not answer, "Surely thou art our Father?" Do not raise questions; do not ask disbelievingly, What will be done with my evil heart? *Leave all that to Him*, and go quickly, go confidently, yes, *rejoicing go*, and take your place among His children, and your portion with His people, and be to Him a son, and be sealed after that ye have believed, with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of the inheritance, the first-fruits of the purchase of that glorious possession reserved for you in the heavens.

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER 8

## TRUE ZEAL

[In February 1844, Mr. Burns visited Perth for ten days, at the earnest request of those who longed to see an ingathering of souls. Besides three services on the Sabbaths, he had a service every evening, as also at 9:15 a.m., for working people, during their breakfast hour. Prayer for a blessing on the town was followed by a short address to Christians on the way to work acceptably for Christ. Snow was on the ground most of the time, but it did not prevent a large attendance.]

“BUT IT IS GOOD TO BE ZEALOUSLY AFFECTED ALWAYS IN A GOOD THING.” – Galatians 4:18

There is nothing more precious than true zeal in the things of God, and nothing, perhaps, which has so many counterfeits. Genuine zeal is simply a soul-absorbing concern for the Lord’s glory, and it is thus the highest of all graces: it can only be in lively exercise when love to God is felt, and, indeed, not always then, for it requires a high degree of heart-devotion and self-dedication to put it forth and sustain it. There may easily be a great deal of zeal in a bad cause; so high may that zeal rise, that the true zeal of God’s children can scarce keep pace with it. They seldom rival the zeal that will “compass sea and land to make one proselyte.” There may also be a great deal of bad zeal in a good cause. Alas! that this should be, at all times, so common in the Church of God. True zeal is, then, as rare as it is precious; it is a fruit seldom seen among us. Few men are filled with such a desire after God’s glory as Christ had, when he said, “The zeal of thing house hath eaten me up,” or if they do at times feel something approaching to it, it soon evaporates, it does not last. And why is this? Why do those, who were once the most zealous in the work of God, begin to fall asleep? Why do those who used to weep tears of sorrow and pity over the unawakened, and who could not let one act, dishonouring to God, pass unreprieved, or at least unmourned, now begin to sit down with careless professors, giving all up in despondency and hopelessness, and even saying in God-dishonouring unbelief, “We must take things as they are, and leave others to take their own way, and wait on God’s time?” My dear friends, whoever says *that*, is guilty of treason against the King of kings; and moreover, whoever *perseveres* in saying that, will bring, ere long, a blight upon his own soul, and it may be, upon all his labours. It is a dangerous thing to cease from the work of seeking to gain others over to the service of our Master; the soul’s prosperity is so intimately connected with it, that we cannot neglect it without losing the blessing of God.

On the other hand, if we *are* engaged in a good work, we cannot throw too much energy into it; it is impossible to cast too fervent a heart into genuine heaven-born zeal; for when will our zeal be worthy the followers of the Lord Jesus, who left His throne, and suffered, and bled, and died on this earth, just that He might bring glory to the divine law, and sanctify the Father’s name, in the redemption of lost sinners, by the blood of His cross?

“It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing.” And were none of you ever thus affected? Some of you *were* zealous in days past. Has it lasted? Examine yourselves as to this, while we mention one or two things which are inseparable from true zeal, and without which it cannot burn with a pure and steady flame.

The first of these is a *strong spiritual appetite*. A living believer seeks to have an equal relish for all the food which he finds in the Word of God. There is no truth, provided it have Divine sanction, from which he will not extract saving benefit, and life to his soul: the *smallest* parts of God’s truth, as we might be apt to call

them, have deep attractions in His eyes, and the *plainest* parts of the Word have more charms for Him than the most adorned human compositions. Have you this characteristic of a child of God?

The second thing which we shall mention is *spiritual activity*. This is the first outward manifestation of the existence of true zeal in the heart, and it springs immediately from the spiritual appetite of which we have spoken.

The want of food incapacitates a man from working; unless his body receive due support, he cannot work either hard or long; and so in the Divine life, if a man cease personally to live *on* Christ, he cannot work long for Christ among others. Impossible! He *may* keep up the *appearance* of this life long after the *reality* of it is *gone*: I believe that some now present can confirm the truth of this by painful experience. Are there not some among you who used to warn your fellow-sinners, and pray with them, and employ every means in your power to lead them to Jesus, speaking to them out of a full heart, and with all the earnestness of love? - but now, your efforts are feeble, and what you say is forced, and only said from a sense of duty.

You complain that it does not impress the hearts of those to whom it is addressed. My dear friend, *it does not pierce your own conscience*; and it is *only* when a deep and powerful impression of the truth abides on a man's own heart that the word has power to convince and to convert others. Sometimes the words spoken, whether of warning, or in commendation of Christ, are like nothing but dry skeletons of skin and bone, without either life or soul in them, and falling cold and powerless on the ear. But when truth is vividly impressed on the speaker's inmost soul, each word seems to have a volume in it, and every remark drops down sweetness and fresh fragrance.

And why should it not be *always* thus? Is the glory of Christ not what it once was? Are the interests of God's kingdom less dear to you, or is it so far advanced in the world, that you have nothing now to do but to sit still, and look idly on? Is the state of sinners less awful, or their danger less imminent, because they are so many years nearer eternity? No brethren. It is *we* who have changed; it is *we* who have fallen asleep. Oh! confess it - it is *we* who are shutting our eyes and folding our hands, and falling asleep over the work, in which our heart and hand, our body, soul, and spirit, our time, talents, life, all, *all* should be engaged. That is not the spirit of the Lord's true people. That is not like the character of your God and Father, or of your Elder Brother in the heavens, for He is a High Priest forever -- He intercedeth *ever* - He loveth to the end, and *beyond* the end of time, even forevermore.

How inconsistent, then, are we, professing as we do to be His chosen people, and to be seeking after conformity to His likeness. You know it is said in one place, that "all people will walk everyone *in the name of his god*;" even the poor blinded heathen spend much of their strength and substance in the worship of their gods, which "are yet no gods, but dumb idols." What! and shall not *we* then, "walk in the name of the Lord *our* God forever and ever?" seeing that He lives and reigns "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." His glorious power is not less now than it was when first we trusted in Him; his long-suffering is not less patient, nor His covenant less secure - His love is not yet removed from us, and His faithful work abideth ever. We have the same Bible we had then; no promise has been taken out of it; the same throne of grace to go to, the same Spirit to help infirmity and strengthen faith. *The Son of God is not asleep*. Oh, no! He has been interceding for us on high amid all our forgetfulness, barrenness, and indifference. "Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." But for that we had been cut down long ago. In His name, then, go forward; forward to do His will. To some of you we say, *go forward rather than pray*. Think not that we would, as these words might imply, cast discredit on prayer; but, beloved, our hearts are deceitful, and

although we should at every moment have an upward eye and a thirsting heart for the guidance and the presence of the living God, still there are times and circumstances when it becomes almost a sin to pray; sometimes it is unbelief that makes us pray, or rather *seem* to pray – else what does that word mean – “Why criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward.” This shows us that men may, and do, sometimes, slink away from self-denying, disagreeable duties, and go to prayer, when they ought rather to be turning “the battle to the gate.” You will generally find that these are the times when you will be *least able* to pray. It was absurd to call *true* prayer sinful; prayer is our strength, the safeguard of the soul: the Lord the Spirit gives the heart to pray. But let us keep all things in the order which God has laid them, remembering for our encouragement that nothing is ever undertaken for the promotion of the cause of God in which He will refuse to aid us. I would make no exceptions or limitations to this; for I believe that no man, however poor, and weak, and humble, ever did undertake anything with a single heart and eye to God’s glory, and according to his will, without finding God in his path, strengthening and supporting him, if not visibly working with and for him.

Believer! can *you* contradict this assertion? Can you point to the time when you sought, with a sincere and willing heart, to serve and glorify Him, and say, that *then* you found Him to be a wilderness, or a land of darkness? I know you cannot.

If you desire the continuance of real, solid, spiritual comfort, seek to work diligently for God. You know that mere feeling cannot last long – much of it must necessarily pass away; it lasts for a time, but the mind wears out, and sinks into a cold relapse, and fresh excitement is required to arouse it again. Ah! but that is not like the calm, pure, spiritual feeling, produced by an impression on the will, through the Holy Ghost, -- elevating the conceptions, purifying the desires, constraining and keeping in subjection the whole heart and mind to the obedience of Christ.

Another mark of zeal, is *implicit immediate, child-like obedience*. How simple is the obedience of a little child; it does not ask a reason, or form a precise opinion of each step it takes, but readily follows its parent wherever he leads. A calm, unmurmuring obedience is what the Lord seeks from His people, a chastened temper, a renewed will; for such a work in the soul is permanent and abiding, and sends forth a constant flow of holy zeal.

The world will not believe in any real zeal among God’s children; the world thinks it is only a natural thing, arising from natural sources, and, therefore, that it will soon wear out and pass off. Alas! that we should give them so much reason to think so. Beloved friends, look at Paul. Did his zeal wear out? Did *it* diminish? Did the coldness of the prison chill *it*? Was it broken under the lash? Was it bound by the chains that lay on his body? Did it suffer shipwreck, when he was three days in the depths of the sea? Did the flame of persecution consume it? Did the roaring of wild beasts terrify him out of his zeal for the cross? No; for Christ was revealed within him, and that was a *permanent* thing.

As men advance in the divine life, zeal becomes purer; it has less of natural emotion in it, and more of God’s grace. And, my dear friends, whenever a Christian begins to languish and fall away; the first flower that the wind of temptation nips is zeal. Pray, then, for us, and for you, that we may endure, shall I say, for a *little* longer – a few years – or *many* years? No; it is *to the end* that we must endure. This is not the language of our own hearts, the flesh is always crying out, “Stop now, stop now!” Yes, and that is a very comfortable sound in a man’s ears, when he is worn out and weary; ay, and a man might begin to think about obeying it, if another voice did not contradict the lie – if God did not say, “He that shall endure *to the end*, the same shall

be saved." Alas! brethren *we* know too well what decays of zeal are; and now that, in the gracious providence of God, we are permitted again to meet in this place, to labour together for the in-gathering of souls, may it be to act boldly, and to enter in, by the open door of Emmanuel's glorious and everlasting righteousness, to obtain the promise of the Father, -- the great Breaker Himself going before us, and Jehovah on the head of us. He breaks up the way for all His children, not only to deliver them from the wrath to come, and from a state of condemnation, but going before them also in all that is undertaken for His glory, and in His name. He does a part of all His works on earth by His people, and enables them to overcome all difficulties, and to overthrow them in the name of the Lord. He makes the worm Jacob, a new sharp threshing instrument, by him, beating the mountains as chaff. "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God."

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER 9

### UZZA SMITTEN

[Perth, February 1844]

"AND THE ANGER OF THE LORD WAS KINDLED AGAINST UZZA, AND HE SMOTE HIM, BECAUSE HE PUT HIS HAND TO THE ARK: AND THERE HE DIED BEFORE GOD." -- 1 CHRONICLES 13:10

The ark was a type of Christ, and the bringing up of the ark, at the command of King David, is, in like manner, a type of the endeavours after the advancement of Christ's kingdom. David was commanded and authorized to bring up the ark; he did it not without considering whether it were pleasing to the Lord, and to His people, and it was, doubtless, a good desire in him. But then, such good desires are many times mingled and accompanied with much sin: and we have an example of this here. David himself had apparently ordered all things concerning it; we find him gathering together all Israel, going himself among them, playing before the Lord, while the ark followed, placed in a new cart drawn by oxen, under the care of Uzza and Ahio. All of a sudden the oxen stumbled, Uzza, in eager zeal, put forth his hand to keep the ark from falling. He seemed to be doing right; he was afraid that some evil would happen to it, and therefore made what would seem to us a harmless movement or even one worthy of the praise and approval of God; but it was not accepted, and Uzza was put to death for it. What may this not teach us concerning the jealousy of the Lord of Hosts when His glory is concerned!

It is not enough to be anxious for the coming of His kingdom. Uzza was anxious to save the ark from falling; but then he touched it not after the due order. We may, then, well tremble at being engaged in the work of the Lord; for zeal, if not according to knowledge, may bring us into rash contact with God's glory, and that will bring us into contact with judgment too, if we work not according to the due order. "The anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza, and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God. And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and said, How shall the ark of the Lord come to me?"

From this, we learn that there are times when nothing but the lighting down of the Lord's arm will do to cast us down, to chastise and humble us -- times when we need to get our accursed pride brought low to the very dust. How wonderful that we should long escape this breaking forth of His power; if it should come,

let us take it meekly at His hand, and learn from it the glorious holiness and jealousy of that God will *not* be worshipped but after the due order.

But when the ark was thus carried aside, the Lord allowed not the resting-place of His glory to be brought into contempt; He blessed the house of Obed-Edom, and all that he had. This seems an emblem of what often happens now; when we are zealously engaged in His work, and meet therein with some heavy rebuke from God, we are terrified and stop, and do not dare to touch it with our hands any more. Well, and does the work of God cease for that? Not so. Whether we will do it or not, whether we take a personal part in it or hold back, or even if we sit down and say that the Lord will not work any more – oh! we hear, all of a sudden, that the ark has appeared elsewhere, and that some other house than ours is blessed because of it. It is a dangerous thing in one sense to be engaged in the work of the Lord – it will lead to chastisement on account of unholy and carnal zeal! but it is equally dangerous to cease from it, for if we do, we shall lose the blessing, and perhaps not find out that we have lost it, till we see it passing us by, and lighting down upon others.

When David saw what a blessed man Obed-Edom had become, he was provoked, it would seem, to jealousy in the good work, and made arrangements for carrying it on anew. And so we shall ever find, that when visible, humbling judgments come upon us, they lay us low at the time, and then the Lord's hand again returns to lift us up in Christ Jesus. If there is to be much of the Lord's presence among us as a church, we shall see far more of this than is expected, by many who think they are longing for God's work to begin. There would, in that case, be breaches made upon us; visible judgments on the unconverted, visible judgments on believers and on congregations; and these things may be sent for many just causes, both on ministers and people; because, alas! there is much building with untempered mortar.

And were the Lord, indeed, thus to begin to work amongst us, how many would be finding out, that they had come into the ministry, and come into the eldership, and into the deacon's office, and to the communion table, *without a divine call*. And those who feel that they *have* a divine call, would be finding out, too, that judgments were coming upon *them*, because they had been taking liberties with the work of God. All would be discovering that He is not One whose ways or thoughts are as ours; but that He is a jealous God, who will not give His glory to another, nor His praise to graven images. And yet, remember that if we, out of fear, refuse to go along with the ark, we shall get no blessing.

Let us follow Him who is the Angel of the Covenant, seeking to know well whom it is that we follow; not hastily rushing, like Uzza, of our own choice, to this or that other part of His work. Let us go where Jehovah leads; let us pray; let us tremble to offend in the least matter, Him with who the blessing lies. Let us seek to be continually engaged in His work, in His way, keeping in mind that we can do nothing, attempt nothing, except as He directs; and even then must it be with constant holy fear and watchfulness, lest a breach be made upon us. Yet this spirit of holy fear is almost unknown among us. Why so? Because there is so little appearance of the Lord's working. More of this would bring more of holy fear, especially upon us in the ministry. One would think, from the way in which God's service is undertaken and performed, that it was a thing any man could do whenever he pleased, instead of being a thing high above us, requiring the constant aid and direction of His Holy Spirit.

But, secondly, we see from this chapter who it was that should carry the ark. A great number of priests were chosen and appointed by God's direction, through David, to this office, and set apart solemnly for it. And in like manner, there is in the church of Christ a race set apart to do service to Him, and to carry His

gospel through the world – even a royal priesthood. It consists of every true minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor is the work confined to ministers and elders. It is delivered by the Lord into the hands of the New Testament priesthood. We are thus taught that it is the bounden duty of all believers to join in this work, and also warned of the danger of admitting any into it who are not God’s people, since they alone will be accepted in it. Alas! this is too often done, others are called in, and the Lord’s blessing is withheld.

Their names are given here, and for many reasons, though some may be wearied by such long catalogues. One of these reasons, doubtless, is to shew what a distinction it is in the eyes of the Holy One, to be employed in His service; and not only does this apply to those in the ministry, but to all who are in any way connected with His cause; for they all have this high honour from Himself, as well as a heavy responsibility laid upon them.

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER 10

### RETURN OF THE ARK

[Perth, February 1844]

1 Chronicles 15

All the priests chosen to bring up the ark to the city of David were commanded to sanctify themselves. “For,” said David to the priests, “because ye did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought Him not after the due order.” Experience had taught David; sad when it does not teach us, yet seldom does it teach presumptuous men. David had got the sanctified use of the breaking forth of God’s anger upon Uzza. We find also in this account of the ark’s return, that many persons were appointed to the giving of thanks. Surely the approach of the King of saints ought to be welcomed by the highest praises of all creatures; yet how cold and lifeless are we in this matter! All the details here given set forth typically the variety of the praises which the children of God owe to Him for His varied dealings towards each. And there is a great variety in these. Some can tell of dealings which others cannot comprehend; and, oh! what some souls have to praise Him for. How loud will be their song to Him who liveth forever and ever! What notes some will reach! How high their strains!

The form of praise was not left to chance. David delivered the psalm to Asaph with his own hand. It was the spontaneous effusion of that hour, directed by the putting forth of the Holy Ghost, and thus David was full of joy as he approached the resting-place of the ark. He was clothed in a robe of fine linen, which is emblematical of the glorified state of Christ’s church, for she is clothed as in fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints. And, then, filled with the Spirit, he came forth leaping for joy. This is a state in which the Lord’s people can get and need expect no sympathy from the world. None but those who have some acquaintance with the Lord, -- the source of all their gladness, -- will be able to bear their company when they are in a very lively state, and enabled greatly to rejoice in the Lord. At such times, the world, like Michal, looks down upon them, and is filled with pity and even hatred towards them.

Michal felt, no doubt, the greatest *respect* for David in general; she would, no doubt, idolize him, with the thousands of Israel, when the cry was that he had slain his tens of thousands. But when David was more

than usually exalted in the Lord and in the power of His might, -- when he could rejoice in Jehovah all the day, and boast in the God of his salvation -- the man after God's own heart, -- it was then that Michal (who does not appear to have been a godly woman, but one with whom David was unequally yoked, being an unbeliever) saw King David dancing and playing; and she despised him in her heart. Oh! how like to what we see now-a-days, and to what has been and will be seen in every age to exist in the hearts of the unregenerate. How perfectly does it express the contempt of the world towards the godly, not at all times, observe, nor indeed at any time, but just when believers are lifted up in soul, and enabled to behold Him "whom their soul loveth." There is the point at which the enmity of the world begins.

And just as it was not a stranger who mocked David, but Michal, his own wife; so in families we find that this enmity burns hottest of all. This is often quite imperceptible in times of deadness, but not when the Lord appears. Instead of the coming up of the ark into a place, or a congregation, or a family, being a signal for peace, and a cause of union, it is the very reverse. When the Ark of the Covenant comes up and rests among us (should that blessed and longed for day ever come, we shall hear of more disunion yet. Union among believers will grow and be strengthened and increase; but *disunion* from unbelievers will increase in proportion. So it is with iron put into a furnace. Some one might put it in, with all the clay about it, to harden it and make the substances *unite*. But this would not be the case. All the metallic part would flow together, and become pure and hardened, but the rest would consume and separate. And where the Lord appears in His glory, congregations are broken up, and churches rent asunder; multitudes are seen standing back in alarm, and *none* are united but the Lord's true people, while *they* are despised by relatives and acquaintances, those nearest them in the family or in the church, despising them most.

How little have we of His presence now! The want of chastisement is one mark of His absence. Were he among us, there would be more strokes coming direct from the Lord's hand. There would also be blessings coming direct from His hand upon all; and His own people would be filled with the Spirit, devoted to His glory, triumphing in His praise, and separate from the world. Such a sight as that would quickly bring reproach, mockery, and suffering in its train.

How did David answer the taunt of his wife? "It was before the Lord, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel: therefore will I play before the Lord. And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight; and of the maid-servants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour." Oh, how beautiful! Few, few have such grace!

Look at the psalm which David composed on the occasion of the coming up of the ark. *He* was not deterred of the coming up of the ark. *He* was not deterred by contempt or ridicule from going on in the praise of the Lord. "Give thanks unto the Lord. . . . Be ye mindful always of his covenant," going on to shew how the Lord had been faithful, always rebuking their enemies; working, as now He does, wonderful deliverances for His people, when they do not know it; following them from nation to nation; and many times when they think they are deserted by Him, and given over into the hands of their enemies, He is staying the arm of persecution, and saying to their oppressors, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm," while He is reproving kings for their sakes. And thus, He leads them by His providence, and protects them by His power, till He brings them to His presence in His house above.

If it be so, let His people be continually remembering their Lord, and declaring His goodness to others. Think of the blessedness of being His people. And when you see houses among you where the Lord seems

to dwell, should not such sights incite you to strive to get near Him who blesseth them and theirs. Remember, that all are not alike in this matter. There is much left to man's free-will. The hand of the diligent maketh rich in the things of God, as well as in temporal mercies. Let the Lord's people resolve in His strength, that they are to be of the number of those who *make full proof* of the present fruits and privileges of salvation, and they shall not be disappointed.

Are there any such here to-night? any who run the race determinately and fleetly; who pass by, and get out of, and far beyond, the ranks of loiterers and them who are at ease? Are any of you running as if one alone were to obtain the prize? as if the gate of life were too narrow to admit any but *yourself*? Some of us will be taught the necessity for this, by seeing many draw back unto perdition. We might be taught it by Emmanuel's words, "Hold fast that thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Ah! we'll get our crown taken unless we trample upon ease and sloth, and difficulty, in His name. BLESSED IS THE MAN THAT FEARETH ALWAYS, and who is thus, in continual trembling, led to draw from the fullness of One able to keep him from falling.

Now, may that jealous God, who bringeth down every high thing, and casteth down every proud imagination, by "the power whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself," *bring us down*, and cast us all into the dust before Him; lest, being lifted up by pride, we touch, with Uzza's hand the ark of the covenant; for then Uzza's judgments will surely break out upon us. Oh! that Jehovah would raise up, for His service in the ministry, men who will go about, taking their lives in their hands, counting not their life dear unto them. Precious, Lord, in Thy sight, is the death of Thy saints; and if it be so, why need they fear? they *cannot* lose life till the time appointed. Oh! for ministers in our beloved land, such as have never yet been seen, -- men who will go bound hither and thither, and will go all the more confidently in the Master's name, even when the Spirit testifieth that "bonds abide them." Oh! for humbling in the Lord's sight, because of personal sin, to be creeping into the dust on account of it, and in view of Thy glory, Lord Jesus. We see not Thy matchless perfections, oh, "Thou fairer than the sons of men," and yet Thou art ours, "the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely!"

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER 11

### TRIAL MADE SWEET

[Perth, February 1844]

"PATIENT IN TRIBULATION." – Romans 12:12

If, while earthly good is removed, Divine consolation is given instead, the believer gets back an hundred-fold what he gave up, by receiving that which is an hundred-fold better.

What an example of this we have in Moses. He deliberately chose present reproach with the people of God, and then he straightway esteemed it "greater riches." Reproach is not a sweet thing in itself; it is only when it is Christ's reproach that it becomes sweet; and when it is thus suffered, believe the testimony of all the saints, that any suffering, when borne along with Christ, is sweeter than any joy enjoyed without Him. Another thing that sweetens reproach, is when it is borne in company with the Lord's dear children: and

indeed, there is just one company that it is good to be in, and that is the despised company of the Lord's children. Not that their outward circumstances, either always or often, make it pleasant to be with them. One does not naturally like to be shut up in the city where famine is raging, or in the dwelling infested by the plague: that cannot be desirable for itself, unless there is some circumstance apart from these that makes it so. Now, God's people are often in the greatest straits, sorely reduced, and seemingly forsaken; but it is best, it is safest, to be among God's people. And believe it, brethren, if there is any day when it is especially good to be among them, it is not when they are saying with

Job, "I shall die in my nest, and multiply my days;" and when all earthly things go so well with them that they have nothing more to wish for. It is safest, it is best, it is sweetest to be among them in dark and troublous times, when they find a hedge about their path, and when thorns are on the road; when they are wandering hither and thither in the valley of Achor, and are looking out at the door of hope. Theirs is not a waiting-time and a watching-time; a short-day, or, as they are tempted to think it, a long day, of labour and of prayer, during which they have oftentimes no comfort but that of the hope of brighter days to come. How often that expression forces itself on us, "Thou shalt abide for me many days." What a striking word! What a type of the faithful, constant self-dedication of the Church, or of the believer, to his absent Lord. Ah! this reminds us, and reassures us that the marriage-covenant is not broken, it is not annulled. It was formed when the sinner gave his heart in solemn covenant to the Lord, and when the Lord Himself said, "Thou art mine;" shall it ever be forgotten, come what may? True it is not yet complete, "The top-stone hath not yet been brought forth with shouting." Believers have got a time of trial given them meanwhile, an opportunity to prove their love for Emmanuel; they are to be employed in waiting for Him, and living to Him; and He does not even now leave them comfortless. No, He comports them in ways as various as their individual needs and desires.

Let us mention three of them. The first is *tidings of Himself*, through the word of God, which tells them all He was on earth, and much of what He is in heaven since He sat down upon His throne. The second way is by the visits of His spirit, which are frequent, heart-supporting, and refreshing to the weary soul. And the third is the blessed hope of seeing Him again; it may be soon, very soon; and it shall be a vision of Him "as He is," whenever it shall come. By these and other means, after which we would earnestly entreat you to seek to profit, -- and He has infinite resources of grace and glory, -- he does support his Church and carry her through the deepest waters, and across the raging surge, even beyond the river of death till He place her at His own right hand. And remember, my beloved friends, that it is no new thing for Him to do this: nay, He can lead her through flames of fire, and seven-times hearted furnaces, to the city of habitation, just as securely and as happily as by an ordinary path.

Oh! bear this in mind, that it is not an untried Gospel that we are called to lean upon. It is no new thing to pass through fire and water before coming into the wealthy place prepared before the foundations of the world; nor it is an unbeaten path that the ransomed of the Lord have to pass over. It is a blessed thing when by trials the Lord leads His people on to his own future promised glory, and it is a safe thing when He leads them into the wilderness, because He has the power to carry them also through the wilderness, and out of the wilderness, all the journey through. Safe are they who are leaning on such an arm. They will be borne through, and, though they may have to seal their testimony with their blood, they will yet be borne testimony to. You may say, "Why speak so much of these things?" Brethren, because we may need these things before we meet again, -- we cannot tell, -- yes, ere then the time may be come, when we shall have to enter into our chambers and shut the doors about us until calamity be over past, and when, had we not such

real supports as these to look to, we might be desolate enough. Ah! we would need to be having our anchor cast within the veil, to be learning to lay faster hold upon Jehovah's word, and leaning on His faithful promises. What an amazing ground of consolation does that word afford to the weakest saint: the Lord has provided the very surest and best foundation that His wisdom could have devised to invite and to secure the poor sinner's confidence. Build then upon it. Remember that "he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, and few there be that go in thereat. Many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." "He that loseth his life for my name's sake shall keep it;" keep it, defend, protect it upon life eternal. "If any man serve me, him shall my Father honour."

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER 12

### THE BREAKER UP

[Free West Church, Sabbath Evening, February 19, 1844]

"I WILL SURELY ASSEMBLE, O JACOB, ALL OF THEE; I WILL SURELY GATHER THE REMNANT OF ISRAEL; I WILL PUT THEM TOGETHER AS THE SHEEP OF BOZRAH, AS THE FLOCK IN THE MIDST OF THEIR FOLD: THEY SHALL MAKE GREAT NOISE BY REASON OF THE MULTITUDE OF MEN. THE BREAKER IS COME UP BEFORE THEM: THEY HAVE BROKEN UP, AND HAVE PASSED THROUGH THE GATE, AND ARE GONE OUT BY IT; AND THEIR KING SHALL PASS BEFORE THEM, AND THE LORD ON THE HEAD OF THEM." Micah 2:12-13

This passage refers to ancient Israel, but its application does not end there. It applies to the salvation of everyone who is delivered from the death and bondage of sin, by Him here called "The Breaker," who is evidently no other than the Son of the mighty God. Three things we notice here – first, What is said of Israel, "They have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it." That has an application to all who are delivered; and to prepare the way for this, two other things must be noticed, and these refer, not to the people who go out, but to Jesus, their King, -- "They have broken up, they have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it."

You will ask, from what are they delivered? The language employed here, refers to a state of captivity and bondage, -- to persons shut up in a prison, encompassed by walls, gates, and bars. From this prison-house, they come out. On the state of outward bondage to which the passage may refer, if taken literally, we have not time to dwell at present; but as applied to the state of an individual sinner, it evidently represents the man here to be in a state of imprisonment. When a citizen of any land commits a public offense against its laws, he is taken up, and, by the power of the law, kept in prison. So it is with the breakers of the law of God. What but the power of law is shewn by all our prisons and penitentiaries? What are these but so many assertions, made by the law of the country, that it has power over the acts of men, and so many provisions made by the statutes of the realm, for the safety of persons and of property, -- for the preservation of social order, and the maintenance of civil peace? So is it with the offender against God's moral government. Every claim made upon the creature, rests on the divine law given in the Ten Commandments; and if we dared to place one part of Jehovah's testimony above another, we should call it the most important part of the Word

of God, -- the only part of that Word which was written by His own finger; distinguished by Him in this way.

Unless you have a right and distinct view of this, you can neither understand your awful state, nor God's glorious deliverance from it. Not till then will you see, that, as a human law pursues, imprisons, and keeps the offender bound, so the divine law accuses, pursues, apprehends, judges, condemns, and imprisons. Then it is that bonds are on the soul, and chains upon the conscience. They do not, indeed, bind the body, but they are stronger than any other, for the iron enters into the soul. The sinner is kept as in a prison held fast so that he cannot escape. If the bars were of brass, or iron, they might be broken, -- if they were adamant, they might be burst asunder; but the chain that binds him, is a righteous sentence, passed by the Holy One. Who can alter the nature of justice? Its bond is stronger than omnipotence, since omnipotence will not, and cannot break it. Power cannot throw it down, for power is but the hand of justice, and inferior to it. Not so, indeed, on earth: what is right, and what is, are not always the same thing now. Power triumphs many a time over right; but even on earth, in a moral point of view, that which is right is infinitely superior to that which has merely power on its side. If omnipotence could prevail over justice at any time, to set her lawful captives free, it would put the triumph into Satan's hands! Is it not the very glory of the Lord, that His justice guides His power! The law has, in its own hand, a right to condemn and to destroy. Justice reigns and shines in God's government, through all His holy nature, and in His blessed will. Herein lies the strength of our prison. Take an illustration. When I sin, I am guilty. I am worthy of the wrath of the living God. Justice brings her accusations and lays them at my door, while, in her hand, is the warrant to destroy; and power stands back: it cannot, by whomsoever wielded, release me. Why? Because it was not against power that I sinned: it was justice that I wounded, -- it was holiness I grieved, and they must be satisfied, come what may of me. The illustration only gains strength as you widen the range from one guilty soul to a myriad. Come what may to all creatures in the universe, justice must be vindicated and glorified eternally.

By the Word of God, and from the experience of men we know, that in all ages, since the fall to this present day, there has come forth, from this dark and lawful prison-house, a holy band of delivered men, -- the ransomed church of God. They have broken up, passed through the gate, and have gone out by it. Yes; and we know, that at this hour there are in the midst of a world which lieth in the Wicked One, a company who have been breaking up, and passing through, coming out, by the open gates of righteousness, into present and eternal liberty from condemnation, vengeance, and eternal doom! They have broken up, and have passed through the gate. Observe, it is something done by them, not only done for them (as salvation, doubtless, is done wholly for us, in one sense); it is also done by an act of their own will, -- an act, ungodly man, which you too must yet to, if ever you are to be saved, -- an act, believing sinner, which you have already done. You are come out into a large place. How, then, did you this? How did you escape? We cannot understand it; and yet, you came out by your own act, -- you came out with the triumph and the confidence of a believing sinner, and you have walked in the light of God's reconciled countenance up to this hour. But how? Were not these walls of adamant, were not these barriers impassable, was not your soul undone? See, beloved, the Breaker! The heavenly Breaker is gone up before.

Three names are given to Him in this single verse. There is, first, the incommunicable name, Jehovah -- I am. This leader of the people is none other than "the Man who is Jehovah's Fellow." That is one name, but He has another, "their King at the head of them," even the King of kings. "He hath on his vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords." "I will make Him my First-Born, higher than the kings of the earth." The third name given is the Breaker. See, now, it is Jehovah Himself who has

entered in and gone before; and He is called "The Breaker" for various reasons. First, that he has to break through many barriers. He opened the gate by which the ransomed of the Lord come forth from prison, and by which the church has a ready and constant access to the holiest of all. And how did He come forth?

We have told you of that prison-house, and of its security. We have told you that its walls are the righteousness of the law, holding the sinner under the curse of God. But how are these things ever to be taken out of the way? How shall holiness become the sinner's friend? How is divine justice to take the sinner's part, seeing that power can avail him nothing, supposing, which God forbid, it were brought over to his side. All is done by the Lord Jehovah. In a very few words we shall try to tell you how. He comes down from the heavens, and advances to the gates of justice; He undertakes to break them, by coming first into the prison itself, -- within its very walls. Among its poor inmates is heard the joyful sound, "To us a child is born, to us a son is given." To us the holy child Jesus appears, born among sinners, born in the prison, born within the gates of the condemning law, born of a human mother, born of a sinful creature. Not one whit better than other sinners was Mary. Of her was He born into a world condemned and perishing, and subject to the awful curse of God.

He did not enter the prison after He was brought up. No, He was *born* there; and not content with that, our King spends His life in the prison, dwelling here for more than thirty years. What was He doing all that time? Many seem to speak as if He had done next to nothing in these thirty years, and that His glorious work of redemption was not begun then; but that it was a very inferior part of His life on earth that we hear of when it is said that he lived unknown but as the carpenter's son -- the child of Mary. But, ah! He was obeying the law, in satisfying all its demands and keeping it entire. Every bar, then, that made the prison secure, was impassable and indestructible, because each one was a bar of pure justice, and unspotted holiness, and eternal truth; and each one had a voice to cry, "The soul that sinneth it shall die"; while the gates were bolted, so to speak, by the majesty and holiness of God.

Anything else would have been a setting aside of the justice of God, for the sake of a guilty worm, -- which cannot be; therefore the Lord undertook to be the Breaker. Ah! Satan thought that the gates could not be broken, or at least, if they could, that it would serve his purpose even better; for it would be the triumph of power over right. But the Deliverer was a great King, and He was Jehovah all the time He was working out this deliverance for us. That was what made His work of infinite value; that was what enabled Him confidently to undertake to pay all the price that justice could demand. He undertook to open wide the gates of brass, to buy them open, and to leave them open to the end of time, as gates of righteousness and gates of life! Oh, what an undertaking! For this He kept the holy law for three-and-thirty years; for this He laboured among the unbelieving Jews; for this he bore the united hatred of man and devils, aye, and even desertion from the Father Himself. The work of His lifetime was laying down the price of man's salvation, and setting open the gates of righteousness. Little did the world think what Christ was doing. Satan thought that he himself was triumphing in his own work of darkness; and in proportion as the Lord's work progressed, Satan, thought it was going backward. When Satan thought the victory was won, Emmanuel was actually putting the price into the Father's hand. So He lay in the grave till death could keep its royal Master no longer; for death had now no cord wherewith to bind Him. On the resurrection morning, the Breaker arose a conqueror.

This was the Breaker coming up; and the reason why the bands of death were allowed to hold Him was, that the strong bond of justice was around Him. It was not man's power that crucified the Lord of Glory, it was an unseen power -- the power of a sentence passed in a higher court. It was not the Jews, nor was it

Pilate, that laid the chains upon Him, -- it was the process pending at the bar of justice on high, in the name of sinners; *that* alone gave Him into the power of death and the grave. But now that sentence being executed, the grave could no longer hold Him. He died once, but, behold! He is alive again.

I fear that few of us realize our need of this Saviour. Here the door is open, and now the message is to tell the wide world that all may enter; and to call upon all men to awake, arise, and flee from wrath to come. The prison is the very place where you have been born and brought up in. You have lived in it too long to wish to escape from it. Yet listen to these precious words, "The Breaker is gone up." Yes; and He comes to you and asks you to go forth. The Lord comes up to the poor sinner, to everyone whom He delivers; he comes by His word, by His divine power, by His servants, and by His Spirit. He awakens them, -- He arouses them as the jailor at Philippi. Peter trembled when the angel came to him in the prison: but the Lord led him forth, and he found, to his amazement, that, instead of meeting with obstacles, every door was standing wide open for his escape. We need the Lord to come forth with us, to lead us by the hand. The door has stood open now for eighteen hundred years; but oh, how few come forth. How we need the Breaker still; we need Him in the midst of us; we need His hand to touch the sleeping sinner, and take him by the hand. And all we have to do is to come among you to tell that the new and living way is open, and that if you will but come boldly up to it, come when it even seems bolted to your unbelieving eye, it will spring open of itself. Oh, that men were walking forth in multitudes into the freedom of the Lord! Where, oh where, is the freedom of the Free Church, if she is in bondage with her children, if they are not being made free by the Son of God?

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER 13

### WORDS OF WARNING

[Free St. Leonard's Church, Perth, Sabbath Afternoon, February 19, 1844]

#### 2 Thessalonians 2

This chapter contains a most remarkable prophecy of the rise, progress, and final destruction of Antichrist; and we now desire to direct your attention to what prepared the world and the professing church in the first ages for being deluded by Antichrist, and to that which should also prepare the world in the end of time for receiving its delusions afresh. The apostle begins by warning the Thessalonians church of the danger they were in, or misunderstanding the directions which he had previously given them. They had been told that the Lord was *at hand*; and *this was true, as the apostle meant it*; but they had misunderstood him: they had been taking the times and the seasons out of the Father's hand, and begun to set times for the accomplishment of prophecy. This was their error; and this epistle was written to entreat them not to be shaken or moved, as though the day of Christ were at hand. This warning equally applies to us in these days; for we are too apt to bring the fulfillment of prophecy down to the times in which we live. True, we are nearer to the end of time than the Thessalonians were; the coming of Christ is eighteen hundred years nearer than it was then. But still we have great need of warning regarding it. This is a time of trial in the church of God; a time when we cannot expect much outward peace or comfort; and therefore there is a great danger of men's groping about for consolation, -- laying hold of anything in that shape that comes within

their reach, and oftentimes holding fast what is *unreal*: and then, again, it often happens, that when those things which they had taken up as certain, do not come to pass, they are more and more discouraged.

The apostle begins by telling the Thessalonians about the Roman heresy, which should corrupt the professing church, until she should apostatize, and finally be made drunk with the blood of the saints. The character given here of this mystery of iniquity is very awful, and evidently applies to the Roman Antichrist. There are, doubtless, *many* Antichrists to which this description may have reference; but that it emphatically applies to Rome in the first instance, there can be no doubt. Notice what is set before us in the 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> verses: -- "And will all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." This teaches us that God in righteous judgment would allow, and did allow Satan to put forth his power to deceive and ruin souls. Nothing is more remarkable than the *place* in which the abomination that maketh desolate was to be set up: it was not among the idolatrous heathen, nor among the open enemies of Christ, but in the *temple of God*, in the midst of the professing church itself; which teaches us clearly, that the judgments of the professing church are more awful than any other *because* the sin of hearing the gospel without obeying it, is *greater* than any other. The deceitfulness of Rome is tenfold greater than any of the abominations of the heathen, and her judgments will be more tremendous. Why? To shew that there is no place where God so hates sin as in His own church. "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore will I punish you for your iniquities."

We may be preparing ourselves for that – remembering that, when judgment does begin at the house of God, it will be the most awful of all. There is *no* place where men will be more readily given over to delusion, and to the belief of a lie. There were few churches more honoured in early days than the Church of Rome; and so now, because it has fallen from Christ, it has become a golden cup in the hand of Satan, by which he maketh the nations drunk: that cup is going the round of the nations *now*, to the great amazement of many of the world's wise children. Many professors wonder at it too, and cannot comprehend how men, in the nineteenth century, should be drinking of all the delusions of the dark ages – they think they can easily, by their own natural powers and intellect, avoid all those deceits, and that it is a simple thing for men to judge, by natural wisdom, between truth and error. My dear friends, those who think so will be taught something else ere very long: nothing will save a man from being carried away by the deceivableness of unrighteousness, but the simple receiving of the love of the truth; and let it be remembered that none but those who have received the truth in the love of its most humbling – most Christ-glorifying – sinner-abasing, God-exalting parts, are in the least secure from being carried away by the mystery of iniquity, which seems threatening to overflow the whole land, and to take possession of the temple of God.

It is by the *truth* alone that men are saved; and a heart new created in them, to love, embrace, and keep close to the truth, is the only defense against error of every kind. It is not a *wide head*, but a *sanctified heart*, that will save a man from the most awful delusions, and from the most deep and wily deceits that Satan ever devised. See that *ye* love the truth for its own sake, for the danger of being carried aside by error, is never greater, than in a place where the work of God has been extensively carried on. When the Spirit ceases to work there, those people who have not the genuine love of the truth, lose their appetite for the plain preaching of it altogether. They are driven back and forward, as the chaff before the wind, and then, when the hour and power of darkness is, and when temptation rushes in, they are quickly carried away by Satan's devices, and by the lying wonders which he has received power to perform on the earth. The devil's power

has been, is now, and will yet be so great, and the manifestations of it are so new and numerous, that the time appears to be drawing nigh when they will deceive, if it were possible, the very elect.

Men often think they will be saved from error by belonging to a particular congregation, association, or church, pure as they call it. They cry out, as Satan cries within them, "The Church, the Church!" Not, perhaps, the Church of Rome, or even the Church of England, but still it comes much to the same thing – it is always *the church*, just as of old, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these!" Ah, brethren, beware, beware! No class is, perhaps, for this cause, so near to the strong delusion of Satan as those among whom great things have been done, and who have passed through glorious times of the Lord's right hand without receiving the truth. Look at the Jews, whom God singled out to be the object of His chief blessing. A remnant was indeed, saved, according to the election of grace; but, as a nation, it was not so. Because they hardened their hearts, God sent them strong delusions, and Paul declares that their ears were dull of hearing, and their eyes they had closed, so that they could not see Him to be very God, who was the only begotten of the Father. That delusion is not broken after eighteen hundred years, except in a very few cases comparatively, -- and shall the righteous Judge of all the earth act upon a different principle towards us now? He will not, He does not, as we have too fearful proof around us. Brethren, I warn you. We see not yet the end of these things: "God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie." It is awful to be deluded in matters of eternal consequence, in things of the soul, where heaven and hell, life and death, are in the question; but how far more awful when God Himself sends the delusion, for then, alas! it comes with the power of a divine commission; it comes over the soul without the opposition of a check or restraining power of any kind. It is the work of Satan as all the works of darkness are; it cannot proceed from the Father of lights, for in Him is no darkness at all. Its cause and origin is far removed from Him who is the fountain of life, and yet it is an act unopposed by Him as the God of providence.

It was long a common delusion, that either no man could be really sincere in a bad cause, or in a false doctrine, or that, if he could be proved to be sincere, this was enough. Do you think that this passage would lead us to say that none can conscientiously hold a false doctrine? No; for it is said "that they should *believe* a lie;" shewing that men may be deceived in their belief, while it proves that their belief of a lie cannot save them from being condemned by it. While the termination of their sin is clearly pointed out, the fruitful cause of it is not hidden. It is declared to be twofold – the believing not the truth, and the having pleasure in unrighteousness. These sins involve many fearful consequences unimagined when they are committed. You may be safe, as you think, in a godly congregation, and yet commit these sins; you may belong to a pure church, and yet commit them; you may have the gospel sound ringing in your ears, and love to hear it, and yet commit them. You have never yet believed Emmanuel's testimony, and when He Himself drew near, and appeared in His glory in this place, and when His voice of majesty was heard, and His glorious power seen in the sanctuary, you never bowed to Him, you never put the crown upon His head; multitudes of professing Christians rejected Himself, and denied His work, or thought you did a great deal when you did not oppose it. And now you are twice dead, plucked up by the roots; no sermon touches you, no minister awakens your conscience, no warning ever gets near you. Awake! or Satan will rob you of your day of grace altogether, and ruin your precious souls.

Verse 13. "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Chosen to salvation! Oh, that blessed word! The apostle thanked God; he did not thank *himself*, he did not thank *them* that they were faithful to their high calling; but he thanked God, who had chosen them

from the beginning, and called them to Himself. This eternal purpose of God is your only security: and how precious what follows! – they were not only chosen to faith and repentance, but chosen to complete salvation. The means used – the belief of the truth. The agent – Jehovah the Spirit. Yes, the living God takes a lump of the fallen Adam, quickens it, creates it anew, works faith in it, and brings it on to the end in view – the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. And yet for this glorious salvation the unregenerate have no taste, though eternal life or eternal death is at stake. They look to things seen; their eye rests on present obstacles, and they LET SALVATION GO! they let it slip, and they are undone! Let the children of God also beware.

The devil is too cunning for you to withstand single-handed and alone. Hold fast by Christ, or he will lead you to the pit yet: he will take our life – he will lead us captive, and take our crown! He would take our *Saviour* from us if he could, and thus take our all.

Many of us seem to be as it were leaving Satan's artifices out of account; we seem to be thinking that somehow or other we shall slip into heaven, we know not well how. That was not Paul's expectation, and he knew well that it is far otherwise with God's people; and be very sure that *you* will also have to encounter many an obstacle and many a difficulty more than you calculate on. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne." Are there any here who have got the spirit to overcome? any who are following the Lord fully? Or, are we not constrained to say, What a contrast to past days! -- some becoming cold in their service, -- some leaving their first love, -- some falling into sin, -- some apostatizing altogether, -- many losing their love of the truth, and going after new doctrines.

This brings us to notice, in verses 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, first, an exhortation given, and then a prayer. "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." What tradition does he mean? you will ask. There are two kinds of traditions. One kind of *man's* making, all of which are to be *abhorred and cast away*; and another kind of traditions, which are God's traditions, and are to be held fast through life, and unto death, be the consequences what they may. The word "tradition" has no mysterious or difficult signification; it means something delivered from one to another, -- something handed down, whether from God to man, or from man to man. To the first of these we may ever safely cling; on the second many are now beginning to lean, and they will lean on them till they fall through them into destruction. Hold fast then the traditions which ye have been taught; not the traditions of men, -- not the traditions of Rome, -- not the traditions of your fathers, Christ's faithful martyrs though they were. No; leave that to Rome, leave that to English Puseyism. Your faith lies *here*, within the boards of this Bible. Your life is in that book and especially in such parts of it as search deepest into your heart, and pierce furthest through your corruptions. The closer you keep to it, the further will you be from error.

"For there must also be heresies among you that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." You will see these spreading in different parts of the land. They will come, perhaps, into your own congregation, even amongst yourselves. I fear there may be something akin to this among you already. Hold God's truth, believer; take not up what is new either *readily* or *strongly*. Its novelty may for a time give it a charm; but novelty, novelty! is the cry of an Athenian fickle people, not that of the humbled, tried believer. He does not need this; he finds constant newness of the oldest truths; he finds a fresh and ever-flowing spring of life in the Lord himself. He looks to Christ, and seeks to know and obey His will, and he has not time for more.

Beware of all doctrines which make you high-minded and puffed up, great talkers and expert reasoners, but which yet leave the soul as a dry and withered thing. Plain doctrines once satisfied you. I remember the time when they were your choicest portions in all the Word of God, but now I fear that *salvation, heaven, hell, judgment, eternity*, are not such weighty words as they used to be in your ears. Plain things have worn out of fashion; you have got beyond them; they are too simple and tasteless for you now. In those days the only thing that satisfied you was to hear old simple truths, and plain sermons about regeneration, or man's lost and ruined condition, or, perhaps, even more about Emmanuel's righteousness, or the new heart, and the work of grace, whereby all old things pass away.

Listen to Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians Church: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and stablish you in every good word and work." If that prayer were offered by your minister for you, and by you for yourselves, *and answered*, what a rich congregation would this be! I know that some of you don't *wish to receive* all that this prayer contains; some would like to settle down upon their lees, some would shrink from the testimony they are called on to make for Christ, and some would like to avoid the labour and fatigue of hard, every-day work; and some would spend their strength in controversy, because that warfare, is so much more palatable and easy to the flesh, than the good fight of faith. Brethren! be not hoodwinked out of your salvation, by thinking that you have found out a softer and an easier path to heaven, than the old path, and the King's highway. There is no softer path to heaven, than that which still bears the foot-prints of the Man of sorrows. There has been no wider gate invented since the days when the Lord preached concerning it, in the land of Judea. It is the strait gate still, -- it is the narrow way still; and it must be trod barefoot, to be trod at all. We must agonize in order to enter it at all; it takes many a conflict before the gate yields to our hand, for it is strait, or rather it takes many a conflict with the sin that we would fain be allowed to carry with us. Do you say you find the way hard? Oh! don't stop short of eternal glory, for the sake of a hard road to it. The Lord Himself will put you on it. The Lord will give you everlasting comforts in it. Think not of making a bed of ease, on the road which Emmanuel strewed with groans, and sighs, and prayers, and tears! Think it enough if you have the Three-one God to meet with by the way, and *besides that seek nothing*, but be thankful now and then to be meeting with some weary pilgrim like yourself, who can tell, from a deeply-taught and deeply-humbled soul, of the goodness and loving kindness of your covenant God.

Trust not much for your soul's profit to the constant talking about matters connected with religion, which we now hear so much of. You cannot go into a steamboat or a coach now-a-days without hearing something of that kind, and yet, my dear friends, we do not find that true religious conversation is more common: on the contrary, it is much more *uncommon* than it was. It is always the Church, the Church! that we hear of. There is more Puseyism in that cry than we think; and, meanwhile, our need of grace in the heart is forgotten. There is little about us of that which puts men in mind that there is still a heaven, and a hell, and a glorious, living, reigning Christ. There seems at present to be a blight lying on ministers and people; little good is done; eternity is not brought near to our own souls, and how can we bring it near to the souls of others?

Wait then on the Lord, in this time of deadness and desertion; for, though multitudes are perishing, and though the world is fast asleep, yet there are still some, if not many, precious souls quietly and silently creeping into the kingdom of God, by the strait gate. And though noisy professors may be abusing the present outward circumstances of the church, to their own hindrance, and though the crowd of worldly men

may sink yet deeper in their forgetfulness of God, use you this season lawfully, and do not make a curse of what God intends for a blessing; hide for a little moment safe under His wings from the fear of evil. Seek righteousness, seek meekness; it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER 14

### THE VALLEY OF VISION

[Preached in St. Leonard's Church, Perth, on Wednesday evening, March 11, 1840, to a densely crowded audience.]

#### Ezekiel 37

There is so much in this chapter, that we cannot attempt to explain equally all parts of it; but shall merely make a few observations on what appear to be the principal objects offered to our consideration, remaining longer or shorter on each as the Lord may direct.

The first thing which seems pointed out, is the valley of vision itself, as it is called in another place, and of which the context clearly shews us the meaning. The valley filled with bones, represents a place filled with the remains of soldiers once alive. It was as the charnel-house of Israel, full of the slain, who, after death, had undergone the process of dismemberment and dissolution. Their bodies had first become lifeless, then suffered corruption, putrefaction, and decay; and not only so, but the very flesh had entirely left their bones, and they had become bleached, and whitened, and separated one from another; the ligaments, sinews, and joints being all broken, and everything but the actual bones dissolved and disappeared. The bones were "very many and very dry." What more complete picture of desolation and death could be given; and yet it is not a picture in the least too vivid of the state of moral death into which man has since the fall been sunk. He is dead, as it is explained in Ephesians, -- "and you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins."

Now, this doctrine, though allowed, is seldom believed and seldom acted on. We come to your city and tell you that you are dead, that it is a valley of dry bones; we call on you to flee and escape from "the city of destruction," and you are angry, you will not believe it, but you cry out, "It is defamation." Is it defamation? Then cast it upon the Lord Jehovah. But if you do, take warning of this, for you must abide by the consequences of resisting His word. He has shewn us, by the vision of the valley of dry bones, the state of unregenerate man, and we must see by that word that the comparison is just, -- "there is no health, no life in us," "we are full of wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." We are first dead by our relation to Adam, our father according to the flesh, having in him sinned, and thus come under the fearful condemnation of the broken covenant of works, and so made liable to the wrath and curse of Almighty God. Original sin, or the sin or our nature, therefore, seems to conclude us all in death. The spirit of life is taken from us, and the progress of decay is day by day increased by every actual transgression. It takes away even from the form which remained after the life was extinct, until; at length, our whole spirits and souls become corrupted and fast approaching the last stage of decay, illustrated by the dry bones.

One of the effects of our being dead is that we have lost the image of God, so that, with regard to that, we have become wholly unprofitable, like dry bones, in His sight. Man was at first created that he might be a mirror to reflect the glories of Jehovah. Now is that image entirely defaced, and another image is put on his defaced and disfigured soul. He no longer is holy, just, and true, but is (to use Scripture language) at *enmity* with God. What a thought is this enmity! How strange that the creature should ever have come to such a height of folly, of madness and iniquity, as to rise up and rebel against the God that made him, -- the God that shall judge him, and the God that must for this condemn him to the torments of hell.

Now, such are you all, everyone. This is what the true minister of Christ sees. He beholds you standing on the brink of a tremendous precipice, beneath which hell's gulf lies; he sees that unless God stretches out an omnipotent and a saving arm, you must drop into it. The servant of God, knowing and feeling this, cannot rest till he endeavors to make you aware of your danger. He cries out to you, beseeching you to consider; he must *pull* you away, drive you away from the edge of the pit, and try to save you that he may bring you home to God.

But let us now consider the chapter before us. First, the prophet says, "The hand of the Lord was upon me." This shews us what a real call to the ministry is. There are many calls spoken of among men, but this shews us there is but one. "The hand of the Lord was upon me." This primarily alludes to his exalted commission as an inspired prophet at the actual moment in which he wrote, but in an inferior, though not less real sense, does the Spirit descend on every preacher of Christ crucified, and call him to his work, whether in earliest infancy, in boyhood, or in riper manhood.

"And set me down in the midst of the valley, which was full of bones, and caused me to pass by them round about." This is what God always does when He intends to make always does when He intends to make any man an honoured instrument for the salvation of souls, -- He takes him out into the world, takes him all round the valley, and shews him that it is "full of bones, very many and very dry." He leads him from city to city, and, it may be, from country to country. Very often, when ordinary Christians are thinking that people are unhealthy and require amendment, they are not well, but their case is not very bad; the true servant of Christ sees that they are dead, that their case is desperate, that they are not only diseased and wounded, decaying and putrefying, that they are dead men, and that their bones only remain to shew they are men at all. It is a dark, melancholy spectacle to such a person to look abroad on the world; he sees nothing but a valley of bones, dismembered and decaying, and he mourns over them, and whether he may disclose it to those around him or not, there is an inward fountain of tears ever flowing over, -- he weeps over the souls of men.

The Lord then said to the prophet, "Can these bones live?" This, again, is a question put by the Lord to every minister, to see what manner of spirit he is of. Now, some ministers answer, "We think they can live. Many are diseased, but we shall preach much to them, we shall pray much with them; they have been born of Christian parents, brought up in a Christian country; they were brought to baptism in their infancy, they drank in the gospel truths with their mother's milk, were early brought to know the Word, learnt it on a mother's knee, learnt it by a father's side, they have been instructed in the doctrines of their holy Protestant faith, and, later in life, have been duly examined by a good minister, who has passed them as communicants worthy to sit down at the table of the Lord, and therefore we think that they can live." But what does the faithful minister of the gospel say in reply to such a question? He puts it back to God, saying, "Lord, thou knowest." Ah! it is a blessed thing when believers learn to do this; whenever a hard question is asked them,

or a hard doctrine held out for their belief (many are the questions thus proposed), they honour God by simply giving it back to Him, and praying, "Teach me."

Again He said, "Prophesy upon these bones, and say, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!" It is the duty of every minister to preach the word of the Lord; and this command to preach the Word to *dry* bones even, alone encourages us to do so. I have often said, and still oftener thought, that I might just as well, and with as much hope of success, go and preach to the gravestones in your Greyfriars churchyard, as come here to you – knowing that man can do nothing at all. "Why, then," some say, "do you preach? Why do you go to church, why then do you tell men to come to Christ if they cannot repent, which you yourselves allow and say they never can?" Because it is commanded; and this very command is our support, this command is our support, this command is our encouragement. When ministers get a sight of the valley of vision, and of the bottomless gulf into which bone after bone is sinking, they *do* feel that it is of importance that they should warn and alarm sinners; and then alone do they preach for death, preach for eternity, preach for the judgment-seat, preach for heaven, and preach, too, for *hell*. He at once goes, then, to call to the dry bones, and often, too often, does it without effect; but when he has done so, and spoken the words of the Lord, according to the will of God, then the Almighty Himself speaks to them through him, saying, "Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live; and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live, and ye shall know that I am the Lord."

"So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together bone to his bone." The prophet obeyed the command of Jehovah, hopeless as his endeavours might have appeared to him, and, lo! a shaking among the dry bones. Sinners first begin to be concerned, then anxious about their state, and then alarmed, and *that* sometimes so greatly, that it cannot be concealed in their outward deportment. Sleep flies from them, and tears are their portion night and day. But is this not very natural? and yet, when it is so, it is often called enthusiasm and madness. In Dundee lately, something of this kind was witnessed, and it was therefore denounced as not being the true work of God, because some cried out and wept bitterly, groaning as they felt themselves under the dominion of Satan, and got a sight of sin in their own hearts. It was on that occasion said by a well-known and very godly minister, from the north of Scotland, who visited Dundee in order to assure himself whether it were, indeed, the Spirit of God who was working there, "When bone comes to bone, will there be no shaking heard?"

And what time is more likely for such feeling as this, as when numbers of sinners are at once and together convinced of sin. Ah! will there be no extraordinary feelings, no excitement more than usual, when men first awake from the sleep of death, when they first see that hell from which they are escaping, and whose iron gates are newly barred behind them? No commotion when they first catch a glimpse of their heaven, to which they are joyfully turning that newly opened eye? Will there be no heart-stirring emotions when they see sin, not as condemning them, but as wounding the Crucified? If there is no deep feeling, my dear friends, whether it be inward or outward, when a mind is renewed, and undergoing that thorough change which must accompany regeneration, there is great danger, we think, of the apparent change not having been real. A man *must* feel at such a time; it is impossible but that he should feel, and that with a depth unknown to him before.

After the coming of bone to bone, the next thing that happened was the covering of the bones with sinews, and with flesh, and with skin. The body formerly decayed, was renewed; but ah! 'twas lifeless still. I

fear many present have got this length, and yet are not saved. Some of you have been getting sinews and flesh on the formerly naked bones. That is, you have been seeing your deformity in part, and you begin to perform neglected duties, to attend meetings, to study the Word of God with regularity, to go through your morning and evening devotions punctually; all around you, perhaps, are admiring the change, and you yourself are convinced that you are changed; you have come to ministers, and followed them. Ah! you are *our* converts, and not the Lord's. Beware of this – *beware of this*. If you are only the converts of ministers, woe, woe be to you, and woe be to us if we deceive.

I remember to have read of the great Whitfield, that one day, as he was returning from preaching, he overtook a man, who was intoxicated, driving a cart. When the carter recognized Whitfield, he called out, "O Mr. Whitfield, is that you? I'm glad to see you. I'm one of your converts." "Yes," said Whitfield, "I see you are one of *my* converts, and not one of the Lord's." Ah! what good will it do you in the day of judgment, that you have been outwardly changed, if the Spirit have not changed your hearts. Now, we don't deny that the change which has taken place is good; but don't rest there – don't rest in that outward form. I doubt not, 'tis lovely to look on; ah, 'tis fair and beautiful. No eye, perhaps, sees a defect in the newly-formed character, in the virtues so carefully cultivated, in the duties so scrupulously performed. No human eye detects the faults. All are deceived, and admire the change.

Thus, when the spirit has just fled from its earthly tenement, the body sometimes appears alive still for a little, and the unpracticed eye says, "Ah, I see no difference. My brother is not dead. The expression of intelligence and wonted sweetness plays round the lips. Still I can see no change." Yes, that form is fair, is oftentimes passing lovely, -- the colour, that once glowed upon the cheek, still tinges it, perhaps, in death, -- the chiseled features have not suffered the slightest change, -- the eye is not yet dimmed, the smile has not yet left the lips that never spoke but in love; and yet – yet – the eye that penetrates deep, the discerning eye, sees that death is there, -- sees a pallid hue fast overspreading the whole countenance, -- sees that, though the eye is there, no life is darting forth from it. And there is a death-like chill fast coming over the members of that frame; while the eye looks, it is all the while sealed in death, and you know that a body such as that, -- a body on which decay has, as yet, made no inroads, -- is as ready for the coffin as the dry bones are, -- is just as ready for the grave as the putrefying corpse by its side. Though no hideous deformities which disfigure the one are to be traced in the other, both are dead. There is no difference as to any power of action or of thought. And so, if the Spirit of God has not begun, and is not carrying on the work of conversion, the most amiable, dutiful, and devoted individual, is not more *alive*, more endued with the Spirit of life, than the man who is sunk in guilt and in crime. Far be it from us to say, that there is no difference as to *this* world. The man who has openly sinned, alike fallen a victim to dissipation and to vice, is like the decayed body or the dry bones, or perhaps, in that last stage of all, just crumbling into dust. But what we desire for you, above all, is that ye be not deceived. We fear there are many (and it is natural that such should be the case) who are imagining themselves to be indeed converts to Jesus Christ, who will soon, very soon, fall away, and whose souls, much changed as they seem, are dead – entirely dead, -- dead to God, dead in sin. Many outward marks of a child of God are in the character, but ah! there is an icy coldness in the heart. It beats not with love to God, beats not with heavenly love to man, beats not at all. The veins, the sinews, the joints are there – all in lovely proportion; but there is no life, no blood, no heat.

Hatred to God lies hid within: you image it is gone; but ah! in the case of many, it is not driven out of the soul at seasons like this, -- it is not driven *out*, it is merely *driven in*. Outward circumstances are pressing you so hard, that even Satan may not dare to let that fearful enmity appear. And so, assaulted on all sides, it

retires, and retires, and retires, till it is concentrated in the heart, taking up its dwelling in the very strongest fortress, in the citadel of the soul, and there it remains, and there it is chilling and congealing all, and so it will continue to do, till it consumes your fancied religion, and torments you so completely, that it will soon, very soon, seal you in the cold sleep of death. You are polishing and beautifying the exterior of your sepulchers, but they will at last be discovered to be full of dead men's bones, of decay, and of corruption. The kernel, as it were, is still as hard as ever, as unbroken as ever, though it lies within a beautiful and finely-painted shell.

Now, what is to give you life, animation, and power to serve God acceptably, -- what can do this? "Lord, *Thou* knowest." The prophet sees that all his labour is vain, as far as having raised up living men is concerned. "There is no breath in them." "Then said He unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live. So I prophesied, as He commanded me," -- *as He commanded me*. Ah, here is the strength of the minister of the Gospel. He prays for the Spirit of the Lord, that it would come down and bless the word, causing the seed to spring up and bear fruit; and when the Spirit *does* accompany the words, how marvelous are its effects, -- it breathes on the slain, they live, and "stand on their feet, an exceeding great army." It is sad when ministers do not come from the closet to the pulpit, for then they do not come with the fullness of the Spirit. Pray much for us, that all who preach the Gospel be much in prayer, -- yea, live in prayer for the descent of the Spirit, and the blessing of the Holy Ghost, or else we may as well not preach to you at all. Pray that we may all see the bones to be "very many, and very dry," and thus be filled with compassion on perishing multitudes, and declare to them the whole counsel of God as for *eternity*.

As scarcely any time remains, we ask you but one question; Have you any grounds for believing that you have received the Holy Ghost? or have you not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost? If you have not, the consequence is you are still unconverted, unsaved, for you cannot yet have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, without the Spirit of Jehovah. The error of some is that they trust to themselves in part, while they likewise in appearance trust in part in Christ -- that is, they believe they are obtaining strength from Christ. They are growing on their own roots, and in their native soil. This will never do. You will never become true converts till you are quite translated from the soil of nature to the soil of grace. You must be taken out of self altogether, and be engrafted into the true vine, even Emmanuel, and from Him you will receive strength, support, and consolation. Do you want life from the dead? He is our life, He is light, He is love. Join yourselves to Him in a perpetual covenant, which shall not be broken. If you have received Christ, He will be precious to you. If He is your portion, you will want, you will desire, no other.

When a poor man comes to a great inheritance, he will not seek to keep possession of the little hut or cottage which he formerly inhabited. That would be given up to the first beggar who comes to ask it. He will rather be glad to get rid of what reminds him of a state of wretchedness. And so with those who have obtained Christ, and seen His glory. You don't need the world, or anything in it, to complete your bliss; you don't want gay amusements, and trifling pleasures; you don't occupy yourselves with ornaments, and studied dress, and apparel. You say, "We don't need the world's amusements; we have got Christ. Take your world, take its pleasures and its gains." The believer does look with contempt on the world, and on its trifling occupations, saying, "What have I to do any more with idols? Henceforth would I glory in nothing but the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." You have got Christ, and with Him His holiness, His righteousness, His consolations, His glory, His Father, His heaven. "For all things are yours." You have got Christ for the hour of need, Christ for life, Christ for death,

Christ for prosperity, Christ for adversity, Christ for trials, Christ for bliss, Christ for judgment, Christ in time, and Christ through all eternity. And what need you more? "Christ is yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

Will anyone of you go away without Him tonight? If you do, you cannot go away without Satan. Satan in your bosom, and you are just cherishing the viper which will cut and sting you to all eternity. We ask you this question, in the view of that great meeting, -- that glorious assembly before the great white throne, from which there will not be a single absentee, though there are now so many from a throne of grace. You shall be there, I shall be there, all now absent shall be there, and we shall give account to God. The only question then will be, Who is Christ's? Who?

I speak to you in view of that nearer parting, which must soon take place between us, -- when we, who speak, can no longer speak to you, for we are come here only for a short period, to stand and preach the Gospel, and tell that Christ is free, that salvation is free, that heaven is free, to all. When one city falls asleep, we must just go to another (and many other cities are eager for the glad news), and tell them too that it is free to them. These meetings which, praised be God! have been blessed to many, are now necessarily nearly at an end; and will you, who have come night after night, and week after week, and so patiently listened to us, let us part for altogether, or part to-night, without listening to Christ, without coming to Him, as many have been all along doing? You have received us with the greatest kindness, and shewn us, in every possible way, that you would do much for us; but will you not come to Jesus, and come out of yourselves?

Here, in this heart, there is no good thing, -- nothing but emptiness, pollution, corruption, and sin; but yonder! ah, yonder! all fullness dwells. You may look within all your lives, and you will find nothing -- nothing but guilt to be repented of, depravity to condemn; but yonder, in Jesus, all righteousness, all peace, all love abide: if you will come to Him, they are yours. Now, won't you look, won't you live? Some of you have been long kept in doubt, and darkness, and despair; and why? Is it God's will that it should be thus? No, no! Then whose fault is it, if not your own? You've been trying to convert yourselves, trying to effect a change; and so long as you try that, you will never be saved, you will never have peace. Just try, now, to look out of yourselves, and *into* Christ, and up to Jehovah's throne of grace, and up to the blood of the mercy-seat; and while looking, try to get very low, infinitely low; for what other posture befits the worm Jacob, when he approaches his great Creator, his Eternal Judge? Yet fear not; for even the worm Jacob may look up with complete confidence, for he is commanded to look in Christ, and by Christ, and to Christ alone. Come in then, come in to Christ. The neighbouring villages are, many of them, crying out for Christ. Will you not be provoked to jealousy? will you not join them? Oh, that the whole city would lift up its gates, that the King of Glory might enter in.

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER 15

### THE TEN VIRGINS

[Preached in Moulin Parish Church on Sabbath evening, September 6, 1840. In the forenoon of the same day, Mr. Burns preached in a tent to the people who were seated in the Churchyard. Many of the higher classes were present who were not likely to have a second opportunity of hearing him, unless attracted by the discourse. He was almost unable to get through the service. He said afterwards, that the adversary of souls had been at his right hand the whole time; and that each statement he sought to make from the word of God, seemed to be contradicted by a voice within as soon as made. At night he preached as follows to a congregation of country-people in the same place; the emptied vessel was filled to overflowing.]

Matthew 25:1-13

“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten Virgins, which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom.” “Then,” this expression shows us that the following parable is prophetic, relating to an event which shall take place at a future period, which, if you look at the close of the last chapter, you will find to be the coming of Emmanuel to judge the world in righteousness. This event happens in one sense to every man at the hour of death, but it is his second coming, when he shall come to *all*, to judge all, to condemn all who believe not, that is here spoken of; it is an event to which the believer looks forward with joy unspeakable. Now, how many are there here who can say they are hasting to his coming? I heard of a little child, who has been lately, we trust, indeed, brought to Jesus, who seemed already to enter into this feeling. She said to her Sabbath school teacher, “Oh! I’m wearying to see Christ.” Can you say this? Ah! *can* you say it, Christians? This expresses the feeling of the faithful followers of Christ, when they are not in a very dead state; they are “wearying to see Jesus,” “whom, having not seen, they love.”

“Unto ten Virgins.” This number seems to have been merely chosen from the circumstance of that being a usual number of persons to wait for the bridegroom on occasion of a marriage. It is said “they took their lamps.” This expression is employed to represent the profession of religion made by Christians. By the lamps of profession we understand more than it is sometimes supposed to mean. What is a professing Christian? Who is considered *now* as a consistent professor? One would think that the nineteenth century had widened the gate to heaven. In the idea of too many among us, he is a consistent professor, whom his neighbour cannot charge with open violation of the moral decency of the community in which he dwells. If a man is not a drunkard, if he does not steal, if he has not lifted the murdering knife, if he is a good neighbour, and, in short, a peaceable member of society, that man is a Christian, and it would be uncharitable to doubt it. At what point of degradation, of sleep of death, have we then arrived, when this is the standard of Christians in a Christian land? Yet there is many a name in the communion roll that never was inscribed in the Lamb’s book of life; there is many a baptized face that never got the Spirit’s seal upon its forehead; there is many a one looked up to and esteemed by men and considered as a true believer, who never was missed from his place on the Sabbath in Church, that stands also on Satan’s catalogue for the hottest place in hell. But all this does not nearly amount to the profession of the foolish virgins, for the difference between them and the wise virgins does not seem to have been discovered till the last scene of life, -- they all went forth to meet Jesus.

This going forth implies much more than is included in a profession. The foolish virgins, as well as the wise, come out from the world and take up their lot with the followers of Emmanuel: going forth to meet Him, implies expecting Him, waiting for Him, looking forward to His coming, deriving joy from the thoughts of it, and the hope of His glory. There is very often nothing in such characters by which they can

be distinguished from the true servants of Jesus, nothing in their outward conduct, nothing in the account they give of their experiences, by which it can be discovered. To the eye of man, the difference is often unapparent. The features of their character, their feelings, seem identical. It is a great mistake to think that among the foolish virgins, none know anything of experimental religion of a natural kind. There can be no doubt, that such persons as are here described may know much of this.

But here there is a clear distinction made between the two classes: “five were wise, and five were foolish.” There is a difference in the eye of God. The wise are His own elect, His redeemed, His chosen, His reconciled children; and the others – poor, deluded souls, little do they think whose they are, little do they think that Satan binds them, holds them fast, possesses them as his slaves, just as much as he does those careless, thoughtless sinners that are lying contented in his chains. They little know that, honoured and loved as they are, they are Satan-bound, Satan-deluded, Satan-enslaved, and Satan-possessed. It is fearful to see men rushing headlong, sunk in crime, down to hell: but who can image the state of those who are living and dying in the hope of a heaven they are never to enter, and without a single fear of the hell to which they are now condemned?

What, then, distinguishes the one from the other? One certain distinction exists between the saint in the very lowest state into which a saint can sink, and the sinner in the highest state of outward perfection to which a hypocrite can rise. The difference is just this: in the one heart God reigns, and in the other Satan reigns. In the unregenerate heart of the professor, Satan may have assumed, as he constantly does assume, the character of an angel of light, but still it is *Satan*, in whatever form, that is on the throne. The influences of the Spirit of grace which operate on his heart, striving with him in a manner common to all sinners, are entirely subordinate and uninfluential. Christ is always knocking at the door, calling him by His providences, calling him by His love to man, and the poor sinner thinks he belongs to Christ, thinks he is getting grace from Christ, thinks he is saved, while Satan has still the citadel, the dominion, the command.

In the regenerate heart, it is not so. Emmanuel reigns. He has assumed entire command, and however much the saint may sink into ungodliness, into temptation, into sin, Emmanuel holds him in His hand, whence no devil shall ever tear him. Satan is not less active in this man’s heart than in the other, but he is dethroned. The very moment that Emmanuel first entered that heart, He took the command of it, He sat down forever on the throne, He took the crown, He took the scepter, and the devil was cast down forever. *That* man’s heart is no longer in the power of the devil; he comes often to the door, pays many a visit, and makes many a loud, boisterous knocking from without; but he does not dwell, he does not reign there, it is his dwelling-place no more. The Spirit of Jehovah fills his room, and spreads around the graces of Emmanuel. He is often tempest-tossed – rudely and severely tempest-tossed – *so* rudely, that he thinks he is sinking altogether; but grace, however weak, is still there; *there*, ready to kindle up afresh, to burn into a flame.

We do not say that those characters represented by the foolish virgins never receive grace; we believe that there are some operations of the Spirit common to all; in other words, that there is such a thing as common grace. For instance, take the case of a man under convictions of sin, which never issue in saving conversion. That there are such cases, no one can deny; all have heard of it, most have met with it in their own experience. I daresay there are some among yourselves, brethren, who recollect such cases in the revival of Moulin, forty years ago. I have seen such cases myself. A man, during an awakening of great power, sees one and another, and another of his former associates change, and become thoughtful and anxious, and, in short, turning to the Lord with full purpose of heart, he says, “What is the meaning of all this? what has

come over them?" By degrees the man sees that it is *he* who is mad in continuing unconcerned, and that they are in their right minds. The man is convinced. The sins of his former life come crowding round his in dread array. Past iniquities take hold on his affrighted conscience, with all the pungency and all the bitterness of newly committed sin; he feels wrath to be his portion, and he is bound down under the full weight of the approaching wrath of God.

It was only last Friday, as often before, that I witnessed such a scene. I saw men, young men, strong in body and mind, almost overwhelmed with a sense of their guilt, and of the justice of their eternal condemnation. But I saw cases too at Perth, where the feelings were thus aroused, and where persons have been so overcome by a discovery of their present actual state in God's sight, as children of wrath that it has almost been too much for them to bear. Many a sleepless night have they passed, many an anxious day, many watchings, many tears, has it cost them, and this led them to do many things to attend meetings regularly, to read the Bible, and to pray; and after a time they seemed really to find peace and joy in believing. But, ah! friends what are some of these become? The dog has returned to his vomit again, and the sow that was washed to his wallowing in the mire. These very men have I seen returning, with more greediness than ever, to the gratification of their lusts. The outward man was changed, the character was formed a new, but the nature, the old man, the *swinish* nature, *still* remained. It has never been removed. It had never given place to the Spirit of Jesus. But can we think that this change was the work of the mere natural heart, of the sleeping, dead conscience? No, beloved brethren, no man who reads the Bible can suppose it.

Common grace is often given without the new nature, and that grace is often given to change and improve the outward character. But why was this grace asked from God? It was just to exalt the creature, to exalt self, to exalt the sinner, and to cast down the Saviour. It is not to glorify Jesus such a man asks grace, but just that he may turn it against the Giver. He kneels below mercy's golden scepter, just that he may, as it were, wrest it from Emmanuel's hand; he has got grace, but then he has never got Christ. You have all heard of the common fable of the jay, that tried to imitate the peacock, by getting itself all covered with its beautiful plumage. Now, the persons to whom we have been alluding, just reminds us of the poor bird in this fable. They have asked grace, only that they might deck out and adorn the hideous mass of corruption that lies concealed within; they use it to adorn themselves, and never simply to glorify Jesus.

Not so with renewed hearts; the Spirit of God has shewn them not only the future punishment of sin, but it has shewn them the gigantic strength and power of prevailing inward corruption. It has shewn them that they must be entirely changed, entirely renewed, *born again*, or they must perish, they must die, they must be damned; they see, as it were, all help cut off from every side, above, beneath, all around. There is nothing, nothing but a fearful looking for a wrath and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries, and must devour them. Their iniquities cover their heads, and they sink in the mire and in the deep waters; all the Lord's billows go over them, so that they cannot look up.

Such a soul feels as if he had been, cast down over a precipice, whose base arises from perdition's gulf, and that he might just as soon catch by the air, grasp it in his hand, and thus save himself, as conquer the heart disease that rages within, or behold a reconciled Father in the Avenger of sin. This is no exaggerated picture of human destitution; for oh! a guilty sinner is too heavy a material to fly up through the either of holiness to the glorious presence of Jehovah, or reach the thrice holy precinct of the heaven of heavens. He feels this, and he can never soar aloft unless borne on the eagle pinions of Emmanuel's unspotted righteousness.

There lies the grand distinction between the wise and the foolish virgins. The wise are united to Christ. The others are not. UNION TO CHRIST! Here is the difference, here is the distinction, and here is the life-giving principle that has been inspired into the new created heart by the Holy Spirit. Here is the principle, without which, whatever be his profession, whatever be his hopes, whatever be his actions, the sinner is unprofitable, dead, unsaved, unsanctified, condemned. Union to Jesus is the humble Christian's life, his hope, his all, leave him but this, and you may take what you will away from him. It makes his trials, his afflictions, his losses, his sorrows, his griefs, not only supportable, not only endurable, but precious, sweet, a cause of thanksgiving, a matter for glory, just because in them, -- in the very severest, in the very hottest, -- that union is always the more closely cemented. The furnace burns, burns, burns, but ah! it touches not his union with Emmanuel. The hotter the furnace burns, self, and sin, and pride, die out and waste away, -- are sometimes so nearly consumed, that the soul forgets that there is *any other* in the wide universe but Jesus. Self is all but destroyed, for one desire and another is checked, cut off, and consumed; a rebellious will has been so crushed, so broken, so bended, so moulded to the image of Him to whom alone it has clung in the storm, that for a time it seems to have forgotten to be rebellious. For the time no other will is known than His, who, while he wounds, is tempering every trial with a hand gentle and tender, and filling up every place that is left vacant of its *creature* tenant, with a Creator's infinite love.

The foolish professor, as one said, is like a tree bending to one side, leaning over on the support of another, whereas the Christian, not only leans on Christ, but he is like a slip of a tree grafter into another tree, he has come off his own room, he has been cut off completely, and grafted deep into Christ. It is quite necessary that the sinner should be entirely reduced to *self-despair*; for nothing but self-despair can make him feel his need of a Saviour, and the Holy Spirit brings every savingly convinced sinner into this state. Helpless and lost, he lies down as it were, to die, and feels that no efforts of his own can ever in the least even enable him to arise and lay hold on the rock of salvation. He feels that, unless Jehovah, by an act of absolute, free, sovereign, and resistless grace, lay hold of him, raise him up and translate him from Satan's power to that of Christ, he must die. He sees that, unless reconciliation *begin* on the part of Jehovah, he can never be reconciled, and thus he is brought by the Spirit to lay aside all those things, which formerly he was vainly trying to perform and to work out in his own soul, and just simply to come out of himself into Jesus. Christ first apprehends the sinner; having elected him, He begins by the drawings of His grace to attract him to Himself; and then, as the natural consequence, the first strength thus received is employed by the thankful penitent in loving, serving, and adoring his Divine Redeemer. The newborn babe is cherished, cared for, and tenderly watched by its mother, while unconsciously it lies, folded in her arms, insensible of her love. But whenever it begins to grow a little, and to get even a little strength, its first natural action is to clasp its little arms round the neck of its mother. Just so is it with the poor sinner. Jesus, long before *he* is aware of it, says, "I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine." He continues by His providence and love to incline the sinner, till at last, coming willingly to Him, and no longer desiring to rebel, he begins to love such a Saviour, to serve such a Lord.

Have *you* ever surrendered your hearts? Christ will not accept an unwilling gift, he does not ask your heart, unless you give it wholly, freely; but if you are willing to do that, *He* is both able and willing to save you. Are you united to Christ? Many among you have not even got the length of the foolish virgins, -- many of you have got no lamps at all, -- but to you who are carrying your lamps we speak, and we again simply ask, Are you, or Are you not, united to Jesus? It is no light matter. It is not the unimportant trifle which some seem to consider it, whether or not you can answer this question. Oh! that you would even now begin, in the light of the Holy Ghost, to *think* on these things, to consider your latter end.

“They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.” We are not told that any difference appeared between the foolish and the wise virgins; it is not even unlikely that, at the beginning, some of the lamps of the foolish virgins burned the brightest. Christians are judged of very differently by God from what man sees in them. Grace often dwells in the heart of some poor, despised, heart-broken one, who trembles at God’s word, and who is oppressed with doubt, fear, unbelief, and temptation, never hoping that he is a subject of grace; while many a flaming profession has nothing in it on which the eye of God can bear to look. We are thankful when we see a lamp burning brightly for one year, but how many of those that have been lighted are blown out. At Kilsyth, for instance, there are a few who, for some months, promised fair for heaven, but the light is extinguished. It reminds us of a nursery of young plants. The first year, when they are all lying close together in the plantation, they seem to thrive, and they are allowed to grow up together; but the second year they must be thinned, and only the choice plants can be given a place in the ground; in successive years they are thinned, and thinned again, and what a small, small number of the original seedlings remain in the dark forest of a hundred years. It is just so, in the spiritual world, especially when there has been a great awakening. At first, there are numbers of professors, the crowd follows Jesus. There is no shame, no reproach, and it is easy to follow Him when there is no cross on the way. But in a short time, when religion is no longer the fashion of the day, when the crowd forsakes Him, then too many of those whose lamps for a time seemed to burn the brightest, turn back, and walk no more with Jesus.

Some go further than this, their lamps remain lighted for a longer time, and while all goes on smoothly, and they remain in the society of their Christian friends, they find that, after all, it is rather a comfortable thing to serve God; but when they have to sacrifice something that is peculiarly dear to them, or else to give up Christ, it is found that they have been hypocrites all along. Friends, what madness, not to give up everything gladly, freely, for Christ; remember I beseech you, these affecting words of the Lord, “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul.” None can tell in this world, how many, once promising professors, have been ruined by the example and influence of the ungodly. I daresay those of you who are old enough, remember examples of this at Moulin. One man married an ungodly wife, and that cost him his soul; some woman married an ungodly husband, and that cost her, her soul. Some fell in the time of reproach on account of the word, and alas! too many, have continued in the sunshine of worldly prosperity so long, that the riches of this world and the cares of this life, have sprung up and choked the word.

O, prosperity! prosperity! who can resist thy baneful influences? Who ever stood thy unclouded sunshine? Who ever escaped unhurt from thine unceasing smile? There is nothing, nothing so difficult as to escape this; indeed, we may say at once, that without a great degree of the influence of the Spirit of God, *it is impossible*. Blessed be Jehovah’s name, that with Him all things, the very greatest of human impossibilities, are possible. Commonly speaking, however, this is not the case; it too often happens, and I think it is perhaps just the greatest proof of the fearful depravity of our nature, that all God’s gifts are, one after another, turned in measure against the Giver.

Sometimes the lamp of profession will last even for a longer period, and the lamp burns on with its deceitful flame, even till that solemn hour when it lights the sinner to the entrance of the dark valley. It leaves him there ALONE. It is a fearful discovery to make at such an hour as *that*, that a man has been walking in the directly opposite road from heaven all his life, and walking in it at ease; that he has been carrying all his life a lamp which, in the hour of need, is to leave him in the dark.

We are not left in ignorance as to the cause of this, it is contained in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> verses of this chapter, "They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps." Here is the secret of the difference. The foolish virgins' lamps may not only burn on till a dying hour, they may go further still (for the wicked have often no bands in their death) – the lamp may lead them fearless to the judgment-seat, nor go out till they reach the bar of God. They have got no oil with them. They have got light enough to maintain a consistent outward profession, but they have never got Christ, they have never got the Spirit of Christ; they have no secret supplies in themselves, and they have got no key to the treasure-house.

Believer, you feel that in yourself you have no good thing, no supply of grace, no faith, no light, no love; but then the more you are conscious of that, the more will you confide in that everlasting provision, that exhaustless fountain that sends forth the rich streams of heavenly blessing to poor dead souls: even in that Holy Spirit who is come into the world to convince it of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, and to take of the things of Christ and shew them to men's souls. Though you have been savingly and abidingly united to Christ, you still need to come afresh every hour, just as for the first time.

The provision we receive at once is sometimes great, but it soon needs renewing. When you have gone to rest at night, after getting very near to God in prayer, feeling that you had certainly got enough to last till the morning, yet when morning came, with its vanities and its cares, you felt the need of carrying back your empty vessel to the fountain of living water to get it replenished. Sweet to lay down an empty soul at the feet of a Saviour, who filleth all in all! Take care to have your lamps always trimmed, for listen, "While the Bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept." I do not mean to say that the lamp which has once been lighted by the Spirit can ever go out. It cannot, it will not. But beware, beware, that you have indeed received the grace of Christ, that you have indeed seen His glory. Have oil in your vessels with your lamps. The coming of the Bridegroom is here shewn to be an unexpected event. We should all be on our guard; He will not come when He is expected. Watch and pray, lest, coming suddenly, He find you sleeping. It is a sad surprise to a Christian when he is not ready for his Master's coming; it is a sad surprise to find himself unprepared, his books all unsummed up, even though he may have been a faithful servant. This is the chief object of desire which he has presented to His dear people. Whenever the people of God have been in a lively frame, ever since His ascension, their desire for His second coming has always been the greater. His last words to the church are, "I come quickly." Now, are you all adding your Amen; or are some of you secretly wishing that it might be just a little longer deferred, and then you would have made up your mind to part with all that is now so dear to you, and then you would be ready and willing to go with Jesus home to heaven. But, friends, if you feel thus towards Christ's second coming, unless you are hasting unto it, examine, examine, I beseech you, e'er it be too late, and do not rest until you discover if your profession be really genuine. Better, if need be, make the mournful discovery on this side death, than to find out only at the judgment-seat that you have been self-deceived hypocrites. It is said that the coming of Jesus will be as a thief in the night. It will be in the dark. Though in a far more fearful sense He will come in the night to the foolish virgins to cast them into outer darkness, this is also true to His coming to believers.

It will be without a warning. You know that it is generally prefaced by some bodily distress or affliction, as it were, to prepare for the last scene, and the more you are enabled to be in such a state of preparation, the more likely will your death be either peaceful or triumphant. In whatever state of solemn preparation you may be, it will be a sudden and overawing surprise to a soul, to find that it has crossed the Jordan of death, and floated away out of the stream of time, to see the king in his beauty.

Every figure used to represent this to us, brings the suddenness of it to mind, but none so much as that of a thief in the night. A thief never comes in the day time, he does not like the sunshine, it does not suit him; he won't come when the moon is shining brightly, for then he might be detected, and easily found out. No, no, the thief does not like the moonshine, he would not like even a very starry night, but he likes a dark, cloudy, evening like this, when the shades are deep. He comes at midnight when it is pitch dark, and when all men are asleep. Now, believers, this is the way He will come to you, and He tells you this, so that you may be watching and ready, for you see His followers are sometimes slumbering and sleeping, when the cry is heard – "Behold the bridegroom cometh!" Oh! for a well-trimmed lamp. Oh! that you would, everyone of you, see that your lamps are all burning, that they are all trimmed, and that besides you have oil in your vessels with your lamps. Are you not afraid, you what think yourselves Christians that your lamps at last will go out? The words, "Ye must be born again," ring in our ears. Unless you are sure that that great change of conversion has passed in your soul, don't you think you have reason to tremble? You do not know but your lamps may go out. I do not know whether my lamp may not go out.

Does it not make you tremble to see the lamp of Judas shine so long? Does it not make you cry out, "Lord is it I? Lord is it I?" Better, far better, ask with all the apostles that awful question now, than read the fearful answer for the first time in hell. And, remember too, that not only those who shall be saved, now ask that question with anxious fear, for Judas too asked, "Lord, is it I?" Men and brethren, be up and doing; strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, are words that seem almost forgotten in these days of ease, carelessness, and sin. They are not expunged from the Bible. No, the gate is as strait; the way is as narrow as it was on the day that Jesus proclaimed to disbelieving Jerusalem, that few there be that go in thereat. It reminds us of the gate which you find at the toll-bar, when, during the night, the wide gate is locked. You know there is always a small turnstile at the one side of the wide road, contrived in such a way that nothing larger than a man can pass through it. Neither can more than one man pass at a time, each one must go alone. This is using a familiar illustration, which you must all understand. It is just so with the narrow gate to heaven. All men are going along the same road, -- the broad road of life, -- leading its millions down to eternal death. Now the wide gate stands open all day long, and there is always a crowd passing through it. The broad road is just the road in which the poor, blind sinners are born, brought up, and carried along by the thoughtless crowd. It is the way they have always walked in; it is the road their fathers passed over; it is the way which they see thronged by their relations, companions, neighbours, friends; and it is a road they never think of leaving. By the side of the wide gate stands the narrow gate of life, heaven, and glory; and Jesus stands upon that narrow path, and calls to all the poor, weary travelers to ruin, to come to Him, and he will give them rest. He tells them He is able, He tells them He is willing, He tells them He is near, to help and save them, and stretches forth his hands, all the day, to a disobedient and gain-saying people. A chosen few, drawn by His resistless grace, he brings to Himself, and He will lead them till He carries them on to glory.

Sometimes the crowd is so mixed, that those who pass along mistake which road they tread. But, however closely the two ways may run together, they end as widely apart as heaven and hell. Every man, woman, and child among you is walking along either the one or the other of these ways, -- the one ends in life eternal, the other in death. Which are you in? Which are you in? Eternal life! Eternal death! Which is yours?

Are we to go away to-night without a blessing, without one soul for Jesus? Oh, that the former days of Moulin were revived with tenfold power! Oh, that the spirit, who, not forty years ago, was poured out in Moulin, -- in this very place, on the same ground on which we stand, -- were to be poured out in rich

abundance, that the dry, parched wilderness might rejoice, and blossom as the rose. Christians, will you not pray for Moulin, that it may again become a very garden of the Lord.

Brothers, sisters, are you going to choose destruction, are you going to stand out against the entreaties of Emmanuel, the strivings on the Spirit? You hear how all around you, people are coming into Christ. Blessed be God, the question is already asked, "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their window?" The poor world is already beginning to stagger at the unaccountable change that has come over some who used to be just as sensible, firm, and manly, as they. I doubt not that there is sometimes a strange sinking of heart as they pronounce them silly, mad, woman-hearted, -- an involuntary asking, "How am I to account for this in such a one?" What has made these calm, reasoning, quiet, respectable men, these good neighbours that have always been as regular in their duties, as sober and as kind to their families, and as punctual in their performance of every duty as I am, begin to say so much about new hearts? It is so incomprehensible to them, and yet so powerful, so brightly glorious in its effects, that they are filled with wonder. Is the same question, "Who are these that fly as the doves to their windows," not to be asked of Moulin? There have been many coming to Christ in Scotland. Only weak women? Nay, I have seen strong, sturdy men, in the very pride of youth, of manhood, and of sin, bend till they nearly sank. So near yourselves as Aberfeldy, I saw it only last Friday, when there was a marvelous impression made, as some present well know, which, God grant, may be followed up by a work of conversion, if these impressions do not dissipate again. Yes, men of Kilsyth have come to Christ, men of Dundee, men of Perth; there is a little band of new disciples in Kilsyth, in Dundee, in Perth, is there not to be one in Moulin? Are we not to get you for Christ, sons of the mountains?

We long to see the prayers of the saints that lie in yon churchyard answered. They float in the heaven over your heads like clouds of blessing, clouds that were attracted to heaven by the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. Forty years ago, His rays sped down, and poured light, and heat, and glory over this fair land, that had long been dwelling in spiritual darkness. We long to see the clouds which are bending towards your mountain tops, -- called for as they are by a parched soil -- called for also now by the prayers of children's children. Your fathers made Moulin in their day like a city set upon a hill, which could not be hid. Coming towards this place, I overtook a middle-aged labourer on the road, and when he asked one or two questions about his spiritual state, he seemed quite astonished. When he was asked whether he was a Christian, he looked with unfeigned amazement in the face of the speaker, and said, "A Christian! Oh, sir, we're all Christians here; why do you ask that?" Poor man! I daresay there were many such Christians as he in the place where he lived.

Are there none here of whom Jesus said, "I pray for them;" none that are to look back on this night, and say, "On that Sabbath evening the Spirit awoke me from sleep. On that Sabbath evening I first saw Christ. It was then my bleeding conscience found peace in the blood of the Lamb."

Sinner, open your heart to Jesus. You would not keep the Queen waiting for admission, or even your landlord. There never was such a thing heard of, as to keep a landlord waiting! You never even kept a friend, a relations, a neighbour, perhaps some of you never kept *a poor beggar* waiting at your door. And yet you, who have not yet freely embraced Christ, you have been keeping the glorious Emmanuel, the blessed and only potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords, waiting, and waiting, and waiting, at the door of your poor, dark, blinded hearts. Yes, the King of kings, by whom princes reign, has knocked, and knocked, and knocked repeatedly, again and again, and the door is still shut. To-night, He *still* is standing at the door. Is He to see the portals of *one* heart, the everlasting doors of one hitherto barred dungeon, lift up their heads to let

the King of Glory enter in? You have an open door to sin, to folly, -- an open door to the devil; and yet, it is shut against Jesus, against God, against the Spirit. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me." Will you not say, "Welcome, Emmanuel, as all my salvation"?

*[We give the following intimations as they were made by Mr. Burns, at the conclusion of the service, to shew how unwearied his labours were at that time.]*

I trust, if the Lord will, to meet with you several times before leaving the country. First, there will be service on Tuesday forenoon, at Straloch, at 12 o'clock, for the benefit of the people in that neighbourhood. To-morrow evening, there will be service at 5 o'clock, at Tenandry, when Mr. M'Leod from Ross-shire, whom you have heard to-day will preach again. On Wednesday, there will be likewise service at Tenandry, at 5 o'clock. On Thursday, there will be a meeting in this place at 12 o'clock; and in the evening, there will be a prayer-meeting at 6 o'clock. On Friday evening, there will be another prayer-meeting at 5 o'clock. By prayer-meetings, we mean an evening service, but only, -- not wishing to restrict ourselves to particular hours. The service to-morrow evening will be in Gaelic; the other services will, of course, be in English. I am very sorry that I am unable to address you in Gaelic, your own language; but it is surprising how much people will understand when they are anxious for it. Believers, if you desire a great blessing, be much in prayer for it. Ask and ye shall receive. Ask in faith, nothing doubting. According to your faith be it unto you. Amen.

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER 16

### SIN CONDEMNED

[Preached to the congregation of the Rev. Dr. C. J. Brown, Free New North, Edinburgh, while they worshipped in the Potterrow, December 1846. Mr. Burns had then just returned from Canada. The claims of China, in connection with the resolution of the English Presbyterian Church to start a mission in that great empire, were strongly pressed upon him. The result was his giving himself to that service, and being ordained at Sunderland on April 22, 1847.]

"FOR WHAT THE LAW COULD NOT DO, IN THAT IT WAS WEAK THROUGH THE FLESH, GOD SENDING HIS OWN SON IN THE LIKENESS OF SINFUL FLESH, AND FOR SIN CONDEMNED SIN IN THE FLESH." -- Romans 8:3.

The word "flesh" in this verse seems to stand for the nature of fallen man, and shortly expresses what we might, in other words, call, man's nature forsaken by God's Spirit. The Lord Jehovah having left the place designed for Him in the human heart, His place is taken by another. Sin has its seat in the flesh. It reigns there unopposed in the natural man. It has many and varied manifestations; on these we cannot enter -- they are innumerable. They are as many as the man has faculties; and, in short, in all the ways in which man is now capable of thinking and acting, he is sinning. The word "flesh," then, as here used, does not refer to the body, but rather to man's whole nature, destitute of the Spirit of God.

This gives us a very deep view of sin, and shews us how firmly it is entrenched, and how securely lodged in the heart; and there is no form in which it appears so much *to be sin*, or so utterly vile and hideous, as that spoken of in the seventh verse, where it is said that “the carnal mind is enmity against God.” There are indeed some aspects in which sin is more easily detected, but here is a form of it which prevails universally in all who have not been made free in Christ Jesus. What an opening up is this of the state of man’s mind! “It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” It can submit to no control, to no government, however just, and wise, and good, but must of necessity continue to rebel and to widen hourly the breach between the soul and the Lord God who made it, thus rendering it an impossibility that any natural man should, at any moment, or by any act, please God. “They that are in the flesh cannot please God.” Ah, my dear friends! if our eyes were opened, this would indeed seem a fearful statement, and on calculated to shut up every sinner present to the faith of the Son of God.

But let us now consider the means which *cannot* deliver from this awful state. The law of God, the statute-law of the kingdom, written by the Lord Himself, -- unerring, perfect, holy, divine, -- of this law it is said, “What the law could not do.” To what is it then declared impotent? To condemn sin in the flesh. True, in one sense it does this; the tables of the old covenant were written for this. The law discovers sin, forbids it, passes sentence upon it, threatens eternal death upon the commission of it, pronouncing a fearful curse upon the smallest violation of the commandment, and in this way sin is condemned; but the impotence of the law lies in this, that it cannot condemn sin with power to destroy; it *can* condemn the *sinner* to death, and it can hold him fast, so that no creature may deliver; and it can carry out the sentence by destroying him, and causing him to suffer forever, in the name, and by the authority of God, whose minister it is; but this is all the law can do; and, ah, brethren! there is little hope for a poor sinner here. The law cannot help him against his sins, it cannot even drive the love of them from his bosom; and though it brings sin to the light, and exposes it there to all the commands, and the curses, and the threatening with which the law is armed – instead of dying, *sin revives*. This is what is meant by these words, “the law entered that the offence might abound.” Paul tells us something of a sinner’s experience when this holy law comes in contact with him and his iniquities, -- “For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died;” not *sin died*, but *I died*. There is a great difference between the sinner being condemned, and sin being condemned. Ah! there is no view of sin that shews its dreadful Satanic power more than this, or that proves the difficulty of rooting it out of the heart more than this, that even God’s hold law cannot do it. A law, holy, just, and good, approving itself to the sinner’s conscience, armed with awful sanctions, holding in its hand life and death eternal, speaking with the voice and authority of Jehovah. What could be stronger? What more likely to influence and be obeyed by intelligent creatures? And yet, when this law comes into direct contact with sin, it is found to be “*weak* through the flesh.” There is something in sin that turns aside the weapon, something so stupefying that ever warning is of no avail.

Oh, fellow-sinner! are you awake to this? do you know that your heart is so ungodly, so desperately bad, that it makes the most perfect instrument that God can use or devise ineffectual? Oh, it might terrify men out of their sleep, to hear that they are yielding complacently to the dominion of that which is so vile, so polluting, and yet so strong, that it can neither be transformed nor subdued, nor extinguished by any of the workings of the holy and mighty government of God. What an awful thing to be a servant of that which can only be put a stop to by shutting it up in hell forever to die the second death! Surely, then, this view of sin might teach you many lessons of your own helplessness. Men think that sin will bow to *them!* and that *they* can tame it down by reformations, and good resolutions, and efforts of their own! It does not bow to the

very law of God' so that at Mount Sinai, when just given, and before Moses had time to bring it down to them, the poor Israelites set about making a golden calf.

And now let us inquire how it is that the law has no strength to condemn sin. The first reason is that it can provide no *remission* for sin. It comes seeking obedience, and when it finds not that, it goes no further – it pronounces a curse. It is this that makes it so worthy of God; it never makes a compromise, nor lowers its demands, and yet all the while pursues the sinner for payment, his conscience being on the side of the law, and witness against himself. You see, then, that unless a way could be found in which sin could be remitted, man must continue to flee farther and farther from God, and to increase in enmity to Him. But, secondly, the law is weak in respect to this, that it possesses no *sanctifying power*; although it *commands* obedience, it provides no gracious power to *create* obedience. The law was suited to man in a state of holiness, but it can have nothing to do with any works that are not perfect, -- it turns away from all such. If only men knew and realized this, how differently would they listen to the Gospel! In most people's experience, I believe, the Gospel is virtually regarded as unnecessary; spoken about, it is true, but merely spoken about, because there is so much of it in the Bible, and not from any deep heartfelt need of it is the sinner's bosom. This arises from their ignorance of the law; they do not believe in its stern, uncompromising character; they do not believe that it gives no help to an awakened sinner, and that no provision it in it to enable him to return to God. Viewed at a distance, the law looks as if it might destroy sin, but when it comes near, and shows the sinner a true picture of himself, sin rises and rebels, and becomes exceeding sinful indeed; every convinced soul is brought to acknowledge this, and to say that the law is "weak through the flesh," and can do nothing to bring him nigh to God.

Let us now contemplate for a little *the means which do accomplish* the final destruction of sin. It would seem that none could be more mighty than the law, which holds death and life, blessing and curse, in its righteous hand; but the Lord appears, and the simple, glorious means is this, that God sent His own Son. This is the beginning of a sinner's hope. *God sent His own Son!* What an awful thing is sin proved to be – how fearful its power – how wondrous the work of condemning it, when Jehovah took a way to do it so altogether without example or parallel in the universe; *not* by the curse of the law, *not* by any works on man's part, but by His own Son, sent in the reality of human nature, but only in the likeness of sinful flesh and of fallen man. Mystery of love! Great without controversy: and yet this is the only means sufficiently powerful to condemn sin. Do you ask how this intervention of the Son of God condemns sin? By exposing its vile, unalterable, malignant nature, when it can neither be weakened, condemned, nor destroyed, but by so unheard-of a means as this, even the sending forth of Emmanuel in the likeness of the rebellious creature, to be marred, and bruised, and slain in his room. Surely sin is condemned thus, and sentence passed on it as evil, when Heaven must give up the Only Begotten Son, before it can be destroyed. Think of this.

Not only does the sending forth of God's Son show, in a clearer light than the law can do, that sin is an evil and bitter thing – it passes a sentence of death on it, and slays it by satisfying the law: "The strength of sin is the law." We think by nature that the law is the death of sin, whereas the law is so much the strength of sin, that it not only provides no sanctifying power in itself for the sinner, but it stands by, as it were, to see that he gets no relief from any other quarter. The very grace of God cannot reach him, because of this offended, dishonoured law. Even had the Lord, to speak with reverence, desired to give man his Holy Spirit, He could not give any of his glorious blessings to one lying under the sentence of death, for the law stands in the way.

Supposing a destroying serpent were in your house, and you took a sword to slay it, but a beloved child was in the way between the serpent and you, so that you could not strike the one without piercing the other, you dare not destroy the object of your love in order to slay the reptile. Thus the Lord cannot give His Holy Spirit to subdue your sins, without first satisfying the law; *that* were to give life at the expense of his own holiness; and so the law stands at the sinner's side, crying, "Pay me that thou owest!" But oh! when the Son of God came down, and appeared to take the sinner's place, there was no longer any obstacle to God's giving the Spirit to destroy sin in his heart. The evil of sin was held up, and the law, which is its strength, was taken out of the way, while the gift of the Spirit was provided for the sanctification of the very vilest.

He endured the curse of a broken covenant, and then the way was opened for the descending Spirit. *A way opened!* O how wondrous is this new and living way! The lost sinner beholds it, and begins to commit himself, soul, body, and spirit to Jesus, and to rest his hope of a free, full, final, pardon, *not* on anything he can ever do, but on the Surety of the covenant; and then the Spirit of Jehovah comes freely forth to glorify Jesus and renew the heart, and to nail sin to the cross, not dead, but under sentence; and every time the Spirit puts himself forth in the believer's soul, is a fresh intimation given to sin of coming death; and then the law is loved, and gloriously set up in the soul; and now it is that the believer, who flies to Christ, and finds that there is no condemnation, can testify that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made him free from the law of sin and of death. True, there is a constant fight; but then he will be more than conqueror soon, and meanwhile he walks after the Spirit, he makes deliberate choice of all that the Spirit suggests; and though the flesh trouble him, it is not he that is running after the flesh but the flesh that is walking after him; it will continue to oppress and pursue him, so that he is ever crying for deliverance, but he will be freed from its very presence when he is gone to be present with Immanuel.

And now, what should the unconverted learn from all this? The unconverted – who are they? how may they be known? They are those who are "after the flesh," and unlike the believer who flees from sin, and escapes as for his life, they walk after it, and seek its gratification all the day long, in some form or other. True, you will not allow this – you consider yourselves above yielding to the lusts of the flesh; you do not like to hear men thus divided into two classes; you would rather not be troubled with hearing so much about conversion and a new heart; but oh! brethren, the line would need to be put very plainly down in these days, when men do not know their own faces in the glass of God's word. You are running on in sin with the world – pursuing it – devouring it, though God is warning you, and sounding his awful threatening in your ears. If this be true to you, you are not converted; your own consciences tell you so. The man who is walking after the Spirit does the opposite from this; hating the body of death which drags him down, and mourning when he is overtaken by it, he groans for relief, longing after God, crying for grace, seeking the extermination of sin. Who among *you* are doing this? Who among *you* are resisting sin unto the death? *Only as many in this house* as are led by the Spirit *now*. Ah! dear fellow-sinner, sin is no trifle. Its guilt is no trifle. Its power is such that none but the Spirit of Jehovah can kill it, and emancipate the soul. Your resolutions will not do this, friends cannot do it for you – your own will cannot do it – knowledge cannot do it, and your refuge is therefore in the crucified Lamb! *There is no other refuge* – none. Yet don't be deceived here, fellow-sinners! Some think they are hidden there, who are only *sleeping* on a *notion* about grace and the blood of Jesus. They are cleaving to the covenant by flatteries, and there is too much of that in these professing days. Oh! but is there in this house a poor sinner lying burdened and groaning under the load and power of sin? Look then here! Lift up your eyes, and see what a provision! Look to that great, glorious Redeemer! Hear Him! What is He saying? "*Come unto me;*" and you will come; you will value him, and you shall find salvation.

All God's people know what it is to be convinced of sin and to flee to the hiding-place; but I would ask you, believers, is this your *present experience*? If you are not realizing it, go to Jesus now – go as for the first time. Ah! do not go back to walk after the flesh. Are you resting in the warfare? Are you looking with more toleration upon sin, and with less alarm upon that vile God-dishonouring unbelief that makes you doubt his word; are you fainting, beloved, and saying you need rest! Ah! but this is *not* your rest. This is the time for pursuing the enemy, and for disputing every inch of ground with Satan – for wrestling, and fighting, and watching, and it will be so *to the end*; and your rest will come yet – a long, long, eternal Sabbath rest above. Oh, is there any soul here who is becoming *slothful*? I fear there are many, many such; many who are lazy and idle in fighting against sin. “Be not slothful;” up and be doing; the day is coming when the battle will end, and you shall have rest. Sin is yet to be destroyed. It is now a criminal in confinement, waiting for execution. The hour of final victory is nigh at hand, and when it comes there will be no wandering thought, no vile affection, no body of death.

And what does all this teach us with regard to contributing for Christ's cause on the earth? how does it bear on the object of raising means to send the Gospel to the poor heathen in distant lands and dark corners of the earth? You know well that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord;” so that it is utterly impossible for one single soul among these perishing millions to enter glory. If it *were* possible, the law must leave heaven when such a one entered; or rather, brethren, it would follow the sinner into heaven, and pluck him from the very presence of Jehovah, down to the pit of destruction. And if this be true of every man in a Christian land – of the most amiable, virtuous, generous man, who knows not Gospel holiness – WHAT'S TO COME OF THE HEATHEN? Who ever heard of a holy heathen? True, the men of the world are pleased with many of them, and would almost rather see them remain heathens still; but ah! the servants of Christ feel very differently; and you who are believers belie your profession, if you would not give all you had, yea, and your own selves also, if others were not ready to aid and to carry forth the Gospel among them. Look abroad – look not at tens of thousands merely in this land; but look yonder and see MILLIONS – millions perishing – rushing on, in darkness, down to the pit.

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER 17

### A LETTER TO THE PEOPLE IN THE HIGHLANDS OF PERTHSHIRE

[The affection, with which Mr. Burns was regarded, wherever he went, by those who attended his ministry, was doubly manifest towards him by the ardent Highlanders. From the Highland districts which he visited, as from his other scenes of labour, he received so many letters of gratitude and of inquiry that it was impossible for him to reply to them. He would sometimes write a letter to be read by the ministers to the people, who would at once have it printed, that each might possess a copy. His last visit to the Highlands was paid in the year 1854, when, having returned from China for a few months, he went north from Perth by Blairathole and Tummel Bridge in the first week of December. He reminded his hearers of his deep regret, while among them formerly, that he could not address them in the Gaelic tongue; but said he could now at least read to them a chapter in it, having learned as much in Canada from the Highlanders there.]

My Dear Friends,

I have often thought of writing to you, but have been hitherto prevented by various causes; and I now take up my pen in great haste to send you a few hurried lines, praying that Jehovah, the God of all grace, may enable me to say a word in season to each of your precious and dearly beloved souls.

It has given me unfeigned joy to hear that those appearances of spiritual concern, which I was privileged of God to witness among you, have *not* proved in every case as the morning cloud, and as the early dew; but that some among you who seemed, when I was among you, to be entering in at the strait gate, are still following on to know the Lord. It is a sweet and sure consolation to me to think that the work is Jehovah's and His alone; that He *will* have mercy on whom He will have mercy; and that, though many, alas! may, and actually do, abuse their privileges, and grieve away the Holy Ghost, and are left, in righteous judgment, to follow their own ways and perish, yet the Lord *will* pluck His own chosen ones as brands from the burning, and *will* put His fear in their hearts, so that they *shall not* depart from Him.

1. Blessed indeed are *those among you whom God has called by His grace to the fellowship of His Son*. Your blessedness, believers in Jesus, is infinitely greater than the tongue of archangel can express. *Now* are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. *All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, -- all are yours; and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's!* True it is, my dear brethren in the Lord, that you must, through *much* tribulation, enter the Kingdom. *All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*. You will be hated by an unrighteous and ungodly world; assaulted and buffeted by a cunning and malicious devil; and, above all, deceived, and in danger of being destroyed by a desperately wicked heart. But be encouraged, fainting believer, He that shall come *will* come, and will *not* tarry. Then shall the battle be over, the victory be gained, the crown of glory be bestowed by the hand of Jesus! Then we shall see face to face that adorable and matchless One whom, not having seen, we love. Then shall we join the blood-washed throng in crying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God with His blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God and the Father, and we shall reign forever and ever!"

How sweet the trials of a Christian are when he meets with Jesus in them, and feels that the Lord is making them a means of purging away his dross, and taking away all his sin. The believer's trials are like the fiery furnace to the three children of Israel at Babylon, which burned off their bands, but touched not a hair of their heads. Seek, dear followers of the despised Emmanuel, to obtain glimpses of His divine glory and grace, through the power of the indwelling Spirit, and these will make you to see such a surpassing beauty and glory in Jesus, that you will count *all* things loss that you may win Him, and be found in Him. If you find the way to glory hard and rugged, oh! think what is cost the Son of God to open up that way! Remember also that, wherever you are called to go, in following the Lamb, you may see, by faith, the prints of Emmanuel's feet on the path before you. He *does* lead His people through fire and through water, but it is to *a wealthy place*. Soon will He come to call us home to the place prepared for us above. Soon He will offer up for us the prayer, "Father, I will that these whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory," and then shall we depart and be with Jesus! To them that look for Him, He will appear the second time without sin unto salvation! Now the just shall live by faith; but, if any man draw back, my soul, saith God, shall have no pleasure in him. May none of you be of them that draw back unto perdition; may you all be of those who believe unto the saving of the soul.

Let me exhort you, beloved, with a view to your perseverance in the good ways of the Lord, to feed continually upon Jesus Christ and Him *crucified*, as He is made known in the holy word of God, and by the

Holy Ghost. For this purpose read the Bible much, and pray continually over it for the saving illumination of the Spirit. Examine your hearts frequently in regard to your acquaintance with sin, and your knowledge of the Lord Jesus. See that you be *wholly* dedicated to God in Christ; that His holy, heart-searching law be written on your hearts; and that you be aiming habitually with a single eye at the advancement of the divine glory. It was the common saying of an eminent saint (Brainerd) that nothing else made him content to remain in this world for a single day, but that God could be seen and could be served in it. This is the language of the heart of every true saint; though, alas! few can say it with such emphasis as he.

Let me press upon you, also, to make the truly godly your only companions, and to seek that God may greatly bless to you the fellowship of the saints. Avoid, I beseech you, in all things the very *appearance* of evil; and make it manifest, by your holy, pure, humble, meek, spiritual, and consistent walk, that you are no more of the world, but have been born of God, and are preparing to enter into the holy kingdom of your Father who is in heaven. Finally, let me exhort you to keep the conscience always clean and peaceful, by beholding the bleeding Lamb of God as your Surety and Saviour, to put on the divine righteousness of Jesus as the only covering of the guilty, naked soul, at the bar of divine justice, and to be filled with the Holy Ghost, who quickens, sanctifies, comforts, supports, and at last glorified the soul in which He dwells!

2. But what shall I say to *those among you who have neither part nor lot in the matter of salvation*? Alas! your case, dear fellow-sinners, is awful indeed, little as it *now* affects your own blinded souls. My heart is ready to break for you, when I think that, after all the solemn warnings you have received, and after all the pressing offers of Jesus that have been made to you in the name of God, you still remain in a state of heart-ungodliness, or of open sin! Others around you can this day say with joy, "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed:" but of you it is written in the word of the holy and unchangeable God. "Their judgment *now* of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not!" Oh! dear fellow-sinner, is it not the height of madness to go on any longer in a Christless state? You know well that except a man be born again he *cannot* see the kingdom of God – that the time is at hand when the Lord Jesus will appear in the clouds of heaven, with His mighty angels, taking vengeance on all that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that these shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power! You *may* go on a *little* longer without being cast into hell; but oh, how *soon* will death, the king of terrors, come and drag you to the bar of God! You *may* avoid the Throne of Grace, but you *cannot* escape the Throne of Judgment! You *may* despise Jesus as a Saviour; you *cannot* but tremble before Him as a Judge! You *may* reject Him as the Lamb of God; but, *alas*, you *must* endure His consuming wrath as the Lion of the tribe of Judah! You *will* not weep for sin *now*, but you *must* endure His consuming wrath as the Lion of the tribe of Judah! You *will* not weep for sin *now*, but you *must* weep for it hereafter! You *shall* mourn for sin in hell, if you do not mourn for it on earth! Ah! tell me why you reject the Lord? What fault can you find in Jesus? Have you found any other Saviour? Oh! dear fellow-sinner, it is high time for you to awake out of sleep!

Arise and come to Jesus *now*. He is crying, Come unto me, I will in no wise cast you out. The Father is ready to receive you into His family. The Spirit is striving with you, did you not resist Him and grieve Him away. Halt no longer between two opinions. Sin and Satan are ruining you; knowledge cannot save you, decency cannot save you, profession cannot save you, conviction cannot save you – you may go to hell with the arrows of the Almighty festering in the conscience; -- nothing will avail but the blood and the Spirit of Jesus. Yield yourself, then, to the Lord as a lost sinner, and he will *not* cast you out. You have seen

individuals around you, perhaps some of your own friends or companions, fleeing to Jesus; why did you not follow them? Are you *resolved* to be left behind in Sodom and to perish in the flames!

Do I seem to you, dear fellow-sinner, as one that mocks, when I thus warn you. Ah! remember it was so in the days of Noah. The old world thought him, no doubt, a self-righteous fool, when he warned them that the world was about to be devoured by the floods of God's vengeance; but they saw that he was divinely wise, when he entered into the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all! Soon will the deluge of everlasting wrath roll over this guilty, sin-stained earth, and sweep away, in its devouring, relentless waves, the whole world of the ungodly! Then will the penitent followers of Jesus rest secure upon the Rock of Ages, and look down without fear upon the horrific floods below! Ah, sinner! what joy will the pleasures of sin give you *then*? will you laugh, and dance, and drink with your companions *then*? Ah, no, you will rue the day that you were born! you will curse the day that you heard the gospel and despised the Saviour! Yea, you will even hear the words that I am now writing to you ringing in your ears, and adding new anguish to your unutterable torment! Do not, I beseech you; leave the place where you now are until you have given yourself up to the Lord, who still waiteth to be gracious. Will you *yet* delay? Oh! it is the suggestion of Satan, your murderer; yield at last to the love of God, put the crown upon Emmanuel, save your soul, disappoint the devil, and give the angels a song of joy in heaven. May the Holy Ghost descent in his almighty power and prevail with you. May you *now* escape from that miserable company – the unregenerate – against whom the Lord's messengers, and I among the rest, must stand as witnesses at the judgment-seat of Christ, to condemn them to the second death.

Unworthy as these lines are of appearing in print, they will at least serve to put many of you in mind of those glorious days of the power and grace of the God which we enjoyed together last autumn, -- days which we shall all remember, either with grief or joy, throughout an endless eternity. Oh, that these days were now to return among you with tenfold greater glory, and that multitudes who have hitherto withstood every call of God that has been made to them by their own ministers and by strangers, were at last persuaded to repent and turn to God through Jesus Christ! Oh, that the Holy Ghost were now poured out upon many thousands among you in His convincing, converting, sanctifying, and comforting power! Plead, dear fellow-sinners, for this infinite promise of the Father, which we have heard of Jesus. Ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence and *give Him no rest*, until He arise and make Jerusalem a praise among you, and throughout the whole earth. Commending you all to the infinite, free, sovereign, and everlasting grace of Jehovah, and desiring an interest in the prayers of the Lord's children among you,

I remain, Your affectionate and humble servant in the Lord,

Wm. C. Burns

Grandtully, June 11, 1841.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 19

### THE PRECIOUS SAVIOUR

1864

“UNTO YOU WHO BELIEVE HE IS PRECIOUS.” - 1 PETER 2:7

There are very few people who would not agree with the apostle when he says, that Christ is precious to believers. All who have been educated in a Christian land, however incorrect their views, and however dead their hearts, have a notion, at least, that but for Christ they could never get to heaven; and few or none would therefore contradict the assertion, that he is a Saviour to be valued. But when one comes a little closer, and asks professing people why He is precious to them, and in what degree, the answers to this question are indefinite and vague. It is not of Christ *himself* that most professors will speak. Some will say they need his righteousness, others that they hope in his death; but ah! the genuine child of God alone can say, from the very bottom of his heart, “To me Christ is precious.” The heart is so very deceitful, my dear friends, that a man’s attachment to Christ may be nothing more than a name, without his being aware of it. Most people’s knowledge carries them the length of a certain desire to have his merits and his blood laid to their account in the eye of God, while their hearts are yet entirely strangers to the words of the text. Christ’s righteousness cannot be separated from himself, and nothing but faith in a living, conquering, reigning Jesus will save the soul, -- a faith that clings to him above all in his character of a King, willing and able, -- yea, pledge to root out and destroy his people’s iniquities. Neither can his righteousness be separated from his presence in the believer’s soul; he only becomes “precious: by personal acquaintance, and therefore, he can be so to none, who live habitually at a distance from the mercy-seat. Faith brings about a very close connexion between the soul and him, and this is kept alive mainly by a sight of sin. In a word, we must know him as our *own* Saviour, while it is not self-interest alone that makes us love him. It is something higher, -- it is excellence seen in the Lord himself that draws out the heart. No mere report of others about him will do, -- he must be seen, believed on, and embraced as the portion of the soul. We must get such a sight of him, as would enable the soul to sing that sweet psalm of thanksgiving to Jehovah-Jesus, --

“I love the Lord, because my voice  
And prayer he did hear,  
I, while I live, will call on him  
Who bowed to me his ear.”

If you are not God’s children, you can scarce go through that psalm without faltering and feeling a sad blank, and an inability to fill out the words with your own experience.

But now to apply the subject more directly, we shall briefly notice a few characteristics in believers themselves, which seem to show that to them Christ is precious.

Innumerable marks might be given, but here is a distinguishing one, -- *Christ is the object nearest to a believer’s heart*. He dwells in the soul, nearer than any creature, -- more closely entwined round the heart-strings than aught beside.

Has Jesus ever got this near place to your heart, dear fellow-sinner? Has he got a deep seat in your soul? -- is he reigning there as Lord of the conscience? Do you welcome him in all his grace and love as a God and

Saviour, willingly submitting yourself and all others to his sway? Who in this congregation knows anything of his drawing near *thus*? There is a deep conflict in that hour, -- a conflict that will hardly end without leaving some traces on the soul of a Divine hand at work, -- traces not well to be mistaken, nor lightly to be forgotten. Sin is cast out *then* from its vile dominion -- the world is put down, -- every idol falls, and lies smitten and broken. The affections of the regenerate soul are set on things above, they cluster around the Lord Jesus; its desires are fixed on his free salvation, and cannot rest amid the fleeting vanities of time. Now, my dear friends, what are you saying to this? Does no counterpart to such a transaction as we have described rise in your memory? If not, to you Christ is not precious.

The second mark of the believer's value for the Lord Jesus, is, that *he puts no society in comparison with his presence*, -- no other company has such sweetness or such power to refresh and comfort and purify the soul. Here is a sure and unfailing test to detect the unregenerate. Some of them see to take pleasure in religious society, others appear almost willing to cast in their lot with the people of God; but then they stop at that, and are satisfied without anything more; but ah! God's true children cannot rest there, -- whether alone or in company, they must have the presence of Jesus. Solitude loses all its sweetness, and the company of the most godly becomes insipid and profitless, unless the Lord be found in both. Try yourself again, dear fellow-sinner, -- do you know anything of this? Do you know what it is to meet spiritually with Christ? I fear many will answer Yes, without knowing what they say; and even those who do understand its nature, fall far short of that blessed fellowship with the Father and the Son, which the apostle spake of. Oh! we have all indefinite ideas of this at the best. You think it is merely some kind of feeling; *no*, -- it is deep, real, personal, spiritual in its nature; it is the very life of the soul, and it brings down actual, rich, and gracious blessings to the needy sinner who has found true access to Jehovah.

The third proof of the estimation in which Christ is held by his people, is, that, *for his sake, and for the love they bear him, they give up all known sins*. Fellow-sinner! try yourself here. What sin have you given up for Christ? A deep-rooted love for sin reigns in every unconverted soul, -- deluded men inflict severe penance on themselves that they may obtain a free license to sin afterwards; yes, and the world sets at nought present peace, -- rejects salvation, -- seals its everlasting doom, all to gratify its thirst for sin. Oh! how precious then, when a soul is really brought to mortify and deny all ungodiness! I know *you* cannot do this. Ah, no! 'Tis beyond the power of man or angel, -- no hand but Jehovah's can do it. There can be no casting out of sin, till God comes near and does the work for us. Christ must be precious indeed, before the love of iniquity, which is born and brought up with us, is weakened and yields. Employ the Physician himself to do it by his Almighty Spirit, and he will bruise both sin and Satan under your feet.

The fourth proof that we shall now mention is, that, where Jesus is precious *his ordinances are highly prized* -- we shall value his word, alone and in the family, as well as in the house of God. Not because we have received as a tradition that it is profitable so to do -- nor merely to follow the example of godly parents, nor because it is a good and universal custom to take it up at certain times. No; but because it is the channel of living waters from the upper sanctuary, and a Divine means of meeting with Jehovah, and of feeding on Christ by faith. And so also with his house, his table, his Sabbath, we shall not wait on these merely because it is a statute for Israel forever that men should thus assemble to hallow the seventh day, but we shall value them as meeting-places with an absent Lord; above all shall we love his day because it is a proof of his resurrection, the standing witness in all ages that he came and died for men, and the sure token that, after appearing like a criminal at Pilate's bar, and meeting an accursed death, the surety was set at large by Divine justice, and rose from the grave. "Why was this change made to the first day of the week?" the believer will

say within himself; "The Jew still keeps the old day, and why am I now keeping the Lord's day, if not as a seal of my justification in the Beloved?" Let infidels answer that, and tell why the Christian world keeps that first day of the week; where in the book of history could you find a surer proof of his divinity? Ah! there is a testimony *here* that He is the Only Begotten of the Father, and this makes the Sabbath a precious day to the believing soul, and makes him desire to see all open violations of it arrested and put down, that others, as well as himself, may learn to use it as a time for rising beyond all that is seen to the things within the veil, and for laying the soul anew by faith on the great foundation stone.

Again: *God's people are precious to the believer*, and in some aspects this is also a distinctive mark, though we shall not dwell on it, as each one can easily apply it to himself; we would only say that they are often *most precious* to a genuine believer when they have nothing else to recommend them; he may almost be apt to turn away from them when they are found in ease and prosperity, under the smile of the world; but when he finds them in prison, naked, poor, forsaken, -- ah! the heart of the child of God is drawn out to them in love, he sees them as they will be seen at the last great day with all the Lord's beauty shining on them.

Another mark that Christ is precious to believers is that *they are longing for his second coming*. The way to heaven is to be *in* Christ -- and heaven is to be *with* Christ, this is what makes it "far better to depart," and what enables them to "hasten unto the day of God."

Now what say you to all these marks of value for the Saviour? Not that your opinion of him will make any difference. The preciousness of Christ stands eternally separate from your judgment of him, and it has been attested by multitudes now in glory, and by thousands now on earth: but is he precious to *you*? -- as a Redeemer -- as a sanctifier through his Spirit poured forth? For we speak not of a name to be found in history, or of a dead man like the false prophet, whose followers still speak of what he was on earth, and I fear that the Lord Jesus is little more than this in the hearts of you -- carnal professors.

No, but we speak of him who liveth and reigneth -- dead, but alive again, and giving evidence at this hour in men's souls that there is a King in Zion. Oh! the blindness of poor sinners, that they can see no beauty in him. We look up to Jesus, and to the eye of faith he seems "the chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely" one. We ask of you, and you say there is no beauty in him. Whence is this! The god of this world hath done it. Lay this to heart, fellow-sinner; be alarmed; say, Alas for me! that he should be so precious, and that I should not feel it! Ah! my dear friend, would you like to taste and see that he is good, -- you need no title to obtain it, but that he is God's free gift to a dying world. Jehovah is testifying. "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation." Only believe on him, and you will find him to be the stay and the rock of a sinking soul. Cry to him like blind Bartimeus, and remain at his footstool until he bless you. It is high time to be up and awake. Oh that there were some among you becoming persuaded that there is a *reality* in Jesus -- no fiction, no mistake, no overdrawn picture, but a real, divine, glorious Christ, ready to become your Intercessor with the Father -- your friend in life and death -- your all in all to eternity. If I see not *that* in Him I am lost; if you see not that in Him you are lost; but ah! you need not remain so. Do not despair -- do not limit him -- put him to the proof, for there is nothing he loves so well as to be tried and trusted by a poor hell-deserving sinner -- do it at once -- do it *now*.

And you, believer, press on. Do not think you know enough of him. Oh! what is any discovery you have made compared with what is in him! Paul had seen much of his glory and tasted much of his love when he said, "that I *may* know him." Paul could say in the same breath, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Yet it seemed to him that but a drop from the ocean had reached

his breast, and so he adds, like one who as yet knew nothing of him, "that I *may* know him." Ah! Paul felt that all he had seen was but a chink opened to let Immanuel's glory into his soul. His glory! Oh, it will be the subject of eternal anthems. Make it all your boast now – be concerned for his glory – hate all that would intercept the shining of his countenance. Let sin be bitter to you. Let error be shunned. Error dims him, sin offends him; call upon him, then, in sincerity and truth. Let us now draw near to him in prayer. Fellow-sinners! will you not join us in seeking his face? Seek *now*, knock *now*, ask *now*. He is rich to all that call upon him; and his heart-satisfying, enduring riches will begin to flow in upon your soul from the hour when you first can call him precious.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 20

## MISSIONARY OPERATIONS IN CHINA

1865

Pekin, February 7<sup>th</sup>, 1865

I have now finished the "Pilgrim's Progress" in the Mandarin colloquial, which, after being looked over by one or two native friends, will be printed. This will occupy some months at least. I had begun to make an attempt to put the second part of the "Pilgrim" also into Chinese, when my teacher a few days ago left me on business of his own, which may occupy him at least two months. Perhaps he may, after his matters are arranged, return and proceed with the work, but meantime it is at a stand, and its accomplishment will depend upon future events. The second part would need a great many changes to render it suitable for China, and I would commend the matter of its translation to the prayers of all who value the original. The preaching of the Gospel goes on here still without outward hindrance, but the interest arising from novelty has in a good degree passed away, and the need is more felt of a work of the Spirit to awaken souls to a genuine concern about salvation. During the last three months, I have preached but seldom. Now, however, that the weather is beginning to be a little milder, and my work indoors, without a teacher, is at a stand, I hope by the gracious help of God to speak to the people more frequently. I now close these hurried and barren lines with my usual and all-important request that we may be remembered continually by God's people at the throne of grace. With Christian regards for all friends.

Ever yours, WILLAM C. BURNS

\*A more recent letter has been received from Mr. Burns, from which we learn that he had gone into the country south of Peking to preach the Gospel at a station lately opened by Mr. Edkins of the London Missionary Society. Dr. Martin of the American Missionary Society writes that Mr. Burns had been there addressing large and attentive congregations.

.....

## Chapter 21

### RECALLING WILLIAM C. BURNS

1875

The first evening of our arrival we had the pleasure of hearing Rev. William C. Burns of the "English Presbyterian Mission" conduct the union mission meeting. He wore the "full Chinese blue dress and tail," he was both a distinguished scholar and earnest missionary. Mr. Burns was born in Scotland April 1, 1815, arrived in China November, 1847, and left Amoy for Peking 1863. He had many thrilling adventures to face during his inland itinerant life. On one occasion he proceeded westward beyond the range of his first labors, without any clear indication of the Master's will. At night he had lain long awoken in anxious and pensive questionings when he became suddenly aware of the presence of robbers in his chamber. With great presence of mind he sat up in bed as two of the muffled figures approached with stealthy step and blackened faces to his bed side and stood over him with naked swords held to his breast. "Do no violence, my friends," he said calmly, "and you shall have all my things." "His pleading for the Bible of his Mother was not in vain, but the thieves broke open his trunk, and in the presence helped themselves to books, clothes and money as they pleased. One fellow had his hone, and being puzzled to know its use, brought it to Mr. Burns to learn what it was fit for, and was patiently taught the mode of sharpening a razor or knife on it. When his landlord came in to condole with his guest on his loss, 'Poor fellows,' said he, 'let us pray for them,' but he was obliged to remain patiently in bed, on the mainland opposite Hong Kong, until the return of a messenger he had dispatched to his friends in the English colony, supplied him with the necessary articles for appearing in the street in an appropriate garb. In August, 1856, he was seized by the Imperialist and brought to Canton over four hundred miles from near Swatow in the capacity of a criminal; his situation was trying, but on his arrival at the Provincial city he was speedily released from his truly unpleasant vile duration. Two Chinese Christian colporteurs arrested at the time were subsequently liberated and returned to Hong Kong. The *Pilgrim's Progress* was translated into Chinese by Mr. Burns and printed on smooth yellow paper manufactured from rice straw. It is not printed with types, but each page is engraved on wooden blocks, which form a cheap and convenient stereotype. On account of the mass of population in China, the wages are extremely low, and this is evidenced by the price of the books, which costs about four pence per copy. It is embellished by a number of illustrations remarkable well executed. A young Dutch gentleman entered the sitting room of a friend in Hong Kong and saw on in Chinese garb, and really marveled what Chinese could be reading *The London Times*. It turned out to be the missionary W. C. Burns. Soon after, he went to hear Mr. B. preach, and never could forget the expression he used in preaching, '*My dear fellow sinners!*' and it resulted in his conversion. Mr. Burns was one of the most remarkable missionaries of modern times, a man of truly apostolic spirit. He had a wonderful facility in acquiring languages and dialects, and he has sown seed probably in many districts through which he traveled, the springing up of which to life will be heard of in after days. [Since my pleasant visit, Mr. Burns has passed away from his labors. He died at the Port of Nieu-chwang April 4, 1868, worn out by privation and persevering toil."]

CATHARINA VAN RENSSLAER BONNEY

THE END



**MEMOIR OF THE REV. WM. C. BURNS, M.A., MISSIONARY TO CHINA FROM THE ENGLISH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

BY THE LATE

REV. ISLAY BURNS, D.D.,

"Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions (or hardships), do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." (2 Timothy 4:5)

1873

## PREFATORY NOTE

This edition of the "Memoir," as the title-page indicates is a posthumous one. Its loved and lamented author has passed within the veil, to be the sharer, we may not doubt, of his sainted brother's joy, as he had been the follower of his faith, and the loving, like-minded memorialist of his work, as a servant of the Lord Jesus. He has not been spared to complete, as he had begun, the revisal of the volume, or to see it in its new form. He continued at work upon it as long as he was able; and he had made considerable progress, when at last his strength failed him, his Master's summons came, and the pen dropped from his hand. The remaining part had to be provided for otherwise, and it was in compliance with a wish expressed by him a day or two before his death, that I undertook to do what he left undone, — aided by the suggestions of those nearest to him, with whom he was wont to take counsel, and who knew his mind best. The disadvantage attending a publication, thus posthumous to so very limited an extent, will not, I trust, be found to be considerable. His endeavor was, and mine has been, while diminishing as much as possible the size of the volume so as to bring it within the reach of a wide circle of readers, to whom the possession of it, at least, has hitherto been unattainable, to diminish as little as possible its value, or its interest; perhaps even to increase the latter, — by abridging those parts of it which are least personal to its subject, and so rendering it even more distinctively than it was, a Biography of William Burns. The details of his work in China, as well as the statements of his missionary brethren in regard to it (in which there has been most abridgment), are no doubt, in the estimation of some, superior in interest to anything else, and to the value of the information thus supplied the strongest testimony has been borne from many quarters; but that class of readers is not, comparatively, a large one; and the pain of excision in those parts of the volume has been greatly lessened by the consideration that in its unabridged form it is still accessible, and is intended to be kept in circulation, as heretofore. It was even more painful to be under the necessity of curtailing the extracts from his Journal of mission work at home, at Dundee, in Edinburgh, in the Highlands, and elsewhere, in which home readers will naturally take the deepest interest, all the more, in the knowledge of what a mass of equally interesting matter remains behind, almost untouched. But this has been done also as sparingly as might be, the best parts have all been retained, while the samples given are such as to convey a faithful, if not a full idea of the whole. What the author says (in his preface to the first edition) was his "single aim," he did, by common consent, to a wonderful degree succeed in accomplishing, viz. "to present a true and life-like portrait of him whose footsteps he had undertaken to trace;" and what was true of the work before, will be found scarcely, if at all, less true of the work still, "so that being dead he may yet speak, just as he spoke while he was with us, to the praise of that divine grace which he so greatly magnified, and by which alone, as he so profoundly felt, he was what he was."

J. C. B.

Free Church Manse, Kirkliston, 1873.

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

The difficulty I anticipated in writing the Biography of one so nearly related to me was very soon forgotten as I proceeded with my task, and felt more and more deeply how utterly insignificant are all such earthly ties, in presence of the higher relations of that eternal kingdom in which my lamented Brother so entirely lived. If, while he was still with us, it was possible for those most closely connected with him in some measure to know him "after the flesh," one instantly felt so soon as he had passed within the veil that henceforth we could know him so no more.

The materials from which the narrative has been drawn are — 1st, My own personal recollections and those of other intimate friends; 2nd, Private letters addressed chiefly to members of his own family; and 3rd, Copious journals, extending over the whole period of his home ministry, and continued, though in a briefer and more fragmentary manner, during the early years of his residence in China. From these last I have quoted very largely, but not more so I believe than those who are really interested in his work would wish me to have done. Indeed, the difficulty often was merely to extract from a document, which many readers doubtless would have wished to possess entire.

To the many friends to whom I have been indebted for valuable materials, I have made acknowledgment in the course of the work at the places where their communications have been used; but I would here specially mention the names of the late Rev. Dr. Burns, of Toronto, who contributed the tenth chapter; the Rev. Duncan M'Gregor, M.A., of Dundee, and the Rev. Dr. Kirkpatrick, of Dublin, who furnished the graphic sketches of my Brother's labours in Edinburgh and Dublin; and the Rev. Carstairs Douglas, M. A. Of Amoy, to whose loving and painstaking endeavours I am indebted for almost all the precious memorials from China which enrich the closing chapters.

My single aim has been to present a true and life-like picture of him whose footsteps I had undertaken to trace; and that thus being dead he may yet speak, just as he spoke while he was with us, to the praise of that divine grace which he so greatly magnified, and by which alone, as he so profoundly felt, he was what he was.

Free Church College, Glasgow,  
December 6th, 1869.

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER I - Early Years

CHAPTER II - Preparation for the Ministry

CHAPTER III - Opening Ministry

CHAPTER IV - Revival Scenes

CHAPTER V - St. Peter's, Dundee

CHAPTER VI - St. Andrew's, Perth, &c.

CHAPTER VII - Labours at Aberdeen

CHAPTER VIII - Work among the Mountains

CHAPTER IX - Newcastle, Edinburgh, Dublin

CHAPTER X - Canada

CHAPTER XI - Call to the Chinese Field

CHAPTER XII - Departure for China

CHAPTER XIII - The Field and its Pioneers

CHAPTER XIV - Breaking Ground

CHAPTER XV - Canton

CHAPTER XVI - Amoy

CHAPTER XVII - First-fruits

CHAPTER XVIII - Shanghae, Swatow, &c

CHAPTER XIX - Old Scenes and New

CHAPTER XX - Peking and Nieu-chwang

CHAPTER XXI - Conclusion

APPENDIX

## CHAPTER I

1815-1832

## EARLY YEARS

William Chalmers Burns, the subject of the present memoir, was the third son of the Rev. William Hamilton Burns, D.D., minister successively of Dun in Angus, and of Kilsyth in Stirlingshire, and was born in the manse of the former parish on the 1st day of April, 1815. It was a quiet and gentle spot, full of stillness and peace, nestling, with the adjoining church and graveyard, close within the bosom of a romantic dell, amid the shadows of ancient trees and the hoarse chorus of rooks high overhead, which seemed rather to increase than to break the silence. A little beyond, reached by a rustic bridge across an arm of the ravine, was the gray mansion-house of the Erskines, with its antique garden and bowling-green and smooth-shaven lawn, carrying back the thoughts into the far past, as associated in popular tradition with stories of " the good Superintendent " and the brave John Knox. With this tranquil scene, little suggestive of profound spiritual experiences or intense moral struggles, were his earliest memories linked. To the neighboring cathedral city of Brechin, too, of which a paternal uncle was a then minister, and which by the continual coming and going of cousins and common friends had become to us as another home, our thoughts in after-days often recurred — with the fine old church and churchyard, and the castle steep and the castle pool, and the quaint streets, and the fair sunny gardens, and the scarlet-vested town's officers, the objects to us of continual wonderment; and chief of all, the reverend face and form of the good pastor, whose very look was a benediction, — all bright forever in the golden light of childhood. In his sixth year, however, all this was left behind, and became as the dreamy reminiscence of a bygone world. In the year 1821 his father was translated to a wider and more stirring sphere, where the family life developed itself henceforth under intense and more stimulating influences. The village of Kilsyth, situated about twelve miles east of Glasgow, at the foot of an undulating range of picturesque green hills, the gentler continuation of the more rugged Campsie Fells, contains a mixed population of hand-loom weavers, colliers, and shopkeepers, which numbered at that time about 3000 souls, and formed the centre of a parish which in its landward part contained about 2000 more. Here the wheels of life moved more swiftly. There was a greater stir of mind, greater variety of interests, greater impetus and force of existence every way, intellectual, moral, social. The chatting groups in the market-place and at the street corners, the merry song often sustained in full chorus, blending with the sound of the shuttle in the long loom shops, the keen party politics and the strong and even bitter denominational sympathies, the eager and sometimes little ceremonious canvassing of ministers and sermons, the collisions and mutual jealousies of class and class, with all the other well known incidents of a south-country weaving village in the neighbourhood of a great industrial and commercial centre, formed altogether a scene in strong contrast to the still life of our former home. A little to the south of this little busy hive, and separated from it only by a narrow valley, stands the manse, with its sheltering thicket of planes and beeches, and commanding an extensive and beautiful prospect not only of the village and the hills, but over a long strath, level as the sea, to the far west, where the blue summit of Goatfell can be dimly descried from the parlour window in a clear day. Here our second home was established, and our deepest and most lasting home affections nurtured. It was to us a sacred and blessed spot in every sense, full of quiet pleasures, healthy activities, and gentle charities — a manse home, and a manse home of the best type, in which cheerful piety, quiet thoughtfulness, and a modest and reverend dignity of speech and carriage, formed together the purest element in which the young life could develop itself and receive its first impressions of truth and duty. Here of course, as elsewhere, it was the parent that made the home, and in this respect I think we were happy beyond the lot of most. Our father, gentle, reverend, gracious, full of kind thoughts, devout affections, and fresh genial sympathies — serious without moroseness, cheerful and 'even sometimes gay without lightness, zealous, diligent, conscientious without a touch of impetuous haste, and carrying about with him withal an atmosphere of calm repose, and staid measured dignity, which in these bustling days is becoming increasingly rare — he was the very model of a

type of the Christian pastorate which is fast passing away; the father alike and the friend of his whole parish, and the loving centre of everything kind and good and true that is passing within its bounds. To him our mother was in some respects the direct counterpart. Of a nimble buoyant active frame, alike of body and mind, she was all light and life and motion, and was as it were the glad sunshine and bright angel of a house which had been otherwise too still and sombre. There was not in those days under their roof much direct and systematic home education. The influence and teaching of the place was rather felt, or experienced without being felt, than visibly obtruded and pressed upon us. "My father's government was rather calm and strong, than bustling and energetic; he was a regulating and steadying power, rather than a busy executive. He was, in short, felt rather as a presence than seen as an agency; the element in which we lived, the atmosphere which we breathed day by day; something, in short, which was as it were presupposed, and in its silent influence entered into everything that was thought, felt, planned, enjoyed, or suffered within our little world. We were not often or much with him, not so much, I think, as would as a general thing is desirable. His calm and unimpulsive temperament here, as elsewhere, fitted him to act rather by continuous influence, than by distinct and specific efforts. A casual reencounter in the garden walk or in the harvest field; a forenoon drive to some neighbouring manse or country house; half an hour's private reading with his boys in the study before breakfast; above all, the Sabbath evening hour of catechizing and prayer; these, with now and then the reading aloud in the fireside circle of some interesting and popular volume, a task in which he greatly delighted and much excelled — were the chief occasions of direct intercourse and influence between the father and the child. Sometimes, too, along the garden walk at eventide, or through a partition wall at midnight, the ejaculated words of secret meditation and prayer would reach our ears and hearts, like the sounding of the high-priest's bells within the veil." Was in this way that the first touch of serious thought I ever observed in my brother was brought to light. We had lain long awake in our common sleeping chamber after some months of separation, talking eagerly of all our ideas and plans of life, in which as yet God and heaven had little share, when the well-known sound from within the sanctuary was heard in the silence. He was hushed at once at least to momentary seriousness, and whispered: "There can be no doubt where his heart is, and where he is going." It was not long before the great decisive change took place, and may possibly have been the first living seed of grace that sunk into his heart. — But the more active management of the household and of the home education was safe in the hands of his more nimble and lively partner, who seemed made, if anyone ever was, to make home and home duties happy. "Herself the very soul of springy activity and elastic cheerfulness, she kept all around her alive and stirring; while by the infection of her own blithesome and courageous spirit, labour became light and duty pleasant. Never was she so much at home as when, in one of those occasional inundations of friendly kith and kin to which our large connection and central situation exposed us, the manse became too narrow for its inmates, and double-bedded rooms and extemporized shake-downs became the order of the day. Was there now and then, amid this universal quickness and alacrity, a slight tinge of sharpness in chiding the dreamy loiterer and the handless slut? Perhaps so; yet we children scarcely saw it, to whom she ever spoke in the true mother tones of gentleness and love. From her lips and at her knees we learned our earliest lessons of truth, and in her voice and face first traced, as in a clear mirror, the lineaments of that gentle and loving godliness which hath the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." Such was the element in which my brother's earliest years were spent, and in which his first experiences of life were formed. There was another household with which, second to our own, our most hallowed thoughts of home and of home life were associated — the manse of Strathblane, situated about twelve miles from Kilsyth, in a quiet valley at the foot of Ballagan, at the other end of the Campsie range. Dr. William Hamilton, the head of that household, and the father of the better known and well-beloved Dr. James Hamilton of London, was my father's ancient friend, and in former days had been used, while the assistant minister of a church in Dundee, to visit us, especially at communion times, in our old home at Dun. His stately form, and a certain almost prophetic majesty of mien and bearing, powerfully impressed us, and his image and voice, as he paced up and down the manse parlour, in eager discourse or with rapt air reciting some favourite snatch of sacred song, remained ever afterwards a cherished tradition in the family. When in after-years the two friends found themselves again established within easy distance of each other, the old relation was resumed, and was kept up not only by the official interchange of services at

communion times, but by a cordial intimacy between the families which was signalized by occasional comings and goings in bright summer days along the romantic valley between. Those visits were always seasons of high enjoyment, and revealed to us a phase of the Christian home which was to us in some measure new. Dr. Hamilton was a man far above the common standard of his class and of his time, alike in intellectual stature and in moral elevation and strength. A ripe scholar, a profound divine, and a minister of singular fervour and sanctity, he was characterized at the same time by an enlargement and enlightened liberality of view in regard to all public questions civil and religious, at once admirable and rare. He was an ardent friend of the missionary cause while that cause was yet in its infancy and still suffered the full brunt of the world's scorn. He was a reformer at a time when, to nine-tenths of his order, reform, associated with ideas of revolution and church destruction, was a name of terror. I remember during the days of the Reform Bill, when the whole land was a stir with the excitement and the fear of a movement which seemed to most of us like an eruption of the Vandals, hearing with dismay, how a bannered host of workmen from the print-fields in his neighbourhood had actually, at his own desire, filed, to the sound of drum, past his manse, encamped on the green lawn before the door, and received from the good pastor not only words of kindly counsel and encouragement, but "good cheer" also of another and more substantial kind. But it was in his study that he was most at home and in his glory. He had a hunger for books, which fortunately his ample means enabled him to gratify by the accumulation of stores which overflowed far beyond their proper sanctuary into every available nook and corner of the house, and which seemed to us, accustomed to more common things, one of the wonders of the world. The spirit of the father infected the children, and diffused through the place an air of studious application and still quietude which was almost cloistral. Yet was the house happy and cheerful withal. The favourite sports and pastimes, indeed, were like everything else about the place, of the intellectual cast, but none the less on that account bright and gladsome, — a boyish lecture to the literary society at the neighbouring print-fields; an animated discussion of the respective merits of Wilberforce and Brougham, and Grey, and Henry Melville and Dr. Chalmers; or a mock trial in the parlour in the evening, in which boys and girls alike bore their share, and the several parts of judge, jury, panel, and pleading counsel were sustained with an ability and gravity which alike astonished and confounded us. How vividly do I recall the very look and voice with which a fair and gentle girl, "the little one" and the favourite of the family, came forward, with a blithsome air which sadly belied her grim part, shouting, "I'm to be the panel." James, of course, was senior counsel for the crown, as well as the presiding genius of the whole scene; William, his younger brother, and now a respected minister of the Free Church, sat, duly bewigged and gowned, as the most reverend judge, while the remaining parts, I am afraid, broke sadly down in my brother's hands and mine. Altogether it was one of the brightest and holiest spots I have ever known on earth — a place which angels might well visit, or desire to look into in passing by on errands of mercy and grace; so that it seems quite in the natural course of things that there should have proceeded from it the author of the Mount of Olives and the Happy Home. We returned musing many thoughts, and feeling that we had got a look into a world to which, accustomed to a more outward and muscular style of life, we had been in great measure strangers. My brother's bent, especially, was at this time decidedly in the "muscular" direction. He gave far greater promise of becoming a mighty hunter than a deep student bearing the pale hue of thought.

Strong of limb and of sanguine temperament, his heart was in the open fields and woods, and in all manner of manly and athletic exercises. He spent long days with his fishing rod on the Carron water on the other side of the hills, along with a congenial friend from the village. He wandered for hours along the hedges and through the fields with an old carbine, borrowed from the village blacksmith, in search of sparrows and crows. He was famous for lifting up his axe upon the thick trees, at one time clearing the whole precincts of the superfluous growth of years by his unaided strength. He did yeoman's service on occasions in the hay or corn fields, and was in great request by the "minister's man" when a sudden emergency called for the aid of a volunteer force. I do not remember, at that time, any books which greatly interested him except these two — the Pilgrim's Progress, which he read over and over again during a time of confinement occasioned by an accident, and the Life of Sir William Wallace, bought with a half-crown given him when a very-little boy by Dr. Hamilton. There were, however, few books then fitted to arrest the attention and stir the minds of the young, and especially of boys. There were no Martin Rattlers, or Old Jacks, or Tom

Browns. Even such as there were had in their outward appearance a most uninviting aspect. The rude engravings of former days had just been banished, in the interests of high art and good taste, and the more graceful illustrations of present times had not yet come in. Thus the most enchanting of books had, just at that particular juncture, a most repulsive aspect. The Pilgrim's Progress was without an effigy even of Giant Pope or the Shepherds on the Delectable Mountains. Robinson Crusoe was without the shaggy umbrella and the footprint on the shore. Even the Scots Worthies and the Book of Martyrs were mere acres of black type, without one solemn gleam of the gathered faggots and the aspiring flames, and of the clasped hands and uplifted eyes of martyr faith and victory. Thus there was comparatively little then to allure or to keep within doors a stirring boy, urged by a strong physical impulse toward the open fields and woods. Meanwhile, however, the essential matters of a common school education went on satisfactorily. He attended, all the time of his residence at home, the parish school of the place, then under the care of the Rev. Alexander Salmon, afterwards of Paisley and Sydney, a teacher of rare intelligence and skill, who was among the first Scottish schoolmasters to avail himself of the modern improved methods of tuition, and to substitute an intellectual interest for the old iron sway of the ferula. I have myself a most vivid recollection of the very time when the grim reign of terror came to an end, and the halcyon days of lively questioning and kindly moral influence began. Here my brother did his work well, and kept a good place in all his classes. He became a good reader, a good arithmetician and accountant, and learned, at least in a certain rough way, the elements of Latin; without, however, any kindlings of desire after further attainments in the higher learning. His thoughts were still all outward, and his highest ambition and declared resolution to be a country farmer, like the fathers of most of his school companions and friends. And yet, even then, a touch of deeper feeling would now and then betray itself, which revealed the hidden fire that slumbered within. A touching instance of this I very vividly remember. The population of a dovecot which he owned as his special property, had become redundant, and the decree had gone forth from the higher powers that some of his favourites should fall a sacrifice to the public good. Yielding reluctant to the stern necessity, he undertook himself the office of executioner, which he deemed would be more mercifully discharged by his own hand than by any other; and planting himself carbine in hand at the corner of a wall at a little distance, took his aim resolutely but tremblingly at one of the devoted flock perched on the ridge of the house, between him and the sky. The shot missed its mark, but unhappily only partially. The poor bird was sorely wounded in the foot, but not killed; and gathering up the broken and bleeding limb beneath its wing, stood on the other, silent and motionless, a spectacle of agony. Instantly his heart smote him for the deed he had done; he was now, to his own sense, no more the executioner, but the cruel murderer; and he stood there rooted to the spot for hours together, as in bitter penance, gazing up with streaming eyes to the hapless victim, which seemed in its turn to look down reproachfully upon him. The whole scene, which is distinctly before me now, might almost have reminded one of Rispah, the daughter of Aiah, in her long watch beside the bodies of her slaughtered sons, "when she took sackcloth and spread it for her on the rock, from the beginning of harvest, until water dropped upon them out of heaven." A circumstance, however, which now transpired, changed at once the whole course of his thoughts, and opened a new, and, as the event proved, a most momentous chapter in his life. A maternal uncle, a respected lawyer in Aberdeen, who happened to visit us at this time, not approving of the farming project, kindly invited William, then in his thirteenth year, to spend a winter with him, and take advantage of the higher training of the grammar-school of that city, then at the very height of its fame, under the distinguished rectorship of the Rev. Dr. James Melvin, then well known within his own sphere, but since his death far more widely, as one of the first classical scholars of his day, and, more perhaps than any other man, the reviver in modern times of exact scholarship, and especially of Latin scholarship, in Scotland. My brother at once felt the fascination of the place and of the man, and caught the breath of a new existence, in which all his old dreams of farming and of a country life vanished out of sight. He fought his way steadily up the class till he reached the genial and exhilarating air of the highest "faction," and closed the session as one of the rector's best and most trusted scholars. When he returned home, even after the interval of a college session, his talk was still of Melvin and of the grammar-school, and was of such an enthusiastic kind as to kindle in me an irrepressible longing to explore the same Eldorado of golden knowledge and pure classic lore. The effects of the mental discipline thus acquired were lasting, and had an

important influence on the whole course of his future life, forming in him once for all those habits of rigid accuracy, thorough work, and conscientious regard for rule and law which ever afterwards distinguished him; while at the same time awakening and training that remarkable faculty for the study of language which stood him in such good stead in the missionary labours of later years. From the school he passed to the University, standing fifth on the list of bursars or open scholars in Marischal College, from among more than a hundred competitors; and after two successive sessions, in which he obtained honourable distinction in all his classes, returned home in the spring of 1831, having completed, as was then thought, his education and full preparation for the work of his life. The nature of that work he had already chosen. His residence with his uncle at Aberdeen had had naturally enough the same effect upon him as the companionship of farmers' sons at the Kilsyth parish school, and he was now accordingly as decidedly set on the profession of the law as before on a country life. His father, who had earnestly desired his dedication to the Christian ministry, gave his reluctant consent, and a few months afterwards he was settled with his uncle, Mr. Alexander Burns, a writer to the signet in Edinburgh, with the view of being bound as an apprentice, so soon as the necessary certificates from his college professors could be obtained.

But "man proposeth, God disposeth." "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord: for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." God had "girded" him for a far higher and nobler work than that which he had chosen for himself, though as yet "he did not know Him." Before all the certificates had arrived, and while yet the last of them was impatiently waited for, a change had taken place in the spirit of his mind, which translated him at once as into a new world and gave a new direction to his whole after-life. The extant memorials of the memorable event are not abundant, but explicit and deeply interesting. "While William was at Aberdeen," writes an elder sister, "a great change had come over our eldest sister, who from a life of gaiety in Edinburgh during two winters, was turned most decidedly with her face Zion wards, and left Edinburgh forever. She returned to our quiet manse, desiring, whatever others did, that she might serve the Lord; and from this service she never drew back, but her path was as the shining light shining more and more until the perfect day — at Perth, 18th February, 1865 — when she passed into glory. I think the year 1831 was a year of grace in our family. I remember we began a practice of reading aloud between dinner and tea some religious book.

Bridges on the 119<sup>th</sup> Psalm was with our sister a special favourite, and means of grace. On these occasions dear William, to our sorrow, without saying a word always slipped out, and he was to our view the least likely subject of grace in the family. He always vehemently rejected the idea of being a minister, and said he wished to be a lawyer, because he 'saw lawyers rich and with fine houses.' Oh! what a contrast his after-life was to this! for one more conformed to his Saviour, in self-denial and in voluntary poverty, the world has never seen — at least one who was all this, without false asceticism or self-righteous pride.

"When, in this spirit, William went to Edinburgh to be bound apprentice to our uncle A. With the view of being a W.S., we mourned over him as one going to be 'bound' to the world; and this view seemed to have come over his own mind when he found the different kind of society he was thrown into, from what he left behind in the manse. A joint letter we wrote him, to which he often afterwards referred as one of the chief means of awakening him, has passed from my mind, and a single sentence quoted from it in a letter of his which still remains is all that is left. The first dawn of hope regarding him is to be found in a letter of date 5<sup>th</sup> December, 1831, in which the following for him remarkable words occur, I am extremely obliged to you for your excellent letter, also to papa, and I look forward to our correspondence as a thing that shall afford me great pleasure when I am fairly settled away from that dear home where I have enjoyed so many happy days, and where in all likelihood I shall never be resident again. I wish you would recommend me to, or send me some good religious reading.\*

This request astonished us, and I think we sent him Boston's Fourfold State. Very soon after this he suddenly and unexpectedly walked in one evening into the dining-room at the old manse, with a graver look than was his wont; and in answer to our mother's exclamation, 'Oh! Willie, where have you come from?' his answer was gravely, 'From Edinburgh. "How did you come?" I walked [a distance of 36 miles].

There was then a silence, and standing on the hearth-rug, with his back to the fire, he said, 'What would you think, mamma, if I should be a minister after all?' His countenance showed that he was speaking in earnest, and he then told openly how the Lord had arrested him, and that he had no rest in his spirit till he should come home and obtain his parents' consent to relinquish the law and give himself to the service of Jesus in the ministry of the gospel. The inner history of this wonderful change you have in his own diary — this is as I saw it; and far distant as is the day, I remember it vividly, and my feeling was that I was standing in the presence of a miracle. I could not contain my feelings, but-rushed along the long passage which led to our father's study, and shutting the door threw myself on my knees and wept.

After being a short time at home, he returned to Edinburgh with our parents' joyful consent to his being what they had long wished and prayed for — a minister of the everlasting gospel. By a singular providence he was free to do so. He had not been bound apprentice, owing to a delay in the arrival of one of his certificates of attendance at college; and it was during this interval that the whole current of his life was changed. It may be right to add that William had been all along, so far as ever known to me, perfectly free from all outward vice. I never knew of an act of duplicity or a bad word. This I think is important to be mentioned, as from his deep views of sin, he during all the course of his spiritual life spoke of himself in such terms of self-loathing, that those unacquainted with the facts might naturally suppose that he had been turned to God from a life of open sin, as indeed is broadly hinted in an Aberdeen document recently given to the world." (It may be of more importance for me to state that my own thorough belief is in entire accordance with that here expressed. As a brother nearly of the same age, I had been constantly with him and shared his inmost thoughts; and I always understood from him that he had begun to tread those paths of folly which often lead to open sin, but never passed over the verge of the precipice. On the contrary, he seemed to regard it as a singular mercy from the Lord that the effectual call of grace had come just in time to save him from a ruin otherwise, as it seemed to him, inevitable. )

Such was the event so far as it could be seen from the outside, even by those who stood the nearest to it. Happily we have another and still more authentic record of it from his own hand — a solemn deposition as before God, in regard to a sacred secret, over which before man he ever cast the veil of a deep and reverent reserve. It was drawn forth by a sudden gush of reminiscence, when, ten years afterwards, and after his own new life had become the germ of similar life to thousands of other souls, he unexpectedly found himself, in the course of a solitary evening walk, in the midst of those scenes which were linked to him with such infinite and deathless memories — "Edin., Tuesday, Nov. 16, 1841. — To-day I was chiefly occupied, as far as business is concerned, in preparing for the press the letters I sent some time ago to the Greenside Place school. In taking the air I walked over scenes which were indeed fitted to speak aloud of mercy to my favoured soul. I walked along York Place, and looked up to the windows of the room (No. 41, west side, upper flat) where, when reading Pike's Early Piety on a Sabbath afternoon, I think about the middle of December, 1831, an arrow from the quiver of the King of Zion was shot by his Almighty sovereign hand through my heart, though it was hard enough to resist all inferior means of salvation. Who can understand the feelings with which I again revisited the spot! Alas! the windows in the roof above met my eye, as the place where a few months afterwards (in 1832) poor Uncle Alexander died in one day of cholera! Oh! what a contrast between the scenes of mercy and judgment exhibited by God in places so near each other! From this I walked down and revisited my old lodgings, No. 69 Broughton Place, where my earliest days as a child of grace were spent, and where first the Spirit of God shone with full light upon the glory of Jesus as a Saviour for such as I was. This was, I think, about the 7th of January, 1832. Although it was then, I remember, that the light of God first shone fully and transportingly on his word, and into my heart, I was never from the beginning, three weeks before, in utter darkness, but felt that God had been always willing to save me, that I was a self-murderer, and that now he was in his own sovereignty touching my heart and drawing me to himself for his own glory; and again, though about the time mentioned, I remember to have beheld transporting wonders in God's law, yet my peace following on this was far different indeed from a settled quiet frame of mind. I had many fears and many awful struggles with sin and Satan, and many sleepless nights of mingling joy and fear, and faith and hope, and love. Ebenezer! Halleluiah! Halleluiah!

Amen.

"Wednesday — Yesterday morning I breakfasted with Mr. Bruce, and this morning with Mr. Brown (C. J. B.); on both occasions we had interesting conversations. Mr. Bruce seemed pleased to be reminded of old events, and promised to give me the dates of several sermons which I was benefited by when preached. The means by which my change of heart was brought about were these, I think — Mr. Bruce's preaching, which engaged me much, and the fear of sudden death from the approach of cholera, were preparatory. A letter from my sisters at home, in which they spoke in a single sentence of going as pilgrims to Zion, and leaving me behind, proved a word in season and touched my natural feelings very deeply; for when sin had rendered me dead to every other feeling, I could not think of my Christian parents, and my godly home with all its sweet and solemn privileges, without an awful conflict of soul at the thought of parting with them forever. I could think of parting with Christ, for I knew him not — alas! do I yet know him? — but to part with them was too much for me to bear. In this way the way was prepared, but as yet I am fully conscious that my heart was spiritually dead. However the set time came. I sat down, with solemn impressions arising from the causes now mentioned, to read a part of Pike's Early Piety, which my dear father had given me at leaving home ; (Ah! little did he know what use God was to make of it, little did the author of that solemn treatise know one of the purposes for which he wrote it ;) and in one moment, while gazing on a solemn passage in it, my inmost soul was in one instant pierced as with a dart. God had apprehended me. I felt the conviction of my lost estate rushing through me with resistless power; I left the room and retired to a bedroom, there to pour out my heart for the first time with many tears in a genuine heart-rending cry for mercy. From the first moment of this wonderful experience I had the inspiring hope of being saved by a sovereign and infinitely gracious God; and in the same instant almost I felt that I must leave my present occupation, and devote myself to Jesus in the ministry of that glorious gospel by which I had been saved. From that day to this, blessed be Jehovah, I have been conscious more or less deeply of the possession of a new and holy principle, leading me to live by the faith of Jesus to the glory of God, and in the communion of the Holy Ghost. Salvation unto our God, who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb! "

The only other extant memorial of this eventful time is contained in the following letter to his sisters, written soon after his unexpected visit to Kilsyth, and which is the first surviving blossom of the new life that had dawned upon him : —

"Edinburgh, February 20th, 1832. — My dear Sisters,— . . . I feel it often a great encouragement to me to persevere in that life upon which I have entered, that I do not make for heaven alone j but though there be few that find I the strait gate' and the ' narrow way/ yet that my nearest and dearest friends upon earth are my fellow-pilgrims to the ' heavenly Canaan/ Let us encourage and exhort one another in following and trusting in the Lamb who was slain, and who now intercedes for all who trust in him, at the right hand of the Father. I have been apt, as is I believe the case with many young Christians, to make my safety depend upon my feelings, and consequently to feel miserable when not engaged in religious exercises, and to despise in some degree the ordinary business of life ; but I have for some time past been coming to juster and more stable views. I had another conversation with Mr. Bruce about a week ago; I was as much as on the former occasion delighted with him, and I trust edified. He had two admirable discourses last Sabbath (yesterday), the one a lecture from the 7th and 8th verses of the 6th of Matthew, and the other from Ephesians, 3d chapter and 12th verse, 'In whom we have boldness/ &c. They were both very much suited to my state, and I trust I was much benefited by them Mr. Moody and I are on the most intimate terms; he is one of the few that live near to God. . . . "If the Lord spare us all, I look forward to the happiest meeting that ever we have had. We are now, my dearest sisters, linked together by a new tie, being members of the same body, and the children of the Almighty, our Father in heaven: but till then let us pray daily to Him for one another, and seek a nearer communion with Him to whom we have access with confidence by the blood of Jesus. Let not the question be with us, 'How near must we be to him in order to insure our safety but how much communion can we

possibly attain to while here on earth. This is not our home, 'for we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God.' 'When He who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory.' What a hope is this, That our eyes shall see Him, and that we shall dwell with Him forever and ever! He now makes intercession for us at the Father's right hand. May we be 'kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.' Let us have but one object in view, the kingdom of heaven, and all other necessary things shall be added unto us. All things shall work together for the eternal good of them that love God, and we must wait upon the Lord that he may give us this love. There is no object in this world, the contemplation of which is an adequate employment for that immortal and divine principle in us — 'the soul,' except the character of the 'Lord of Hosts;' with the contemplation of which, although we were to devote our entire lives, yet would we be compelled to exclaim, 'Thou art past finding out;' and this is the God to whom we approach with so little humility and contrition of soul. How wonderful that he should not only listen to us when we call on Him, but condescend to work in us by his Holy Spirit exciting us to draw near unto Him. We ought to strive to bring our fellow-creatures to a knowledge of their state, and of the mercy that is freely offered them: it is truly an awful thought, that anyone to whom the gospel is proclaimed should go down to that lake that burneth with fire and-brimstone forever. People are apt to think themselves independent creatures, and that none has a right to their services; but if we do not take God's mercy in Christ Jesus, we must take his wrath. I pity most of all those whom we call decent people, who, although they will hardly believe it, are in as unsafe a state as the openly profligate, as they do not build on Christ as the foundation. . . . The cholera is going on here though slowly, and I hope we may all be mercifully spared; but let us endeavour to say from the heart, 'The will of the Lord be done.' I have a letter to ready, which I expect to have an opportunity of forwarding this week. Let us pray earnestly for him, that the Lord would open his heart to the truth; that we may go all on together to that blessed country to which Christ has purchased admittance for all who trust in and follow Him. I cannot tell you all nor any of my thoughts on paper, but wait for a meeting with you, if the Lord will.

Till then farewell.

I remain, my dearest sisters, your truly affectionate brother,  
— Wm. C. Burns."

He remained still for a short time in the office of his uncle, who had already formed an exalted estimate of his ability and aptitude for business, and of his prospects of future success, and who parted from him with unfeigned regret.

In the course of the summer he returned to Kilsyth, and by the beginning of November he was once more in Aberdeen, to resume the broken thread of his studies, with a view to the ministry of the Church of Scotland.

## CHAPTER II

1832-1839

## PREPARATION FOR THE MINISTRY

My brother's remaining years of study at Aberdeen present nothing particularly worthy of record, except a visibly heightened tone of earnestness and energy in all his work, due to the higher motives and principles which now inspired him. A true Christian, he became more than ever an earnest student. Having learned to be faithful in that which is much, he became faithful as never before in that which is least. The result was seen in the higher place taken by him in all his classes, and in the University distinctions which began more than ever to crowd upon him. In his third year he was awarded the first place of honour in the senior mathematical class, and in the next following session he gained by public competition, along with another who unbracketed with him, the mathematical scholarship, then and for long afterwards the highest attainable distinction in the University; while in all the other branches of study he held a distinguished place. In other and higher matters, meanwhile, he held on his constant way — not of course in a path of unclouded sunshine and uninterrupted progress, but consistently and steadfastly. The fresh and blessed experience which had attended his entrance on the spiritual life had indeed passed away, and been succeeded by ebb of feeling over which he bitterly mourned; but the holy stream, fed by an inexhaustible spring, was never dried up, or ceased to flow in a strong and steady current. His religion, indeed, at this time was rather calm, serious, strict, and resolutely conscientious, than specially ardent and exalted; characterized rather by unflinching decision and strength of principle, than by any peculiar elevation of feeling or depth of spiritual experience. His life was more of the usual type, and moved more in the customary channels of Christian profession and obedience, than in after-years. There seems even to have been in him a certain tinge of the artificial and the legal — a tendency not uncommon with young disciples when called openly to confess Christ in the presence of those who have known them before in the days of their ignorance, to maintain a higher standard of outward profession and observance than is fully sustained by the state of the heart within.\* Of this he bitterly accuses himself in his first letter to his sister after his return to Aberdeen, and which is the only surviving fragment of his correspondence belonging to this period of his life :

Aberdeen, Friday, Nov. 16, 1832. — . . . “In regard to my own state of mind, I can say little that is pleasing. When I came here my spiritual state was very low, but I hoped that the necessity which I knew there was of my walking carefully would, by God's blessing, have had a beneficial effect, making me seek nearness to Him and strength for all my emergencies; but I lament to say, I have been disappointed. During the first few days after my arrival, I am sensible of having been guilty of much hypocrisy, striving to make it appear that I was indeed converted, while I felt myself to be far from God, and acting I fear rather for the upholding of my own reputation than with a view to the glory of God. I might say much on this subject, but feel at this moment that although my entering on it is calculated to be beneficial to me, in bringing it more immediately before my own mind, and calling forth your earnest prayers in my behalf; yet the very feeling of having expressed my mind upon this subject may prove a snare to me, leading me to suppose that I have retraced my steps to the cross of Christ, while I remain in reality unwilling to become His wholly and His only. May the Lord in His great mercy teach me my real character, and lead me to some just conception of His perfect holiness and hatred of sin, that I may prize as I ought that salvation which He has provided, and be made to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus! The counsel and sympathy of dear friends are then especially effective when they are absent; for as we delight to think of again meeting after being for a time separated, our views are directed to that blessed abode where alone there is a security of our dwelling in sweet and uninterrupted communion.”

The state of mind thus expressed will not be difficult of comprehension to any who, like him, after a spiritual crisis of more than usual decisiveness, have descended all at once to the common level of ordinary

practical life. Clearly the views and convictions which then opened on his soul remained unchanged, but the fresh impressions and strong- emotions which had given life and force to them had for the moment passed away. He still thought as justly, but he felt less intensely, and therefore moved and acted less buoyantly. He was faint, but he was still pursuing the same high end, and held his face unswervingly in the same direction. They, who thus wait on the Lord, even though they may for a season faint and be weary, shall renew their strength. Though like the molting bird they may droop as if ready to die, a new life will soon stir within them, and bear them upwards as on eagles' wings. Even in the dead calm and when the loose sails hang idly clown, let us remember still the haven whither we are going, and turn our eyes ever wistfully thither, and the heavenly gales will surely soon return. How eminently this was so in the case of the subject of this memoir we shall in the sequel see. Even now the declension over which he mourned was more apparent than real — rather the mere transition from the flush of the morning to the light of common day, than any actual retrogression or even obscuration of the Sun. Meanwhile the light that was in him, dim and feeble as it seemed to himself, was not darkened, and could not be hid from others. "My mind," says Dr. Murray Mitchell, an old class-fellow, and now missionary of the Free Church of Scotland at Calcutta, "goes back to Aberdeen, and 1829, or rather November, 1828, when I first became acquainted with your brother. We were class-fellows, at school and college, for three years. He then discontinued attending college for a year, with the intention I think of giving himself to the study of law. When he returned to Aberdeen he was an altered man. He came back full of holy earnestness, having in the meantime sustained the greatest revolution of which the spirit of man is susceptible, and seeking now every opportunity to converse with his old companions regarding Christ and his salvation." With this statement my own recollections of this period entirely accord. It was a time with him, I think, of steady, though not of marked or conspicuous progress. He was earnest and decided in his Christian profession beyond the standard of most, but still according to the ordinary style of the Christians of that time; nor had that overmastering sense of eternal things and of the infinite worth of souls, which at an after period carried him beyond all the barriers of conventional rule, and could be bound by no restraints but the clear and eternal laws of

God, yet manifested itself. Taking his degree with honourable distinction in 1834, he proceeded in the winter of that year to the University of Glasgow, with the view of prosecuting his further studies for the ministry there. The intellectual life of that ancient and famed seat of learning was in those days, so far at least as the public teaching was concerned, rather more conspicuous in the literary than in the theological department. The revered professor of divinity, Dr. Stevenson Macgill, had by that time fallen into the "sere and yellow leaf," and no longer exercised that effective influence over the minds of his pupils which he had done in earlier years. The air of the church history class was indescribably slumbrous, and reminded one now of Spenser's Cave of Morpheus and now of Bunyan's Enchanted Ground; while our Hebrew studies were superintended by a professor of much intelligence certainly, but who knew almost nothing of Hebrew, and opened his course rather significantly by an elaborate refutation of the vowel-points. In the literary and philosophical departments again all was life and energy; and there was altogether, I think, about the place more of a true academic spirit than existed at that time anywhere else in Scotland. In the Greek classroom, especially, under the most fascinating and eloquent of teachers, Sir Daniel K. Sandford, there was an element of high enthusiasm which no one then at the University can have forgotten, and of which old pupils still speak with a rapture that almost looks like extravagance. The very music of his voice as he read the sounding lines of

Homer, apart even from the brilliant translation and the rich feast of illustrative commentary and apt quotation, was a thing to go and hear. Within this charmed circle my brother was soon drawn, and supplemented by two successive sessions in Sandford's senior class the more elementary studies of his undergraduate course. At the same time the more proper work of the divinity hall was not neglected. If there was little life in the class-room there was great life in the library, and around it. There were men at the hall at that time that was not likely to suffer any society of which they were members to sink into stagnation and ennui — such as James Halley, James Hamilton, William Arnot, Norman Macleod, with others of kindred spirit, though less widely known. No doubt, however, the systematic study of scientific theology must have suffered greatly from the want of the due direction and stimulus. What was done in

the way of special lines of reading, in connection with a class exercise or a University prize theme, was rather occasional and spasmodic, than methodical and sustained. Such incidental calls, however, to studious application my brother promptly obeyed, and improved most strenuously. Returning from Aberdeen about the middle of April, after completing my own undergraduate course, I found him still in his rooms in Glasgow, working at the last of a long series of prize essays on Old Testament subjects for the Hebrew class, in which he had maintained a strenuous competition with another student throughout the entire winter; and either in this or in a subsequent session he devoted much thought and labour to an essay on the characteristics of Hellenistic Greek for a University medal, which he was fortunate enough to obtain. Altogether it quite struck me that the atmosphere of student life in which he was now living was decidedly of a more living and stimulating kind than that which I had left behind. In the higher matters of the spirit it undoubtedly was so. Not only was there a higher tone of religious earnestness among the better part of the students generally, but there were among them individual instances of eminent devotedness and rare elevation of character, which could not fail to tell with quickening effect on others, and especially on one whom divine grace had made so susceptible to such impressions. Amongst these, besides James Hamilton, I would particularly mention the names of James Denniston, a fellow-student of his own in the divinity hall, and Charles Birrel, then an undergraduate in the University, and since an eminent minister of the Baptist communion in England. With these, and with other junior students whom in after-years he gathered more and more around him, he spent many hallowed hours of sweet communion in conference and in prayer, at once provoking and himself provoked to love and unto good works. Other influences there were working towards the same result, and which contributed to render this period an era in his spiritual progress, two of which I would especially commemorate. The one was the peculiar and powerful ministry of the Rev. John Duncan, then of Milton Church, Glasgow, and subsequently professor of oriental languages in the New College, Edinburgh, which during the two last years of his residence took a more and more fast hold of him, and opened to him deeper views of divine truth and more solemn aspects of the Christian calling and discipleship than he had known before. "One soweth and another reapeth;" one forges the weapon of steel, another gives it its last tempering and its keen sharp edge. And so it was ordered of God that this singular instrument of his grace, who at the beginning and further progress of his spiritual course had been helped onward by other able ministers of the word, should receive his last touch of preparation for his great work from that scribe well instructed in the kingdom of God. Certainly at least it seems to me, in the retrospect of those days, as if every Sabbath spent by him in Milton Church had been as a day in Patmos, and every sermon almost as an opening of the gate of heaven. The other influence was that of the Students' Missionary Society in the University of Glasgow, of which he was throughout an active and zealous, and latterly a leading and influential member. That was a sort of focus and rallying point of everything that was most earnest and Christian both in the divinity hall and in the undergraduate classes of the University; drew good men together, and placed the weak side by side with the strong; brought home to us by essay or discussion, or through the well-worn volumes of our library, the shining examples of missionary faith and heroism — the Martyrs and Brainerds of the past, the Marshmans and Duffs of the present — till our hearts burned within us, and we longed to go forth and mix ourselves with life, in the great battle that was going on in the church and in the world around. Here my brother was ever peculiarly at home, and breathed an element which was to him more than any other congenial and inspiring. It was here, and especially while listening to the weighty and earnest words of a missionary about to sail for China, that he first rose to the full idea of that entire and absolute consecration of his whole being and life to the service of Christ, which in his subsequent ministry so remarkably distinguished him, as well as formed his first definite purpose of devoting himself to the missionary field.

Almost the only written memorials of this period are contained in a brief correspondence with one of those sisters who stood, as we have seen, in so close a relation to the beginning of his spiritual life; but these will be read with interest, both as illustrating some of the statements now made, and as marking generally the growing earnestness and solemnity of his views and feelings. Most of them are without date, except that of the day of the week; but I arrange them as far as possible chronologically, as they seem to me by internal

indications to date themselves. The first was written, as the date shows, in the first year of his residence in Glasgow. The rest probably all belong to the last: — "Dear Jane, — The accompanying packet arrived a few days ago from Paisley. Expecting it sometime previously, I had prepared a few lines for you, to accompany it; but I waited in vain — and this among other causes has prevented me from sooner writing you. I am obliged to do so at present very hurriedly, but perhaps the principal interest of anything I might say would be owing to its coming from a brother who remembers you and a brother at home and the merest note may serve this purpose.

"Dr. Macgill, after an illness that confined him nearly four weeks, resumed his labours a few days ago, and is now proceeding with all the vigour that is compatible with advanced age and great weakness. But we are not just dependent on his lectures for a profitable employment of our time, and the loss we sustained by his temporary absence is not so material as a stranger might imagine. I am attending, besides Dr. Macgill, the professor of Hebrew Dr. Fleming, an interesting and excellent teacher. And in addition to this, I am studying French under Dr. Gerlach of the High school. I should consider him a very admirable teacher, and I hope I am making some progress under him

"Glasgow, December 24th, 1834."

"My Dear Jane, — I am sorry, as usual, to be obliged to dispatch the basket in so great a hurry as to prevent me answering as I could have wished your very pleasing note. It is indeed hard to be truly serious and interesting, while it is easy to be morose and dull, in the service of God: yet still we must not desist from an ardent pursuit of our high and holy calling, because of the difficulties which, from an utterly depraved heart and blinded understanding, it is encompassed with. Let us in this as in all things commit in humble but earnest faith our way to the Lord, and he will direct our steps — not thinking on the one hand that we can have too deep an impression of the value of immortal souls and the danger in which we all naturally are, if it is counterbalanced on the other by a view of the glorious remedy, and the fullness and certainty of the Christian's inheritance. O that we might live nearer to God and then indeed if our manner may appear for a little less natural, it will become at length naturally serious and heavenly! I have had a very dull and unfruitful week, have been conscious of more heart-atheism than I remember of feeling, but am now, I trust, desiring in some measure that this discovery of my utter depravity may by God's sovereign and precious grace be blessed to make me more humble and more grateful to the adorable Redeemer, who for such vile creatures as we descended so infinitely low and bore so much.

"I think highly of your scheme of Sabbath teaching, and hope that you will be greatly honoured and supported in it.

Your affectionate brother,  
— Wm. C. Burns.

"Rothesay, Thursday.

My dear Jane,

— I have from various causes delayed till this time writing home, in expectation, before --'s arrival, of every day seeing some of you; and since then, waiting the opportunity of his return home. And now when the time has arrived, I am disappointed to find that, owing partly to other engagements in the evening and partly to a doubt whether or not would go to-morrow morning, I must take to my desk when I should retire to rest. I cannot however think of allowing him to go without some little supplement to the intelligence which I have no doubt he will retail among you for days to come.

I have been enjoying Rothesay, since I saw you, in an unusual degree, the weather being so fine, and my health, in the great kindness of God, unimpaired. Nor can I reckon among the least of the present sources of pleasure the duties- in which of course my time is a good deal occupied. I have an interesting little charge here, and one which I think I have increasing cause to feel at once responsible and engaging. I have

this season the privilege, obtained by request from Mr., of joining with my pupils in the morning exercise of reading a portion of Scripture and prayer, which gives a new facility for bringing to bear on their minds and hearts the religious influence which God may enable me to employ, and accustoms them by practice to a duty which, imperative and fundamental as it is, they are unfortunately not yet otherwise acquainted with. I have many pleasing tokens, had I time to enter into particulars, of such an interest in all my pupils in those truths which must decide their eternity, as hang one between hope and fear on their account, and demand on my part a diligence and prayerfulness which, now that I record this truth before me, find, more than ever, I grievously want. O that I had grace to occupy my present little talent, instead of looking forward to a larger sphere, for when may I expect to be faithful if not now, and may I not here be privileged in Jehovah's infinite loving-kindness, if ever I shall be so honoured, to tend the lambs of the fold of Jesus? it is unbelief and not faith, I find, that discourages the ambition. Let us provoke one another, my dear sister, to love and to good works; let us be steadfast in our efforts and instant in our prayers, and never forget, for your encouragement in the service of our Divine Master, that if I have ever yet known the precious faith of God's elect, it was a letter from you and Margaret, in which I remember you spoke of being pilgrims to a better country,' that was first blessed to rouse me from the unconcern of an ungodly state.

"I wrote some time ago and have had a letter in reply. His circumstances appear, from his account, in many respects very favourable for his improvement. "Appears to have enjoyed his short stay with me exceedingly, and we have been very happy together. He is a boy of very warm heart, solid and in the main thoughtful; a hopeful subject of grace he appears to me when I contrast his character and impressions of truth, as far as I can see these, with my own at a similar age. May the Lord make him his own, and prepare him, if it be his holy will, for important service in the advancement of his cause!

"We have been thinking of you in the enjoyment of your New Testament feast. In the strength of this food may you have grace to go many days. And now farewell, my dear Jane, and give my filial and brotherly regards to all at home and at Cray.

Ever yours,  
— Wm. C. Burns.

"My dear Jane, — I would not write you so paltry a note, were it not that writing to has exhausted my time, and I cannot let another opportunity pass without thanking you for your kind and interesting letter, which I have not yet acknowledged; and expressing my desire that your mid-day period of solemn retirement may be specially regarded of the Lord, and that you may obtain new and remarkable communications of the Holy Spirit in all his vivifying and comforting power. I enjoyed my late visit very much, though, had we been alone, it might have been spent in closer intercourse on the things of the Spirit, and in special approaches to the throne of divine grace, and thus have been rendered more stimulating to us all. Mr. Denniston, I hope, will see you on Friday, and I hope that, through the presence of the Lord, his parting visit may be eminently blessed to your growth in the excellent knowledge of Christ.

"I am asking, though alas! with little becoming solicitude, whether the present is to be added to the list of our almost Christless sacraments. Would that the Lord would pour out on us the Spirit as in former days, and bring his saints into close and ravishing fellowship with himself! 'Whither is our beloved gone?' 'Why tarry the wheels of his chariot V 'Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?'

"In earnest expectation of his coming, let us wait day and night, and he will at last arrive to our infinite amazement and eternal rejoicing." My love in Christ Jesus to dear Charlotte, and believe me, your affectionate brother,  
— Wm. C. Burns.

"Wednesday 17th, 1838.  
— My Dear Jane,

— I would have sent the basket sooner, but could not find the time necessary for dispatching it; and I hope that we shall get it returned not later than this day week. "None of us have been able to get out to Paisley as yet, but I heard of them yesterday. They are all, it would seem, well, with the exception of Aunt --, who I hear is confined to bed with cold, and is still troubled with her arm, which does not seem to mend rapidly. I paid a most delightful visit to Uncle Islay's the other evening, when Mr. --, their new minister, was there, and expounded in a manner remarkably interesting and impressive. He seems indeed a very uncommon Christian, and has made me feel in some degree my own miserable ignorance in the excellent knowledge of the Son of God. O that I might know Him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death! God forbid that we should glory save in the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to us, and we to the world! I trust, my dear sister, that you are obtaining some advancement in the knowledge of your own vileness and misery, and of the glorious righteousness and atonement of Emmanuel, our elder brother. Of such precious knowledge I can say little, but I would desire, I trust by the grace of the Holy Spirit, to fix the eye continually on Jesus, who is the finisher as well as the author of faith, and who will, as he is the faithful God, perfect for his own glory that which concerneth us. I am approaching, as you know, an era of my history, if we except the time of conversion, the most important that can occur to a human being in this world — soon must I offer myself, miserable as I am, to the Church of God as a candidate for the work of an evangelist; and still more, that Church must decide, so great is the honour I have in prospect, whether in this land or among the perishing heathen it shall be my lot to preach to sinners the unsearchable riches of Christ crucified. In the meantime, O pray for me, and our dear brother, as I now again resolve to pray for you, that, in our present respective spheres, we may be always living epistles of Christ, that may be known and read of all men, and be even now the means, in the hand of the Spirit of the Lord, of converting sinners and edifying believers!

Especially for our

dear brother let us plead unitedly, that he may be speedily given to the Church of God, and thus preserved safe unto the heavenly kingdom from those sins and snares of youth which have drowned so many in destruction and perdition!

We had the privilege of being lately addressed in our missionary society by Dr. Kalley of Kilmarnock, a good physician who is leaving his present practice, which I understand is excellent, to consecrate his medical skill to the promotion of the cause of Christ in China, a channel which seems at present almost the only one open among that benighted people, so puffed up by their imagined knowledge in almost every branch of science and religion. Though a member of our own church, he goes out supported by the London Missionary Society, as the Committee of the General Assembly did not judge it expedient to extend the field of their operations farther east than India. He appears a most superior man, calm, but resolved and eager; and being one who I am informed was converted some years ago from a life of vanity, he seems, especially in prayer, to have obtained peculiarly deep views of man's sin, and of the glorious grace of God. But I am forced abruptly to conclude, and am, I trust, your affectionate brother in Christ,

— Wm. C. Burns."

It was with such views, longings, and deep preparation of heart that he approached the period of his public dedication to the service of Christ in the gospel of his grace. The more secret exercises of his soul, in the immediate prospect of that event, may be still further gathered from the following jottings in a diary which he began at this time, and continued, with occasional interruptions, until the year 1853: —

"September 19<sup>th</sup>, 1838. — Here, if God spare my life, I intend to record from time to time the most memorable incidents in my life and in the experience of my heart before God, my Judge. Grant me, O my covenant God and Father in Christ Jesus! that it may be, through the light and guidance of the Holy Spirit within me, a faithful copy of the truth; and that I may be enabled to look on its contents with those judgments and feelings which a sight of the unerring record of thy book of remembrance will produce within my soul in the day of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

This day I had the great pleasure and profit of meeting at breakfast in his lodgings, Mr. Davidson of the Training School, Inverness, a singularly advanced and amiable Christian, whose labours have been remarkably honoured of the Lord in the island of Coll, and for the last twenty years in his present situation. I have done very little today, but I have seen, I trust, through the light of the Spirit, that I am especially deficient in the knowledge of the love of Christ, and am mournfully defective even in attempting to set this before the unconverted. Yet surely this is the truth, the exhibition of which is of all most fitted to beget the confidence of an appropriating faith, and to manifest the glory of the Lord's justice in visiting with a more awful damnation those who perish with Christ in their offer. O Lord! teach thou me to grow daily and hourly in the apprehension of thy unspeakable and sovereign love to me, a miserable sinner, that I may be constrained out of the abundance of an overflowing heart, continually to commend thee to others who need thy love as much as I, and deserve it just as little!

21<sup>st</sup>. These two days have been spent much as usual, and with nothing very remarkable, except that, which is most extra-ordinary because most uniform, when we notice it least, the continued and unchanging love of God in my preservation and support under an hourly increasing load of hell-kindling guilt. How needful to be daily plunged anew under the crimson tide of Emmanuel's blood, that I may walk in the light as God is in the light! I have studied Hebrew chiefly to-day, which Mr. Duncan teaches with great skill and activity. Wm. M'D's and W's lessons take a long time at present. I saw Mr.,'s brother, a spirit-seller in Calton, in bed; conversed and prayed with him. He seemed very ignorant of sin. May the Spirit convince him! None other can awaken truly either him or any other. The work of grace is indeed God's from beginning to end, and all the glory will be his. To his blessed name be praise, through Christ Jesus. Amen.

23<sup>rd</sup>, Sabbath. — This morning rose at 20 minutes to 7 and met my young men's class from 8 to 9. The attendance is increasing, and the prospect interesting. Mr. Duncan lectured in the forenoon on James 2:12. Afternoon I addressed Mr. Patrick's little flock in St. Enoch's School, from John 3:14-15; and may well learn several important lessons from my experience. Last time I addressed the same meeting, a fortnight ago, I had made mere mental preparation, but, as I thought, was in some degree supported, and spoke with some force and fullness from Hebrews 10:19-22. Encouraged by this imagined success, I was content with a similar preparation to-day; and if the former case encouraged presumption, this does not less favour despondency. I felt little alive to the subject, my faith almost failed, and I was left devoid of conscious love to Christ and compassion for perishing souls — the affections which would have given fresh interest to the subject in my own mind, and have stimulated me to go through with its exposition and enforcement; as it was I lost heart after discoursing for some time on our state as dying under the poison of the serpent's sting, and I stammered out some other scraps upon the remaining glorious topics of the subject, and came to an end, — concluding the whole service in an hour and a quarter, instead of the two hours of the preceding day. Oh! it is indeed an arduous thing to preach from supernatural views of divine, supernatural truths. The Lord must give these, or they cannot be attained. Yet notwithstanding, arduous preparation, in dependence on his power, in the closet and study, is, I am more fully than ever convinced from to-day's experience, absolutely indispensable, at least for me, to prevent contempt being thrown upon glorious truths from circumstantial looseness and superficiality which are easily avoided by accurate composition. My classes in the evening were fully as pleasant as usual. In explaining to my young class the first three verses of the 16<sup>th</sup> of John, and to the more advanced one the subject of divine providence from the catechism, I felt more than usually my faith realizing the truth, and in particular experienced something like freedom in discoursing of the love of Christ and the freeness of the gospel, the subjects which I think I am least of all acquainted with, but which it is most important to understand exactly, and discourse on with fullness and affection. I speak of knowing something of the love of Christ; where is that knowledge now? — now, when my soul seems to sink back into unbelief and carnal ease? Oh Holy Spirit, who dwellest in me, if indeed I am a child of God, awaken my soul, and keep thou it awake! Manifest the Lord Jesus Christ within me, and grant that his love may continually constrain me to live henceforth no more to myself but to Him who died for me, and rose again.

Amen.

"October 25<sup>th</sup>. (Glasgow sacrament and fast-day.) — Since last date I have had considerable varieties of outward circumstances and of inward spiritual experience. The dealings of the Lord's providence have been uniformly prosperous, and demand the most fervent and unceasing gratitude, which, alas! I have not given, and cannot give, till I receive it of his infinite and sovereign grace. I have few remarkable discoveries by the Spirit, either of myself or of 'the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ/ but I think I have still had some advancement, displaying itself in a more staid waiting upon God, and finding the mysteries of the gospel more natural to my soul in worship, and in teaching my classes. To-day I have been in some degree waiting for the manifestations of God, but with little enlargement of spirit in prayer, either for myself or others. At worship I was enabled to speak more fully, boldly, and sweetly for the Lord than usual; but where again is that experience now? It is gone! Alas! the fogs of unbelief and carnal affection seem to be gendered almost by the beams of divine glory coming into contact with the marshy putrid soil of corrupted nature. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, that alone which is born of the Spirit is spirit. I am dependent for every acting of gracious affection on the power of the Spirit, as well as for the first production of the new nature. How sovereign then, and uncaused by anything in me, is the ineffably gracious and blessed love of the Godhead! My classes appear (especially the young women's) to be in rather a hopeful state, but ah! where my travailing in birth till Christ is be formed in them? Grant me this, O Lord, and then bestow a blessing above all that I can ask or think, to the praise of the glory of thy grace in Jesus the beloved. Amen."

Thus was he passing more and more within the deep shadow of that great work to which he had devoted his life, and the commencement of which was now so nearly approaching. How solemnly that shadow fell upon him may be partly gathered from an incident which was related to me recently by one who of all others knew him the earliest and the best. She had gone into Glasgow, unknown to him, on some domestic errand, and was passing through the narrow covered street called the Argyle Arcade, when she saw him turn the corner in front, and advance slowly towards her from the opposite direction as in deep reverie. Though she went up straight to him, he was quite unconscious of her presence, and started, when addressed, as from a dream. "O mother," said he with deep emotion, "I did not see you: for when walking along Argyle Street just now, I was so overcome with the sight of the countless crowds of immortal beings eagerly hasting hither and thither, but all posting onwards towards the eternal world, that I could bear it no longer, and turned in here to seek relief in quiet thought." The great deep had been stirred up once more, but by a mightier and more sacred impulse than in former days. He was licensed to preach the gospel by the presbytery of Glasgow on the 27th day of March, 1839.

## CHAPTER III

1839

## OPENING MINISTRY

In the report of the University Missionary Association for the year 1838, the seventeenth from its institution, I find the following interesting notice: — "Gratifying as the preceding facts must be regarded, it is with deeper gratitude and far higher pleasure that your committee intimate the fact that two of their own number, the one for two, and the other for four years a member of this society, have during the present session publicly offered themselves to the church of Christ as missionaries to the heathen, and have been accepted. This society has numbered among its members not a few who were devoted to the same high calling, and it is perhaps probable that it has contributed in other cases to foster convictions which afterwards led to a similar dedication; but in the present instance it has formed the principal, if not the only special, instrument which the Lord of the vineyard has employed in calling his professed disciples to engage in this — the noblest department of his service upon earth."

Of the two here mentioned, the subject of this memoir was one, the other being, I think, a member of one of the Non-conformist communions in England, then resident at the University, as a scholar on the Williams' foundation. To his own case my brother makes brief but pregnant reference nine years afterwards in a retrospective notice in his diary, while at sea on his way to China: "At Glasgow University, during the winter 1837-8, I was led, from my connection with the College Missionary Association, to feel so deeply my personal responsibility in regard to the spread of the gospel among the heathen, that after much prayer and many solemn exercises of soul, I took the solemn step of writing to my father, to request that, if he thought good, he should communicate with Dr. Gordon, the convener of our India Committee, and let him know that, should the Church deem me qualified, I would be ready to go as a missionary to Hindustan. He did this, and the committee having given me encouragement in the matter, I looked upon myself as publicly devoted to the missionary field. In my own soul, and in all my public duties connected with missionary meetings, &c. &c, I felt from that time forward a greatly enlarged measure of the presence and blessing of God, tending to confirm me more deeply in my cherished hope and purpose. This was the last session which I needed to spend at College to complete my curriculum; but, partly because I found myself profitably engaged in study, and still more, I believe, because I waited in expectation of a call to the missionary field, I remained at College during the following winter, and in the spring of 1839 a proposal was made by the Colonial Committee that I should go out for a season to fill a charge at St. John's, New Brunswick, and proceed direct from America to India when the India Committee should require me. It was expected that the India Committee would accede to this proposal, but they refused, wishing that their agents should be frequent to go when wanted, and so the matter ended. This was at the very time when Mr. M'Cheyne, about to set out for Palestine, wrote, asking me to take his place at Dundee. I found myself unexpectedly free to do this, and being speedily licensed I entered on my duties in that memorable field. This was at the beginning of April. In the month of June or July I received the call that I had long looked for, being asked by the India Committee to go to Poonah in the presidency of Bombay. My engagement at Dundee stood in the way of my at once complying, and another call which the Jewish Committee gave me to go to

Aden in Arabia increased the difficulty. While asking guidance in regard to my duty I went to the communion at Kilsyth in July, when the Lord began to employ me in a way so remarkable for the awakening of sinners, that in returning to Dundee, and finding myself in the midst of a great spiritual awakening, I was obliged to make known to both committees that, while my views regarding missionary work remained unchanged, yet I found that I must for the time remain where I was, and fulfill the work which God was laying upon me with a mighty hand."

In giving this extract I have somewhat anticipated the course of events in that part of the narrative on which we are now entering; but it was necessary to do so, in order to present in a clear light the relation in which my brother at this time, and for several years thereafter, stood towards that great work to which he had solemnly, and as he deemed irrevocably, dedicated himself. He had given himself deliberately, and in some sense publicly, before God and His church, to the service of Christ in the field of heathen missions, and he believed the offering had been accepted. Having thus lifted up his hand unto the Lord, he felt the vows of the great Master upon him ever after, and he never drew back or dreamed of drawing back. Their performance was deferred only, not relinquished, and deferred not by himself, but by Him to whom they had been made, and at whose disposal he had wholly and unreservedly placed himself. And so, when nine years afterwards the long-expected summons suddenly came to him, it found him with' the unchanged purpose still fresh upon his soul, and ready to march at a moment's warning at the great Captain's bidding. Meanwhile the field immediately before him was white unto the harvest, and he was thrust forth into the midst of it by a high and mighty hand. A great work was laid upon him which could neither be evaded nor postponed, and he had no choice but to give himself wholly to it, and to do it with his might the door opened to him was wide and effectual, beyond probably what he had ever dreamed. He had indeed, as I distinctly remember, very exalted views of what might be expected even in these latter days from the outpouring of the Spirit, in answer to the earnest prayers of a reviving Church. His mind had dwelt much, in common with many others about that time, on the divine promises to that effect, and on the grand typical fulfillment of them on the day of Pentecost. That memorable scene he regarded not as an isolated event, but as a pattern of what the Church might hope in any age to see, it might be even still more gloriously. Even some of the most startling outward manifestations of the Spirit's working then displayed he regarded not as exceptional circumstances, but as what might be repeated any day before our eyes. The cloven tongues, and the gift of many languages, had indeed passed away, with the age of miracle to which they essentially belonged; but the cries of stricken consciences and the loud sobs of broken hearts belonged not to that age, but to every age, and would, he believed, be heard more or less wherever in a congregated multitude of sinful men the arrows of the mighty King are sharp in the hearts of his enemies. I remember having a discussion with him on this very subject in the course of a quiet walk from Glasgow towards our home at Kilsyth, shortly before he commenced his work in Dundee. I ventured to question whether, even though the working of the divine Spirit in the bosom of a Christian congregation were as powerful and profound as in pentecostal times, the habitual reserve and self-restraint of modern life, especially amongst the more educated classes, would not prevent such unrestrained expression of inward feelings, as that there displayed. To this view he demurred, deeming that if the mighty rushing wind, which bloweth where it listeth, should indeed come with power, we should hear the sound thereof, so that even the world itself should not be able wholly to close its ears. Little did I think that within a month or two of that time, and in the parish church of that very place to which we were then bending our steps, I should myself witness what seemed so remarkable a verification of his words. Probably he himself, even while arguing the possibility of such a thing, little dreamed that it was in truth so near at hand.

He entered on his labours at Dundee on the first or second Sabbath of April, taking as his text Romans 12:1, — the same words on which he had preached his first sermon in his father's pulpit at Kilsyth a short time before, and which were in truth prophetic of the whole spirit and character of his future life and ministry. The work he now undertook was indeed an arduous, and to one so young and inexperienced, a peculiarly trying one. Robert Murray M'Cheyne, whose name has since become a household word throughout the universal Church, was already widely known throughout Scotland as one of the most gifted, holy, and successful ministers of recent times; and it was no light or easy thing for anyone to enter, even for a season, into his labours. An overflowing congregation, of every class and degree in life, drawn together, many of them, from considerable distances in the town and country round, accustomed to the charm of a peculiar ministry which would be apt to render any ordinary teaching tame and common-place, and above all, throbbing throughout with a high tone of spiritual excitement which it was difficult to meet and to sustain, presented altogether a sphere of labour from which the young evangelist, profoundly conscious of his own insufficiency, might well recoil. But it was, in truth, that very consciousness of insufficiency, and

consequent utter abnegation of all trust in himself, that made him strong. Feeling in the depths of his soul that without Christ he could do nothing, but that through his grace strengthening him he could do all things, there did not, after all, seem to him so much difference in point of mere difficulty between one duty and another. Without the immediate presence and help of his divine Master he could not speak even to a handful of little children in a Sunday-school; with that presence and help he could stand unabashed before the mightiest and the wisest in the world. It will be seen from constant entries in his journal how perpetually present was this thought to his mind, and how it formed the master principle of his whole life and ministry; and it seems to me to have been so in a very remarkable degree from the beginning. And hence, no doubt, it was that on the very first day of his ministering before that great congregation, and when many anxious eyes were turned on the youthful face and form of one who seemed to them all too weak for such a burden, he appeared conspicuously calm and self-possessed, as one visibly standing in the shadow of the Almighty, and consciously speaking the words that were given him of the Lord. I have heard old members of the congregation tell how their hearts trembled for him, when they saw what seemed to them a mere stripling standing up in the place of one whom they so revered and honoured, and how almost at the first sound of his voice, as he led with such deep-toned spirituality and power the prayers of the sanctuary, their fears vanished, and they seemed to hear only the sound of his Master's feet behind him. Accordingly he seems from the first to have taken a singularly fast hold of the congregation, and to have filled to a degree which one would scarcely have thought possible, alike in authority and spiritual power, the place of their absent pastor. Young, inexperienced, measured and slow of speech, gifted with no peculiar charm of poetry or sentiment or natural eloquence or winning sweetness, he bore so manifestly the visible seals of a divine commission, and carried about him withal such an awe of the divine presence and majesty, as to disarm criticism and constrain even careless hearts to receive him as the messenger of God. If his words were sometimes few, naked, unadorned, they were full of weight and power, and went home, as arrows directed by a sure aim, to the hearts and consciences of his hearers. Literally it might be said of him, that his speech and his preaching were not with excellency of speech and man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. The result accordingly was soon seen in a visible increase of spiritual inquiry amongst the people, and a generally heightened tone of solemnity and earnestness in the congregation at large. In the words of an esteemed member and office-bearer of the congregation, who has been able to recall with singular distinctness the scenes of those days: — "Scarcely had Mr. Burns entered on his work in St. Peter's here, when his power as a preacher began to be felt. Gifted with a solid and vigorous understanding, possessed of a voice of vast compass and power — unsurpassed even by that of Mr. Spurgeon — and withal fired with an ardour so intense and an energy so exhaustless that nothing could damp or resist it, Mr. Burns wielded an influence over the masses whom he addressed which was almost without parallel since the days of Wesley and Whitfield. Crowds flocked to St. Peter's from all the country round; and the strength of the preacher seemed to grow with the incessant demands made upon it. Wherever Mr. Burns preached a deep impression was produced on his audience, and it was felt to be impossible to remain unconcerned under the impassioned earnestness of his appeals. With him there was no effort at oratorical display, but there was true eloquence; and instances are on record of persons, strong in their self-confidence and enmity to the truth, who fell before its power — who,

" ' Though they came to scoff, Remained to pray. ' "

As already hinted, nothing could be more different than the whole style and character of his mind, from that of him whose place he yet so worthily filled. Of the rich aroma of sanctified poetry and pathos which imparted their distinctive charm to the life and writings of M'Cheyne, he had none. His characteristic was strength, not beauty, clearness and force, rather than freshness and fullness of thought and diction; and it was not even, except when he was profoundly stirred by strong spiritual influences, that one became conscious of the deep fountain of enthusiasm and of intense emotion that was within him. In the words of Mr. Moody Stuart, who intimately knew him from the very first days of his spiritual life, and who seems to me to have formed a singularly just estimate of his character and gifts, "the hard plodding for a great object, the sagacious intellect, the quick linguistic apprehension, common sense, mother wit, coolness and

presence of mind in every variety of circumstance, were more his natural characteristics, than the elements which go to constitute the enthusiastic and exciting preacher.. In the midst of the revival at Kilsyth he would sometimes relieve the tension of his mind by reading the Greek classics; and he possessed the bodily strength, the courage, and all the other qualities that would have enabled him to cross the continent of Africa, like Dr. Livingstone, if he had set his heart 'on such an object. No man was less a fool by nature, yet no man in modern times did more entirely become a fool for Christ's sake. His preaching was in a most peculiar manner by the power of the Holy Ghost, 'in demonstration of the Spirit and in power,' and 'mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.' He had no pathos, no fancy, little natural enthusiasm, and not much that could be called natural eloquence, but he had a firm grasp of gospel truth, a capacity for clear and forcible statement, and a voice capable of commanding any audience, however large, in the church, in the street, in the field; and when the power of the Spirit rested upon him, there were the thunders of Sinai in all their terrors, the still small voice of the gospel in much of its tenderness, the fervent fluency of a tongue touched with a live coal from the altar, the irrepressible urgency of one standing between the living and the dead, the earnest pressing of salvation that would accept no refusal; himself standing consciously and evidently in the presence of the great God, with heaven and hell and the souls of men open before him, with Jesus Christ filling his heart with his love, and pouring grace into his lips, and with multitudes before him weeping for sorrow over discovered sin, or for joy in a discovered Saviour."

His first impressions of the place and of his work will be partly gathered from the following letter to a sister:

—

"Dundee, Seafield Cottage, April 10, 1839. ... I would gladly fill my sheet in narrating what I have been able to ascertain of my situation and circumstances here, were it not that I must husband every moment of my time for my engagements in visiting the sick and dying, examining intending communicants, and preparation for the Sabbath that is approaching. I am not left without many circumstances to encourage me in my arduous labours; not a few hearts seem in a good measure prepared to hear the gospel as the Word of God, and some I have met with whose experience in the spiritual life affords the strongest stimulus to my own growth in grace, and whose ideas of Christian ministrations will, I fear, make me to appear among them as an ignorant babbler. They appear, however, a very kind and not uncharitable class of people, as far as I can discover; they will, I hope, pray for as well as censure me; and as I have had a clear call from the Lord, without my own interference, to come among them, I desire to cast all my burden upon his blessed shoulders, and to wait with earnest wrestlings until he appear among us in his glory to build up Zion. Let us go on to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fullness of God."

It is at this point that the detailed journals of his life and labours, which he began in September, 1838, become for the first time fully available. These will form the main substance of our narrative during the whole period which they cover, supplemented only here and there by such illustrative light as the recollections of others or any surviving fragments of correspondence may throw upon them. They will, I am sure, be far more acceptable to all really interested in his work, than anything, however highly and even truthfully coloured, which could possibly proceed from any other hand. To anyone in the slightest degree acquainted with the character of the writer, and who knows how jealously guarded and almost, as one might say, penurious he was of his words in anything relating to himself or his work, these simple but pregnant annals, written as in the presence and under the very eye of God, will have an impressiveness and a meaning beyond the reach of eloquence. At first they are occasionally somewhat broken and fragmentary, but they increase in fullness and freedom as they proceed, and in parts, albeit naked and unadorned as ever, have all the vividness and force of a record written in the field, and amid the thick of battle. The following extracts, relating to the same period to which the letter just quoted belongs, will still further illustrate the nature of his work, and the inner workings of his soul in connection with it, during the first months of his ministry in Dundee, as well as form a fitting introduction to the more stirring scenes which will form the subject of the next chapter: —

"April, 17, 1839. — Met with two young communicants, M. W and E. W, by appointment at twelve o'clock. Prayed with them, and conversed with each separately. They both appear hopeful converts to the Lord Jesus. M. W doubts the evidence of her faith from want of love to Christ, hardness of heart, &c, and was exhorted to come to Christ for these and all other fruits of the Spirit. E. W appeared to think she was a true believer, and gave an interesting account of her supposed conversion under Mr. M'Cheyne's ministry; she is very intelligent, well acquainted with Scripture, and really appears to have known something of genuine spiritual exercise. I prayed with them at parting, and bade them farewell with mixed feelings of joy at the tokens of God's work which I thought I saw, and sorrow that I should feel so little in dealing with cases so interesting and encouraging. O Lord, keep these dear young disciples from the devil, the world, and the flesh; perfect thy love in their hearts, thine image in their souls, and grant to me in thine infinite grace to experience more pure and tender love for the lambs of the flock. This I ask in the name of my Lord Jesus. Amen.

"Fast-day, 18<sup>th</sup> — In coming from the evening discourse I was met by the father of James Wallace, Paton's Lane, a boy of twelve, whom I had previously called to see, and found, on my entrance, to my astonishment and delight, such a specimen (if all signs do not deceive me) of the work of the Holy Spirit as I have I think never before witnessed on a sick-bed, except in the case of , Rothesay I came away with mingled feelings of astonishment at the work of the Spirit, and desires for gratitude to him for his wondrous love in calling me to behold his marvellous works Came home tired; had worship, and went to bed at eleven. Unspeakable mercies, unspeakable unfruitfulness and ingratitude. The glory will be all the Lord's, for the mercy and the grace are his. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.' Amen.

19<sup>th</sup> — . . . Visited two poor sick people — no decided indication of spiritual life; met communicants at seven — spoke to them on the nature of the Lord's Supper from the questions on that subject in the Shorter Catechism — had some freedom and a little degree of light on the glory of Christ's love in his obedience and sufferings — concluded at nine, and found a dear brother in Christ waiting me, Mr. M'Donald, of Blairgowrie — walked with him to Mr. Thain's, and entered into a proposal that I should exchange pulpits with him before the Assembly, and preach on missions. Came home and prepared for bed at a quarter past eleven.

"Monday, April 24<sup>th</sup>. Warned by Mrs. P against the danger to which young ministers are exposed; home to my studies at a quarter past eight; got some humiliation, or rather some discovery of pride in prayer. The Lord is indeed infinite in mercy when he bears with me; to his name shall be the praise.

"24/7; Home at a quarter past eight; studies till a quarter past ten, interesting and profitable, especially reading from Fleming's remarkable and precious Fulfilling of the Scripture regarding the strength afforded to God's saints under trials and for difficult duties. Praise the Lord. But O for a revival of that experimental deep-laid religion which Fleming valued. And exemplifies so fully in his pages! 'Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord! awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old.'

"Evening of 25<sup>th</sup>, Discoursed on 1 Cor. 1:26 to the end, not much freedom, but a measure of faith in the truth; then read No. 3 of the Revival Tracts about Baldernock. Discovered through grace, an awful hungering after applause from man, and came home fearing that God may utterly forsake me in consequence of my self-seeking in his service; this He would have done long ago had not his love been free and unchanging in Christ Jesus. O for a spirit of humble wrestling prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, that sinner may be awakened, and saints greatly edified and advanced! I wrote something more, had worship, and am now about going to rest. The Lord give me a song in the night to his glorious praise!

"29<sup>th</sup> I have found no time these past few days to keep a note of memorabilia, and must now shortly review the facts that have occurred in the interval. I have been rising regularly a little after six except to-day, when I lay till eight. On Friday and Saturday I wrote and committed my discourses on Psalms

23; 71:16. Considerably assisted in preparing. On Sabbath had great calmness and composure, but I think a great want of holy thirstings after God. I had, however, more than usual liberty in prayer and preaching, especially in the afternoon. That Christ was exalted and man forgotten among this people! Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain that they may live

"April 30<sup>th</sup>. — Called on M L, in distress since the time of the cholera — reading Rutherford's Letters — seemed a really experienced child of God — said many striking things: e.g. The ways of God are strange; we maun just wait to see what airt he taks.' ....

"May 8<sup>th</sup> . ... On Friday I .went to Blairgowrie — spent the remainder of the day and the morning of Saturday most pleasantly and profitably with my dearly beloved brother R. M'Donald, and also his fellow-labourer, Mr. Smith — we had two seasons of special prayer Dear A was taken ill of scarlet fever on Saturday, and this excited us all a good deal. On Sabbath night he was very anxious to see me regarding the state of his soul; however, we were afraid to increase the fever, and I only stood at his bedside and repeated a few of the invitations to come to Christ for all. I was brought by this event nearer to eternity, and felt more of the reality and awfulness of perdition than I remember ever having before. O that the Lord would sustain me in a constant and prevailing sense of the fearful guilt and danger of sinners remaining at a distance from Christ, and his free and offered gift to perishing sinners.

"21st. — In the evening I visited J. W, where I met K. B, the woman who sits on the pulpit stair. She said all head-learning could not enable a man to feed the lambs; there must be first repentance, as in the case of Peter. She exhorted me with spiritual earnestness to watch for individual souls, saying, 'You may lose a jewel from your crown; though you do not lose your crown, you may lose a jewel from it. She appeared to recognize the work of God in my soul, and spoke with great pleasure of the discourses of that day. Praise all to God! I am vile, vile, vile O that the Lord would give me the skill of a Brainerd or a Dickson, for my present difficult and most precious duties! 'Establish the work of our hands; yea, the work of our hands do thou establish it/ How various are God's ways of dealing with the soul; how much does he display his sovereign hand in bringing souls under conviction and into the peace of believing. One of the class came upon Monday night when we were dismissing, and asked if I could tell her anything she could do for Christ. O what a precious question, when put in the spirit of Paul — What wilt thou have me to do? Among other things I told her to be sure to ask the Lord himself, and to leave the matter in his hands."

On hearing of one awakened under his sermon on Psalm 71:16, he writes: —

O marvellous grace, that the Lord should regard at all my carnal, self-seeking ministry; to Him be the glory eternally! .... Lord Jesus, the good Shepherd, lead this wandering sheep to thy fold; even now do thou fan into a flame by the quickening breath of thy Spirit that smoking flax which thou hast touched with the heavenly fire of thy matchless grace, and give me grace— the grace of the indwelling Spirit to fit me for feeding the lambs and tending the sheep. Thy blood and obedience, freely offered to sinners of the deepest dye, are all my pleas with the Father. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, and cause many to say with hearts smitten with the rod of thy strength, 'We would see Jesus/ Amen On Sabbath I preached in the forenoon from Matthew 18:2, 'Except ye be converted/ &c; and in the evening from Psalm 100:3, 'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power;' when a collection of £8, 10s. 6d. was made to assist in establishing a parochial library. I was more than usually assisted of the Lord all day.

How much I would wonder and adore his long-suffering and grace in bearing with me, and in still preventing me with his tender mercies. It is all to the praise of the glory of his grace. Not for your sake do I this/ Truth, Lord. 'The wages of sin is death, but eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

"July 2<sup>nd</sup>. — My manifold engagements have prevented me from recording the multiplied and wonderful doings of God towards me in this book which have occurred during the past month. I can now only note a few. I went to Edinburgh on the 8th of June, at Mr. Moody's request, and preached for him on Sabbath afternoon, from Matthew 18: 2, ' Except ye be converted &c. On the Saturday I saw Mr. Candlish and other friends relative to the mission to Aden. That day the Lord directed me most marvellously to meet with several remarkable saints whom I had not before seen On my way home I called on Mr. M'Cheyne, and finding that they were dividing a sheet among them, and sending a letter to Constantinople for Mr. R. M. M'Cheyne, I was kindly allowed to occupy part of the remaining space. This was a wonderful day to my soul, — a day fitted to humble me very low before Him under whose teaching I have so little profited in comparison of many others, and to exalt in my eyes more than ever the riches and sovereignty of the grace of a redeeming God. Since I came home, three Sabbaths have elapsed. On the first (June 16), I preached all day from Matthew 11: 28. Owing to my many engagements I had nothing written but a few sentences of the forenoon sermon; but, thanks be to

Jesus, on whose strength I was enabled in some degree to rely, I never, perhaps, preached with greater liberty and power. Next Sabbath (23d) I was upon the following two verses. In the forenoon I was considerably deserted of God, and was much weighed down in the interval owing to my having nothing written for the afternoon, and my fears that God was about to make me ashamed before the congregation that I might thenceforward prepare more carefully. I cried to the Lord in my distress, and he heard me, and in the afternoon, as soon as I began to speak upon these words, ' I will give rest to your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light/ I felt most sensibly the quickening breath of the Holy Ghost upon my soul, and was enabled to preach in a way more affectionate, full, and earnest, than almost ever before. I resolved, however, in future to prepare more carefully if possible. Last Sabbath (30th) I began in the forenoon to lecture through the Colossians, taking the inscription and salutation as the first subject and in the afternoon I commenced a series of discourses on Psalm 130, taking the help of the great Owen. I was much supported all day, and had nearer views of the holiness of Jehovah than ever before in the pulpit. There are some favourable symptoms of the presence of God among the flock. Two prayer-meetings have begun among the young women, those among the older people are becoming larger and more lively."....

One extract more, taken from a very remarkable letter to Mr. M'Cheyne, will appropriately close this chapter, taking, as it does, a retrospective view of his experience and impressions during this first and introductory period of his ministerial life.

"Dundee, Nov. 18<sup>th</sup>, 1839

— Dear Brother in Jesus Christ,

— After having forcibly withdrawn myself from many other pressing engagements, in order to write a few lines to you, I experience the greatest difficulty in making a commencement, from the multitude and variety of the thoughts which rise to view before me. Indeed everything connected with the whole period of my residence here, since April last — a period the most remarkable but one (that of conversion) in my own life — and all the thoughts and feelings growing out of these, embarrass and oppress my mind so much that I hardly know what to begin with first.

“God's wonderful and most merciful procedure towards me, in connecting me with you and your dearly beloved flock in Dundee, I saw unspeakable cause to admire from the very first moment that that connection was formed. I felt myself, not only without, but almost against my own intentions, at once drawn into the most endearing union with one of the few ministers in Scotland that I had seen cause to regard as making 'full proof of the ministry of the gospel of Jesus, and one of the few congregations that I had ever heard spoken of as really deriving visible saving benefits from the labours of their pastor. These things made me astonished at the mercies of my God and Saviour from the very first; but now, when, after the lapse of seven months, I have been allowed to see, at least, some part of the development of the Lord's designs in this matter, I know not what to say, or how to speak. I feel almost as if it were my duty to be silent in adoring wonder, and leave that theme for the harps of the heavenly Jerusalem, which I can, but

dishonour while my mind is so blind, my heart so cold, and my mouth so little accustomed to the matchless praises of Jehovah.

“When I came among your people, I found such evidences of the Lord's work in convincing and converting sinners as was truly refreshing to my soul, after having spent more than seven years from the time when, if ever, I was brought to know the Lord, without, alas! ever seeing so much as a single case of open and visible transition from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. I knew a few who, I had reason to think, had really been brought by the Spirit to the knowledge of Jesus, and a few more who, I hoped, had reached the extreme edge of the safe side of that line which divides the kingdom of Satan from the kingdom of God; but an awakened sinner seeking after Jesus with the whole heart, I do not remember to have ever seen, from the time when I began to feel an interest in looking for such evidences of the Spirit's presence, until, in the astonishing, free, infinite, and sovereign mercy of my matchless Redeemer and Lord, I was sent to your beloved and favoured flock. Here I found not a few who seemed to have passed from death to life, under your ministry; and who, in addition, had got beyond that ice-cold region of formal profession, in which even those who are alive to God are in general afraid to speak, as it were, above their breath, of any of those gracious exercises of the regenerate soul, which so much offend, because they so holily condemn, a secure but godless generation of carnal professors. From the atmosphere into which I at once discovered the Lord had brought me, when I entered your church, I learned that there were not a few to whose conversation, as well as to whose minds and hearts, their own state as sinners under a glorious dispensation of divine grace was become familiar. I almost immediately invited, from the pulpit, all those who were under any anxiety about their souls, and might wish private direction, to call on me at particular hours for this purpose; and I soon learned from the intercourse to which this led in many instances, that the necessity of union to Jesus, and entire dedication to his service and his glory, was a truth to which the mind of the congregation in general had been brought under your ministry to yield assent, and one which, through the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, not a few seemed to have savingly realized in their consciences and hearts. Excited by any intercourse of this kind (the only kind, with little exception, that I have had) with your people, and supported by the prayers of God's children among them, I prosecuted my labours among them during the first four months of my residence here, with great benefit and pleasure to myself, and not without a pleasing testimony in the consciences and hearts of many of the people of the Lord, that I was really teaching some part of the truth 'as it is in Jesus. Besides preaching on Sabbath at the usual times, I continued the Thursday prayer-meeting, and the male and female classes, which were all attended, as far as I could find, by about the same number as during your own ministry, and seemed to the outward view to make interesting and encouraging progress. There was one thing, however, that always appalled me, when I was enabled to realize the necessity of the second birth, that so few seemed, under my ministry, to be awakened to a solemn and supreme concern about their souls, though I had every reason to believe that there were hundreds in the congregation and parish who, with a name to live, were, in reality, I dead in trespasses and sins.' Many seemed interested, and some of the people of God appeared to be refreshed, but very few, indeed only two or three persons, awakened for the first time from the sleep of carnal security, came to me in anxiety for direction in the way to Zion. I sought to declare the truth of God both in the law and the gospel with all faithfulness on every occasion, and to 'labour fervently in prayer to God' in behalf of the people at all times; but still there was no appearance of a general awakening among them to the sense of their natural state of sin and misery, and of their absolute need of the glorious Saviour who is offered freely to sinners in the gospel. I always felt as if the ground which was won from the enemy on Sabbath was lost during the following week. Many of the people I feared were in danger of thinking of whatever was said to them as doctrine, suited to the pulpit and the Sabbath, but not to be considered true and of supreme importance on week-days and at their ordinary business; and thus, however plainly their state was taught, and however urgently they were besought to flee to the Lord Jesus as the only Saviour, they seemed still in general to continue going on in the beaten track of their ungodliness, impenitence, and unbelief. There were a few fellowship meetings in the parish while you were here, and these had increased but very inconsiderably in number and size. Still there were at the time when I was called to leave the people in order to attend at my father's communion, some indications of an

approaching revival of the work of God among them. There appeared to be an increasing earnestness in desire and prayer among the people of God, and especially, I think, among the younger Christians who had been brought to Christ under your own ministry, for a larger outpouring of the Spirit of God, and a more general awakening and converting of souls to Jesus. I remember of being told also, at the time when I was going away to Kilsyth, by a person to whom I had been lamenting the little success that seemed to attend the preaching of the Word, that she had seen several persons from time to time around her shedding tears upon the Sabbath; and the very last time that I met the male class before my departure, I was encouraged by noticing more than usual solemnity among all, and one young man in particular, who has since, I trust, been savingly converted, weeping profusely, while I was pressing the necessity of a full and immediate acceptance of the Lord Jesus."

Thus already had the fond anticipation of the absent pastor in behalf of his youthful assistant begun to be realized: "You are given," he had said, "in answer to prayer, and these gifts are, I believe, always, without exception, blessed." Thus far he had proved faithful in keeping the vineyard of another; but he was now on the eve of being called to enter on a field and line of service peculiarly his own.

## CHAPTER IV

1839

## REVIVAL SCENES

The subject of the revival of religion as the great want of the times had been already, and for a long time, much in the minds both of the pastor and the people of Kilsyth. The memorable scenes of the years 1742-3, when, under the ministry of the Rev. James Robe, this parish shared with that of Cambuslang in so remarkable an effusion of the Spirit of grace, still lived as a cherished tradition in the hearts of the people, and there were still here and there little companies of praying souls, "who spake one to another" of the good days of the past, and who "sighed and cried" over the subsequent times of declension and backsliding. There was, I believe, at least one society for religious fellowship which had survived, in the uninterrupted succession of its members, all through the intervening period, and whose lamp of faith and prayer was still found faintly burning, when the light of a new morning broke upon them, and the whole parish seemed to awake as "from a dream of a hundred years." Into those sacred reminiscences and aspirations my father entered most profoundly from the first day of his ministry here in 1821, and laboured unceasingly thenceforward to keep them alive both in his own heart and in those of his people. In the words of his own biography, "his public instructions as well as private conversation, at visitations and elsewhere, abounded with allusions to those happy days of the past, and with expressions of ardent longing for their return; and to this point might the whole course of his ministry be said more or less to turn. In 1822, the second year of his ministry, we find him along with another congenial spirit, the humble and godly Dr. George Wright of Stirling, bending over the old records of the kirk-session bearing on the dates 1742-9, and with solemn interest deciphering the dim and fading lines that referred to the incidents of the work as then in progress. Towards the close of the same year (Dec. 1822), on two successive Sabbaths, he preached directly and fully on the subject, taking for his text those singularly appropriate and impressive words in Micah 7:1 — 'Woe is me, for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape-gleanings of the vintage; there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the first ripe fruit:' — bringing the whole case of past attainment and subsequent declension before the congregation, and calling upon them again to arise and seek -the Lord. In 1830, in consequence of some unusual outbreaks of sin, in connection with drunken brawls, a parochial day of fasting and prayer, in the view of prevailing sins and backslidings, was appointed by the kirk-session, and observed with marked seriousness and solemnity. In 1832 the near approach of the cholera, which fell heavily on the neighbouring village of Kirkintilloch, but never actually entered Kilsyth, while sounding its own terrible peal, at the same time summoned the pastor to lift up his voice in another earnest call to repentance and newness of life. In 1836 he read an elaborate essay before a clerical society in Glasgow with the twofold object of calling more extensive attention to the subject, and of drawing forth the suggestions of his brethren in regard to some signs of awakening life which were even then appearing in his own parish." About the same time he sought by means of brief but pointed pastoral addresses to "heads of families," and on "family-worship," which he printed and presented to every household in his parish, to revive the spirit of personal and family religion amongst his people. Finally, on a Sabbath afternoon in August, 1838, standing on the grave of his revered predecessor Mr. Robe, on the anniversary of his death, and taking as his text the words inscribed in Hebrew letters on his tomb, Isaiah 26:19, he pled before a vast assemblage of his people in behalf of Christ and the new birth unto eternal life, in tones of unaccustomed earnestness, and which stirred the hearts of many in a manner never to be forgotten. By such means as these did he seek through successive years to strengthen the things that remained and were ready to die, and, if so it might be, fan the feeble spark once more into a flame. The result was seen in a growingly heightened tone of moral and religious life in the congregation and parish generally, as well as latterly in more specific tokens of the divine power and presence, which seemed the precursors of a still richer blessing yet to come. There was a marked increase of seriousness and devout earnestness in public worship. Prayer-meetings became at once more numerous and more fervent. One or

two sermons at communion times, marked by a peculiar unction and power, had fallen with visibly solemnizing effect on the congregation — one in particular, by the Rev. A. N. Somerville of Anderston, Glasgow, on the words, "Behold I stand at the door and knock," which imprinted itself on many hearts, and was afterwards often referred to as marking an era in the religious history of the parish. Conversions, in fine, of a more than usually striking kind, became more frequent, and contributed at once to arrest the attention of the careless, and to animate the hopes and quicken the prayers of those who were looking and longing for the heavenly shower.

Meanwhile influences of a concurrent kind were at work elsewhere, and tended still further to quicken the pulse of religious life in the place. Similar tokens of reviving earnestness were appearing more or less extensively amongst the members of the other Christian denominations around, and particularly in connection with a small but very fervent society of Wesleyan Methodists, whose distinctive teaching tended greatly to emphasize in the minds of the people the great ideas of conversion, the new birth, and the conscious peace and life of God, and whose unwearied activity and zeal for the gathering in of souls spread by a happy infection to the hearts of others.

It was in these circumstances, and to a field thus prepared, that the young evangelist now came, bearing the precious seed which he had already sown with such hopeful promise in Dundee. The remarkable scene which followed has been already often described, and I should have almost shrunk from attempting any fresh account of it, did there not happily survive a full and deliberate statement from my brother's own hand, which will enable us to survey it from a new and deeply interesting point of view. It was written during a quiet interval in the manse of Kilsyth exactly a year after the occurrences to which it refers, and is couched in a tone of solemn thoughtfulness and utter self-abnegation, in the presence of Him whose wondrous works he records, which imparts a peculiar weight to every word, and the impression of which would be marred only, not helped, by any laboured description of ours : — "Having a spare hour, it has occurred to my mind that it may be for the glory of God that I should at last record my recollections of the marvellous commencement of the Lord's glorious work in this place in the month of July, 1839, and I entreat the special aid of the Holy Ghost, that I may write according to his own will and for the divine glory regarding these wonders of the Lord Jehovah. During the first four months of my ministry, which were spent at Dundee, I enjoyed much of the Lord's presence in my own soul, and laid in large stores of divine knowledge in preparing from week to week for my pulpit services in St. Peter's Church. But though I endeavoured to speak the truth fully, and to press it earnestly on the souls of the people, there was still a defect in my preaching at that time which I have since learned to correct, viz. That, partly from unbelieving doubts regarding the truth in all its infinite magnitude, and partly from a tendency to shrink back from speaking in such a way as visibly and generally to alarm the people, I never came, as it were, to throw down the gauntlet to the enemy by the unreserved declaration and urgent application of the divine testimony regarding the state of fallen man and the necessity of an unreserved surrender to the Lord Jesus in all his offices in order that he may be saved. However, I was gradually approaching to this point, which I had had in my eye as the grand means of success in converting souls, from the first time I entered the pulpit, and even from the day of my own remarkable conversion, of which I trust the Lord may enable me to leave some record behind on this earth for the glory of his own infinite sovereign and everlasting love in Christ. During the last three Sabbaths that I was at Dundee, before coming to Kilsyth, I was led in a great measure to preach without writing, not because I neglected to study, but in order that I might study and pray for a longer time; and in preaching on the subjects which I had thus prepared, I was more than usually sensible of the divine support. The people also seemed to feel more deeply solemnized, and I was told of some who were shedding silent tears under the word of the Lord. I was to have preached on the evening of the fast-day at Kilsyth, July 18th, but the burial of my dear brother-in-law, George Moody, at Paisley, was fixed for that day, and I was of course obliged to be present thereat. His death was accompanied with a blessing from Jehovah to my soul. I never enjoyed, I think, sweeter realizations of the glory and love of Jesus, and of the certainty and blessedness of his eternal kingdom, than when at Paisley on this solemn occasion. The beautifully consistent and holy walk of our dear departed brother, with the sweet divine serenity that marked the closing scene of his life, made his death very affecting, and eminently fitted to draw away the

heart of the believer after him to Jesus in the heavenly glory. This was its effect on my soul through the Lord's power. On the way to the grave I wept with joy, and could have praised the Lord aloud for his. Love in allowing me to assist in carrying to the bed of rest a member of his 'own body, of his flesh, and of his bones;' and when I looked for the last time on the coffined body in its narrow, low, solitary, cold resting-place, I had a glorious anticipation of the second coming of the Lord, when he would himself raise up in glory everlasting that dear body which he had appointed us to bury in its corruption and decay.

"I have taken this retrospect of circumstances in my own history previewing; but a steadfast keeping within lines of received truth, as not expecting conversion by any special way of stating the gospel, but by the power of the Spirit accompanying it. For a season, however, before the Kilsyth communion, he seemed two different men in private and public — his own spiritual strength so far exceeding what appeared in the pulpit. But then the Lord, who had strengthened David to slay the lion and the bear in the recesses of the mountains, sent him forth to triumph over Goliath before the hosts of Israel. He had been asking, seeking, knocking for the Holy Spirit; that Spirit came upon him with power; and the Lord added unto the church daily such as should be saved, multitudes both of men and women."

The movement thus begun in a manner so remarkable, went on steadily, and for weeks thereafter seemed only to grow in solidity and depth. Meetings for prayer and preaching of the gospel were held every successive night, generally in the church, and occasionally, when the weather favored, in the market-place or in the church-yard. Crowds of inquirers flocked at every invitation to the vestry or the manse to seek spiritual counsel from the minister and his assistants. Prayer-meetings both of the old and young sprang up everywhere in the village and the surrounding hamlets. The neighbouring extension church of Banton, erected through my father's exertions a short time before, and then under the pastoral care of the Rev. John Lyon, now of Broughty-Ferry, became the scene of a similar work of awakening and spiritual blessing. Ministers from all parts of the country, and especially from the neighbouring city of Glasgow, came to the help of the over tasked pastor, and greatly contributed by the richness and variety of their instructions to impart stability and spiritual substance to a movement which might otherwise have largely evaporated in mere excitement. The mountain glen, the solitary haugh, even the noisy loom shop, became vocal often with the sounds of prayer and praise, or witnessed the solemn converse of brethren who, at eventide, talked with burning hearts of the things that had come to pass in those days. The whole tone and spirit of the place seemed for the moment changed, and an air almost Sabbatical brooded over it, which strangers recognized as with instinctive reverence they approached the spot. In the words of a statement read at the time by the minister of the parish to the presbytery of the bounds — "The waiting on of young and older people at the close of each meeting, and the anxious asking of so many 'What to do;' the lively singing of the praises of God, which every visitor remarks; the complete desuetude of swearing and of foolish talking in our streets; the order and solemnity at all hours prevailing; the voice of praise and prayer almost in every house; the cessation of the tumults of the people; the consignment to the flames of volumes of infidelity and impurity; the coming together for Divine worship of such a multitude of our population day after day; the large catalogue of new intending communicants giving in their names, and conversing in the most interesting manner on the most important subjects; not a few of the old careless sinners and frozen formalists awakened and made alive to God; the conversion of several poor colliers, who have come to me and given the most satisfactory account of their change of mind and heart, — are truly wonderful proofs of a most surprising and delightful revival. The public-houses, the coal-pits, the harvest reaping fields, the weaving loomsteads, the recesses of our glens, and the sequestered haughs around, all may be called to witness that there is a mighty change in this place for the better."

The subject of this memoir had been obliged to leave a few days after the commencement of the remarkable scenes just described, in order to resume his duties at Dundee, where his work was becoming every day more interesting; but on the 21st of September he was again at Kilsyth, taking part in the services of a second communion, which the new birth of so many souls, and the fresh baptism and abounding joy of others, had rendered necessary. It was a season long to be remembered, alike for the solemnity and sacred sweetness of its services, and for the rich tokens of blessing which both accompanied and followed it. To

use again the grave words of the pastor, "Having been preceded, accompanied, and followed by a very unusual copiousness of prayer; the showers in answer were very copious and refreshing. We are daily hearing of good done to strangers who came Zaccheus-like to see what it was, who have been pierced in heart and have gone away new men. Our own people of Christian spirit have been greatly enlivened and strengthened, and some very hopeful cases of apparently real beginnings of new life have been brought to our knowledge. I feel grateful to the God of grace and God of order in the churches, that there has been such a concurrence of what is true; venerable, pure, just, lovely, and of good report, and that little indeed has escaped from any of us which can justly cause regret. .... The solemn appearance of the communion tables, and the delightful manner in which they were exhorted — the presence of not a few unusually young disciples at the tables — the seriousness of aspect in all, and the softening and melting look of others — made upon every rightly disposed witness a very delightful impression For ninety years, doubtless, there has not been in this parish such a season of prayer and holy communings and conferences, nor at any period such a number of precious sermons delivered. The spiritual awakenings and genuine conversions at this time are not few, and it is hoped will come forth to victory; but the annals of eternity only will divulge the whole." At this point my brother's personal journal, which the exciting and absorbing labours of the last month had almost wholly interrupted, becomes again available, and I gladly return to it, as furnishing at once the most authentic and most impressive account both of the work in which he was engaged and of the part which he himself bore in it.

Saturday, 21st September, 1839. — I stayed at Mr. Guthrie's all night, and started at seven A.M., by the boat for Kilsyth. The boat was nearly filled in the cabin by dear brothers and sisters in Christ, going to the communion at Kilsyth. We had much blessed converse together, and engaged twice in prayer and once in praise. We arrived at a quarter to one, and found that I was expected to officiate at half-past two o'clock. I accordingly preached to about a thousand from Romans 10:4, with much assistance. On Sabbath, after Mr. Rose had preached at the tent, I was called on to follow him; and accordingly preached for about two hours from Isaiah 54:5, to a congregation which, according to a calculation founded on the extent of the ground which it occupied, is thought to have been little short of ten thousand. They were very solemn and attentive, hardly one removing during the sermon; and though I did not notice many under visible impression, I was told that not a few were in tears, young men as well as others. After leaving the tent I went to the communion table, which was addressed in a most interesting way upon the love of Christ by Mr. Rose. I did not, however, experience much near communion with my blessed Lord and Saviour, but had to complain of much blindness and deadness, while my soul was not altogether unmoved through his free and infinite grace. After Dr. Dewar, Mr. Middleton of Strathmiglo, and Mr. Somerville, had preached at the tent, I was called again to preach the evening sermon there at seven o'clock, while Mr. Rose did so in the church. The subject was Isaiah 54:10, "The mountains shall depart, &c.;" and I was so much assisted both in exposition and exhortation, that there was visible among the people a far greater awakening than during any part of the day. We continued together till between nine and ten, the moon being full and the sky unclouded, though the mist began to settle in the hollow in which the tent was placed. After we had gone home, my father and Mr. Rose not having yet come in, it struck me, while at tea, that we ought to have a meeting still in the church, and continue all night in prayer to God for the outpouring of the Spirit. Some objected, but Charles Brown was completely on my side, saying that he was put in mind of that occasion on which the friends of Jesus sought to lay hold of him, saying, 'He is beside himself;' and accordingly we again repaired to the church, where many were already assembled joining in prayer with Mr. Martin of Bathgate and Mr. Middleton, and after the bell had been rung and the church was filled, Charles J. Brown sang and spoke upon a part of Psalm 72, and then prayed. When he had concluded, Mr. Martin spoke on Psalm 14. To those still unawakened, and engaged in prayer according to concert especially for the same class. Mr. Somerville then addressed the awakened, but not yet converted, from the account of the conversion of Saul, and afterwards prayed for them as Mr. Martin had before done for the others. I was then called in conclusion to speak more generally to all, and did so at considerable length and very calmly from the first four verses of the 116th Psalm, which having been sung the whole was concluded with prayer. We separated from this most precious meeting, in which not a few were awakened, at three A.M. Of Monday,

and after leaving the church Mr. Somerville and I were forced to remain in the session-house with the distressed, instructing and praying till between five and six o'clock, when we went home to rest. The cases in the session-house were numerous and very interesting.

"September 23d. — Having risen from a refreshing sleep at twelve noon, I was told that I was expected to preach the second sermon about two at the tent. I was counselled by my mother to beware of harsh expressions in preaching and prayer, and told by J. That she thought there was a danger of my losing the former sweetness, as she said, of my manner in preaching for an unpleasant sternness. I thanked the Lord for this counsel, and was told by her afterwards that I had been enabled to correct the fault. There were an immense number of ministers and preachers at the tent on Monday, and I went down under some anxiety, as I had no special preparation. However, I was enabled in private and public prayer to cast myself on the Lord, and he did not prove a wilderness to me, a land of darkness, but aided me beyond all my expectations. The text from which I spoke was Ezekiel 36:26, "A new heart also will I give you," and I found so much laid to my hand, both in expounding and applying the subject, that I could hardly get done. There was great attention among the audience, which might amount to two thousand, and blessed be God, some of the ministers present seemed to be convinced that the Lord had helped me to be faithful; Charles J. Brown and John Duncan spoke particularly in this way. In the evening Charles J. Brown preached a most excellent discourse in the church at eight o'clock, from the words in Matthew, 'What do ye more than others?' showing 1st. Why Christians might be expected to do more than others, and 2nd. What more they were expected to do. After he had concluded I felt deeply impressed with the desirableness of continuing in prayer to God, especially with and for the unconverted, whom we were, alas! to leave at the close of this blessed season farther in many cases from Jesus than before. I accordingly proposed to Charles J. Brown that I should ask the unconverted to stay behind, not excluding others who might also desire to do so. He said I should do as I thought best, and accordingly after the praise was ended, I asked those who knew that they were still unconverted to remain, coming down into the front seats below to be addressed and prayed for. My thus assigning those particular seats rather alarmed and staggered Mr. Brown, and, as I afterwards found, my father also and many other of the ministers present; but as no remonstrance was at the time made, and after so many had come forward that the seats were fully occupied, and even (a young gentleman from Glasgow whom I had been conversing with a little before under considerable concern about his soul) went into them with a younger brother also much affected, as I noticed, during the sermon, when the love of Christ was spoken of, Mr. Brown's doubts appeared to vanish, and I proceeded, after singing and long-continued prayer, to exhort at great length those in the seats and also the congregation at large to an immediate closing with Christ. In this work I was assisted, I think, as much as ever before in my life, having a degree of tenderness and affection which my hard, hard heart is rarely privileged to feel, and in prayer I was favored with peculiar nearness to God, insomuch that at one time I felt as if really in contact with the Divine presence, and could hardly go on; while at the same blessed season there seemed to be a general and sweet melting of heart among the audience, and many of the unconverted were weeping bitterly aloud, though I spoke throughout with perfect calmness and solemnity. We separated between one and two o'clock from this the last, and I think, without doubt, the most eminently blessed part of the whole communion season, at least in as far as I was a witness to it. After the meeting had broken up many went to the session-house, where my father had been with not a few in distress during the greater part of the meeting, and then he and Mr. Rose continued for several hours longer, witnessing, as they told us when they came home, the most wonderful displays of the Holy Spirit's work." "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." The rest of the history, so far as it can be written or read in this world, is soon told. The high spring-tide of exalted feeling, necessarily mingled more or less with mere sympathetic excitement, gradually passed away, and the currents alike of religious experience and of ordinary human life flowed once more in their customary channels. There were some temporary professors, there were some "imperfect conversions," there were some whose bright early promise, though not wholly darkened, did not shine forth with an altogether unclouded luster "more and more unto the perfect day;" but there were very many to whose shining consistency and purity, and steadfast perseverance to the end, declared plainly that they had been with Jesus, and that in that terrible moment of their soul's agony they had been indeed born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. The history of the Kilsyth

revival, in short, as of every other true revival, whether ushered in by the earthquake and the whirlwind or by the still small voice, had in truth been written eighteen hundred years before by Him who knoweth the end from the beginning: "Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth; and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and, because they had no root, they withered away; and some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up and choked them: but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold."

## CHAPTER V

1839

St. Peter's, Dundee.

The reader will have seen that in turning aside to refer to the second communion at Kilsyth, and thus bring into one view the history of the remarkable movement there, we have necessarily anticipated somewhat the actual course of events in Mr. Burns' life. He returned to Dundee on the 8th of August, and almost immediately on his arrival found himself in the midst of scenes essentially similar to, and scarcely less remarkable than those he had left behind. To quote again his own words, in the letter to Mr. M'Cheyne referred to above: — "I left Dundee upon Tuesday the 16th July, intending to return to it on the 24th after attending at the communion, which was to be dispensed at Kilsyth on the 21st of that month. But the marvellous outpouring of the Spirit of God which was witnessed on Tuesday the 23d, having made it appear to many inexpedient for me to leave so soon that favoured parish, I remained there for a fortnight longer, and only returned to Dundee upon Wednesday, the 8th of August. In my absence, Mr. Lyon, missionary at Banton, in the parish of Kilsyth, came over to Dundee and officiated for me; and I found on my return, as was natural, that the accounts which had been brought to them by Mr. Lyon of what he had witnessed on that ever-memorable Tuesday at Kilsyth, together with the fact of my being detained from returning to them in consequence of being employed as an instrument in the Lord's work in another place, had produced so deep an impression as seemed eminently to prepare the way for the commencement of a similar work among themselves. However I cannot say that I returned to Dundee with this distinct expectation; which I was in some degree kept from entertaining by a full conviction that the work at Kilsyth was almost entirely dependent for its origin on the prayers of God's people there, which had been for some time incessant and most fervent; and that it was in a very inferior degree, indeed, connected with any particular instrument employed in preaching the gospel. I entertained, perhaps, less hope of an outpouring of the Spirit on the people at my return, also, because I was inclined to think, as other people thought, that I must be exhausted by the incessant labours of the preceding fortnight, and I had rather the idea of taking rest on my return, than of then beginning and from that time continuing to labour day by day as constantly and in the same glorious and blessed work as I had been engaged in at Kilsyth. With this idea of taking relaxation uppermost in my mind I met for but a short time, on the evening of the Wednesday on which I arrived, with the young men's class, and dismissed them without any particular indication of the Divine presence with us, and on the Thursday I requested my kind friend Mr. L, of the Seamen's Chapel, to add to his many former favours by taking my place at the prayer-meeting in the evening. This he did with his usual readiness, and all went on as usual, until, just before the meeting closed, I rose to say a very few words to the people on my return to them, and regarding the marvellous work which had kept me so long away. I felt in speaking, at this time, powerfully impressed with the necessity of improving this, the very best opportunity of seeking to awaken the many sleeping sinners among them to an immediate concern about their perishing state, and to urge them to an instant acceptance of the Lord Jesus. Under this impression, which came with unusual power upon my own soul, while for a few minutes I addressed them, I intimated that, after the blessing was pronounced, I would willingly wait a little longer with any who either knew that they had not been yet converted, or were not sure that they had, in order that I might give them counsel from the Word of God suited to such a state, and might especially join with them in pleading for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to convert them all to the Lord Jesus. In consequence of this intimation about a hundred, I should think, remained behind; and Mr. L having retired I proceeded to speak to them from a passage of Scripture upon the awful state of unconverted sinners, and the duty of instantly obeying the Divine command by 'believing on the Lord Jesus Christ that they might be saved;' entreating them on no account whatever to leave the church until they had fled to Jesus from the wrath to come. As far as I can

recollect, both in speaking and hearing we felt more than usually the unspeakable solemnity of our position; and in prayer there was a far greater degree than, perhaps, I had ever seen among them of the spirit of Jacob's resolution, \* I will not let thee go until thou bless me.' Some were in tears, and all appeared to be seeking the Lord with real earnestness of soul. After the blessing had been again pronounced, I suppose about half-past ten o'clock, a considerable number lingered in the passage, even after the lights had been put out, apparently anxious to catch any additional word that might be said in retiring; and when I began to say a few things in passing to the vestry about the work at Kilsyth, and the hardness of their hearts in resisting the Spirit of God, on a sudden the power of God seemed to descend upon almost all present, and they were in a moment bathed in a flood of tears such as I had never witnessed among them before. It put me in vivid remembrance of the scenes which I had left, and I was at that moment inflamed with the desire, and elated with the expectation of seeing a similar revelation of the right hand of Jehovah in Dundee as in Kilsyth. I called on Mr. T, who was standing beside me, to pray, and before we parted I intimated that next night there would be another prayer-meeting, that we might wait upon the Lord (until the Spirit should be poured out upon us from on high.) On Friday night accordingly, at the usual hour, although it was but very partially known that there was to be a meeting, more than the usual number assembled, and Mr. Baxter of Hiltown, an excellent and trustworthy fellow-labourer, went through the usual services and concluded the meeting at the ordinary hour, without anything remarkable occurring, except that, before the blessing was pronounced, I again invited the same class to remain behind as had remained the night before. There might now be present from 150 to 200; but this number gradually increased while we remained together, by persons who were attracted by seeing the church lighted at so unusual an hour as our meeting extended to. In speaking to them again, and in praying with and for them, I felt more than ever I had done before, except at Kilsyth, the presence of the Holy Spirit constraining me as it were to plead with God and with man. At one time, while I was pressing the Lord Jesus on them all, and beseeching them in the name of Christ to be reconciled to God the whole audience seemed to be bathed in tears; and one or two persons, who had been convicted of sin under your own ministry, and had frequently conversed with me about the state of their souls, were so overpowered by their feelings that they cried aloud for mercy to the Lord. In prayer also immediately after this the same tender frame appeared to increase upon the people, insomuch that at half-past eleven, while Mr. Baxter and I felt it our duty to conclude the meeting, we felt equally called on to allow any of those present who might desire it, an opportunity of still meeting us in the vestry. Mr. Baxter and I accordingly adjourned to the vestry; and I think I never can forget what I saw when we opened the door to admit those that might wish to see us. They seemed all to be pressing towards the door like a pent-up flood, and when it was opened they rushed in like the same flood when it has burst its barrier and carried all before it. They pushed forward with breathless anxiety, and their tears literally streaming from their eyes, and some of them like persons who had been seized with frenzy. One young man in particular (the very individual that I had seen weeping in the male class on the night before I went away to Kilsyth) screamed out and gasped as if for breath, so that J W had to hold him with another man in his arms for half-an-hour, and when we proposed to pray, all, as if seized with one impulse, threw themselves on the ground, groaning, weeping, and crying for Jesus to come and save them. When too we sung the 45th Psalm, and particularly the verse 'Thine arrows sharply pierce the hearts,' &c, the souls of all seemed so much on fire that one man present said to me afterwards, 'he had heard singing often, but such singing as there was then he never heard.' After Mr. Baxter and I had prayed and spoken with them until half-past one o'clock we dismissed them to their own houses, Mr. Baxter kindly agreeing to come back on Saturday night and assist me again at a prayer-meeting which, at the special request of the people, we had intimated before leaving the church. At this meeting, which was larger than the one on the preceding night, Mr. Baxter first, and then I, officiated. The people seemed to be much in the same frame as on the preceding night; and so strong did the call appear to be to remain among them, that we both stayed until the Sabbath morning had arrived with those who, as on the preceding evenings, had remained behind after the blessing was pronounced. On the following day I preached with more than usual liberty, though I had almost no time to do more than choose the subjects on which I was to speak; and I felt much more of the presence of the Holy Spirit breathing with quickening power upon my own soul, than I had ever experienced in your pulpit before. I had intended in the afternoon, in order to

make a grand onset upon the hosts of the enemy, to extend the same plan to the Sabbath congregation which I had followed at the prayer-meetings on the days past, by inviting all the unconverted to remain behind, after the congregation at large had been dismissed. However, the hour being late, I invited the same class to meet me in the church at seven o'clock, when I made it known that any other persons might also attend, what-ever was their state. So strongly also did I feel the necessity of continued public as well as private prayer, in order to obtain the plenteous effusion of the Holy Ghost, that I intimated public prayer-meetings for every night during the following week. In the evening all went on as usual, while I addressed inquirers from the account of the penitent woman in Luke vii. 36-52, and conducted the other ordinary services. However, after the blessing had been pronounced, and, after waiting long in the pulpit, I was on my way to the vestry, a great many of the people still kept their seats, as if resolved to wait for that blessing from the Lord which they had asked, but had not as yet received. I could not leave them in such an interesting state, though no doubt my strength was by this time considerably exhausted; and accordingly I returned to the precentor's desk, and having sung a Psalm, I called on our dear brother Mr. C to pray and read a chapter. He did so most suitably, adding a few observations at my request upon part of the 15th of Luke, the passage which he had read. After he had ended I felt still called on to continue 1 with the people in prayer, and also to direct and exhort those that were seeking after Christ, which I did chiefly from the 53<sup>rd</sup> of Isaiah. The state of the people, who might amount at least to several hundreds, was much the same as on the preceding evenings. The greater part was in tears, and many were almost overcome, either by the agony of conviction, or a transporting sense of the love of God in Christ. It was about twelve o'clock when this glorious meeting ended; and though I had been speaking for an unusual length of time, and in unusually exciting circumstances, I felt in no degree more exhausted at night than in the morning; and enjoyed when I came home, as I have done throughout the whole of this wonderful period, sweeter and more refreshing rest than I had been accustomed to have before. When I opened my Bible on Monday morning my eyes rested, much to my surprise, on the words of the Lord to Paul — Acts 18:9-11 — and truly I was not without the need of some such supporting assurance of the Lord's favour in the work on which I had entered; for the whole city was in an uproar, many saying, and perhaps some believing, that the people and I had gone mad; while few even of the people of God, except those who had been present (none of them felt thus), seemed to sympathize in what was going on, and some even charged me with fanaticism and an unintentional effort to ruin the interests of vital godliness in the city. However I have never been allowed, though I am by no means naturally of a courageous temper, either then or since, to entertain the least shadow of a doubt regarding the propriety of any step which I have been led to take in this matter, and I felt, especially at that time, that though many to whom I might look for aid should stand back, or even take part with the world, it was my duty like a soldier who has got some important post from his general to defend, rather to die in fighting to maintain it than to yield it to the enemy. Accordingly on Monday and Tuesday nights, being deprived of the presence of Mr. Baxter, who was obliged to go to Edinburgh that week, as a member of the Commission of Assembly, I conducted the public meetings alone. ... On Thursday my dear friend James Hamilton, son of the late Dr. Hamilton of Strathblane, came in from Abernyte, where he is assistant, and conducted most of the services. On Friday and Saturday I was again alone; but never felt that my strength was inadequate for all that I was left to do. During this whole week the meetings were crowded nearly to suffocation, and after all hundreds went away without gaining admittance. Curiosity and even worse motives no doubt attracted the great body of these assemblies; but many who came to mock remained to pray, and more who were drawn by the mere desire to see something new and strange, saw nothing new that was remarkable, but heard the old gospel as if they had heard it for the first time, no longer 'as a tale that is told/ but as glorious tidings for guilty and ruined sinners. The meetings in general ended about ten o'clock, though I frequently had to meet with inquirers after dismissing, in the vestry, and nothing ^ particular characterized them, but an unusually solemn attention in hearing and earnestness in prayer. I began this week also the plan, which has been continued ever since, of meeting privately in the forenoon any of those who might wish to converse and pray with me regarding their state. Many came from the very first to these private conferences, and I soon obtained evidence, which stands in great part upon record in my note-books, of the reality of the work of God's Spirit among us in convincing men, through the medium of his own Word, of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, which may remove

the suspicions of all friends and overthrow the cavils and calumny of all enemies. On Sabbath, the 18th August, we had one of the greatest days of the Lord's power that I have seen in Dundee. On the evening of that day, when I preached from Isaiah 54:5-6, Thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name several persons sobbed or almost cried aloud; but the impression of the truth of God was so deep on the audience generally that this seemed to be little regarded. A greater number have attributed their awakening to that single discourse than to any other single sermon that I have preached, with the exception of that delivered upon Tuesday, the 23d July, at Kilsyth, by which, in the hand of the almighty Spirit of Jehovah, the whole congregation were, as if by some instantaneous electric shock, in a moment shaken with alarm or transported with divine joy. "I have given you a specimen, in the first week, of the meetings, which have been continued, with a few exceptions, every day down to the present time. For nearly two months after they began, they continued to be crowded as much as they had been at first; since that time the numbers have been in general smaller, partly on account of the shortness of the days and the darkness of the nights keeping back many that were accustomed to come from a distance, and partly also, no doubt, from the falling away of many who came at first from improper motives, and did not receive such benefit during their attendance as to make them continue it from better reasons. At first, as I have already told you, many of the people of God, and not a few ministers, including even some of the very best, were suspicious of the work, or even openly opposed; now, however, while men of the world are probably as much opposed to it as ever, the church of God among us is much more visibly separated from the world by its almost unanimous testimony in its favour. . . ."And now, dearly beloved brother and fellow-labourer, at the very time that I am about to enter, in answer to your most judicious queries, upon the most inviting part of this region, through the most rugged part of which I have been trying hastily to drag you, I find that my time is more than gone, and that I must leave those results to your own observation and to oral communication, of which I could have wished, had time permitted, to give you a general sketch. In a word, several hundreds at least are awakened, belonging to all classes of the community, and to all denominations of Christians, though, of course, a greater number belong to your own congregation and parish than to any other single section of the city or surrounding country. All the awakened, as far as I know, are making most satisfactory progress. Many of them are rejoicing in the Lord Jesus, and not a few of them are, I believe, adorning the doctrine of God their Saviour by a life and conversation becoming the gospel, &c." The scenes at Kilsyth, in short, were in every essential particular repeated here, allowing only for the difference between a quiet country village and a large and busy manufacturing town. The crowded and solemnized assemblies in the church from night to night for months together; the eager throngs of inquirers, sometimes so numerous as to form themselves a congregation; the varied and weighty instructions of ministers, followed generally by more special counsels and prayers for those whose overmastering anxiety constrained them to remain behind; the numberless prayer-meetings of old and young, in private rooms, in workshops, in retired gardens, in open fields; the public challenge to the powers of evil and open assault on their strongholds by sermons and addresses in market-places and public streets or church-yards; the nightly journey of thirsty souls from far distances in the outskirts of the city, and in the rural parishes around; the general sensation and spirit of inquiry — half-serious, half-curious — which pervaded more or less the entire community, — were here as there the salient features of a time which none who lived through it, and entered in any measure into the feeling of it, can ever have forgotten.

In the following exalted strains of adoration and fervent aspiration he closes the record of a week of incessant, but to him delightful labour: — 20 minutes to 12. — When this week is expiring I would again, with praises which must echo through all the arches of heaven, set up my Ebenezer and say, Hitherto the Lord hath helped me! O what a week of mercy and grace and love! Last week was wonderful, this is much more so; what will the next be? Perhaps it may be with Jesus in glory! O that it may at least be with Jesus, and that it may redound to the eternal glory of his grace in me and many thousands of redeemed souls! Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! O scatter the clouds and mists of unbelief which exhale afresh from the stagnant marshes in my natural heart, the habitation of dragons, and pour afresh upon my ransomed soul a full flood of thy divine light and love and joy, in the effulgence of which all sin dies, and all the graces of the Spirit bloom and breathe their fragrance! Nor do I pray for myself alone, but for all my dear friends — father, mother, brothers, and sisters .... — for all the people here — all the ministers of every name whom

Jesus hath called to preach his gospel, and for all who shall to-morrow hear or read the glad tidings of great joy which shall yet be to all people! Lord, hasten the latter-day glory! Come quickly, and reign without bounds and without end! And now wash me in thy blood, whose price I cannot tell, but need to cleanse me, so great a transgressor am I. Glory to thee, O Lamb of God, and to thee, O Father, and to thee, O Holy Ghost, eternal and undivided! Amen!"

And so from day to day and from week to week the sacred work of this remarkable time went on — the church nightly thronged with arrested and deeply solemnized multitudes, and every other available hour occupied with individual inquirers, who in very deed sought the eternal wisdom "as silver, and searched for her as for hid treasure." Twenty, thirty, forty, would often come to him on this errand in a single day, gathering in little groups in an outer chamber and pouring out their hearts in united prayer, or in silent and solitary breathings, as they waited each their turn for a personal interview. Generally at the public assemblies, a large part of the audience would remain after the regular services were concluded, for further and more special instruction; and even when all was over, often at a late hour, eager groups would still cling around the preacher as he retired to the vestry, in hope of hearing still some last words of parting counsel and prayer. Occasionally even then it was scarcely possible to shake off the importunate crowds who hung upon the lips of Christ's ambassadors as for their lives: — "When we left the session-house," he writes on September 19th, "we met a great multitude still waiting to hear the word, and some of them in tears. Many of these came along with Mr. W and me to the west end of the town, and when we came to Roseangle, Mr. W at my suggestion engaged with them in a parting prayer on the highway side, under the starlight faintly shining through the dark windy clouds." At one time the throng of worshippers was so great, especially during a visit of Dr. M'Donald of Urquhart, that it was found expedient to change the place of meeting from St. Peter's to St. David's Parish Church, the largest place of worship in Dundee, the use of which was kindly given by the minister, the Rev. George Lewis, who himself took a deep interest and bore an efficient part in the services. The movement may perhaps be said to have reached its climax — a kind of spring-tide flood — at the communion season in October, when the late much esteemed and highly gifted Mr. Bonar of Larbert, assisted by Messrs. Bonar of Kelso, M'Donald of Blairgowrie, and Mr. Flyter of Alness, dispensed the living bread to a vast concourse of hungry souls, "many of whom seemed burning with desire after nearness to Jesus." On the evening of the day three several congregations were assembled — one vast assemblage in the church, and two lesser ones formed out of its overflow in the adjoining school-rooms, and were addressed respectively by Mr. Bonar of Kelso, Mr. Bonar of Larbert, and Mr. Burns. "During the whole of this communion Sabbath," he records in his journal, "there was, I am told by the ministers, an unusually deep solemnity pervading the audience — the result, I trust, of the near presence of Jehovah."

Amidst those solemn scenes Mr. Burns himself remained, in a most remarkable manner, calm and self-possessed. The great objects of faith which so mightily moved his soul seemed to tranquillize, whilst they solemnized and stirred him, so that he moved from day to day in an element rather only of holy and exalted feeling than of excitement in the ordinary sense of the term. At the close of the most exhausting day of apparently exciting labour, his sleep would be as deep and soft as that of a child, and he arose for the next day's toil fresh and joyful, as a strong man to run his race. "I rose," says he (Sabbath, October 6, 1839), "at half-past nine, and felt very strong, even after the incessant duties of Saturday — so wonderfully does the Lord refresh me with sweet sleep." And again (November n), "I rose this morning at 11 o'clock! This appeared to be my duty after being so long and busily engaged on Sabbath. Indeed, it is by sleeping until I am fully refreshed, more than by any other means, that my strength has been preserved undiminished, or rather, I may say, has increased during the excessive labours to which I have been called during the last three and a half months."

In regard to the character of his preaching during this period, it would appear from all I have been able to learn in regard to it, to have been characterized by great fullness, freedom, and rich copiousness of scriptural exposition and appeal, by a melting and persuasive unction, and even by a clearness and force of thought and diction, which, considering the incessant draughts made upon his resources, was very remarkable. At the same time, as he ever sought to speak, not from the mere remembered impression of past convictions, but from the immediate and present sense of eternal things, and felt constrained either to

utter only that which he felt livingly in his soul or be silent altogether, his preaching was subject now, as ever afterwards, to great variations alike in fullness and in power.

Amid his engrossing and abundant labours in the field of service specially allotted to him, he found time also for occasional evangelistic excursions to other places, the results of which were sometimes interesting. Thus, instead of returning straight home from the communion at Kilsyth, referred to in last chapter, he made a rapid visit to Paisley, where he preached in the High Church to a densely crowded audience, with much assistance, from Job 33:23; and "saw not a few in tears," as he was himself "considerably moved, not so much when preaching, as when expounding briefly Philippians 2: 5-9." On his way to Paisley an incident occurred which is worth recording, as characteristic alike of the time and of the man:

"Tuesday, September 24<sup>th</sup>. — In the afternoon, when on my way to Paisley, I had hardly seated myself in the Glasgow boat when an acquaintance (John Marshall, Auchinsterrie) said to me, "You should have worship here." 'Of course if it is agreeable to all it will be agreeable to me.' All seemed anxious for this, and the next minute the captain came saying, 'Will you allow me to open the steerage door as the passengers there would like to hear?' This of course we gladly agreed to, and in a few minutes I found myself, to my own joyful astonishment, standing at the partition door and praying with the whole company. We also sang more than once; and I would have expounded a passage, but I had a little hoarseness and did not see it to be my duty to expose myself when I had so much of the most important work before me."

The next day he preached in the forenoon at Kirkintilloch, and in the evening at Denny, where we catch a characteristic glimpse of one lofty alike in stature and in moral bearing, whom all who were present at the convocation of the ministers of the Church of Scotland in 1842 will remember as perhaps the most striking figure in that assembly: "There was a most densely crowded audience, to whom I preached with considerable assistance from Romans 3:19, 22. Having ended at twelve o'clock, Mr. Dempster, who seemed all on fire with earnestness for a blessing on his people, came up and said a few words, adding, that if any still desired to hear more of the gospel, Mr. Duncan 1 would be glad to preach again."

The following extracts, the first of them deeply touching and characteristic, will afford a glimpse of some of his labours elsewhere: —

"Edinburgh, October 16th, 1839. — This forenoon I visited, after seeing several cases privately, the Orphan Hospital, under the government of my dear friend M'Dougall, with whom I one dark evening prayed in Bute upon some lonely rocks by the sea-shore, and a pious matron, Mrs. Dickson. In the governor's room I saw a fine picture of Whitefield, who was a great favourer of this institution, and when I went into the little pulpit of the chapel, saw the dear orphans so neatly clad and so beautifully arranged before me, and began to read Psalm 103, 'Such pity as a father hath &c., I felt quite overpowered by a feeling of sympathy with these dear children in their orphan state, mingled with grateful wonder at the love of God in dealing so kindly with them. In prayer also I had considerable enlargement, but particularly in speaking from 2 Corinthians 8:9, and telling them some anecdotes, I felt unusually melted myself, and yearned over them, I think, in the bowels of Jesus Christ. Some of the boys and girls were crying, and when I bade them farewell, they unwillingly and with many tears withdrew. O Lord, think upon each of these dear children, convert them all to thyself through Jesus, and raise up from among the boys a great band of holy and devoted ministers and missionaries of Jesus! It was with peculiarly affecting feelings that I hurriedly bade adieu to this most interesting institution, running to be in time to visit, as I had promised, the Greenside Female School, under the conduct of Miss Haldane and other pious ladies.

"St. Andrews, November 4<sup>th</sup>. — After visiting Mrs. C, an interesting Christian widow, who travails in birth again for her children, that Christ may be formed in them, and praying with her and two of her dear children, I went at eleven to Mr. Lothian's; and after he had prayed and said a few words I spoke for a little too about fifty or sixty people from John 4:10. Many were silently weeping, though, alas! my own hard heart did not feel so tenderly as at some other times. We bade them all farewell at the door, leaving many in tears as we went into the curricle that was to convey us back to Dundee. On our way James H, and I both

prayed and had much conversation about the glorious work in which we were engaged, the hopeful symptoms of an approaching revival in St. Andrews, and the necessity of making full proof of our ministry, taking up our cross and following Jesus whithersoever he goeth. There are a few names even in this poor desolate place that have not defiled their garments, and who begin to take pleasure in the stones of Zion and to favour her very dust. O Lord! do thou appear in thy glory among them, and turn all their hearts as the heart of one man to thyself. Father, glorify thy Son; glorify thine own name. Amen.

"O Lord Jehovah! grant to me a heart for Jesus' sake to praise thee with becoming love for all the most marvellous displays of thy love and mercy which I the chief of sinners am permitted to behold from day to day. Breathe on me, O Holy Ghost! for the glory of Emmanuel, and fill my soul with seraphic love, and my tongue with holy and unceasing praise, and O! draw by thy omnipotent grace all these dear inquiring souls to the blood and the bosom of that adorable Emmanuel whom they seek after, and whom thou earnest to glorify in the hearts of sinners. Amen."

On Thursday, November 23, Mr. M'Cheyne returned from the interesting mission which had led to Mr. Burns' temporary occupancy of his pastoral charge, and from that time accordingly his official connection with St. Peter's Church and congregation closed. The following extracts will show the feelings with which he ended this first, and in some respects most eventful period of his home ministry, and the tender bond of sacred affection which still, in parting, bound him alike to that people and their pastor:

"Sabbath, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1839. — . . . In applying the subject I was remarkably aided, and just as I was concluding it came into my mind that though I might probably preach to the people again, yet that now I had reached the termination of my ministry and this gave me an affecting topic from which to press home the message more urgently (subject - Union to Christ, John 15.)

The season was indeed one that I shall never forget. Before me there was a crowd of immortal souls all hastening to eternity, some to heaven, and many I fear to hell, and I was called to speak to them, as it were, for the last time, to press Jesus on them, and to beseech them to be reconciled to God by the death of his Son. . . . After I had intimated that Mr. M'Cheyne was expected to be here on Thursday, I spoke a few words on my leaving them, but I was so much affected that I could say but little, and I felt that it was a cause of praise that the Lord hid from me so much of what is affecting in my present circumstances, though I believe it were good both for the people and myself to feel this much more. The people retired very slowly when we had dismissed about five o'clock, and many waited in the passage and in the gallery until I retired, who wept much when I was passing along, and obliged me to pray with them in the passage again. When I came out I met with many of the same affecting tokens of the reality of my approaching separation from a people among whom the Lord, in his sovereign and infinite mercy, has shown me the most marvellous proofs of his covenant love, and from among whom, I trust, he has taken, during my continuance among them, not a few jewels to shine forever in the crown of Emmanuel the Redeemer! Glory to the Lamb that was slain! .... Truly the work of the Lord is marvellous when I begin to look back upon it from the beginning. It must engage my harp and my tongue, with those of countless multitudes of the redeemed in glory, throughout the endless ages of eternity.

"Friday, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1839. — I met Mr. M'Cheyne at his own house at half-past six, and had a sweet season of prayer with him before the hour of the evening meeting. We went both into the pulpit; and after he had sung and prayed shortly, I conducted the remaining services, speaking from 2 Samuel 23:1-5, and concluding at ten. We went to his house together and conversed a considerable time about many things connected with the work of God, and his and my own future plans and prospects. I find he preached to a densely crowded audience on Thursday night, and with a very deep impression, from 'I am determined to know nothing among you &c. He seems in but weak health, and not very sanguine about ever resuming the full duties of a parish minister. O Lord, spare thy servant, if it be for the glory of thy name, and restore his full strength that he may yet be the means of winning many souls for Jesus. Amen."

## CHAPTER VI

1839-40

## ST. ANDREWS, PERTH, &amp;C

With the return of Mr. M'Cheyne, Mr. Burns' stated labours at Dundee necessarily came to a close, and though the somewhat delicate state of his friend's health still for a season rendered his assistance in pastoral work more or less needful, his movements became henceforth of a more varied and desultory kind. On the 27th he was at Abernyte, of which his endeared friend Mr. Hamilton was then the assistant minister, where he addressed a crowded audience from the words, "God so loved the world," &c. "The people seemed much solemnized, and at the close a few were shedding silent tears. Mr. Wilson, the old minister, stayed till near the end (about twelve o'clock), and seemed much interested; and dear James Hamilton, who I think is decidedly growing in grace, spoke to the people a little towards the end in a very close and affecting way." From thence he proceeded to Bridge of Earn, where, though he complained that he "did not feel particularly assisted in preaching, and was much humbled, on coming out, from a view of his own want of simple and supreme desire for the divine glory," he enjoyed much the congenial society of the minister, Mr. Cumming, and rejoiced to hear of some hopeful tokens of a coming blessing on his field of labour. "Pray on," Mr. Somerville had said at the close of the communion services the week before, "and you will soon have a revival here." Next morning he was in Perth, and had his first sight of a field already white unto the harvest, and in which he was soon to spend many a day of abounding but delightful labour:

"Friday, November 29th, 1839. — I had intended to leave Perth this morning by ten o'clock, but was prevailed on by Miss M, whom I saw at the Bridge of Earn, to think of remaining till four P.M., and then thought I might as well stay all night and preach among them; accordingly I came to Perth at one o'clock, and having met Andrew Gray at Mrs. M's, where I took up my lodging, it was agreed that I should preach in his church at seven o'clock. Some men were accordingly sent round to give intimation, and short and partial as the notice was, the church was crowded, and hundreds went away who could not get admittance. I preached from Job 33:24, and had unusual liberty throughout. We did not separate till near eleven, and I am persuaded that had I had time to wait there were not a few who were in deep anxiety about their souls; as it was, two men and four or five women came up after me to the vestry under deep concern.

"Saturday, November 30, 1839. — I this morning met at breakfast Andrew Gray and Mr. Milne, who has just been settled in St. Leonard's Church, and with them I walked about on the quay for a considerable time waiting for the boat, which was considerably behind her time owing to the flood in the river, and had much interesting conversation. Both of these dear friends, but especially Mr. Milne, seem deeply anxious for a stirring among the dry bones in poor Perth, where they are very many and very dry, and both kindly pressed me to come back to them soon."

He returned to Dundee, but only on his way to St. Andrews, to which he had been strongly urged to return with the view of following up the impression created at his first visit, and where he again preached to immense audiences, and with very marked tokens of the divine blessing, both in the parish church and Independent chapel. "Too many," says an old disciple, whose name will long be fragrant in the city and neighbourhood of St. Andrews, "that season, I trust, was the birth-time of their souls, and to believers a time of great revival and refreshment. To me it was a feast of fat things, and I trust of great blessing. Certainly I never heard the gospel message so clearly preached, so unfettered, so unobscured; and as faith cometh by hearing, so faith came to my soul, and, out of obscurity, I saw and felt the love of God in a way

so melting and so overflowing as to make me weep. May I never lose the impression produced by that sermon from these words: 'He that believeth doth enter into rest; and another also from Mr. Wight — 'Hold fast the beginning of your confidence steadfast unto the end.' What an exhibition of the fullness and freeness and completeness of salvation to the believing soul! 'Doubting Castle' was quite demolished; every chain struck off; closed lips opened to shout for joy, and sing praise to our redeeming God." . . .

On the 6th December he expresses himself as "in great difficulty in knowing my own duty — whether to remain steadily in Dundee, or to visit it only among the many places which seem at present ripe for the harvest." In the meantime, however, he continues his evangelistic excursions, guided simply by the calls which immediately pressed upon him, and having no other plan than that of doing what his hand found to do, and doing it with his might. The next entry is interesting, as illustrating the manner in which he unweariedly sought to sow the precious seed beside all waters, scarcely ever losing an opportunity of speaking a word in behalf of his Master wherever there was a human ear to hear it, whether in the house or by the way, on the top of a coach, on the deck or cabin of a boat, or to the random travelers on a country road. Instances of this occur perpetually, and in every variety of circumstances, in his journal, and give, perhaps more than anything else in his life and ministry, the impression of one who lived for nothing else but to serve and glorify Christ. It is touching often to mark how eagerly and thankfully he hailed such opportunities, not as calls to the discharge of a difficult duty, but as special tokens of the divine mercy and favour towards himself. To give him the liberty of conducting divine worship and delivering the message of grace, at any time or in any place where a few immortal souls were gathered together, was to lay him under the deepest of all obligations. Thus no one who ever spent the briefest time alone with him, or even met him casually by the way, could for a moment doubt that in the truest and fullest sense to him "to live was Christ."

"Thursday, December 5, 1839. — I this day went by coach from Dundee to Cumbernauld. . . . At Cumbernauld I left the coach, after giving tracts to all on it and in it (a practice which I intend to follow wherever I go, as eminently calculated to advance the salvation of souls), and walked over the hill towards Kilsyth. I first made up to two boys going home from school, who seemed very ignorant of Jesus. I spoke to them, gave them tracts, and shortly prayed with them on the road. I next met Mr. Lusk going home, with whom I also prayed on the road. At the Craigmarloch Bridge I met widow Mitchell and her daughter Agnes, an old school companion of my own. With them I prayed — going for a little into the house. At home I found all well, my father absent at the presbytery, and expected to return in the evening with some minister to officiate in the evening meeting. This duty, however, was devolved upon me. . . . I preached from Ephesians 5:1, chiefly seeking the edification of those lately converted to the Lord. During the service my father and Dr. Smyth of Glasgow came in. It was delightful indeed for me to meet, after the congregation dismissed, with many of the dear lambs of Jesus' fold, who appeared to be growing in faith and love both towards Jesus and towards each other. All the road home was strewed with little groups of these dear believers waiting to welcome me back among them and receive some word of exhortation.

"Tuesday, December 10th, 1839. — . . . Preached to the dear Kilsyth flock in the evening from John 15:1-2 . . . . I had in the afternoon of this day several very interesting conversations with particular individuals — as widow Miller, a remarkable old woman, who was converted on Monday evening, July 29th, in the meal-market, while I was speaking after Mr. Somerville had concluded. She appears to be making marvellous progress in the knowledge and love of Emmanuel; and being naturally of a superior cast of mind, she makes the most beautiful and striking remarks. She said, for instance, "Oh! you must rouse them, you must rouse them to-night, just as a mason drives his chisel with his mallet upon the stones. And are we not all stones — rough stones, till God hew and polish us? You roused them before, just as if you were to put a cold hand on a man's warm face." She said also to a poor old beggar, "Oh! you must be made new Robby; it's old Robby with you yet. I was old Betty, but I am new Betty now; and you must pour out your old heart before the Lord and get a new one, &c."

After brief visits to Bo'ness, Dunfermline, and other places by the way, he reached Dundee once more on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, and thence proceeded two days after to Perth, in which he was to find his chief scene of labour for several months to come.

The nature of the field on which he now entered, as well as the character of him with whom especially it was his lot there to labour, will be familiar to very many of my readers from the admirable memoir of Mr. Milne, lately given to the world by Dr. Horatius Bonar. He was indeed "a man greatly beloved," and a true and worthy "yoke-fellow" of Minister of St. George's Parish, Glasgow.

St. Andrews, Perth, the subject of these pages throughout the whole course of those memorable days. Of one mind and of one heart, of differing gifts, but of equal devotedness and singleness of purpose in the service of Christ, they fought the good fight side by side, without a dream of personal rivalry, or any other thought whatever, but that of "striving together for the faith of the gospel." It was especially admirable to mark the perfect self-abnegation with which the young and gifted pastor saw his work, as it were, for the moment taken out of his hands ever he had almost entered on it; and rejoiced in the fruit of his brother's labours even as though it were his own, content either to thrust in his own sickle or to see the harvest reaped by another hand, so only the Master's garner were filled. Closely linked together in life, in affection, and in sympathy, it was interesting to many also to notice that in death they were not long divided, having been called to their eternal rest within a few weeks of one another, and both at a comparatively early age, having lived much and long in a little time.

The rapid and pregnant brevity of the first notices of Mr. Burns' labours here indicate at once the remarkable power with which the sacred movement set in almost from the first day of his arrival on the scene, and the incessant and absorbing occupation which in consequence devolved upon him. His days and nights were so filled up with acts, and with those intense exercises of soul which are the living breath of acts, that he had little time either to narrate or describe : —

"Sabbath, December 29<sup>th</sup>, 1839, forenoon — Preached in East Church, Dr. Esdaile's. I was not left to myself, I hope. Subject, Isaiah 42:21; time too short to allow of sufficient fullness: church full — the gay people of Perth; the magistrates present. Afternoon, St. Leonard's, great crowd; subject, conversion, Matthew 18:3; more aided than ever before on this text, I think; solemnity deep. Inquirers invited to meet at seven in the evening, and at one P.M. On Monday Evening: about one hundred and fifty were present. The Lord was very near. . . . We had to continue together till about eleven o'clock. . . . This was a meeting very similar to some of the Lord's most gracious visits at Kilsyth and Dundee. Praise and glory to his matchless name!

"December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1839, forenoon. — Meeting at one; a few hundreds present. Mr. Cumming, who had promptly answered our call for aid, began. I then followed upon Psalm ex. 3; a solemn meeting; when it was ended the vestry was filled with weepers, with whom we had to pray and sing a long time. Evening in Mr. Turnbull's church, at seven o'clock; subject, Matthew 11:28; dense crowd. Meeting at ten o'clock in St. Leonard's Church, to bring in the New Year. We all took part in the service — Mr. Cumming first, Mr. Milne second, and myself third; we separated about one o'clock on the New Year's morning — a sweet season. I never brought in the New Year so sweetly before.

"Friday, January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1840. — Meeting in the forenoon in Kinnoul Street Church, Mr. Bonar of Collace present, and officiated along with Mr. Milne, Mr. Turnbull, and myself. We met with many interesting cases in the vestry. I went off to Dundee at four o'clock, and left Mr. Bonar to officiate in the evening. He preached to a most densely crowded audience in St. Leonard's Church, from the Ethiopian eunuch; Mr. Milne also spoke; and it is said to have been a most solemn season — not a few in tears."

Prayer, temptation, and deep humiliation of soul, as usual, prepared the way for more abounding joy and strength: —

"Friday, January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1840. — In the evening I spoke from Romans 5:1, but felt much straitened, and was so filled with self-complacency, vain elation, and spiritual blindness, that I had to stop in a very short time, and felt called on to tell the people that I believed, and had been made to feel for some days, that unless we were humbled under God's mighty hand, and the people ceased from their idolatrous confidence in instruments and looked more to God alone, I was convinced his work would not go on, &c.

"Saturday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, 1840. — I was alone during the greater part of the day seeking humiliation before the Lord, and began through grace to discover how far, alas! I have fallen from that contrition of soul for sin which I once enjoyed. Lord, I am indeed set in slippery places. Lord, humble me and keep me from falling into the snare of the devil!

"Sabbath, January 12<sup>th</sup>, 1840, afternoon — Preached in Mr. Gray's from Romans 12:1, with some degree of brokenness of heart and comfort in the Lord. Evening, preached in Dr. Findlay's from Ephesians 4:30, on the work of the Holy Spirit. It was a solemn season, an immense assembly. I had great liberty, especially in pressing sinners not to resist the Holy Ghost. Dr. Findlay was with me in the pulpit. . . ."

Here, as elsewhere, and perhaps even more than often elsewhere, he was, in the most emphatic sense, instant in season and out of season, never deeming any place or time unsuitable in which a word might be spoken for his Master, and an effort made to win the life of souls. The highways and hedges, the river steamboat, the roadside inn, the mart of business, the purlieu and haunts of vice and crime, were to him, equally with the crowded church or upper chamber, the fit arena in which to fulfill his divine ambassadorship, and "compel men to come in" to the house of God. The following incident is strikingly illustrative of this, as well as of the pervasive influence of the movement in the Perth community at this time, and the unlikely quarters into which it found its way: —

"January 16<sup>th</sup>, 1840. — Coming out I saw behind a public-house some men and women sporting themselves, and went up and said, 'You are making work for the day of judgment. They all ran in except one young man, a son of the housekeeper; he was subdued. I asked him if he would allow me to go in and pray. I got into a large room; many assembled, and we had a very solemn meeting. They all promised to come out to the meetings at parting.'

The sequel appears in a brief entry about a fortnight after: —

"January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1840 — When I went home Mr. Milne told me he had heard that Mr. L., the public-house keeper, in whose house I was so remarkably led in God's providence to hold a meeting, had given intimation to his landlord that he was going to give up his shop at the next term, and to leave the spirit-trade. . . . Praise to the Lord!

The power indeed that attended his words, and the effects which often in the most unexpected quarters followed them, was at this time most remarkable. "I never thought," exclaimed a strong, careless man who had heard him, "to have been so much affected & it is surely something altogether unearthly that has come to the town." Another "had come with a companion to our meetings one night to mock, and they both did so, and went from the church to a public-house. However he would not go in, refusing with an awful oath to do so. On his death-bed he called for his companion, and asked him if he remembered these things. He replied he did. 'Well,' he says, I would give a thousand worlds to-night that my soul were in the state his is.' He died after he said these words! "

On Sabbath the 19<sup>th</sup> he was at the communion at Dundee, when he had the solemn joy of sitting down at the table of the Lord, "along with many dear believers, not a few of them his own children in the Lord," but immediately afterwards returned to his work in Perth, which seemed still steadily to grow in depth and wide-spread influence: —

"Sabbath, February 9<sup>th</sup>, 1840, afternoon. — Preached in Mr. Turnbull's to a crowded audience, from John 3:14-15. I felt under the bonds of unbelief during the chief part of the discourse, but towards the close was enabled by the Lord fairly to break loose and speak with some degree of faith and joy in Emmanuel, especially when insisting on the stronger grounds for faith in our case than in the case of the Israelites. They were called to look to a piece of brass as a saviour, and thus their looking was an act simply based on the divine word; but we are called by the same divine word to look for life not to an object of no intrinsic power or value, but to the most glorious Object in the universe, the Son of God purchasing the church on the cross with his own blood, &c. I saw several persons in tears; I was weeping myself, and found this a blessed time. Praise to the Lord! — Evening: the crowd was so great seeking to get into St. Leonard's Church, that it was supposed there were more collected in the street an hour before the time than would have several times filled the church. The press was so great when the doors were opened, that several persons were somewhat injured. I preached from Romans 10:4 and felt considerably aided; thought to myself the season was not quite so sweet as in the afternoon. We prayed particularly for the raising up of Jewish missionaries, according to the call of the Jewish Committee by circular, and prayed that some of those present, if it were the Lord's will, might be called to this glorious work.

Monday, February 10<sup>th</sup>, 1840 (day of Queen Victoria's marriage). — Evening: there was to be a grand display of fireworks on the Inch, and we hardly thought that the church would be anything like filled. However, it was quite full, and after a time not a few were standing. I spoke upon the 45<sup>th</sup> Psalm, commenting on the glory of the Bridegroom Emmanuel, and the privileges of the Bride the Lamb's wife, and thus enforcing the divine call, 'Hearken, O daughter, and consider,' &c. I felt much of the Lord's presence, and had a full persuasion from the frame of the hearers that some, if not many, were in the act of being betrothed to Christ forever in righteousness, and judgment, and loving kindness, &c, Hosea 2; and while we were thus celebrating in the British dominions the marriage of our beloved sovereign, I trust there was joy in the presence of the angels of God over sinners espoused to the Lamb. How infinitely does the one event transcend the other in importance and glory! and yet, alas! this poor world, blinded by Satan, extols the one and despises the other. . . . Awake, O gracious Lord, awake this sleeping world! Amen.

"March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1840. — We had this day a solemn fast — kept by many, I have no doubt, very strictly, as far as the duty of abstinence is concerned. We met at two o'clock P.M. I spoke upon the exercises appropriate to this day: — "1. Self-examination in order to the discovery of sin — of the heart and nature as well as of the tongue and life — by the law and the Spirit of Jehovah. 2. Humbling the soul before God under sins discovered. 3. Confession of sin, full and particular, free and filial. 4. Penitent turning from all sin. 5. Entering into the covenant of grace by the receiving of Emmanuel and the surrender of the soul to him and to God through him. 6. Special prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon this city, and the other places united with us in this fast — the great end designed in its appointment. There was very great solemnity. — Evening: we met again in Mr. Turnbull's church, Kinnoul Street, and concluded the subject. I had at this time more melting of heart under a sense of the love of God than ever I remember to have had in the pulpit, and I think shed more tears than ever before in preaching. The people also seemed in an unusually tender and solemn frame. Glory to the Lamb!"

Amid these abounding and exhausting labours in a sphere in which so wide and effectual a door had been opened to him, he still found time and strength for occasional evangelistic excursions amid the villages around, the results of which were often deeply interesting. In this way he visited at different times during this period the parishes of Auchtermuchty, Strathmiglo, Dunfermline, Muthil, Stanley, Auchtergaven, Caputh, Kinfauns, &c.

The period of his continuous ministry in Perth was now drawing to a close. He had received repeated and urgent invitations to visit Aberdeen, the scene of his second home, and of his college days, which he was unable any longer to resist, and he felt at the same time that he had already remained in Perth long enough to fulfill the functions of a distinctively evangelistic ministry. What further work remained to be done in order to turn to the best account the powerful impulse that had been given, was more of a pastoral

than of a missionary kind, and that work he felt was abundantly safe in the hands of Mr. Milne, Mr. Gray, and the other brethren with whom it had been his privilege and delight to labour throughout the whole course of those eventful days. The sacred spring-tide, however, flowed on with unabated force to the last, and he closes, immediately before leaving Perth, the first year of his ministry as a preacher of the gospel, and the twenty-fifth year of his earthly life, in a sort of solemn "triumph in Christ," who still continued in so remarkable a manner to make manifest through him the savour of his saving knowledge and grace.

March 28<sup>th</sup>, 1840. — When during this day I tried to be grateful to the Lord for all the marvellous work that I have seen during the year that was closing, I felt my soul almost over-whelmed, and could only think with joy on the subject, when I remembered that I had an eternity to spend in praising and blessing God. Praise to the Lamb! infinite, eternal praise; mercy sovereign, infinite, unchangeable, everlasting! The Father electing, the Son redeeming, the Spirit renewing.

'To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,  
The God whom I adore,  
Be glory, as it was, and is,  
And shall be evermore!'

"Wednesday, April 1st, 1840. — This day begins my 26th year. I would act for the Lord Jesus henceforth as if I had hitherto done absolutely nothing in his service. May he enable me. I spent the morning alone and in fasting. The Lord, I trust, was near, though I cannot say that I spent the season in a manner befitting such an occasion. Indeed, I can hardly dare to think of God's dealings with me. They overwhelm my soul with astonishment. I wait for eternity to study and admire and extol them."

Such were those remarkable days at Perth during the spring of 1840, as their history is traced in the simple and solemn words of the chief actor himself. It may be desirable, however, for a moment to look at those scenes as seen by another eye; and this we are enabled to do through the following interesting recollections kindly furnished to me by one who herself "owed much in after-life" to the sacred impressions received at that memorable time. Of the after and permanent results of the work then done we shall afterwards have occasion to speak; what we have now to quote refers rather to the immediate aspect of the movement while still in progress, as it presented itself to one who lived through it and deeply shared its spirit: —

"It was in a hotel in Rome that we first read, in the columns of Galignan's Messenger, the name of William Burns. The article was a bitter and sneering caricature. Returning to Scotland a few weeks later, without having had any opportunity of being in church in the interval, and with the bewitching mummeries of the Roman Church, as they surrounded the person of Gregory XVI., in vivid recollection, we were taken to an inquirers' meeting conducted by Mr. Burns in Perth; and the thirty years which have since sped away, instead of effacing, have only deepened the impression of the scene we then witnessed. William Burns was speaking from Revelation xix. Of the doom of Antichrist, and the hallelujah which shall rise from the redeemed when the smoke of her torment shall ascend in their sight. He was warning the unsaved that over their destruction also the same assenting 'Amen, hallelujah/ must yet arise, if they persisted in rejecting Jesus. He was inviting poor sinners to come to Calvary's fountain and wash and be clean. He was warning such as imagined they had washed and were living unholy, thus: You are saying, ' If I sin it will easily be washed out again.' Or, if not saying it with the lip, you are acting it out fearfully in the life. Ah! the soul that has washed its filthy garments in the stream of Calvary is careful how the remedy is used. Many believers have so much allowed the stains of conformity to the world to disfigure the white robe, that instead of representing the work of God within, they are scarcely to be distinguished from the servants of the devil/ He was setting before believers the coining joys of the marriage-supper of the Lamb, and said, ' This blessedness is not so far off as the world seems to think; the meanest saint can tell that it has already set in with a sweetness unspeakable. Ushered into the breast of many by billows of affliction and temptation, beating wildly on the soul with their tempestuous swell, yet are the beginnings so glorious and so blessed, that they are an earnest of a springing up of a life eternal in the heavens. On the joys which shall crown our union with

Emmanuel no destroyer shall lay the withering blight of his death-cold hand; no ruthless separation shall snatch our happiness from us, or us from our happiness. After washing for a few days more in the free fountain here — after a few days more weeping on account of sin and sorrow — you shall awake suddenly in the city of our God, to walk with Emmanuel forever in the courts above. The company, small here, will be innumerable yonder. Ten thousand times ten thousand are their voices, and ten thousand times ten thousand are the harps they tune; but it is as the sounding of one voice. Hallelujah! 'tis the keynote of an eternal song. Only one name rests upon their lips; it is Emmanuel. They know but one song, the song of the redeemed. It is sometimes difficult to say here 'all his judgments are righteous,' for they are often heavy and severe. When you join that company, your narrow and short-sighted views will be gone. If I were ever to see the smoke of your torment ascending before the throne, I would have to say Amen; hallelujah! and if you, standing on high, were to see the smoke of my torment ascending, you too would cry Amen; hallelujah! . . . An hour has nearly elapsed since we began to speak with you; it is just taking wing; a few seconds and it will have fled to bear its tale to the judgment-seat. Shall it announce the submission of a sinner, the return of a prodigal, the adoption of a son into the family above?' The deepest solemnity pervaded the assembly, as the simple searching truth was calmly presented. Individuals were conversed with in St. Leonard's Church for an hour or two afterwards; and many a burden was there laid upon I the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the World. 'These inquiry-meetings were held three times a week, and in the evening the church was open for the crowds that thronged it from town and country. An hour before the time of service every seat was filled. The multitude generally remained in silence, and many heads were bowed in prayer. The stairs leading to the pulpit were also filled, and it was with difficulty the preacher could be conducted thither. The Rev. John Milne, the recently settled pastor of the congregation, usually shared the pulpit with the speaker. We recall especially one evening when a chair was handed up for James Hamilton, then of Abernyte, to sit at their side, It seems now as if one chariot had sufficed to carry home the three, 'William Burns, John Milne, and James Hamilton/ That night was one of power.' Tough bows require sharp pruning/ said the preacher, when someone would have tried to blunt the knife, by advising him to the use of more measured and tempered language. 'A sleeping minister and a sleeping congregation, what will they do in the day of judgment?' He was privileged to break this sleep — in congregations, in kirk-sessions, and in manses. The first part of his discourse always embodied a mass of telling doctrine, holding up the divine law right in face of the sinner's conscience. The appeals in the latter part were irresistibly winning, brimming over with the freely offered love of Jesus. The Spirit was glorified. He arrested many before the preacher had time to enter his subject; in some cases the arrow sped from the first psalm that was given out, and many were awakened during the opening prayer. It is not easy to describe his prayers. Adoration of Jehovah's uncreated glory, as it falls on the darkness and corruption of man's heart, and reveals the abyss of a yawning hell, filled the first part. He brought himself and the saved part of his audience down into the sides of the pit whence they were hewn, in a way that made the greatest outcast in the church feel that he or she was sympathized with and carried abreast; and then his soul would as it were be seen to pass anew through the cleansing flood, up into the very presence-chamber of the King of kings, and there looked up into the Father's face with unutterable love. His theology was unbiased and swung like a pendulum across the truth of God, avoiding all limited, classified, partial, and one-sided expressions of it. His training of young converts was thus invaluable to them. 'No cross, no crown, was the term of enlistment.' Suffering is the law of the kingdom. The greater your sacrifices for Christ, the more of his joy will fill your heart.' 'Forsake the glass, the dance, and the song, if you would drink of the rivers of his pleasures, if you would leap for joy on the shores of Emmanuel's land, if you would take up the unending hallelujah.'

"He warned the young that if they would live near the Lord, they must be content to be singular even among believers, and to travel sometimes almost alone. I am often reminded of this,' he said, ' when setting out by the early stage-coach. The morning is sharp, companions few, and from the top of the coach you see whole streets shuttered in as in the night. But just here and there, one, earlier up than others, has begun her morning work, with no one apparently to notice or thank her. She will find out the good of it before nightfall. So with you. Forget the crowd, walk with God alone.'

"It was a high standard he himself set before them. The longing of my heart would be to go once all round the world before I die, and preach one gospel invitation in the ear of every creature.' He had a tender regard for those who were kept long in darkness; saying, that those, to whom the Lord had revealed much of their own sin and misery in the place of dragons, were often led into high places in the school of Christ.

"All the roads from the town were nightly trod by groups of country hearers. Some were returning home to sing for the first time the new song. Others with heavy pace carried an arrow rankling in the heart. Others bore the good news of companions in town turning to God, the public-house signs taken down, the police comparatively idle, and families and workshops sharing the wide-spread blessing."

In the words, in fine, of Mr. Milne, used a year and a half afterwards, on a retrospect of these remarkable scenes: "God's people quickened; backsliders restored; the doubting and uncertain brought to decision and assurance; hidden ones who for years had walked solitary brought to light, and united to a family of brothers and sisters; a large number of the worldly, thoughtless, ignorant, self-righteous turned to the Lord; a peculiar people growing up, who are separate from the world, know and love one another; watch over, exhort, and aid one another, and seem to grow in humility and zeal;" such is the summary history of the work done and the fruits of blessing gathered in at Perth during this signal "time of power."

After a few more days spent in fulfilling some country engagements, he started for Aberdeen on the 7<sup>th</sup>, amid a crowd of loving friends who had assembled to bid him farewell; but rejoicing still more to see, as he passed through Bridgend, "that William G's sign as a spirit-seller was taken down!"

## CHAPTER VII

1840

## LABOURS AT ABERDEEN

The details which have been given in the three last chapters from Mr. Burns' own journals, of the nature of his labours, and the scenes amongst which he mingled, at Kilsyth, Dundee, and Perth, will render it unnecessary to give such extended extracts with reference to his evangelistic work at Aberdeen. The spirit in which he laboured, and the results which followed, were here in all essential respects identical with what we have just described elsewhere, and might be said to be simply the continuation of what was there begun. The same unresting activity, intense earnestness, and vivid realization of the unseen world on the part of the preacher — the same mighty and gradually swelling tide of interest, inquiry, irrepressible emotion, on the part of the throngs that waited on his ministry and hung upon his lips — were here as there the salient features of a movement which was the subject of solemn joy to one part of the community, and of wonder, consternation, scorn, or anxious misgiving to the other. Sermons to densely crowded audiences in three several churches on each Lord's-day; prayer-meetings in the morning and afternoon, and a public address in the evening of each week-day, with generally an additional hour of counsel, instruction, and prayer, for those whose intense anxiety still detained them after the long service was over, with words by the wayside and conferences with inquirers and young disciples at all other available hours, constituted the daily history of his work, so far as it can be written by man, for weeks together. An occasional sermon, too, in the open air — in Castle Street, or at the foot of the Barrack Hill — startled and scandalized a Christian community, which has since seen the same self-denying service done, with no other feeling than that of admiration, by so many others. Even his brethren in the ministry, who in all other respects approved and furthered his work, with one single exception deprecated a course which all the existing conventions condemned, but which, by its remarkable results, in sounding the depths of a class of society which no other agency had reached, more than justified itself: —

“In the evening,” says he, “I (April 26) preached in Castle Street to an immense audience, chiefly men, on the willingness of Jesus to save the chief of sinners, from the ' thief on the Cross, I felt more of the divine presence than on any former no occasion in Aberdeen, and laboured to pull sinners out of the fire. The impression was very deep; many weeping, some screaming, and one or two quite overpowered. At eight o'clock we adjourned to the North Church, where Mr. Wilson from Belfast was preaching, and when he had concluded we remained with a crowded audience for another hour in exhortation, prayer, and praise. After this we dismissed the people; but a great many were so deeply moved that we could not get away, and accordingly I returned with Mr. Murray, who addressed along with me about four hundred, from the precentor's desk. After prayer and singing, we dismissed about ten o'clock. Getting with difficulty out of the crowd, I went down to Albion Street, and addressed in a school-room about seventy of the poorest and vilest of the people in that degraded district. They were very solemn and interested to all appearance. We separated about eleven. Though this was a day of uncommon toil, yet, praise to the Lord! I was not worn out, but felt strong as ever on my way home. ... I may here record that none of the ministers were in favour of the street-preaching but Mr. Parker.

He and his session all went to Castle Street; though I felt that I did not need human countenance, having so clear a conviction of the duty, and being so conscious of the divine support in this effort to advance the glory of Jesus.”

Other tokens besides the immediate sense of the “divine support,” and the access opened to him to “the poorest and vilest of the people,” soon appeared to confirm his conviction that he was in this matter in the

right line of action. "When walking on the links," says he in his journal of next day, "in the afternoon I met some poor lads, with whom I prayed among the sand-banks. They were very serious for the time, and one of them said he had been in Albion Street school the night before. He said that many were praying for the first time, and he among the rest, after I went away." We are not surprised, accordingly, to find him soon again on the same battle-ground, renewing the charge from the same point at which he had already effected so wide a breach. The scruples of his brethren, too, soon gave way, as they witnessed and gladly hailed the good results of the bolder course from which at first they had shrunk : —

"Tuesday, April 28<sup>th</sup> — In the evening I preached to an immense audience at the foot of the Barrack Hill, including multitudes of the worst people in the town. I was hoarse, and the situation was very unfavorable, owing to its vicinity to the public road; yet with all these disadvantages the audience were most fixed and solemn in their attention, and I was encouraged to intimate a similar meeting in the same vicinity for Thursday night, though I had previously proposed to leave Aberdeen on the afternoon of that day. This afternoon I had also at half-past five a meeting in the barracks with about thirty of the soldiers. They seemed much impressed, and some of them shed tears when I came away. . . .

"Thursday, April 30<sup>th</sup> — I was again at the barracks in the afternoon; appearances just such as on the former day. I preached thereafter at the foot of the Barrack Hill to an immense audience. I had been thinking on the subject of conversion, but I was led in the time of the opening prayer to think of Matthew 11:28 and I preached on it with perhaps more of the divine assistance than I had done at any time before. Towards the end especially, many were screaming and in tears. . . . I felt as if I could pull men out of the fire; indeed, I never had more of this feeling than this evening, and on Sabbath evening in Castle Street. In order to escape the crowd I slipped into the barracks, and after walking up and down in concealment a little, I went up to some of the men and spoke to them of Jesus and salvation. I got a good many of them to come and have a last prayer-meeting before our parting, which we had accordingly. When going up to the room I met dear J. C. (An interesting convert mentioned in the journal before several times.) standing with streaming eyes alone. He had run up Union Street, thinking to overtake me, but not seeing me, and being obliged to be me by nine o'clock, he returned disconsolate, thinking that he might never see me again, the regiment being to leave Aberdeen for Paisley on Tuesday first. Our meeting was sweet indeed, and our parting affecting, but full of the hope of meeting in the presence of the Lamb. Glory to his matchless name!

"

Of the after-history of individual souls amongst those neglected multitudes in Albion Street and Barrack Hill, to whom the gates of the eternal kingdom were thus opened for once at least, so widely, but few and broken fragments can be gathered from the records of earth. The names of some of them occur in connection with the labours of a committee of inquiry soon after appointed by the presbytery of the bounds, and the cases of others are doubtless well known to individual ministers of the city, under whose ministry the seeds of life then sown were cherished and ripened to holy fruitfulness. With his friends amongst the soldiers, however, he was destined to meet again in other and deeply interesting circumstances, when, five years afterwards, they rallied round him, and acted as his gallant body-guard amid the rude assaults of the ruffian mob at Montreal.

Throughout these manifold and arduous labours Mr. Burns had enjoyed, as ever afterwards in Aberdeen, the valuable countenance and co-operation of several of the ministers of the city, and particularly of Dr. Murray of the North Parish, Mr. Parker of Bonaccord Church, and Mr. Mitchell of Holborn, in one or other of whose churches most of his meetings both on Sabbaths and on week-days were held. The two former have since died — leaving behind them the rich savour of a revered and blessed memory. Mr. Parker was a man of deep, thoughtful, and even severe piety, with peculiarly profound and solemn views of the holy law and sovereign grace of God — who had been recently translated to his present charge from a chapel in Dundee, where he had laboured for several years with remarkable acceptance and success. Dr. Murray was a ripe scholar, a sound divine, a brave and godly man, and, especially during his earlier ministry in Trinity Chapel, a stirring and successful preacher. He lived to a good old age, and passed away amid the universal respect of a community that had for long years honoured him as one of its most worthy and true-hearted citizens. Both loved and befriended the young evangelist with that peculiar and beautiful affection which one sometimes sees in those of more advanced years towards the young.

On Tuesday, May 1, he left Aberdeen for a season, in order to fulfill some other pressing engagements — thus briefly summing up the result of his labours there during the past month: —

“I am now come to the end of my sojourn in Aberdeen, and must notice a few general features in what met my eye and ear. We had meetings every morning to the end, in Bonaccord Church, which were very sweet and solemn, and increased in size towards the end. I also continued to meet almost every afternoon, from one to three, with anxious inquirers. Many that came to these meetings, as well as many that called at the house, seemed in a most promising state, and altogether, upon a review of all I saw of this kind in Aberdeen, there seemed to be very hopeful symptoms of an extensive awakening. And now, Lord Jesus, grant me and all thy people there, the Holy Ghost as a Spirit of praise for all the tokens of thy glorious and gracious presence there; and may those who were impressed by thy power not be left to fall back into their former security beneath the abiding wrath of God, but be brought to wash in thy blood, and put on the glorious wedding-garment of thy righteousness, and adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour by a life and conversation becoming the gospel; and to thee be all the glory! Amen.”

His retirement from Aberdeen, however, was only temporary. Neither in his own judgment nor in that of the brethren who had laboured with him, had he yet made full proof of his ministry there; and accordingly, after an absence of five months, we find him again in the field, prosecuting with equal devotedness and zeal, and with even still more remarkable results, the work which he had before begun. For two months together, on week-days and Sabbath-days, the attendance at the meetings continued unabated, and the number of inquirers increased. I find on one of the last pages of his Aberdeen diary specific mention of the 200th case of spiritual anxiety with which he had had to deal since the commencement of his visit; and those who sought him out on this errand, and with whom he was able to converse, were of course only a fraction of those who were more or less affected by the general and widespread impression. So great at one time was the number of the anxious, that appointments made for their special behoove would be responded to by such crowds, that individual instruction became impossible, and the inquirers' meeting grew into a congregation. Meanwhile the intensity of feeling manifested by those who were the more especial subjects of the movement was often very great, and found vent to itself in the case of those who were of a more impressible nature, and were least habituated to self-control, now in silent weeping, and now in loud sobs and cries. There was undoubtedly at this time a good deal of what is called religious excitement. The solemn impressions of eternal things renewed night after night, in crowded congregations composed in large measure of the same individuals, and under the spell of a voice that seemed as if the very echo of eternity, gradually grew to an intensity which became at last altogether uncontrollable.

It cannot certainly be matter of surprise that such manifestations, occurring in the midst of a great Christian community, should have attracted a large measure of public attention, and should have been thought deserving of serious consideration and inquiry on the part of those entrusted with authority in the church. They were sure to be variously, and by many severely, judged. Not only were those to whom every expression and sign of religious earnestness were but as the raving of fools, sure to turn away from such scenes with contemptuous scorn, but even some, to whom the struggles of the interior life were a great and blessed reality, might question whether a spiritual movement, attended by such a tumult of emotion, were likely to prove in the highest degree solid or lasting. It was not that the spiritual concern of those whose souls were most powerfully stirred by the melting and thrilling words of the preacher was in itself too solemn or too deep. No amount of solicitude in regard to interests so stupendous as the favour and love of God, and the eternal life of the soul in him, could be regarded as either unreasonable or extreme. Of such solicitude, whether called by the name of excitement, or enthusiasm, or the awakening of the spiritual life, well might it be said with President Edwards: “If such things are enthusiasm or the fruits of a distempered brain, let my brain be evermore possessed of that happy distemper! If this be distraction, I pray God that the world of mankind may be seized with this benign, meek, beneficent, beatifically, glorious distraction.” But the question still remained, whether a course of such continuous and exhausting excitement of the feelings were not fitted rather to hinder than to help spiritual inquiry in the highest sense — by preventing quiet thoughtfulness, and possibly issuing in a

reaction of deeper carelessness and apathy. Grace, it was urged, while in itself supernatural and divine, yet works ever according to the essential laws of our moral and physical constitution; and whatever in any degree runs counter to those laws must tend in that degree to hinder or to mar that work. Of those laws the healthy equipoise of the different elements of our nature — the reason, the conscience, the feelings— is one of the most fundamental, and therefore any undue or exclusive predominance of one of these to the suppression or abeyance of the others must tell with more or less of injurious influence upon all. It was alleged too that the excitement then prevalent was in many cases an excitement of fear rather than of love or moral feeling, and for that reason also the more liable to prove evanescent, or to issue in morbid and unsatisfactory results. It was not enough to say in answer to these considerations that the work was, as most Christian men fully believed, in its essential nature and substance a work of the Spirit of God; for a divine work was all the more sure to be more or less marred by the erring touch of man; and that work, it was maintained, would have been helped, not hindered, and the spiritual birth or holy progress of souls furthered, had the public meetings and protracted and exciting services been fewer, and the hours of still and meditative retirement more.

There was some truth, doubtless, in these considerations; but probably not so much as those who urged them were disposed to think. It was not enough considered that such a season of general awakening to the sight and sense of eternal things was in its nature exceptional and temporary, and that the intense excitement with which it was at first attended was sure, in the course of nature, soon to die down into a more quiet and tranquil condition of things. Whatever effects of a permanent kind might result from the earthquake shock, in startling souls from the sleep of death, its immediate tremor and concussion would soon pass away. Neither in the public mind generally, nor in the history of individual souls, would the tumult of emotion last long enough to produce, at least to the full extent, that revulsion or paralyzing exhaustion of feeling that was apprehended. Many of those who were most deeply moved by the prevailing influence very soon passed the crisis of their anxiety, and through that sore agony and travail of soul entered into a state of calm peace and rest in God, which was the very opposite of all tumultuous excitement. The same power that was mighty to wound was mighty also to heal, so that "the bones which" that divine unseen hand "had broken" were speedily made to "rejoice." There was the gentle and reviving south wind, as well as the biting north — the time of the singing of birds, as well as the winter and the rain. Thus those whose desires after God, the living God, were deep and real, did not long fail of the object of their quest, and with it of that holy calm which can alone effectually still the tumults of the heart; while in the case of those whose natural sensibilities alone were stirred, there was enough in the cares of the world and the pressing exigencies of daily life soon to blunt the edge of excited feeling, and preclude the danger of a too intense or long-continued anxiety. Those, in short, who had then been roused to momentary seriousness, would either inevitably soon sink into slumber again, or have their eyes opened to the sight of Him, the beholding of whom alone can permanently keep the soul awake, and in whom there is not only life everlasting but peace unspeakable.

It should be remembered also that those to whose benefit Mr. Burns' labours were at this time for the most part directed, belonged to that class whom it is most difficult to arouse to any thought or care about eternal things at all, and who when they are so roused, are then only led to think when they have been first made to feel. Those rude and untaught hearts in Albion Street and Barrack Hill, or amidst the crowds of factory workers, who were brought to weep and wail aloud at the thought of God and eternity, might never get beyond those mere sobs and tears — might catch only a momentary glimpse of a higher world, and then pass again into darkness; and yet surely the very state of mind which made them capable of such tears had already raised them far above their former state of stolid indifference and moral debasement, and brought them at least several steps nearer the kingdom of God than they were before. There are those — let us never forget it — whose deeper nature must be reached, primarily and chiefly, not through the head, but through the heart.

It was a time doubtless of high, but, in the main, of sacred and salutary excitement. Occasionally, no doubt, the tide of feeling was too unrestrained — more continuous and less subjected to regulative control, than with a view to solid and enduring results would have been desirable. There was not indeed too much feeling; but there was perhaps too little thought — not too much of the whirlwind and of the fire, but

possibly too little of the still small voice. Without any less of the religion of the heart, there might have been more of the religion of the informed judgment, the educated conscience, and of the disciplined will. It is hard in any case, and under any ministry, fully to reconcile and combine what may be called the stimulative and the educative functions of the gospel message — to give full scope at once to the powers that stir and to the principles that should guide and control the spiritual nature. I do not say — least of all would the subject of this memoir have said — that in the present instance this reconciliation was perfectly attained. In the great lack, too, of wise guides of souls, and in the comparative inexperience in such work even of those who were most fitted for it, it is not wonderful if a spiritual movement, at once so extensive and profound, should have got occasionally somewhat beyond control; and if some portion of its good results should thus have been lost or have passed away into impure and morbid forms. Even a Divine work in human hands partakes ever and necessarily more or less of the imperfection and the error of that which is human. In the main, however, and with every reasonable allowance for such imperfection and error, we believe this remarkable movement to have been a real and most blessed work of the Spirit of God — a true awakening, through his heavenly breath, of the spiritual nature, and quickening of the springs of highest life in multitudes of human souls. If it was an enthusiasm, it was an enthusiasm of faith, of love, and of holy endeavour and aspiration.

Still, let it be admitted that the dangers apprehended from excessive and too continuous excitement, if often exaggerated, are nevertheless real, and that so far as they can be avoided, they are, in the interest of the work itself, and for the honour of Him whose work it is, to be sedulously and anxiously guarded against. "There being a great many errors and sinful irregularities," to use again the words of Edwards, "mixed with this work of God, arising from our weakness, darkness, and corruption, does not indeed hinder it from being very glorious. Our follies and sins in some respects manifest the glory of it. The glory of divine power and grace is set off with the greater lustre by what appears at the same time of the weakness of an earthen vessel. It is God's pleasure to manifest the weakness and unworthiness of the subject at the same time that he displays the excellency of his power and the riches of his grace. And I doubt not but some of these things which make some of us here on earth to be out of humor, and to look on this work with a sour countenance, heighten the songs of the angels when they praise God and the Lamb for what they see of the glory of God's all-sufficiency, and the efficacy of Christ's redemption. And how unreasonable is it that we should be backward to acknowledge the glory of what God has done, because the devil, and we in hearkening to him, has done a great deal of mischief." Still none the less error is error, and sin is sin, and both are to be with the utmost watchfulness and care guarded against, so that the work which we recognize as divine may not only be, but be seen to be, "honourable and glorious," and that no needless stumbling-block may be thrown in the way of any true though feeble seeker after God.

Whether, then, and to what extent, any such incidental evils had appeared in the present case, was a most fair and important subject of inquiry; and a committee was accordingly appointed for that purpose by the presbytery of Aberdeen, moved thereto chiefly by some very unfair and one-sided accounts of some of the meetings which had appeared in one of the public prints. The result was eminently satisfactory. The proceedings were conducted on the whole — as Mr. Burns himself most cordially admitted — with candor and fairness, and in such a manner as fully to elicit the essential elements of the truth. To the convener of the committee in particular, the Rev. Wm. Pirie, he felt himself under deep obligation for the kindness and courtesy with which he conducted his own examination, when called personally to appear as a witness.

The committee of presbytery very properly extended their inquiries beyond the sphere of their own immediate jurisdiction, to some of the other scenes of Mr. Burns' labours, where a religious movement essentially similar to that at Aberdeen had taken place and where from the lapse of time its real nature and tendency could be the better tested. The result was a remarkable concurrence of weighty and impressive testimony alike to the depth and extent of the influence at work, and of the holy and enduring fruit in the hearts and lives of multitudes of its subjects; and the presbytery accordingly agreed to the following resolution, as embodying their mature and final judgment, after a full consideration of the whose facts and bearings of the case: — "The Presbytery, having taken into their solemn consideration the evidence on revivals of religion received by their Committee on that subject, resolved,

"1. That a revival of religion, consisting in the general quickening of believers, and the conversion of multitudes of unbelievers, by the Holy Spirit, cannot but be an object of most earnest desire to every follower of the Lord; that the genuineness of such a revival is chiefly to be tested by the nature and permanence of the effects by which it is followed; that it can only be expected to flow from the use of the appointed means, accompanied with the abundant outpouring of the Spirit of God; that it should be made a subject of fervent and persevering prayer; and that, when such a revival takes place, it should not be dreaded or spoken of with levity, but should be carefully and seriously marked, and acknowledged with devout thanksgiving.

"2. That the evidence, derived from answers to certain queries sent by the Committee to ministers and others in different parts of the country, amply bears out the fact that an extensive and delightful work of revival has commenced, and is in hopeful progress in various districts of Scotland — the origin of which, instrumentally, is to be traced to a more widely diffused spirit of prayer on the part of ministers and people, and to the simple, earnest, and affectionate preaching of the gospel of the grace of God; that this work in the districts referred to, many of which are locally far distant from others, has been attended with few of those evils which have generally more or less characterized seasons of great religious excitement; and that, on the whole, an amount of good has been accomplished which loudly calls for gratitude and praise to Him 'who turneth the hearts of men as the rivers of water.'

"3. That in the case of Aberdeen, to which the evidence more especially refers, it clearly appears, so far as the test of time can be applied to the subject, that a very considerable number of persons, chiefly in early life, have been strongly, and it is hoped savingly, impressed with the importance of eternal things, and are in the course of further instruction; that many of all ages have been awakened to a more serious concern about Christ and salvation than they formerly felt, and have been quickened to activity in well-doing; and that the labours of Mr. W. C. Burns, preacher of the gospel, are peculiarly discernible in connection with these results. At the same time, the Presbytery cannot but regret that such an exclusive reference should have been made to two particular meetings at which Mr. Burns presided, where the services were protracted to a late hour, and where much outward excitement prevailed — circumstances obviously liable to much inconvenience as well as misconception — while it appears from the evidence that many other meetings were held for religious instruction, through the same instrumentality, which could be liable to no such misconception, and where much good was wrought. And, upon the whole, the Presbytery are convinced that, if it had entered more into the nature of the inquiry to ascertain simply the extent of the awakening that has been effected in this city and neighbourhood, the evidence of a favourable kind would have been such as to lead to increased thanksgiving.

"4. That the Presbytery having considered the whole evidence that has been laid before them on this unspeakably important subject, feel themselves called upon to recommend to all ministers, preachers, and elders within their bounds, in their respective spheres, to labour more and more diligently and prayerfully, in the use of all scriptural means, to promote the cause of vital religion, which needs so much to be revived among us; and they would also exhort and entreat all the private members of the Church to study to grow in grace, to abound in all the fruits of righteousness, and to plead more earnestly with the great Head of the Church that he would pour out of his Spirit more plentifully upon us, and bless his appointed ordinances, that the wilderness may become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest."

Before the commencement of the investigation, Mr. Burns had already closed his labours at Aberdeen, having been called to take the temporary charge of a new church at Dundee. He left for that town on the 5th of December, at early dawn; but not too early to find awaiting him at the place of departure a number of those who had learned to look to him "even as an angel of God," and who parted from him with many tears : —

"Saturday, December 5<sup>th</sup> — Though I was very late up last night (this morning), and had but a short time for sleep, I awoke of my own accord at the proper time quite refreshed, and set out at twenty minutes to seven with the Dundee mail. A number of my young friends had found out the time of my departure, and stood by on the pavement in tears. The mockery of many around made our tongues silent: we looked at each other, with Jesus in our hearts' eye I hope, and wept."

## CHAPTER VIII

1840

## WORK AMONG THE MOUNTAINS

"I shall never forget," says one to whom Mr. Burns "was more than any other man," "the first time I saw him. It was at Lawers, on Sabbath the 16th of August, 1840. The whole country was ringing with the wonderful movement in Kilsyth, Perth, and Dundee, with which his name was associated. It was rumored too that a short time before a person had died in connection with one of his services. A great multitude assembled, not only with the ordinary feelings of curiosity, but with feelings of wonder and solemnity deepening almost into fear. I can remember the misty day, and the eager crowds that flocked from all directions across hill and lake. The service was of course in the open air, and when the preacher appeared many actually felt as if it were an angel of God. There was an indescribable awe over the assembly. Mr. Burns' look, voice, tone; the opening psalm, the comment, the prayer, the chapter, the text (it was the parable of the Great Supper in Luke 14), the lines of thought, even the minutest; the preacher's incandescent earnestness; the stifled sobs of the hearers on this side, the faces lit up with joy on that; the death-like silence of the crowd, as they reluctantly dispersed in the gold-red evening

— the whole scene is ineffaceably daguerreotyped on my memory. It was the birthplace of many for eternity. Last year (1868), when a deputation from the General Assembly visited the presbytery of Breadalbane, in connection with the state of religion, a venerable minister stated that such of the subjects of that gracious work as still survive adorn the doctrines of God our Saviour in all things. Most of the congregations in the district received the divine shower."

Mr. Burns' labours in Breadalbane, or the romantic district that lies along the margin of Loch Tay, took place between the periods of his first and of his second visit to Aberdeen described in the last chapter, and constituted altogether one of the most interesting and characteristic parts of his whole evangelistic course. Here he was peculiarly at home. The solemn fowns of the everlasting hills and the great shadow of the supernatural which they seemed to cast even over the spirit of the people were congenial to him. The Sabbath stillness too, and the fresh and healthful upland air, contributed to restore tone and vigour to a frame on which the fevered atmosphere of city life and city work had begun sensibly to tell. Never probably at any period of his life was he more happy in the best sense than during this interval of quiet thoughtfulness and restful labour — kneeling in lonely prayer in some forest thicket by the river or mountain side, or standing up before those arrested crowds that hung upon his words, silent and solemn as the mountains around. Never, probably, were the sacred impressions produced by his preaching more deep and spiritual than here, or the tendency to an unhealthy and nervous excitement less. The following graphic words from the writer already quoted were true of him at all times, but at this time emphatically so: "Like the Baptist he came preaching repentance, and with terrible earnestness warned the thousands that flocked to hear him to flee from the coming wrath. Like the Baptist, too, he was independent of home ties — lived, as it were, in the wilderness, 'making himself grandly solitary for the work of Christ!' His very eyes left their light with you after he had gone. . . . And yet there was an Isaiah-like grandeur about his expositions of the gospel. When his lips were touched with the live coal, it was indeed a feast of fat things to hear him. And even when he was straitened, which he often was, owing to the incessant demands upon him, there was always something precious which stuck fast in the memory."

To this interesting period of Mr. B.'s labours we propose to devote the present chapter; but it will be proper before entering on it, to glance briefly at the course of his movements during the three preceding months.

For some weeks after he left Aberdeen, those seasons of "straitening," of which Mr. Macgregor speaks, had been more than usually frequent and painful to him. The reaction of feeling and the physical exhaustion naturally succeeding a time of high excitement, produced a languor alike of mind and body, which even his vigilant self-jealousy could not avoid attributing, in part at least, to other than spiritual causes. Thus at Dundee, May 3d, at the close of a Sabbath's services, he writes, "I was tired and had not much of the Lord's comfortable presence in my work, feeling that I needed rest for the body and a season of solemn retirement to meet with the Lord in personal communion." And again at Stirling, May 6th, "I did not come here with an expectation of doing much, on two grounds: 1st, that my bodily strength was much reduced; and 2d, my mind needed recreation to restore its elasticity and power." Yet even then, sometimes the bow drawn at a venture, albeit by an enfeebled hand, would send an arrow of divine conviction home to some favoured heart: — "I was going out," says he, May 13<sup>th</sup>, "on Monday night among the people, and dropping words here and there, I somehow looked up the stair when the people were coming down, and the eye fixing on a young man, I pointed to him and said aloud, 'Will you come to Christ?' On Tuesday this young man came to me in great distress, and told me that he was a smith belonging to Scone, who was living there when I was in Perth, and often attended our meetings. He said he often wanted to be awakened, and wondered how he was so little moved, when so many around him were. He remained in his undecided state until these words were so remarkably directed to him. They went like a knife to his heart, and seemed to bring him to the foot of the cross! — He struggled on in the endeavour to fulfill engagements already made, till a decided attack of illness compelled him to pause and "rest a while" under the hospitable roof of Collessie manse, where his kind friends Mr. and Mrs. M'Farlane welcomed and nursed him with an affectionate tenderness, which he never afterwards forgot. In a week or two, however, he was at his work again, preaching to large and deeply moved audiences in various places in Fifeshire, and meeting with unexpected encouragement and support even from some of those ministers who would have been thought least likely to favour his line of things. Dr. Barclay of Kettle, the oldest minister of the Church of Scotland, then in his ninety-first year, who had been always ranked amongst the Moderate party, shook him now Dr. M'Farlane, of the Free Church, Dalkeith, warmly by the hand as he came down from the pulpit, saying, "I thank you most heartily," and urged him to return. Dr. Ferrie of Kilconquhar, reputed of similar views, made him free alike of his house and of his church, entered with the deepest interest into all the solemn scenes which attended his preaching, and told him that "while he was with him he was to act exactly as if he were the minister of the parish." In the neighbouring parish of Anstruther, then under the pastoral charge of Dr. Feme's son, he had a like freedom of action, and a like open and effectual door of access to the consciences and hearts of the people, all the ministers of the place cordially uniting their congregations to form one deeply solemnized audience, in the midst of which "some of the most hardened sinners of the town were seen turning pale as death and shedding tears" under the preacher's appeals. Here he was in the midst of interesting scenes and reminiscences. "Mr. Feme's manse," he writes, "is the same that the celebrated James Melville, minister of East Anstruther after the Reformation, lived in, and I spent most of my time on Saturday as also on Sabbath in his study, a little room over the stair which juts out from the house on the outside. It is called 'The Watch Tower,' and is well suited to the name, as it has three small windows looking east, west, and south, from which one can see almost all the town and the whole frith." And again, two days afterwards, July 1<sup>st</sup>, "I spent the day chiefly alone, seeking personal holiness, the fundamental requisite in order to a successful ministry. I was in Burleigh Castle for an hour on the first floor, which is arched and entire, having climbed up by a broken part of the wall. Before me I had to the right Queen Mary's Island in Lochleven, and to the left the Lomonds, where the Covenanters hid themselves from their persecutors, and I stood amid the ruins of the castle of one of their leaders. The scene was solemn and affecting, and I trust the everlasting Emmanuel was with me. O that I had a martyr's heart, if not a martyr's death and a martyr's crown!" After rapid visits to Strathmiglo, Milnathort, Cleish, Kinross, and Dunfermline, he now proceeded westward by Stirling, Gargunnoch, and Kippen, to Kilsyth, and thence, after nearly a month of quiet pastoral work, which was to him almost like repose, northward to those scenes amongst the "Sabbath hills," where we have now to trace his footsteps. He had left Kilsyth on the 12<sup>th</sup> August, and after spending two days of incessant labour in Glasgow, proceeded northward via Lochlornond and Glen Falloch to Lawers, where he commenced his labours on Sabbath the 16<sup>th</sup>, the day

referred to by Mr. Macgregor, and thence advanced gradually eastward to Fortingall, Aberfeldy, Logierait, Moulin, Tenandry, Kirkmichael, as God in his providence opened the way, welcomed everywhere by a solemnly expectant and willing people. Our space will only admit of a very few characteristic extracts from a journal which we would gladly give entire: —

"Inveraman, Friday, August 14<sup>th</sup> — I travelled to Inverarnan, at the head of Lochlornond, where I slept. Nothing particular occurred by the way, except that I spoke to one or two of my fellow-travelers, wandering in quest of pleasure, and was generally in such a dead frame of soul that I had to remain below, and could not dare to open my mouth in the Lord's name. At Inverarnan I spent much of the afternoon in wandering about and admiring the grandeur of the Lord's works in this mouth of the Highlands of Perthshire. I noticed two things among the people as affording an index to the nature of the privileges they had enjoyed. Some seemed to have full knowledge of a kind that is only to be got by hearing the most spiritual and systematic of our Scottish preachers, and one woman I met on the road who seemed to me a perfect specimen of a groaning hypocrite (perhaps I am doing her injustice the Lord pardon me if I am); as soon as I began to speak to her, she wrung her hands and twisted her features as if trying to manufacture the symptoms of repentance, &c. This agreed well with what I know had been the Lord's dealings with this part of the country. They have had under some ministers the very best preaching, and some of the people retain not only the mould of the doctrine taught them, but the recollection of the deep and overpowering emotions which it produced in the hand of the Spirit upon many minds at a former period; particularly about twenty years ago, when Breadalbane, &c., was signally blessed of the Lord, under the preaching of Mr. M'Donald and other godly ministers. — Evening, I had a meeting in the toll-house adjoining the inn, with about twenty persons, chiefly men, who seemed solemnized. The innkeeper was not very anxious for this meeting when I spoke of it to him. He had much scriptural knowledge, and many of his expressions put me in mind of Mr. McDonald's phraseology, but his attachment to his trade seemed stronger than his theology. His family I was much interested in, and they upon the whole received me well, though I did not spare the publican's trade even when Mrs. M'Callum was present. I this forenoon travelled by the Dunkeld coach from Inverarnan to Lawers, up Glen Falloch, down Glen Dochart, and by Killin along the side of Loch Tay, a splendid route for a great part of the way. I did little on the way but sigh occasionally over the poor people whom we passed, and to wish them an interest in Emmanuel. I also gave away one or two little books to Highland boys in their kilt, who hung upon the coach from time to time. Dear boys, they looked surprised and pleased! At Killin I breakfasted along with two young gentlemen on a fishing excursion, who seemed to eye me suspiciously with my black clothes and white neck cloth, and took care to allow me to begin breakfast before them, I thought, in order that I might not ask a blessing aloud. When leaving them I said, 'I am a fisher too.' They looked grave, and one of them said, 'Oh! a fisher of men, I suppose.' 'Yes,' I said, 'but like other fishers we have often to complain of a bad fishing season.' They smiled, and so we parted. I arrived at Lawers at one P.M., and found Mr. Campbell a truly pious and very kind man. His partner equally so — Evening, I walked up the hill, and prayed for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. I had, however, to walk by faith and not by sense.

"Lawers, Tuesday, August 18<sup>th</sup> — We had a prayer-meeting at twelve, when the church was three-fourths filled. Mr. M'Kenzie began, and was followed by Mr. Campbell, both in Gaelic. This occupied nearly two hours, and when I went to the pulpit I found it my duty to dismiss the people without detaining them any longer, offering, however, to converse with any individuals who might desire it. From one hundred and fifty to two hundred waited about the door, and with these I engaged in prayer.

During the prayer the Spirit of God was mightily at work among us, so that almost all were deeply moved, and one man cried aloud. Mr. M'Kenzie said that he almost never felt in the same way as at this time. After prayer I addressed the people in a series of miscellaneous remarks tending to bring them immediately to surrender to Jesus. Many I saw in tears and among these a number of fine stout young Highlanders. We then prayed again, when the impression continued, and concluded by singing Psalm 31:5.

"In the evening I preached at six o'clock to a crowded and most solemn audience from Isaiah 45:22, and enjoyed some degree of assistance, I think. We concluded about nine o'clock, but just as the people were going away 'a woman that is a sinner' cried out vehemently, and we had to stay and pray again. Many of

the people were in tears, and among these some stout hardy men. Praise to the Lord! It is sweet to see how the people show their kindness when their hearts are opened to Jesus. During these few days there have been four fat lambs sent as presents, some to Mr. Campbell and some to me, with many other articles, such as butter, &c.

“Breadalbane, Fortingall, Friday, August list. — . . . The people were met at the tent, but the wind being high we adjourned to the church. I spoke with assistance at the outset from Psalm 72:16-18, and had considerable enlargement in prayer. The subject was conversion; text, Matthew 18:3, and in discoursing upon this I experienced more assistance in attempting to speak home to the very marrow of men's souls than at almost any other time (a few occasions excepted). Two wicked men could not stand it, as we supposed, and retired from their seats. Many others, and among these the stoutest men, were in tears. At the conclusion, when I had pronounced the blessing, I sat down in the pulpit in secret prayer as usual, but to my amazement I heard nobody moving; and waiting a full minute I rose and saw them all standing or sitting, with their eyes in many cases filled with tears, and all fixed on the pulpit. It was indeed a solemn moment, the most solemn Mr. M'Kenzie and Mr. Campbell said they had ever seen. I asked them what they were waiting for, and whether they were waiting for Christ. I prayed again, when there was the utmost solemnity, and then spoke a little from a Psalm which we sung, and then parted at four P.M. The people retired slowly and most of them in tears. We dined at the manse; when all were very serious, and came away immediately in order to hold a meeting in this parish at six o'clock. As we came along the road we overtook some men and women in deep distress, as their tears and sober countenances indicated, and their iron grasp when we shook hands with them. Many also came to their doors and recognized us with evident concern. At six we had a meeting for an hour and half in a house at the east end of this parish, when about a hundred were present. Praise to the Lamb!

“Breadatbane, Ardeonaig, Sabbath, August 23d. — This morning I crossed the loch at a quarter past eleven, along with hundreds of the people, to preach at the missionary station of Ardeonaig, under the charge of a most primitive Christian minister, Mr. M'Kenzie, a nephew of Lachlan M'Kenzie, late minister of Loch Carron, a very remarkable and eminently honoured minister of Jesus. The tent was placed on the hillside behind the manse, very nearly on the spot where it stood in the days of the former revival under Mr. M'Donald of Urquhart, and the minister who then was placed here, the eminently godly Mr. Findlater, whose memory is sweet in this neighbourhood. There was an immense assembly, collected from a circuit of from twelve to twenty miles, which could not amount to less than 3000. Mr. M'Kenzie began in Gaelic at eleven. I succeeded him in English at one, preaching from Ezekiel 33:11. I felt a great- uplifting of the heart in pride before God, and though I was enabled so far to get over this as to be able to speak boldly and strongly upon the 'evil ways' of men from which they are called to turn, yet I could make nothing of the display of Jehovah's love which is made in the words, 'As I live, I have no pleasure,' &c; and though I stopped and prayed with the people for assistance, yet I had to conclude abruptly, having nothing to say but what would profane and degrade in the eyes of the hearers these marvellous words. I came into the house at four o'clock, much cast down on account of the reigning vanity and pride, and self-seeking of my desperately wicked heart, and was driven to my knees, when I found the Lord very gracious, and had a sweet anticipation given me of the Lord's presence in the evening, when we were to meet in the church. Accordingly we met at six o'clock. I did not discourse on any set subject, but was led to speak upon the Psalm which we were to sing (Psalm 102:11-14), and in this I felt so much enlarged, that both people and preacher were tenderly moved with a view of Emmanuel's love. After we had prayed I made a few additional remarks of a miscellaneous kind, which seemed also to come home to the heart. When we were separating, some individuals began to cry aloud. I tried to quiet them, as I am always afraid that they are in danger of drawing the attention of many who are less affected away from considering the state of their own souls. However, they could not be composed, and when I went up to the gallery, where the most of them were, I found to my joy that they were persons from Fortingall, who had I suppose been impressed on Friday. We took them along with a number of other persons in the same state into the manse, and after prayer sent them away, though not in the best state for going to so great a distance. Praise! I saw a number of men in the church much affected, but they did not come so prominently forward, being better able to restrain their feelings. . . .

"Lowers, Tuesday, August 25<sup>th</sup> — We had a meeting here at one o'clock, of thanksgiving to Jehovah for his glorious work in the souls of the people here during the past days. It was conducted chiefly in Gaelic by Mr. Campbell and Mr. M'Kenzie. I spoke a few words at the end, from Psalm 149:1-4. The people seemed in a very solemn frame. As we came from the ferry-boat, we looked into the old church on the loch side, now used as a barn, and joined in giving the Lord praise for the marvellous displays of his saving grace made in it to many who are now in heaven! — Evening, we had a public meeting at six.

The evening was fine, and the audience could not be much under 700, I think. Many had come a distance of 8 miles. I was, as yesterday, brought under a deep sense of my inability to say anything to the Lord's glory previous to our assembling, but I was aided in my extremity in no less a degree. I read Mark 9:41-50, and preached from Luke 16:16. I believe I never spoke more faithfully in the pulpit than at this time from these three particulars: — He that presses into the kingdom of God — I. Sets his whole heart on Christ. II. He gives up all that would prevent his following the Lord fully. III. He fights his way to heaven through the opposition of his enemies. 1. The Devil. 2. The world. 3. The old man, &c. &c. There was very little visible emotion among the people, but the most affecting solemnity and most riveted attention. It was as if the veil that hides eternity had become transparent, and its momentous realities were seen appearing to the awe-struck eyes of sinners. We parted at a quarter-past nine, after pressing on the people to retire directly home to the throne of grace. I am told to-day (Wednesday) by Mr. Campbell that for a quarter of a mile from the church every covered retreat was occupied by awakened souls pouring out the heart to God. He seems to think, from all that he saw and has heard to-day that last night was the most solemn season that we have had at this time. Praise, praise! O humble me, good Shepherd, and be thou exalted over all! Amen.

...

"Lowers, &c., Saturday, August 29<sup>th</sup> — I left my dear and kind friends at half-past twelve by the coach, after visiting a young man on his sick-bed, a son of the Baptist minister. Many of the people recognized me as we went along. Mrs. M'N or Mary M'G, who was on the road, burst into tears and threw herself down upon the dyke. We had a delightful drive. At Kenmore a gentleman in clerical dress, who had been on the front of the coach, addressed me and said, You have very affectionate hearers; I am glad to see it. I am a minister of the Church of England, and have under my care fifteen thousand souls in the heart of London/ &c. Another English gentleman who was standing at the inn said to me, that is one of the excellent of the earth, his name is Mr. W. He was a missionary, but had to come home from bad health, and is now travelling from the same cause.' He had a livery servant with him. He left us at Aberfeldy, and I went down and spoke to him while the horses were changing. He seemed a sweet, humble Christian man. 'Oh!' he said, 'that is a heavenly scene, if we had only a heaven within; at least I want that/ &c. We parted with Christian salutations. The Lord's people are indeed one in him, though separated in the world. . . .

Wednesday, September 9<sup>th</sup> — I rode up in the forenoon to B., the property of Mr. S, Perth, where he and his family at present are; with the view of preaching at Tenandry church, near which they are. The scene is the most sublime that I have almost ever seen, including the pass of Killiecrankie, &c. &c; but I have no time, even had I the power, to describe the grandeur of the Lord's works in nature. I felt the temptation to be unfaithful to the 'rich man' with whom I was called to live, and through this compliance unfaithful also to the poorer classes around. If we are unfaithful to the rich and great all our faithfulness to others must be more or less hypocritical. This I felt, and being made to cry to the Lord for help, I got so completely over it that when preaching in the evening at Tenandry, with the S.'s, Mrs. H. of S., the builder of the church, &c, present, I spoke boldly and openly of many things that the rich alone could understand, and which they would find it hard to bear unless they would unreservedly submit to Christ and his cross. We met at five o'clock; I spoke from Hebrews 4:7. At first I had assistance enough to expound, but not enough to reach the conscience with keen exhortation and reproof. However, after praying, I got this for a considerable time, and the people were so much affected that all were riveted in their looks, and some were weeping audibly. The plan followed was this: — I considered the meaning of, 1st. Hearing God's voice. 2d. Hardening the heart. 3d. The arguments against this sin. (a) Our losing the promised rest; (b) Our having been long called already — 'after so long a time;' (e) Our being called 'to-day.' After I had prayed I sought to improve these truths by selecting a few passages of God's word, such as 'Ye must be born again,' &c.; 'Come now and let us reason together;' and pressed the people by the arguments of the text to hear and

obey these immediately as the voice of God. It was this part that seemed to come chiefly home. We had an after-meeting with the anxious, who seemed to be numerous.' . . . ("This service," says one who was present, "lasted from five o'clock till nine, beginning early for the convenience of those who had long distances to walk home, and continued late because the hearers hung upon the preacher's words until the sun had set and the full moon had arisen. It was a memorable night in the history of many.")

"Logierait, Sabbath, September 13<sup>th</sup> — The morning was fine, and an immense congregation assembled at twelve o'clock in the churchyard, with whom I continued uninterruptedly until five P.M., singing, praying, and preaching the word of life. The subject was 2 Corinthians 5:19-6:2. The people were very solemnly affected, indeed more visibly so than on any previous Sabbath that I have been in the Highlands; at one time many were crying aloud in agony, and tears were flowing plentifully throughout the audience. One of the addresses that seemed most signally blessed originated in a somewhat remarkable way. As I was about to engage in prayer at the middle of the service, I noticed two young gentlemen looking down upon the audience from a little eminence a few hundred yards distant from us; and feeling a strong desire to say something that might arrest them in their carelessness at so awfully solemn a time, I called on the people of God to join me in praying for them, and spoke so loud that they could easily hear me. When I was doing this a third young man ascended to my view, and joined his companions. The three put me in mind of the three young men who were so remarkably converted at the Kirk of Shotts, when going to Edinburgh to be present at some scenes of public amusement. I told this anecdote, enlarging upon many things which it suggested with much liberty, and the impression seemed to be deeply affecting. The young men in my view, as soon as they heard me speaking of them, and had the eyes of the congregation turned upon them, withdrew from their position and came near; concealing themselves behind the church, where they no doubt heard what was said. The rich people, with very few exceptions, remained to the end; and some of them I thought seemed solemnly affected, at least for the time. Some of the most pointed appeals were addressed specially to them. Mr. B. seemed satisfied, and gave me encouragement to come to him again. Both he and Mr. C., of Moulin expressed themselves as agreeably disappointed, having expected to hear something very exciting, and not solid and sober.

"Monday, September 14<sup>th</sup> — This day I spent chiefly alone, in letter-writing, &c, having no meeting in the evening. Oh! how sweet and profitable to my soul I find a day on which I have no public duty! Would that I had more such, if it were the Lord's holy will! In ordinary cases they would be absolutely indispensable, but when the Lord moves in so mighty and sovereign a manner as he is doing now, the mountains become a plain.

"Wednesday, September 16<sup>th</sup> — . . . During the time of our meeting I noticed a farmer of the name of M'G. of H of Grandtully, come in and stand listening with the most riveted attention to what was said. He was a rough-looking man, and one whom I noticed in this character the first night that I was at Grandtully, saying to myself, ' How wonderful it would be to see that man brought under conviction of sin. From his appearance at Logierait on Sabbath, and now at this meeting, I entertained a hope that this might be the case. When I came out and met him, my hope was agreeably confirmed. Having to go from home on business, and being anxious to be at our meeting at Grandtully in the evening, he had set out very early, and was now returning in the utmost haste. When he heard that I was at Balnaguard he sent home his horse that he might be present and accompany me home. We accordingly had a good deal of solemn converse on the way. He seemed under deep concern, and pressed me to go in, though my time was nearly gone, and pray with them. I did so, and hardly had I entered when the room was filled with old and young, collected from the harvest-field. Without saying a word we joined in prayer, and so remarkably was the presence of God granted that all were in tears, and some cried aloud. After prayer I left this scene, which was certainly one that displayed the finger of God as much as any one in which I ever was, and walked home in company with R. D., a stepson of M'G.'s, and the boy who cried out in the church at Grandtully on the first night that I was there. He seems to continue under deep concern, and has got some comfort since that time. He went, dear boy, with me to carry my bag. When we had got to a considerable distance, a number of those who had been affected in the house came running across the fields to meet us again, weeping bitterly; but I did not encourage this, and sent them to secret prayer. I arrived at Grandtully by

five o'clock, and hardly conscious of fatigue. 'The Lord will give strength to his people,' 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be!'"

Here we must reluctantly break off this remarkable and deeply interesting itinerarium. Remarkable and interesting I cannot doubt that it will be regarded by every Christian mind, however differently men may judge in regard to some of the points which it naturally raises for consideration. It brings indeed into the strongest relief at once that in him which in the view of all was most admirable, and that which was most peculiar, and, in the view of some, opens to question. In particular the predominantly, sometimes almost exclusively subjective character of his ministry stands out in the broadest light. He spoke, apparently could speak, only what he felt, and that only while he felt it, and so far as he felt it. He must utter the very present experience and conviction of his soul, or be silent altogether. Out of the abundance of the heart alone could his mouth speak. The declaration of a mere intellectual belief, or remembered conviction of the past, seemed to him a mockery, and almost a falsehood. His preaching was thus in the strictest sense a *cardiphonia* — the voice of an instrument that could sound only as the breath of the eternal Spirit of God swept over it. Truths merely known, believed, arranged in logical sequence in the mind or in written discourse, was to him no message from God to human souls; but only truth "quick and powerful," and glowing in living fire within the heart. Most significant in this point of view are such expressions as these found in his journal: "I could not speak at that time for the whole world." He said afterwards to a friend (referring to an occasion at Moulin), "that the adversary of souls had been at his right hand the whole time; and that each statement which he sought to make from the Word of God seemed to be contradicted by a voice within as soon as made." At another time he felt as if the people might see through his very eyes the hypocrisy and falsehood of his heart, while he uttered mechanically the sound of words, the life and power of which he did not feel. I offer no opinion now in regard to the profound question here involved: whether the principle on which he acted was in itself just; or whether, if just for him, the course of action to which it led were a fit precedent and example for other men. The question is not even properly raised in this form, for his whole ministry during those remarkable years was so plainly exceptional that no warrantable inference can be drawn from his case to that of others. His function and vocation was rather that of the old prophets uttering from time to time the message and the "burden" given to them under the immediate impulse of the Spirit who gave it, than that of the priests whose lips ought at all times to keep knowledge, and to impart its sacred lessons to others even when for the time they enjoy not the full sweetness of it themselves. Even those who may think that the principle on which he acted was carried out by him to too extreme a point will scarcely deny the general truth, that however it may be with the other functions of the pastoral office — as of instruction, admonition, counsel, persuasion, consolation — for the special work of awakening souls an awakened and immediate sense of eternal realities is of all things most essential. It may be possible enough to explain a doctrine or enforce a duty without anything more than a general and habitual conviction of the truth involved, yet surely if we would make others weep we must weep ourselves. At least if in this matter he erred, he erred on a safer side than that of those who would divorce altogether the message of the preacher from the experience of the man, and who can discourse of the deepest and most sacred exercises of the soul with an equally free and fluent speech, with a cold and with a burning heart. Better a single word spoken in the spirit, than a thousand words of mere sounding breath; better to utter in a few broken sentences a real message from God, than to speak with the tongue of men and of angels a heartless, soulless message of our own.

After all it can scarcely be doubted that the extreme fluctuation of feeling and of consequent freedom of utterance manifested in these journals was in great measure owing to that exhaustion of the vital powers, and that lack of opportunity for studious meditation which the incessant labours of this period entailed; and that in more favourable circumstances his spiritual experiences might have been more equable, and his power in the pulpit more constant. It would appear from expressions which occur here and there in the journals that this was occasionally at least his own impression, and there is much in their general tenor which goes strongly to confirm that view. It is observable how often his times of deepest depression immediately succeeded his times of highest elevation, as though the one were at least in large measure the reaction of the other. The temporary quiescence of the feelings, equally with the corresponding languor of the bodily frame, was but the inevitable and even salutary result of the sudden unbending of the bow

which had been too long and too tightly bent; and it was his trial rather than his error that he could, during these three remarkable years, so seldom obtain that needful restorative repose. It was in circumstances such as his that the gracious Master, who knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust, said to his disciples, when they were worn out with the greatness of their labours and with those manifold distractions which left them no leisure even to eat, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest awhile." There was no such interval of retreat permitted to him now; but the enjoyment of that precious boon was reserved for another and not distant day.

## CHAPTER IX

1841 — 1844

## NEWCASTLE, EDINBURGH, DUBLIN

During the next three years Mr. Burns was incessantly engaged in evangelistic work, partly in places which he had already visited, and partly in new fields. Of the latter the most conspicuous were Newcastle, Edinburgh, and Dublin, and to a brief notice of his labours there I propose to devote the present chapter. They were, of course, in most respects essentially similar to those which we have already described in Dundee and Aberdeen, but still possessed some features sufficiently distinct to deserve a separate, though less detailed record. At Newcastle, the first aspect of the field and his first trial of the work were not encouraging. I know not if the "sins and sorrows of the great city" be really greater there than in other communities of similar extent and character with which he had been before acquainted, but it seemed to him, at least, as if it were so. The giant forms of evil with which he had everywhere to contend, stood forth before the eye in more naked and unblushing prominence, as though iniquity were, in truth, too strong to feel ashamed or hide its face. He found himself in the presence of a power which, alike in its extent and terrible energy, startled and shocked him, and threw him back as scarce ever before on the power that is infinite and divine. "The people of God," he writes a few days after his arrival, "are rallying in their places, and we have them of every name on our side. Ah! but the Lord is with me as a mighty, terrible one. This is enough." "I ask it as a favour," he writes to his endeared friend Mr. Milne, "and plead for it, that you will lay before your people the case of Newcastle, an iron walled citadel of Satan. Almighty power and that alone, can make a breach and plant the banner of salvation in the Lamb on its proud ramparts. They must cry, they must wrestle; for the devil is in the field, and the day will be hot." While, too, "the enemy thus came in like a flood," it seemed to him as if the forces on the other side were comparatively few and feeble. "The Scotch Church," says he, "is low here; the audiences were not large. During the week I preached every night but Tuesday and Saturday, but chiefly to the church-going few, including some Christians, with a view to stir them up to come nearer to God. . . . Went out at meal hour and began to invite sinners. Very apathetic. The sleep of death is on the city."

The spell of apathy, however, was soon, at least partially, broken. The announcement of a Sabbath pleasure trip of a more than usually offensive kind having met his eye, his spirit was stirred within him, and he denounced it in a terrible placard, which he signed with his own name and posted up in every street and open place in Newcastle. It fell like a bomb-shell in the midst of the community, startled the ears alike of friends and foes, and drew general attention to the preacher and his message. A solemn tract on the sins of the city and the impending judgments of God was at the same time prepared and sown broadcast among the people. The newspapers too, both local and metropolitan, took up the matter, bitterly denounced his proceedings, and thus still more loudly rang the bell of alarm in the ears of a community from whom he only desired a hearing, even though they should strike while they heard him. "Newspapers and Socialistic placards," wrote his friend Mr. Bonar of Kelso, "have been making Edinburgh, and I suppose other places, ring with your doings in Newcastle." But he remained calm amid the storm, unmoved alike by the rage of enemies and by the doubts and fears of friends, so only the cause of Christ were helped, and not hindered. "The people in Scotland," said he, "are thinking that the opposition must be awful here. But it is like bomb-shells thrown over our heads and bursting at a distance. They know more of it in London than I do in Newcastle. 'Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.'"

Meanwhile, according to his wont, he soon exchanged the empty churches for the open and crowded streets — preaching to varying audiences and with varying tokens of success on the quay, at the 'Spital

Square, in the Corn and Cloth Markets, in the open space beside the castle, sometimes in continuous and impressive discourse, sometimes in a running fire against Secularist or Romish objectors who started up as opponents from amongst the crowd; sometimes alone, and sometimes dividing the ground with the political lecturer or the puppet showman, who spread forth their rival wares at a few paces' distance. He had some encouragement, but no very marked or decisive evidence of blessing. He speaks from time to time of "solemn attention;" "very great attention and eagerness;" "a very large and deeply solemn audience;" "a large audience who stood riveted to the end;" of a "service of three hours' duration, in the castle-yard where Whitfield preached of old;" "and would have remained almost till midnight;" "a considerable audience who continued immovable under darkness and rain;" "the people so much impressed that the stars were out in the sky before we separated;" "some of the old sailors on the quay weeping, and pressing their money on those who gave away the tracts at the end;" yet there were few or none who sought him out in private for spiritual counsel and instruction. Perhaps this might in part arise from the fact that his street audiences here consisted almost exclusively of men — the softer and more impressible sex having, as he suggests, either less curiosity, or more fear of noisy crowds, than in the cities of the north. Now and then, too, after all his labours were over, he would go forth into the dark streets, with a bundle of his "plain sentences" under his arm, that he might see the city in its midnight dress, look down into the depths of that abyss of ruin which for the love of God and man he so vehemently longed to sound, and it may be hold out the torch of life eternal to some poor wanderer whom he might never hope to meet at any other place or time. Strange scenes would sometimes on these occasions meet his eyes and ears: "I went out after coming into my room and with a bundle of the plain sentences' paraded some of the chief streets. In this I met with some strange incidents. I offered near the mouth of the Arcade a copy to a gentleman half-intoxicated. He swore fearfully and said, 'Oh, what a cursed country this is! I might go through every town on the

Continent, and not meet with such another rascal as you infesting me. Rome is infinitely better than this"&c. On another occasion he writes: "After the meeting I spent a half-hour on the street with tracts, and met with awful proofs of the enormous wickedness of the people, also with many whose language amid their sins seemed almost to be, Oh! that I were saved, oh! that you could do me any good."

One is reminded of the heathen in Tertullian's days, of whom he tells us that even their oaths and ejaculated utterances of grief and fear bore witness to their deep consciousness of God and of a higher world, and showed that the "testimony of the soul" was by its very nature on the side of Christ. Sometimes conscience would still more distinctly speak and take part with the reprover against the sinner: "I spoke to three young gentlemen intoxicated; they mocked; but one of them, having separated from the rest, went along with me a short way. He then left me and whistled for his companions, but they had deserted him; and conscience-stricken he called after me, and when I went back asked where I was from, my name and residence, and promised to call on Friday at five p.m., saying with some feeling, 'he had much need of a lecture.'"

Still there was no deep and general impression, and even the partial interest that had been excited began after a season gradually to die down towards the former state of apathy. The congregations in church were small, the audiences in the open air less numerous and less solemn. The sensation created by the Sabbath placards was passing away and no deeper and mightier influence apparently had come to supply its place. Even some of his friends, who had most sanguinely hoped for a rich and wide-spread blessing, began to lose heart. "I had hoped at one time," said one of the most ardent of these, "but now I confess it is gone. Every ear seems closed." He himself too almost despaired. Receiving a letter from Mr. Parker, in which he expresses his astonishment that the people could bear his words, he writes in his journal bitterly, "Alas! the people can bear anything here as yet. The body seems so dead, that though you plunge the knife to the heart there is no pain." But it was only the lowest ebb, before the turning of the tide, and before another day had passed it was in full and buoyant flow. God had only made him utterly to despair of self that he might the more simply and wholly triumph in Christ. A single passage must here be given, as affording a vivid picture of the nature of the hot battle which he had expected and which had come at last, and of the spirit in which he fought it:

“Thursday, September 23<sup>rd</sup> — During the day I was very weak in body, and was tempted to think of neglecting an opportunity of doing good at the cattle-show, which is held here this day. But the passage turned up, 'If thou say, Behold, I knew it not &c, and I was compelled to go. I found that there was no opportunity for preaching, as the show was within a park, and the people outside were staying but a few minutes. Alas! perhaps it may be found in the day of God that there was opportunity. Certainly the showmen found an opportunity of attracting many. However, I only gave away tracts, spoke to the people here and there, and intimated that I would preach in the Cloth-market in the evening, which is at the end of the Corn-market, the place where, at three P.M., about a thousand were to dine together. The tracts were received by high and low. . . . After dinner I felt my strength of body renewed, and had hope of something being clone of God in the evening. A little after six we went to the scene of action, and found a great crowd around the place, many of them trying to see in through the windows, and multitudes waiting for the music at intervals. I thought of heaven lighted with the brightness of a thousand suns, and of poor lost souls longing to be in when it is too late, and forced to hear from afar the joyful praises of the redeemed, loud as the noise of many waters. We had no sooner begun than an immense crowd gathered round. Some of the enemies were enraged and urged the police to interfere, crying, 'Down with him, down with him.' The policeman told me that the people were disturbed by us within, but this was so absurd that he did not insist on it; and as he could not find us guilty of a breach of the peace, he soon went away. But although the enemy could not oppose us by legal force, they did not cease to show their deadly hatred of what was said and done. Once a stone was thrown, again a quantity of manure, which bespattered my clothes. Afterwards, in the time of prayer, when we were prevailing against them without hand, they raised a burst of horrid laughter, and pushed the crowd at the side on me with the view of overthrowing the pulpit. At this time I had to pause in the prayer, and when I began to tell them that they could do nothing without the Lord's permission, and that all they did would promote his cause, &c, they were quieted for a time; and I was led out to speak with greater power, perhaps, than ever before in Newcastle, putting the sword into the very heart and bowels of the town's iniquities. At this time, and ever after it until ten o'clock, when we parted, there was the greatest solemnity, and a deep impression; and though I was frequently interrupted with questions, they all tended to bring out in a marvellous way the truth of God, so that they who put them were silenced and the people rejoiced. During the first hour and half we were obliged to contend, at intervals, with a tumult of people all around the music in the Corn-market, and the movements of a travelling-show taking up its encampment close to us. Even amid those trials, although increased by the contradiction of sinners, I was enabled not to waver nor faint; afterward, however, the meeting in the market broke up, the show people were quiet, the streets were nearly empty, and we worshipped the Lord amid solemn silence for another hour and half. At this time the singing was truly sublime; and the whole scene, when contrasted with what it had lately been, was fitted to deepen the impression of the word in the hand of the Spirit. I did not speak on any text, but used the various circumstances of the feast so near as to set off by way of comparison and contrast the feast of fat things on Mount Zion. I did not proceed regularly, but from time to time noticed such topics as these: — That feast is for the body, this is for the soul; that is one of which you easily take too much, in this you cannot exceed; that is soon over, this will last eternally; that would tire and nauseate if often repeated, this becomes sweeter every day; that is only open to those who can pay for a place, this is provided freely for the poor: it is made free not because it is of little value, but because it is so costly that no money can buy it, and in order that it may be a feast for all; that is made on bullocks and fatlings, but this, oh! wonder of wonders, is made on the body and blood of God's own Son; the greatest sinners are welcome to it now, and the greater they have been they will sit nearer the head of the table as honoured guests, in order that the more the grace and mercy of Jehovah may be displayed to view! These and similar points gave ground from time to time for varied information to the mind, and appeals to the conscience which seemed to arrest many; and the effect of this was aided by the many truths which were from time to time drawn out by the questions and objections of enemies. One man cried there was no hell, and demanded a definition of it. He was answered, 'If thy right hand offend thee' &c, and remained silent. Another said there were no devils, and this was the occasion of tearing away the veil from the iniquities of the town, and exposing their power over men in its deformity and dreadfulness. Many in different ways tried to vex us, but this explained the text, ' Consider him who

endured, &c, and gave us ground for praise that we had not yet resisted unto blood. Nay, one shameless man, whose question the people would hardly bear, asked me, 'How are you supported V a matter of general wonder. I answered him that I never needed to ask a penny from any one, but that even since I came here £\o had been sent to me unasked, and partly without a name they seemed confounded. (It may be right to state here once for all, that from the time of his leaving Dundee until his departure for China, he relied wholly on such support as was spontaneously sent to him by those who desired to further his special work. The result was that while his own immediate wants were amply supplied, he seldom lacked sufficient also to contribute liberally in behalf of Christ's cause and Christ's poor. The above is given as a specimen of such entries in regard to this matter as occur from time to time in his journal. The following is the first of these, of date, Perth, January, 1840: "Received £1 from a friend for personal expenses, making now in all, given me since I ceased from my engagement at Dundee, £53. So wonderfully is the Lord providing for all my wants! Praise! Oh Lord! deliver me from covetousness, and enable me with overflowing gratitude and joy to give all that I don't require to promote the extension of thy blessed kingdom in this poor ruined world. Amen,")

At ten o'clock we asked the parting blessing and separated — indeed only for a moment, for when I got to the lamp I took out my Bible to look at a verse, and the whole crowd gathered round and stood with breathless attention while I read what God had sent me, 'None of these things move me. &c, and told them some things about my own conversion. We then parted, and it would not have been so soon, had not the policeman desired it.

"Though I spoke nearly four hours amid such difficulties in the open air I was not fatigued, and am well to-day. Oh! that I were only well in soul, and fit to renew the combat. Come, Lord Jesus! come quickly! Amen! Amen! Glory to Jehovah!

"P.S. — When I came into my room and looked at the Bible which was lying open, my eye rested on Psalm 111:4- 5. Oh! how glorious and how seasonable it was! 'He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered, the Lord is gracious, and full of compassion. He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant.' Halleluiah!"

After visiting several other places in the north of England, and among others Sunderland, where he preached "to a dense and hungry audience, who seemed to open the mouth wide for the blessing," he returned to Scotland, in order to take the temporary charge of the congregation of St. Luke's, Edinburgh, in the absence of his valued friend Mr. Moody Stuart. Of his labours here I am happy to be able to present the following graphic account from the pen of a friend to whom I have been already indebted, and who then watched his footsteps with deep and sympathetic interest: —

In the winter of 1841-2 Mr. Burns supplied the pulpit of St. Luke's, Edinburgh. Mr. Moody Stuart, owing to an affection of the voice, had been advised to spend the winter in Madeira, and Mr. Burns was requested to take his place. He began his work in Edinburgh on the 14th November, preaching in the forenoon from 2 Corinthians 4:1-6; and Dr. Bruce of St. Andrew's Church (of whom he always spoke with filial affection) in the afternoon.

"The work of this winter forms a unique chapter in his life. A special interest attaches to it. He had to become both pastor and evangelist. True to the motto of his family, 'Ever ready,' he soon showed that he could be both. He at once began a course of lectures on the Sabbath forenoon upon the Epistle to the Romans, and another course at the Thursday prayer-meeting upon the Epistle of James. On Monday evening he taught two classes: a female class for expounding the miracles, and a young men's class at a later hour, where he took up the parables of Christ. Every Saturday afternoon he conducted a class for children. Two courses of lectures — three classes — sermons upon the Sabbath afternoon suggested by the special circumstances of the times or of the congregation: here was sufficient work for an ordinary man. But he was no ordinary man. He was always longing to be on full work again. The college session had begun. He taught a private Greek class in his lodgings. (During the winter of 1844 he also taught a Hebrew class in the New College, for the benefit of the pupils of his revered friend, Dr. Duncan.) The College Missionary Association met every Saturday morning for prayer and the reading of essays upon topics

connected with foreign missions. He attended these meetings, and by the blessing of God infused his own fire into the hearts of many of the students. At the concluding general meeting of the Association, when about two hundred students were present, he moved one of the resolutions, and it was the universal impression that there never had been such a meeting in the college before.

“A large number of students attended his ministry — not only divinity students, but gownsmen of all stages with their pale eager faces. Memory recalls such names as Alexander James Campbell, John Donaldson, John Craven, Alexander Thain, Frederick Sandeman, Robert Ireland, Robert Taylor, Duncan Maclaren, M. Macgregor, Walter Davidson, Donald Sutherland, Patrick Neill, William Balfour, Neil Macleod, A. Luke, Thomas Gardiner, Thomas Just, &c. He invited them to his lodgings; he sympathized with their difficulties; he guided those who were groping in the dark and seeking the way to Zion. Those who had the rare privilege of meeting him in private, and seeing his close walk with God, were at no loss to understand the power which attended his public ministrations.

“With him the winning of souls was a passion; calm, but intense, consuming. As Foster has said of John Howard, it was the calmness of an intensity kept uniform by the nature of the human mind forbidding it to be more, and by the character of the man forbidding it to be less.’ He cast his net into all waters. He wished to get access to the soldiers in the castle. He visited the barracks, distributed tracts, and invited them to his open-air services in the High Street. He frequently visited the Shelter, the jail, the bride well, the Magdalene Asylum, the Orphan Hospital, the Dean Bank Institution, &c, and preached to the inmates. Wherever the lost or neglected were to be found he was there; like Him who yearned over a world plunged in sin, telling them of rest for the weary and hope for the guilty. From the very refuse of society he gathered jewels for Emmanuel’s crown. Very touching to see him, as I have done, giving tracts and speaking tender words to the fallen. To him they were lost pieces of silver; and the thought that they might even yet have Christ for their brother, and heaven for their home, filled him with a tenderness which he had no name for.

“In the midst of his abundant labours in Edinburgh, the Lord opened a wide door for him in Leith. From January to March he preached on Wednesday and frequently on Sabbath evening in North Leith, South Leith, and the Mariners’ Church, to densely crowded and (to use a favourite word of his own) ‘hungry’ audiences. The weather was severe — keen frost and snow — but the interest swelled and spread until the attendance even on the Wednesday evening was overflowing, and so deep was the impression that the people could not go away after the blessing. An after-service for prayer and directing anxious inquirers had to be held; and such was their distress that they had to be removed to the vestry, where he sought to give them the oil of joy for mourning.’ Mr. M’Cheyne took part in one of these services, and spoke and prayed with the anxious. It seemed as if the ever-memorable scenes of Kilsyth, Dundee, and Perth were to be repeated in Leith. So wide-spread was the impression, that a gay lady in Leith said the people were all going mad. In his young communicants’ class he soon gathered in abundant fruits of his labours in Leith — sheaves of joy. To use his own words, ‘The Lord gave him spring, summer, and harvest that winter in Leith.’ About the middle of March, in consequence of the resolution of the directors of the Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway to run trains upon the Sabbath, I bade the people of Leith farewell for a season, in order that he might give his whole heart to the work in Edinburgh.’

“One memorable incident which belongs to his work in Leith I must not omit. He wished to get access to the sailors. One Sabbath afternoon Dr. Gordon agreed to take his place in St. Luke’s, and he ran down to preach on the quay at Leith, taking two or three of us with him to distribute tracts and invite the sailors. It was on the 2d January, 1842. He stood half-way between the upper and lower bridges. I was never more struck with his tact and fertility of resource. A large crowd assembled — a sea of bronzed faces. After reading his text — Ecclesiastes 8:11: ‘Because sentence against an evil work,’ &c. — it began to rain heavily. He paused, and prayed that God would restrain the clouds that the people might hear the word. The rain continued, however, and we adjourned to a large shed at the head of the quay. He resumed, and the rain ceased. I shall never forget the look of wonder with which that crowd gazed on the clear sky. They plainly felt that there is something deeper in prayer than is dreamed of in human philosophy. The preacher spoke as if he had spent his life before the mast: his skilful use of sea-phrases gave rare zest to his discourse; and, rising to a climax, he cried, ‘Sailors! the breakers are ahead! the storm is rising! you are

running upon a lee-shore! in a few moments the ship (the world) will strike and go down! The life-boat is Christ! It is lying alongside — it is ready to move off! Come away, sailors, come away, or it will be too late!

"It was on Sabbath the 13th of March that the first Sabbath train was run between Edinburgh and Glasgow. Mr. Burns' spirit was stirred to its depths in connection with this question. His zeal for God and his love for his country were 'as a burning fire shut up in his bones.' He regarded the Sabbath as the palladium of Scottish Christianity. In name of the session of St. Luke's he wrote a remonstrance to the shareholders, setting forth the 'fearful iniquity' of trampling upon the sacred day, and the 'awful judgments' which it must inevitably bring down upon the land. He attended the two great meetings held in the Hopetoun Rooms and in the West Church, by the friends of the Sabbath, to oppose the opening of the railway; and spoke with great thankfulness of the powerful speeches of Drs. Cunningham, Candlish, and C. J. Brown, and Messrs. D. T. K. Drummond and Makgill Crichton, in favour of the entire sanctification of the Lord's-day. He preached for several Sabbaths upon the subject, and discussed it in all its aspects; he prayed with even more than his wonted fervour, that He who saith to the sea, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed,' would arrest the advancing tide of Sabbath desecration; and he intimated that he would preach at the railway-station every Sabbath at seven in the morning and at six in the evening — the hours at which the trains were advertised to start.

"True to his word, he was at the railway-station at seven o'clock on the following Sabbath morning. He spoke of it as 'a momentous day in the history of Scotland.' A great crowd assembled, and joined with deep solemnity in the service. It was after nine before they dispersed, some of them in tears. He conducted the ordinary services in St. Luke's, at eleven and two, with unusual tenderness and power, as if the morning service had only put a keener edge upon his spirit; and was at the railway-station again at six, surrounded by a dense concourse of several thousands. The station was then at the Haymarket, in the out-skirts of Edinburgh; and as the bruit spread, the people poured out to hear this extraordinary man, as they once did to hear the Baptist in the wilderness. Like a soldier mounting the breach, or leading a forlorn hope, he stood upon a large stone, and sang the Psalm: —

'Horror took hold on me, because men thy law forsake,' &c, and preached one of his most characteristic sermons to a deeply impressed audience. He continued till nine o'clock in the evening, having been about nine hours engaged altogether. For the next three months his usual Sabbath work was four services — two at the railway-station and two in St. Luke's. He was often engaged for eight or nine hours — he often had to raise his voice so as to be heard by thousands; and yet he used to say that he was as fresh on Monday as on Saturday. He was 'a wonder to many.' Like Ezekiel, he was set for a sign. His brethren in Edinburgh were full of joy at his lion-like courage and noble testimony; and only wished that they had bodily strength to stand by his side. As he himself said, Even if no good was done to souls by these services, the lifting up of a bold testimony for the Lord's-day in the hearing of thousands, and in the face of the world, was a work worth living and dying for.

"So grave did he consider the crisis to be that he resolved to hold meetings for prayer every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at noon — to preach in the open-air at other points — and to turn his female class into an evangelistic service in the church. It is not easy even to recount his labours from this date. And instead of being worried or hackneyed, his soul, like Gideon's fleece, was drenched with dew, and his preaching was never marked by greater depth, variety, and freshness. It was the culminating point of his work in Edinburgh. The church was overflowing. The word was sharper than a two-edged sword. There was a Bethel-like fear over the congregation. Every head was bowed. It was felt that 'the living God was in the place. Some who had entertained prejudices against the preacher were ashamed when they found that solidity and impressiveness were the leading characteristics of his teaching. At the spring communion two hundred joined from other congregations. In his young communicants' classes he met continually with deeply interesting cases of persons recently awakened, and heard of others. At the close of a Monday prayer-meeting some remained behind, who seemed to be under 'a divine convincing work; 'and as they went away, one of the elders said with sparkling eyes,' That's the Lord's work beginning. And so it was. The day alone will declare the fruits of that winter's work. If the Spirit did not come down as a rushing mighty wind, yet the promise was fulfilled in abundant measure, 'I will be as the dew unto Israel. What the old chronicler said of the effects of

Richard Cameron's preaching, might be said of Mr. Burns' preaching on not a few of those Sabbaths in St. Luke's: 'The people fell into a state of calm weeping.'

"I have said nothing of his Sabbath-evening services in the Queen's Park, or of the solemn meetings he addressed at the end of the old Tolbooth Church in the High Street, where there were manifest tokens of the divine presence, and where beyond doubt fruit was gathered unto life eternal. I have said nothing of his quick eye in seizing opportunities of. Dropping a word in season, in the house and in the street, on coach or track-boat, to any one whom the thousand eddies and swirls of daily life threw in his way. I have said nothing of four evangelistic tours which he made in the midst of his Edinburgh work — one in April, 1842, to Milnathort, Bridge of Earn, Perth, Burrelton, Collace, Abernyte, Dundee; another in June, to Dundee, Kilspindie, Anstruther, Logie, Cupar-Fife, and Falkland; and two in August and September to the Highlands of Perthshire. One recalls it with amazement. Here was a man who crowded the work of years into months— of months into weeks — of weeks into days. The work of many a lifetime was compressed into this single winter in Edinburgh. He often spoke as if he had a presentiment that his exhausting labours would soon wear out the earthly tabernacle, and he hastened to do the work of Him that sent him.

"My space is done, else I could give fragments of his 'Meditations' which I still vividly remember — morsels of living bread which the Master had blessed and broken. In digging in the field of the Word he threw up now and again great nuggets, which formed part of one's spiritual wealth ever after. A mind of keen insight and power — he was given to study subjects rather than texts, so that if he studied one text he sometimes preached from another — and always longing to resume those habits of close and consecutive study which he pursued until he was carried away by the tide. He was a great puzzle to students — his work, his circumstances, and his methods were so exceptional; but those who were so minded could learn from him the greatest lesson of all for the work of the ministry — the omnipotence faith and prayer.

"For reasons which I suppress, I had the privilege of seeing him often in private — generally twice a week. Little notes, too, he used to send me; and although I have lost them, their contents are written 'as if in star-fire' on my heart. Here is one. He had asked me to breakfast, but was unexpectedly called from home. He left a note expressing his regret, and adding, 'We are often disappointed in our meetings with man, but never in our meetings with God at a throne of grace, where we are ever welcome in the blood of Jesus. In another, written from Dublin, he says — 'May the Lord carry on his own great work within and around us, and may we be enabled to glorify him in life and in death! 'The very last words, I think, I ever heard from him — standing at his father's door one night in 1854, under cold November skies — were, 'We must run!'"

Allusion has been made to those rapid excursions to other fields which occasionally interrupted the more even tenor of his labours at St. Luke's. Of the incessant and exhausting toil which such excursions involved no one acquainted only with the ordinary scenes of evangelistic work can easily form a conception. A single specimen, therefore, we must give, and we do so all the more readily that it will carry us back for a moment amid the scenes of his former labours in Breadalbane and Strathtay: —

"To one with an exact knowledge of the geography of Perthshire," says the same eye-witness, to whom I am indebted for the above notices, "his labours during the week from Sabbath the 14th August, 1842, to Sabbath the 21st inclusive, furnish one of the most extraordinary episodes even in his life. There were no railroads then in Perthshire, but he had an interesting fellow-labourer in the shape of a fine fast trotter, as worthy of the name of 'Church Extension' as Mr. M'Cheyne's pony. He was a famous rider, and sat his horse like a knight. On Sabbath the 14<sup>th</sup> he preached at Blair-Athole (1) for five hours in the churchyard to an assembly of at least 4000 persons, and (2) in the evening in the church for three hours to an audience that would have remained till daybreak. On Monday evening he rode to Moulin, and preached (3) to a deeply affected audience. On Tuesday he rode to Kinloch-Rannoch (20 miles), and preached (4) in a park at the south end of the bridge, from two to five o'clock, to an interesting congregation of shepherds, game-keepers, foresters, grazers, cattle-dealers, &c, gathered from both sides of Loch Rannoch. After a hurried dinner he struck across the west shoulder or Schiehallion, one of the most trackless and difficult passes in the Highlands — taking a guide part of the way, to Fortingall (18 miles); rode six miles farther to Lawers, crossed Loch Tay to Ardeonaig — preached (5) there on Wednesday at twelve, and recrossing the lake

preached (6) at Lawers the same evening. On Thursday he rode down to Grandtully (17 miles), and (7) preached with great power in the churchyard to a dense crowd from Hebrews 12:18-25. On Friday he rode up to Fortingall (12 miles), where he preached (8) in the open air from two to nearly six p.m., a sermon (Hebrew 9:27-28) which made a deep impression, many of the audience being in tears; and returned to Grandtully the same evening. On Saturday morning he started at six for Balnaguard, preached (9) there at seven o'clock to a large company, many of whom had got saving good under his ministry previously — caught the mail-cart at half-past eight, reached Edinburgh in the evening, and preached thrice (10, 11, 12) in St. Luke's on the following day.

"The congregation at Blair- Athole on the 14<sup>th</sup>," continues our informant, "was a most imposing sight. Most of them were men, and the ground being a dead level, and inconvenient for sitting, most of them stood. The thirst to hear was so intense, and the blessing which had crowned his previous visits so widespread, that almost the whole population, not only from the vale of Athole, but from Straloch, Strathardle, Kirkmichael, Glenerochy, Dalnacardoch, Foss, Glenfincastle, Strathtay, and Strath-tummel, flocked to hear the great preacher of repentance.

As he read the opening Psalm 22:27-31 — "All ends of th' earth remember shall, And turn the Lord unto, &c," and during the first prayer, you felt as if the light of the other world struck on his face. His text was John 18:11, 'The cup which my Father' &c: and as he proceeded to explain the emblem, 'the cup. He said, 'Wine is the strength or essence of the grape. God's wrath is his whole being as directed against sin. He looks upon sin as infinitely base and vile, and therefore he is indignant: and the wine of his holy anger is poured out in all its strength into the cup of his indignation. This wine was not diluted when the cup was put into the hand of the Son of God. Look at the anguish sin has wrought. The tears of mankind have never ceased to flow since it entered the world. No sooner do they dry on one cheek than they begin to run down the other: no sooner does one widow lay aside her weeds, than another begins the wail: and yet one diluted drop of God's wrath has done it all. What anguish, then, must have been in the cup which the Father gave his Son to drink!' Words like these cut deep into many a heart that day. I saw a white-haired old man in the gate weeping bitterly, and saying, ' Oh! it's his prayers: I cannot stand his prayers!'

Between the scenes now described and those to which we have next to refer, great and startling events had taken place. The ancient and venerable Church of Scotland, of which Mr. Burns had been an attached and faithful member, had been broken in pieces, and from its ruins had arisen a new and powerful society with which a large proportion of her most devoted sons had cast in their lot. With the movement which led to that remarkable revolution, and with the principles which lay at the foundation of it, he most thoroughly sympathized; and when the critical day of exodus arrived we find him hurrying away from the busy scenes of his evangelistic work in Fife, that he might witness that signal and illustrious act of faith, and share the inspiration and the triumph of that solemn hour: — "Tuesday," he writes in his journal, "to Edinburgh per steam through a great storm on the way to the Assembly. Thursday, I was honoured to join in the solemn procession of ministers, &c, from St. Andrew's Church to the Free Assembly Hall, Canonmills, walking between my father on the one side and Uncle George of Tweedsmuir on the other. This was a scene of which I know not what to say! The opening of the Free Assembly was graciously solemn. Surely the Lord was there." But the scenes which immediately after followed, though deeply important and spirit-stirring, were not perhaps peculiarly favourable to the quiet prosecution of his special work. The country was all astir and filled with the din of ecclesiastical reconstruction and organization, and though this enthusiasm of church life and church work was itself of most wholesome influence on the general interests of religion in the country, and indeed, as it is believed, lent an impulse to the spiritual life of many, never to be forgotten, it was scarcely in unison with the peculiar mission of one whose one exclusive theme was that of repentance and the second birth. While therefore he still unweariedly prosecuted his appointed work wherever the divine Master seemed to point the way, he yet felt that the auspicious season for such work had in a great measure, at least for the present, passed. It was a time not so much for the awakening of life, as for the exercising and turning to good account of the life already awakened — a birth-time rather for the collective church than for individual souls. There was, indeed, abundant and most momentous work to be done, but work not precisely of that kind for which he felt himself especially fitted, and to which he

believed himself to have been by the irresistible call of God especially devoted. It was his part not to rear, or even materially to assist in rearing, the outward fabric of the house of God, but to help by God's grace in gathering the living stones of which it was to be reared. He was the more willing accordingly to listen to calls which were coming to him, with increasing frequency and urgency, from fields that lay beyond the sphere of the existing movement, and among these from Dublin, where he found himself on Saturday, April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1844, under the hospitable roof of his valued friend the Rev. Dr. Kirkpatrick, one of the ministers of Mary's Abbey Church. The following graphic and deeply interesting narrative, for which I am indebted to his kind host, will give some idea of the nature of his labours, and his manner of life in this new and untried field: —

"I had seen your brother in Perth, and had invited him to my house in Dublin. He accepted my invitation; and after he had finished his immediate engagements in Scotland he suddenly appeared at my door, with a small bundle in his hand, containing the whole of his travelling apparatus. His principal object in coming to Dublin was to find opportunities, if possible, of making known to Roman Catholics the message of the gospel. Accordingly he selected as the place of his public labours a suitable piece of ground in front of the custom-house; a place in which Father Matthew had administered the temperance pledge, and where he could address his audience without obstructing the ordinary thoroughfare. This area was surrounded by a low chain fence, inside of which he stood on a chair, and spoke to the people, who occupied the space between him and the building. Here he took his position evening after evening, and amidst innumerable annoyances and interruptions he sought to bring before his ignorant and prejudiced hearers the word of eternal life. It requires no small amount of courage, and tact, and temper, as everyone knows who has made the trial, to address an unsympathizing or hostile Irish mob. Mr. Burns was exposed to many opprobrious salutations, derisive questionings, vehement denials of the statements which he made; sometimes the uproar was so loud and long-continued that he was obliged to desist altogether; often his clothes were torn; not seldom the chair on which he stood was broken; but he never was impatient, nor ever for a moment lost his self-command. Amidst the most noisy and turbulent scenes, his countenance was beaming with joy, insomuch that some of his persecutors were constrained to say, 'He is a good man; we cannot make him angry. The ring leaders of the mob occasionally joined hands, and rushed down upon him for the purpose of driving him from the chair, or of throwing him down upon the street; but he was always protected from the danger of these assaults by a body-guard of three young men, members of my congregation, who were never absent from these meetings; and who, standing behind him, caught him on their arms till the wave had passed by and spent its force; and then, having set him on the chair again, he proceeded in his address with as much quietude of manner as if no interruption had taken place. The questions interjected by the crowd from time to time, while he was perhaps in the middle of a sentence, were sufficient to perplex a speaker of less experience and of less self-control than Mr. Burns. Let me give some specimens of the style of interrogation to which he was subjected in the course of his addresses: — 'What book is that which you hold in your hands?' — 'It is the Word of God.' 'How do you know? can you prove that it is the Word of God?' — 'I shall prove that it is if you deny it; but if we both of us admit it to be from God, why need I stop to prove it?' 'What is your commission?' — 'I shall read it to you, my friends,' let him that heareth say, Come. Eleven years have now passed since I heard the Lord speaking to my heart, and saying come. And ever since I have been saying 'Come' to as many sinners as were willing to listen to me. 'You may go; we don't want you here. — 'My friends, it is to those who don't want me that I am always most anxious to go, for I find that they are the people who have most need of me.' 'Bravo!' shouted someone in the crowd, pleased with the readiness and appropriateness of the reply. 'From what country do you come?' — 'From Scotland. 'Have you no sinners there?' — 'Yes. 'Have you not much drunkenness in Scotland?' — 'Yes, a good deal.' 'Why did you not stay at home to convert the drunkards before you came over to teach us?' — 'For this reason: in Scotland the drunkards know that they are sinners, and do not attempt to justify themselves in their sins. But here I see people who curse, and drink, and tell lies, who say, nevertheless, that theirs is the true religion. Now these people must be labouring under a great mistake, and I have come to set them right in this matter. 'But our church is the true church, and we have our priests to teach us and to keep us right. — 'My friends, your saying that you are members of the true church do not prove that you really belong to it. Let me read you a passage from the Word of God. John

8:39, 44: 'They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus said unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.' This passage fell upon them like a thunderbolt, and silenced them for a season, while the speaker in the meantime pursued his address. The scenes described in the Gospels under the preaching of the Word were thus vividly illustrated, and to some extent reenacted, under the ministry of Mr. Burns.

"On one occasion he proposed to vary the commencement of his open-air service by the singing of a psalm. I endeavoured to dissuade him from his purpose, by representing to him, that as his audience knew nothing of our metrical psalms, nor of our psalmody, his attempt to sing would serve but to increase and embitter the spirit of opposition. He was anxious, however, to make the experiment, and announced the 62<sup>nd</sup> Psalm. After reading a portion of the psalm, he commenced to sing the 5<sup>th</sup> verse, 'My soul, wait thou with patience Upon thy God alone.' The crowd, taken by surprise, listened to the first line in mute astonishment; then burst into a laugh of derision; then forming themselves into a compact phalanx, they rushed down upon Mr. Burns just as he had completed the first two words of the second line. The three friends, who were ever near, drew him aside till the crowd swept by, and after a considerable interval placed him once more upon the chair; and he then, with his usual composure, resumed the tune at the part of the line, 'thy God alone. which he had reached before he was interrupted.

"One evening, when he was obliged to stop short in his discourse in consequence of his chair being broken, he went down along the quay on the other side of the river, for the purpose of addressing himself to the coal-porters. It was in vain that his friends represented the danger to which he would be inevitably exposed; he replied, that 'he had never known fear.' His courage was soon put to the test. Whenever he commenced to speak, an angry mob quickly assembled, and loud and threatening shouts drowned all his efforts to be heard. The police came to his assistance, and kindly but firmly required him to cease. Still he was as unwilling to give up the attempt, but after several ineffectual efforts, the mob becoming larger and more ferocious, the police peremptorily insisted that he should be silent and cross the river in the ferry-boat; for if you attempt to go back along the quay. They said, 'I we will not be answerable for your life.' But 'I cannot pay for the ferry-boat.' 'It will cost you only a halfpenny.' But 'I have no halfpenny.' He replied, 'Here is one for you. Said a good-natured policeman. Accordingly Mr. Burns stepped down into the boat, and holding up the half-penny, he cried out to the people on shore.' See this, my friends; I have got a free passage. In like manner you may have a free gospel, a free forgiveness of all your sins, a free passage to the kingdom of heaven. Without money and without price.' And thus he proceeded to deliver a message to the persons who were crossing with him in the boat.

"It is not to be concluded from these details, that his labours in this arduous field were wholly unsuccessful. One Sabbath morning, his audience at the custom-house were more quiet than usual. His subject was regeneration: 'Except a man be born again. &c. At the close of his sermon, a man who had been listening attentively said, 'Well, sir, if what you have said be true, you had much need to come from Scotland to tell it to us, for we never heard of this doctrine before.' After Mr. Burns left Dublin, several Roman Catholics came to inquire about him, speaking respectfully of his labours, and of the loving and genial spirit in which they were conducted.

"During his stay in Dublin we had prayer-meetings in the church of Mary's Abbey almost every day. The prayers of Mr. Burns were very striking — distinguished by deep acquaintance with Scripture, by intense fervour, and by strong faith. He truly pleaded with God, and occasionally seemed to get near access to his presence. But his addresses to our Presbyterian people failed to produce much visible impression. His failure in this respect disappointed and grieved me very much. The congregation looked forward to his promised visit with much interest; having been largely informed of the wonderful success which God had vouchsafed to him in many districts of Scotland, they expected to hear from him a fuller exposition, and a more specific application of scriptural truth, than he was wont to give; and they were somewhat dissatisfied to observe that his discourses appeared to be wholly extemporaneous. I tried to induce him to give some time to special preparation, but without success, and regarding his course of procedure as beyond the range of ordinary men, I forbore to press my objections. I continued, however, to think that he was mistaken in expecting that his word would be with power when he did not beforehand consider how to

divide and to apply it; and that he was also mistaken in attributing his want of success, as he was at that time accustomed to do, solely and exclusively to the hardness of the hearts of the people. His views on these points, I think I have since learned, subsequently underwent considerable change; and I am sure that he was prepared to adopt any means which appeared to him most directly and effectively to bear on the advancement of the kingdom of God. This great object alone engrossed him. Political or even ecclesiastical affairs had no attraction for him. He was bent earnestly and ever on the salvation of souls. This grand concern occupied and absorbed his daily prayers, his social converse, his public addresses, the whole course of his thoughts, and the whole business of his life. Why are there not more of us like him? The need of such men is as urgent as ever; and we know that the grace of God is not less rich, nor his promises in Christ less sure, nor his gifts less varied or less rich. 'Lord, we believe, help thou our unbelief.'"

The following brief snatch of reminiscence by a respected minister of the Free Church of Scotland, 1 gives another vivid touch to the picture, and affords a pregnant hint as to the unseen results of those despised and self-denying labours: —

"I only saw him once in Dublin. I was then a student in Trinity College, and I remember well, passing along by the custom-house, I came upon a crowd which, as I drew near, appeared greatly excited. I stopped to listen, and I found that William Burns (as I afterwards came to know) was addressing them. I think I see him still: with what a strange calmness he spoke! with what meekness he met all their taunts! He was hooted, pelted, insulted, but quite unmoved he held open his Bible, and answered every onset by saying, 'But hear me — hear what God says to us in his blessed Word.' I remember he was speaking from John 10. Concerning the good Shepherd and the door of the sheepfold. At times the crowd were quieted down to listen, and one at least of the hearers walked away, forgetting for the time Greek iambs and mathematical deductions, but filled with the thought, 'That stranger has a peace and a life of which I know nothing.' Next time we met was at the Duchess of Gordon's, Huntly Lodge, on his return on a visit from China; and I have never forgotten that happy season, or his last words, as, entering the railway-carriage, he said, 'Now for China!'"

One or two characteristic extracts from his own journal will carry us still deeper into the heart of the combat and of the combatant: —

"Tuesday Evening. — During this day my path has opened a little, or rather not a little, farther. During the former part of the day I wrote letters to Scotland. Was alone with the Lord, and also traversed the city that I might get a full view of its character, naturally and morally, which is always most easily done before you become known. I conversed with Mr. Drysdale, the elder to whom I before alluded as a man of God. ... I spent an hour with him in his workshop alone. He gave me an awful account of the difficulties of out-door preaching in Dublin; but after much converse I felt that I must make the attempt. He would gladly have gone with me, but was engaged this evening at the great meeting in connection with the Presbyterian marriage question, and thus I was left quite alone. However I went, looking to the Lord, and took up my position on the open ground to the west of the custom-house, laid my hat on the ground, and standing a few paces from the footpath began to read, 'It is appointed unto men once to die,' &c. I had soon a large and most interesting assembly, but, as usual, the Romanists introduced their questions, and when the answers came too near them they began to make a rush with the view of putting me down. A police-officer also came and advised me to remove. I said I believed that I was trespassing no law — that that was the ground where Father Matthew spoke — and that I would not remove unless he had authority to stop me. He seemed to be a Romanist, and was evidently set on putting me down, so that after throwing the responsibility on him, and telling the people where I would preach to-morrow, I came away with a disburdened conscience. Dear people! they seemed intent on hearing, and followed me far on my way home despite of all I could do. . . .

"Friday, April 12<sup>th</sup> — Half-past one o'clock this morning I awoke under a powerful assault of despondency and unbelief — tempted to say, Let me sit still and take things in the ordinary way. However, at worship, the fifth chapter of Hebrews, read by Mr. K., particularly the words, 'Be followers of them who through faith and patience are now inheriting the promises,' quickened me again. We had some interesting conversation on the need of perseverance, and of in this taking a lesson from. O'Connell; and at half-past nine I went down in the name of Jesus to the scene of last night's meeting. I asked one captain to give me

his ship to preach in, but he refused. I was then standing in doubt to what ship to go to next, when I saw some poor Romanists — emigrants, I suppose — on board another vessel, who seemed to know me, and were mocking. I asked them how they were so unwilling to hear the word of God; they said they loved it, but not from me — that I could not preach it, &c. This opened the way. With all their confidence they mingled many oaths, which I told them certainly showed that they were not on the right way. A crowd gathered, and I had the best hour among them that I have had in Dublin. I was greatly aided in gaining their confidence. They threatened to throw me into the river at first, but I told them I did not mind that — they treated my Master worse. One asked me for my commission; I pointed to 'Let him that heareth say, Come, One said something vile; I said, 'You know that when you go to confession you must confess that as a sin. Another, hearing of confession, and thinking that I was speaking against it, said, 'What do you know about confession?' &c; I said, 'Not much; but I am saying no more than I know. And repeated what he had said. He was pleased. One said, 'You must be saved by prayer and fasting; I affirmed it, but showed the infinitely higher place of the blood of Jesus. One pressed me to prove that the Bible was the Word of God, wishing to bring me under church authority; I said I would do so if he denied it, but that as we both admitted this, why should I prove it, and so we got to more practical and personal matters. I was so full of God's joy in all this that I could not but smile, or rather laugh, in speaking to them; they wondered at this, and said, 'He is a good man, we cannot make him angry. I told them I would come back again at the dinner-hour and speak again; and so we parted. This was a good beginning. At twelve we had a very good prayer-meeting; and all that seems needful is faith, and patience, and prayer. I am just about to return again to the field; but ah! I must go deeper this time, and be prepared for the worst that the enemy can devise or execute. 'They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death? Oh! to be enabled thus to fight and overcome!

“Evening — . . . During the chief part of this evening I have been led to look afresh at the dark side of my prospects, and so have felt as if nothing could be done; but again I am revived by God's own perfect words. I have just come to my room from family worship, where Hebrews 7:18 to the end was read. I saw something of his glory as a priest, and had some nearness and fullness of heart in prayer, and have again a renewal of hope regarding this poor city. I found to-day also that hope and expectation is springing up in the hearts of some of God's children who at first despaired of anything being done. Last night I told those who disturbed us that I knew well that 'the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison,' but that we would specially pray for them, and that God would fulfill his word, 'He stilleth the tumult of the people. They seemed struck at this; I added, I will get you all very quiet yet before I leave you. Nothing gives one so great an opening as joy, and love, and peace; and I find these poured into my heart when among these poor outcasts in an uncommon measure. Many of the emigrants who in the morning cursed me hung upon my lips in the evening. One poor woman said, 'Ah! I see the tear of mercy in his eye. When they made any commotion I said, 'Now, the policeman will stop us;' and they became as quiet as the river beside us.”

He returned to Scotland on May 10<sup>th</sup>, and after three months of evangelistic work, chiefly in Paisley, Port-Glasgow, Renfrew, and other neighbouring places, proceeded to the British dominions of North America, where we shall have in the next chapter to trace his footsteps.

## CHAPTER X

1844-1846

## CANADA

This chapter was kindly prepared by the late Rev. Robert Burns.

Our North American colonies had something like a hereditary claim on the services of Mr. Burns. It has been the lot of two of his near relatives to be engaged for a series of years in the service of the church in that important and thriving province of the British crown. His uncle, Dr. George Burns, of the Free Church at Corstorphine, was in 1817 called to be the first minister of the Church of Scotland in the city of St. John, New Brunswick, and, with a short interval, he laboured in that important sphere for the period of fourteen years; while another uncle, Dr. Robert Burns, formerly of Paisley, was for fifteen years secretary to the Glasgow Society for sending out Ministers and Teachers to the Colonies of British North America, and was himself for a quarter of a century employed, first as pastor, and afterwards as theological professor, at Toronto, in Canada West. The latter having arrived at Montreal in the spring of 1844 as one of the first deputies of the young, fresh, and already renowned Free- Church of Scotland, the question was at once put to him, "Have you brought your nephew with you?" In fact, the revivals in Scotland were more spoken of in D.D., professor of theology in Knox's College, Toronto, than whom none knew the field of labour better, or had done more to advance the work of Christ throughout its length and breadth. It is given with only such revision as the revered author would himself have given to it had he been spared to impart to it his final touch. Besides him, and chiefly through him, I am indebted also to the following friends who have assisted in furnishing the materials on which the narrative is based, viz. Rev. Alexr. Cameron, of the Free Church, Ardersier, formerly of Canada; Mr. Hector Macpherson, lay missionary at St. Martin's, Perthshire, formerly band-major of the 93<sup>rd</sup> Sutherland Highlanders; Rev. Daniel Clark, of Indian Lands, Glengarry, Canada; Mr. Donald Catanach, of Lochiel, and his sister, Mrs. Kelly; Rev. Alexr. N. Somerville, of Anderston Free Church, Glasgow; Sergeant Long, formerly of the 93<sup>rd</sup>, now of the Gymnasium, Glasgow; Mr. James Ilosack, merchant, Quebec; the Rev. John Clugston, formerly of that city, now of Stewarton; Mr. William Macintosh, now of Belleville, C.W.; Mrs. M'Nider, formerly of Montreal, now of Vincent Street, Edinburgh; Messrs. James Court, John Dougal, Thos. Allan, James Orr, R. M'Corkle, Montreal, and Farnham. Canada than in Scotland itself and the Free Church deputy carried home with him earnest commissions from the good people of Quebec, Montreal, Kingston, Toronto, and almost everywhere, for the presence and labours of Mr. Burns, and others of similar spirit. Written communications to the Colonial Committee at Edinburgh had also preceded him; and when he reached Scotland in June of that year, he found that the proposal to visit Canada had been made to Mr. Burns, and that proposal having been seconded by the full information now given him, all difficulties were removed, and in the course of a few weeks Mr. Burns embarked in the brig *Mary* for Montreal, a free passage to and from Canada having been guaranteed to him by the generous Christian proprietors of the vessel. Mr. Burns sailed from Greenock to Montreal on the 10<sup>th</sup> August, 1844, and reached Montreal on Thursday, September 26<sup>th</sup>, of the same year. In this connection the names of Mr. James R. Orr, merchant in Montreal, and of Captain Kelso, the commander and proprietor of the vessel, deserve honourable mention. With the first of these gentlemen Mr. Burns stayed during the greater part of his residence in Montreal; and the names of both are associated with the first propitious dawning of the Free Church era in Canada.

The following extracts from his journal will show the feelings with which he approached this new sphere of labour, and the spirit in which he entered on it: —

"In every circumstance, even to the least, I have seen infinite grace towards me on this occasion. The ship in which I am is an excellent one. As there is no cabin passenger but myself, I have the cabin as quiet

as my own study could be and a state-room in which to meet with God. The means provided for me by the Lord have so exactly met my wants, that I go forth truly 'without purse/ having only two shillings remaining in the world; and yet I am infinitely rich, 'having nothing, and yet possessing all things.' I trust I shall be enabled not only to pray much, but also to study more deeply the divine Word, and prepare more regularly for the profitable discharge of my awful trust. ... I have got some beginning made among the crew. To-night we had fine weather, and met on deck for worship. It was sweet and solemn, the voice of prayer and praise blending with the winds in the midst of the mighty deep. Oh that I may be prepared for glorifying God fully in my body and spirit, which are his!" On another occasion he says: "To-day we have been becalmed, and I feel the retirement sweet. I think I can say through grace that God's presence or absence alone distinguishes places to me. But ah! I am yet untried. I know but little of what is in me as yet, and still less of the depth of his redeeming love. ... I have sometimes had glimpses both of the depth of sin and of redeeming love; still, I will need very special teaching if I am to be of use in the western world. . . .

"September 2, 1844 — This morning beautifully clear; a gentle north-east breeze, wafting us to our desired haven, brought us in sight of American land, after a delightful run of twenty-three days. . . . Our seasons of divine worship have been increasingly pleasant of late, although I see no mark of a divine work of grace in any one around me. Part of my daily work has been to teach the ship-boys to read. One of them is an interesting black from Africa. Oh that my heart were enlarged in pleading for the ingathering of all nations to Emmanuel!"

On September 10<sup>th</sup> he reached Quebec, and in his journal we find the following characteristic notice: —

"In God's great mercy we arrived here yesterday, after a delightful passage of thirty-six days. As it was the day of holy rest, I did not go ashore, but had worship on board, and spoke on the twenty-second chapter of Revelation. In the evening I was put on shore, and after looking a little at the aspect of the town, I took up my position alone, and yet not alone, at the market-place, close to the river, and began to repeat the fifty-fifth of Isaiah. A crowd of Canadians and of British sailors soon gathered, who at first seemed mute with astonishment, but soon showed me that the offence of the cross had not ceased by their mocking and threatened violence. However, I got a good opportunity of witness-bearing for God and his Christ; and when I left them had some interesting conversation with some individuals who followed me. When I came down again, at half-past eight, to the place where the ship's boat was to meet me, I got into conversation with a company of young sailors, two of whom remembered well having heard me at Newcastle at the quay and in the corn-market. Some of our poor soldiers and sailors were going about intoxicated. Though it were only to reach these two classes of degraded men, it would be to me a reward for crossing the great ocean. Who knoweth what may be the fruit of this evening's testimony among the wondering crowd! . . . I have had on board the ship a time for solemn observation of the character and ways of the unconverted, which I trust will be profitable. The only book I have had with me beside the book of God is Owen on the Glory of Christ, which I find precious indeed. I have had some seasons of great nearness to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and have found his word full of power and refreshment."

On reaching Montreal he at once found himself in the midst both of new and of old friends. The faces of the old soldiers whom he had known at Aberdeen and at Dundee must have been a sight peculiarly pleasant to him, and a happy omen for the future: —

"When we came into the harbor two Christian gentlemen, Mr. Orr and Mr. M'Kay, came on board, and before leaving my little cabin we had sweet communion at the mercy-scat together. I live with Mr. And Mrs. Orr, a godly couple from Greenock, in a delightful situation at the head of the town. Truly goodness and mercy are heaped on me. . . . Before leaving Scotland I observed that the 93<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, the depot of which I laboured among at Aberdeen in autumn, 1840, had removed from Kingston to Montreal, and I trusted that somehow I might get in among them; but what was my joy and wonder to be told that there were about thirty godly men among sergeants and privates who have a hired room near the barracks in which some of them teach a daily school for poor children gathered from the streets, as well as a Sabbath-school, and in which they meet for social prayer every Friday from six to half-past eight. This is the Sutherland regiment, of which in its early days the Rev. Ronald Bayne, an eminent man of God — afterwards at Inverness, and then at Elgin — was chaplain; and that enjoyed until lately the command of

Colonel M'Gregor, a distinguished Christian officer, now at the head of the constabulary force of Dublin. ... I had hardly arrived when I was told they were looking with desire to my coming, and that they wished me to attend their prayer-meeting, and to preach to them next Sabbath. I accordingly went last night, in company with two pious Scotchmen. . . . When we got to the place I found such a scene as I never before saw: a room crowded with soldiers, wives, and children, who were met not to hear a man speak, but to wait upon Jehovah, as their custom was. It put me in mind of the centurion of old. I enjoyed the meeting exceedingly, speaking upon Moses at the burning bush. One of the soldiers prayed, as well as Mr. M'Intosh and myself. In the soldier's prayer I was struck by the petition that they might cherish such expectations of good through my instrumentality as were warranted by his word, and were according to his mind. They seemed all to feel too that nothing but the presence of God himself would be of any avail. I found it very affecting to them and me to allude to the church of our fathers in the furnace, and to the people of Ross and Sutherland, from among whom the regiment was at first raised. . . .

"Tuesday, September 24th. — Sabbath was a good day, sufficient to remind me of September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1839, the day of the second communion at Kilsyth. At half-past nine A.M., I preached on the quay, on the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, and his purging the temple; congregation large and fixed. At eleven I preached in Mr. Wilks' church (Congregational) from the words, 'When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. At half-past one P.M., I addressed the 93<sup>rd</sup> Regiment in Mr. Esson's church: very fixed in their attention; more so than I have seen soldiers before. At seven I again preached in Mr. Esson's to a full church, on ' If any man will come after me, &c., and was much aided.

"Saturday, December 14<sup>th</sup> — During the present week my work has gone on as before, but in addition my conflicts in soul about it have been deeper than before, and several new doors have been opened. (1.) Two hundred and fifty of the 71st Regiment have come to the cavalry barracks, whom I visited on Tuesday and Friday, and whom I am to see again on Tuesday, if the Lord will. It seems very remarkable that the 93<sup>rd</sup> and 71<sup>st</sup> regiments are the only ones whose depots I visited in Scotland, and that the whole of the 93<sup>rd</sup> and so many of the 71<sup>st</sup> should now be here. I have met with a number of the 71<sup>st</sup> whom I knew well in Dundee, and this prepares my way among them. (2.) I have got liberty and more than liberty from the commanding officer of the 89th (Irish) Regiment to meet with the men in their schoolroom from week to week. This seemed so unlikely, as he is said to be a Romanist, that I had given up thoughts of applying, but one of the men in the hospital wanted me to ask a favour for him, and this gave me an introduction. (3.) We have got most wonderfully the use of a large room exactly opposite the French church for holding meetings in, both in French and English — all for nothing — the owner being a friend of the gospel — a hearer of Dr. Carruthers the Independent, whose church met for a long time in this very place. This seems a remarkable arrangement, as it is the very best place in the city for reaching the people."

When the Free Church was opened at Cote Street, Montreal, the soldiers of the 93<sup>rd</sup> had a distinct service allotted to them in the afternoon. On the arrival of Mr. Burns this service devolved on him; but besides preaching to the entire regiment on the Sabbath, he preached twice during the week in one of the largest rooms in the barracks; and he went frequently to the regimental hospital to address the sick and speak to the patients personally. Such was the high estimation in which he was held by soldiers both of that and of other regiments and of different denominations, that on several occasions when men of the regiment were sick, Englishmen and Irishmen, Episcopalians and Roman Catholics, have sent to him earnest messages soliciting his visits and his prayers. To quote the words of Mr. Hector Macpherson, then sergeant-major of the band of the regiment: "I shall never forget the first sermon he preached on the first Sabbath after his arrival. He gave out in the usual way the 32<sup>nd</sup> Psalm to be sung, and had read the first four lines, when he began to unfold the feelings and experience of a penitent believer in a way, to me at least, never opened up before nor since, and which was to my afflicted spirit as good news from a far land. It was like oil and wine to my afflicted spirit. It was also greatly blessed to others of my fellow-soldiers. The man of God continued to address us in much freedom of heart and of power for three hours, concluding somewhat abruptly, but with words which indicated a spirit of winning affection to every one: 'I see your time is up, but I hope to have farther opportunities of addressing you,' and solemnly pronounced the apostolic benediction."

The many opportunities of hearing Mr. B., enjoyed by the men of the 93<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, were eagerly improved by them; and the following description of the bearing of his preaching upon them, and which has been drawn by one of themselves, then a non-commissioned officer, is singularly graphic: — "I have known the Rev. W. C. B. To send this famous regiment, these heroes of Balaclava, home to their barracks, after hearing him preach, every man of them less or more affected; not a high word, or breath, or whisper heard among them; each man looking more serious than his comrade; awe-struck, Mike men that dreamed they were;' and when at home, dismissed from parade, they could not dismiss their fears. Out of thirty men, the subdivision of a company under my charge, living in the same room, only five were bold enough that Sunday evening to go out to their usual haunts; and these must go afraid, as if by stealth, their consciences so troubled - them; the other twenty-five, each with Bible in hand, bemoaning himself. Now, looking at the whole regiment from what took place in this one room of it, you may be able to judge of Mr. B.'s powers as an ambassador of Christ with clear credentials!"

While in the city of Montreal, and freely proclaiming the riches of grace in churches, and barrack-rooms, and hospitals, Mr. Burns found the field too narrow; and he went out to the highways, and streets, and squares of the city which was the especial scene of his apostolic labours. For the first two or three nights there was little opposition, but the majority of his hearers being Roman Catholics, the priests were made aware of what was going on and became alarmed, and violent opposition was the issue. He never indeed used the word Popery, nor any term directly marking the system, or calculated to give needless offence; but his finger, it would seem, touched the sore parts of the malady; and the effect was just as of old, when the men that turned the world upside down were assailing the strongholds of heathen superstition and sin. He writes in his journal: —

"Tuesday, September 24<sup>th</sup> — Evening at seven in open air in Place d' Amies, in the centre of the city, in front of the great Romish cathedral. The proposal of this tried some spirits among us. When I went a considerable number had assembled, and among them a band of the 93<sup>rd</sup>. I had a fine opportunity, and felt the power of the living God with us. Towards the end our enemies made a commotion. The mayor of the city, a Roman Catholic, came to stop me, but was restrained by God. As we retired about half-past nine we were mobbed, chiefly as usual through the excessive fears of friends seeking to guard me from violence. The mayor offered his protection, but I said to the people in his presence, \* No one will harm me — it is my own friends who are creating groundless alarm. I would ask all to go quietly home, and if anyone is my enemy he will give me his arm and we will go together. They quietly moved away. I put my hand on my white neck cloth and moved on unknown to the multitude. If the kingdom of Satan is to be disturbed here, this is but the shadow of what will yet come, and then shall many be offended..."

"Friday, September 27<sup>th</sup> — At half-past five in Place d'Armes, awfully mocked and pelted, though with nothing deadly, yet got much truth delivered both while here and after going to an adjoining street, where a gentleman walking with me was struck on the back. While in the Place d'Amies, one of the magistrates, evidently, I think, a Romanist came and ordered me to remove, threatening me with the exercise of his power if I did not. I said I was doing no harm, and would continue, and that he might take me to prison if he pleased; I was ready. He shrunk away and left me to go on. I feel that standing thus in the breach, though it may have no other effect, invigorates my own faith, lifts a testimony honoring to God, and sets me on a high vantage-ground in preaching in the churches. . . .

"Saturday, September 28<sup>th</sup>. — This evening I was again in the field about six o'clock. A great number assembled, and, in contrast with the previous night, they seemed to have ears given them to hear. This continued for some time, but afterwards they began to throw gravel, &c, and to jostle me in the crowd. Little evil might have come of this, had not some who befriended me as a Scotchman sought to save me from danger; and thus my back being turned the crowd rushed on me, and I got away without my hat and one of the tails of my coat containing a handkerchief and Bible. Their enmity was so great that I believe the Bible was torn to pieces as well as the rest, the hat only being recovered. I got into a shop, where many who trembled for me would have had me to remain, but I was quite above all fear, and went out again alone among the people, and got much opportunity of declaring the truth on the way home. Surely these displays of enmity are a token that the Prince of darkness is in some degree afraid!"

These furious onsets are described by eye-witnesses as having been most terrible, and as having more than once threatened serious consequences. Thus, on one occasion, that evidently referred to in one of the above extracts, his coat was torn, his hat was knocked off and trampled on the ground; and his pocket-Bible, his constant companion, torn from his hand. On the other, a stone thrown with violence inflicted a severe wound on his cheek, and it bled freely. A few of the 93<sup>rd</sup> rushed through the crowd, and one in anxiety said, "What's this? what's this?" Smiling, he replied, "Never mind, it's only a few scars in the Master's service." He was carried into the medical chamber of Dr. Macnider, near at hand, when that beloved Christian physician skillfully sewed up the wound. He came forth speedily as if nothing had taken place; and looking round calmly from his reassumed position, he exclaimed in the words of the great apostle of the Gentiles: — "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

Another hot day of battle is thus vividly described by the Rev. William Arnot, of the Free High Church, Edinburgh, who happened to be in Montreal at the same time, and who himself bravely joined him on the forlorn hope. "Once," he writes, "I went with him to the Haymarket Square, where he meant to preach in English. I went somewhat anxious for his safety, with intent to help him if need should arise. A circle soon gathered. He began to preach. More assembled outside — thicker and thicker the girdle grew, but the roughest were outside. William and I stood alone in the middle of the ring, hedged very closely in, but the gentlest nearest us. Where they stood at first, they remained. No possibility of movement. Noise and throwing of dirt increased. When he became somewhat wearied I now and then took up the address, and the change of voice operated a little in our favour for getting a hearing. One Irish voice from the outside interrupted William at one time, shouting clear over all the din, 'The devil's dead.' A great laugh followed. When it hushed, William struck in with a plaintive voice, tinged almost with the sarcastic, 'Ah! then, you are a poor fatherless child! 'This raised a laugh in his favour, and under cover of it he was enabled to proceed for a while. We were besmeared with mud, thrown from the outer circles, but not hurt.

"The violent opposition of the Irish, however, eventually drove him off. He desisted, as the first missionaries did, when the persecution became violent, and went to another city." At length the hostile Romanist mayor was replaced in his office by another of different spirit — an excellent Protestant gentleman, of the Wesleyan body, who lent the full weight of his authority and moral support to the cause of order and of peace. Appearing seasonably at one of the meetings where tumultuous disturbances were apprehended, he speedily succeeded in calming the storm, and the assembly soon dispersed without injury to anyone. Thereafter he waited on Mr. Burns for consultation on the case. As soon as he had stated the object of his visit, said Mr. Burns, "Let us pray;" when as they knelt together he touched the mayor on the shoulder and said, "You'll pray." He did pray, asking the divine direction and a blessing on the labours of Mr. Burns, and left him with the single request that he would send him notice when and where he would next preach.

The city of Montreal was only one, though perhaps the most important scene of Mr. Burns' Canadian labours. His mission was to the whole dominion of Canada, which may be considered now as including, or as designed to include, all the dependencies of the British crown in North America. In 1844 the name embraced only two branches of one province, Canada East and Canada West; the former being now termed the province of Quebec and the latter that of Ontario. Lower Canada was then, as it had been for ages and still is, settled by French Canadians, speaking the French language, and subject to debasing superstition and a dominant priest craft. The whole land groans under the tyrannical sway of perhaps the most wealthy and powerful hierarchy under the dominion of the see of Rome. We have no doubt that in seeing their splendid palaces, their magnificent cathedrals, colleges, and convents; in seeing the lovely land almost wholly "given to idolatry," the spirit of Mr. Burns was greatly stirred within him. Hence the interest he took, all the time he was in Canada, in the state of the poor "habitants," the benighted French Canadian Roman Catholics; and hence the avidity and the success with which, as we shall presently see, he revived his knowledge of the French language, so as to be able, in a comparatively short space of time, to speak intelligibly and fluently in the French tongue.

Canada West, or Ontario as it is now called, may be termed a Protestant country, inhabited too no doubt by many Roman Catholics especially from Ireland, and by not a few settlers from Germany and the United

States; but unquestionably the English and the Scottish elements greatly preponderate. The leading Protestant denominations are Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and Congregationalists. Of these, the first three are each nearly equal in point of numbers, amounting to not much less than one million in all. The population of the whole "Dominion," including Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, is estimated at four millions. Prior to the era of the Disruption in 1843, the state of our countrymen in Canada was anything but promising. The framework of a Presbyterian church was indeed set up, and a number of pious ministers had been from time to time sent out both by the Establishment and the Secession; and the annals of the early Presbyterian church are adorned with a few noble names. Generally speaking, however, the system was cold, formal, and stiff; and spiritual religion in the line of Scottish Presbyterianism was low. The Disruption wrought wonders for Canada.

Many pious men in the cities and in the land generally sighed for a change; and the arrival of deputies from the Free Church in regular succession for five years, formed quite a new era in the religious history of the province.

No Protestant missionary can be useful to any great extent in "Lower Canada" who is not able to converse and to preach in the French language; and Mr. Burns very soon felt the necessity of revising his attainments in that direction. So successful was he in this, that he not only addressed the "habitants" regularly in their own language, but, seemingly with the view of acquiring still greater facility in the use of it, he wrote a large proportion of his Canadian journal in the French language.

After a second visit of a few days to Quebec, where it will be remembered he first opened his commission as a herald of the cross on American ground, he was invited to visit Leeds and the Gaelic district of Inverness settlements, about fifty miles from the city. It was on this occasion he revived his knowledge of the Gaelic language, already somewhat familiar to him from his visits to the Highlands of Perthshire; and the raftsmen who were his fellow-voyagers on the St. Lawrence were valuable assistants to him in this work, while he imparted to them the rich treasures of evangelical truth. The settlers at Inverness heard from his lips the glorious gospel in the language. Most familiar to them, and the blessed results were deep and lasting. When Mr. Clark of Quebec and Dr. Burns of Toronto visited the same place in 1863 they found a fresh revival of religion, specially marked by distinct memorials of the earlier labours of Mr. Burns. The visit of these gentlemen was in the midst of harvest; but the labourers, eager to hear, found two hours at mid-day, besides two hours in the evening, to wait on the preaching of the Word.

The following notices from an intelligent correspondent afford some interesting glimpses of his labours elsewhere:

"At Williamstown, where the church was denied him by the minister and session, the innkeeper readily allowed Mr. Burns to preach under his roof, to a very respectable audience of attentive listeners. At Lochiel he stood in a wagon by the roadside and freely proclaimed the glad tidings of salvation, one of his hearers, against his wishes, holding an umbrella over his head to protect him from the scorching rays of a Canadian sun.

"In the afternoon he preached in a barn, from Psalm 17:8, which sermon was blessed for the conversion of one individual, who is now one of the principal elders of the Free Church there.

"In Kenyon he preached in English, but many of the Gaelic people waited to hear him. A pious old woman, who understood no English, was asked why she remained. She replied, 'I thought it would be a privilege to be included in that dear minister's prayers. And another thing did me good: he seemed to dwell particularly on one word, spoken in such sweet tones? it sent a glow to my heart — the word 'salvation;' what does that mean?'

"During the communion services at Indian Lands, where his labours on a previous visit had been blessed to many, he preached for several successive days to crowds of eager listeners, who with one accord declared they had never heard such glorious truths. In addressing the communicants, one of his persuasive remarks was, 'If you cannot come in by the saint's door, oh! come in by the sinner's!' A poor idiot who had been present remained after the congregation dispersed, and walked around the small tent (where Mr. Burns still lingered, engaged in prayer), several times, exclaiming, 'You touch my heart, you touch my heart.' Mr. B.'s attention was attracted to him; one of the people told him not to mind the man, he was a fool.

'Ay, ay, one of Christ's fools, perhaps, which rebuked the man. Learning that there was a small colony of French Canadians several miles distant, he immediately decided upon visiting them, and having first addressed the English people of the place, in a grist-mill, he then preached to the French quite fluently in their own language. They listened as if spell-bound. He afterwards conversed with them individually in fluent French, and they united in saying, 'He was the best priest they ever heard speaking.'"

In moving from place to place on his evangelistic tours in the country districts, Mr. Burns did not often avail himself of the conveyances readily provided by friends, but if at all practicable would invariably travel on foot, so as to avail himself of the opportunities afforded in this way of speaking a word in season and out of season to groups of labourers working in the fields, or any one whom he happened to meet travelling on the highway. It is only those who have been in Canada that can know how trying, and therefore how rare, such foot-travelling must be, owing to the extremes of heat and cold, and the rude state of the roads. When going on long journeys, and obliged to sail on the lakes, it was his constant practice to preach on board the steamers to all who might be disposed to hear him. On these occasions he more particularly addressed himself to the deck passengers, usually composed of emigrants and persons of the labouring and of the poorer classes. The calm and peaceful surface of the expanding lakes, and the even flow of the mighty rivers, greatly favoured such evangelistic efforts. The more intelligent and respectable managers on such conveyances encouraged these efforts by granting a free passage; and there cannot be a doubt that such unrequited and humble methods of doing good have been frequently owned by a blessing from on high. If Mr. Burns was known afterwards in China as "the man of the book," he was equally so known in Canada, as well as in his native land.

The following short sketch taken from his journal may give some idea of the variety and extent of his labours as a missionary in Canada West, while it embraces also places visited by him within the line of East or Lower Canada: "I have preached at St. Eustache, Lachute, St. Andrews, Hawkesbury, L'Original, and Vankleekhill, and yesterday evening I preached twice in French, but these meetings have not been large. — Cornwall, Saturday, July 26th, 1845. In the course of these last weeks, I have preached often in English and in French, at Lochiel, Indian Lands, Kenyon, Roxbury, Finch, Martintown, Williamstown, Lancaster, &c. I have had nine little French meetings since the last date. In general they were well disposed to listen to the word. Some of our English meetings have been very large and serious; but, alas! the spiritual deadness of this country is very great. It became at last necessary for me to bear a distinct testimony to the principles of the Free Church. The report of the proceedings of the Assembly of that church is interesting. Their prosperity in an external point of view is very remarkable. May their spiritual prosperity be in proportion. There was formerly at Martintown, near this, a true minister of Jesus Christ named Connel, who appears to have been the means of saving many souls. He died ten years ago, but his memory is blessed, as is that of all the just. After having preached at Cornwall, and further down on the shores of the St. Lawrence, I crossed the Salmon river to Dundee, quite near New York state, and from that place I preached as I went along towards Montreal, where I arrived last Thursday; having visited on my way Fort Covington, in New York state, La Riviere De Loup, Lake Strove, Huntingdon, St. Michael's, Durham, North Georgetown. Sometimes I have been a little encouraged, but in general spiritual religion, which alone saves the human soul, appears to be very rare. Nevertheless I have met with some people who seem to love the Lord. Yesterday I tried again to preach out of doors, but with little success. They stoned and pelted me with mud, but by the grace of God I escaped danger. One poor man in the crowd recognized me as the person whom he had seen beaten at Dublin near the custom-house. Although a Romanist, he appeared yesterday much disposed to listen to the word, and his testimony in my favour will be undoubtedly useful among his countrymen."

After a fortnight's labour at Bytown, now the city of Ottawa, where Mr. Wardrope, the excellent minister there, had been recently settled, he visited Bristol, Perth, Lanark, Dalhousie, Beckwith, Smith's Falls, Carleton Place, St. Andrews, Brockville, Prescott, and Kingston. At this last place he remained some weeks, and besides- supplying the Free Church there, he preached seven times to the soldiers of the 71<sup>st</sup> Regiment whom he had formerly seen. The principal officer gave him liberty to do so, and this he devoutly notices as a proof of encouragement from God. He preached also in the country all around, particularly Gananoque, Glenburnie, and two other places; meeting everywhere with encouragement more or less. He visited also

Cobourg, Belleville, and other places adjacent, such as Demorestville, Picton, and Napanee. When at Kingston he received through Dr. Begg, who had come out as a deputy from the Free Church, a letter inviting him to visit France. The impression on his mind by this circumstance is thus noted in his journal: —

“Perhaps the Lord intends to call me thither, to bear testimony to his truth. May his will be done! Nevertheless, I must go to the upper part of this province; to London, for example, and its vicinity.” He then adverts to his visits to, and missionary labours at, Fredericksburg, Peterborough, Ottonabee, Port Hope, Clarke, Newcastle, Toronto, Niagara, Streetsville, and Esquesing; “preaching,” as he says, “everywhere the Word of God which liveth and endureth forever.” “At Toronto,” he says, “I had much pleasure in meeting with the young men who are at college preparing for the work of the ministry. There are some among them who seem to be true Christians; and they are all making satisfactory progress in their studies.”

In the summer of 1846 he visited a considerable portion of the western territory, preaching at Oakville, Wellington Square, Hamilton, London, St. Thomas, Williams, Lobo, Southwold, Dunwich, Aldbro, Mora, Eckford, Chatham, Amherstburgh near the boundary line, Detroit in the United States, and Port Sarnia, meeting everywhere with encouragement. At Amherstburgh, he preached to a congregation of blacks, formerly slaves, who interested him much. At Sarnia he preached by means of an interpreter to an interesting assembly of American Indians, who are under the instructions of the Methodist missionaries; and, as might have been expected, the meeting and exercises were very solemn and edifying. Two months' labours were bestowed on Imperial, Woodstock, Beechville, Bradford, Lower Stratford, &c. In 1846 most of the places visited by Mr. Burns in Canada West were as yet unsupplied either with Free Churches or ministers; and his labours and varied ministrations were singularly blessed of God, as means of uniting and quickening the members. Among the ministers whom he found settled in those parts, we notice the names of Messrs. Wardrope, Graham, and Macalester, all of whom often spoke of the great refreshing and spiritual edification enjoyed by them and their people from his visits. Of the labours also of the Free Church deputies, particularly Dr. Bonar, Mr. Arnot, Mr. Somerville, and Mr. Munro, he speaks with great interest. These were the ministers who had the charge of the “Free Church” congregation at Cote Street, Montreal, during his residence in Canada, and each of them appreciated the value of his labours, and readily took part with him in them.

Among the varied testimonies we have received to the good effects of the visit of Mr. Burns to Canada, one of the most valuable is that of the Rev. Alexander Cameron of Ardersier, whose opportunities of information were peculiarly favourable. “It was my lot,” says he, “shortly after the return of Mr. Burns from Canada, to labour among the Highlanders of Glengarry for some years until health failed. I found the people in a very interesting state of mind — many of them cherishing a tenderness of conscience and a brokenness of spirit, and thirsting eagerly for the Word of life. Some of all ages were in this condition, but especially young men and young women. The crowds that congregated on the Sabbaths at Lochiel, the most central station at which I preached, were sometimes very great. In the district of Glengarry, where there are now seven or eight ministers, there was then only one, Mr. Daniel Clark of Indian Lands, and myself; consequently the people came from all quarters, travelling five, ten, or even twenty miles and upwards. Many of them started on the Saturday so as to be forward in time for the morning service. The poor Roman Catholics observing all this thought the heads of their Protestant neighbours were turned. In one sense it was easy to preach to these thirsty souls, for the word of God was precious in those days. It was the same wherever I went; no matter where sermon was intimated to be preached in any school-room or district, the place would be crowded, even although such meetings were continued in different places nearly the whole week, as sometimes happened in winter; and often a few of the more ardent spirits would attend all these meetings, travelling from place to place for this purpose. The face of things began gradually but steadily to change. Old customs and inveterate habits were one by one abandoned. Balls and merry-makings and New Year's festivals, so frequent in that country, were fast disappearing. Some of the leaders in such things with their own hands cast their fiddles and bagpipes into the fire; and instead of the sounds of revelry, the voice of praise and spiritual melody began to be heard in their dwellings. Zion was meanwhile putting on her beautiful garments. Communion seasons were now more like those in old Ferintosh than the former scanty gatherings in the 'backwoods this state of things I ascribe chiefly under God to the labours of Mr. Burns. Doubtless many other able and excellent men, especially some from the

Free Church at home, laboured faithfully, and I believe successfully, in Glengarry; but the visit of Mr. Burns, in my estimation, was the crowning visit, and the impression produced by his preaching and his godly demeanor was deep, pervasive, and abiding. The great day alone shall fully declare it."

The following sketch under the hand of an intelligent office-bearer of our Church in Glengarry, at whose house Mr. Burns sojourned, and by whom he was conducted on his missionary way, may illustrate the obstacles which stand in the way of itinerating labour in Canada, and the manner in which they were met and conquered by Mr. Burns: —

"A furious snow-storm having come on, he was detained for a week; and the state of the roads prevented any public meetings being held; but he improved the time by conversing on matters pertaining to the kingdom with our household, including farm-servants, among whom were several French Canadians. We found him remarkably agreeable and sociable as a guest, entertaining us with incidents relative to his labours in Ireland, and those parts of Scotland where revivals have taken place. The recital of incidents connected with such themes always caused his countenance to beam with a heavenly joy. Much of his time also was spent in retirement and over his Bible, which he often carried to the table at meal times, referring to it whenever a pause in the conversation gave him an opportunity. Having an appointment to preach in the Congregational chapel, Indian Lands, so soon as the snow-storm subsided, he and I made a desperate effort to fulfill the engagement. Taking a powerful team of horses and a strong sleigh, we found the roads in an almost impassable state; the horses floundering in the snow, which in some places almost hid them from our view; and in other places they were incapable of moving forward one step, till I got out and made a track before them. In remarking on the state of the roads I happened to say, 'This is awful; but was instantly checked by my dear fellow-traveler saying, 'Oh! my dear sir, there is nothing awful but the wrath of God. Although travelling at the rate of only one mile an hour, we arrived at our destination in due time, where we found a goodly number assembled; and he delivered an impressive sermon, taking for illustration things that he had noticed along our route, such as the clearances in the forest, with the other usual symptoms of progress in the settlements."

References having been more than once made to the services of the deputies from the Free Church to Canada, it may not be unsuitable to insert the following notices from one of the friends who have contributed materials for this chapter: —

"When I arrived in Montreal, in 1842, the spiritual condition of the three congregations was deplorably low, and, with very few exceptions, it was so throughout the country. But I make special reference to Montreal, where there were a very few — like the gleanings of the vintage— who were longing and waiting for the salvation of Zion. These few were led to unite in prayer to the exalted Head of the Church to hasten his coming by whom he would; and he was graciously pleased to hear their cry, and send his servants. The first was Dr. Burns of Paisley, whose first sermon was from Revelation 1:17-18. To some this sermon was the fulfillment of the promise, 'When the poor and the needy seek water, &c. I think Dr. Burns was followed by Mr. John Bonar (afterwards Dr. Bonar), full of love, and meekness, and wisdom, and undaunted courage. He was preeminently honoured of God in gathering and uniting the scattered sheep, and in organizing the Cote Street congregation, and, indeed, of advancing the interests of the church throughout the whole province. In his arrival was beautifully seen the majestic goings forth of Him who is wonderful in counsel. Mr. Bonar was succeeded by other eminent servants of God, whose special mission was to supply the Cote Street congregation, which was then the great centre of the Free Church in Canada."

Among these may be specially noted Mr. Arnot, then of Glasgow, now of the Free High Church, Edinburgh; Mr. Somerville of Anderston, Glasgow; Mr. Munro of Rutherglen; Mr. Macnaughton of Paisley, now of Belfast; Mr. Buchanan of Bothwell; Mr. Bremner of Glasgow; Professor King, now of Halifax, Nova Scotia; Mr. Lewis of Leith, afterwards of Rome; Mr. J. C. Burns of Kirkliston; Mr. Couper of Burntisland; Dr. Begg of Edinburgh; Mr. Paterson of Tranent; the late Mr. Cobban of Braemar; — who during periods more or less extended, laboured in the cities, and occasionally in the rural districts, to the edifying of multitudes of hearers, and to the effect of laying firm and deep the foundations of what in its character as a "united church" may now with perfect propriety be called the "Free Presbyterian Church of Canada."

Mr. Burns returned to Scotland, after about two years of incessant labour in Canada, in the same vessel in which he had before sailed for the West, arriving in Glasgow on the 15<sup>th</sup> September, 1846. He was still in

vigorous health, yet showing but too evident traces of the exhausting and peculiarly trying scenes which he had passed through. The clear tones of a voice of more than ordinary compass and power were gone; his mind and spirit were worn and jaded; and he had already begun to acquire a certain aged look which he never afterwards wholly lost. He had indeed emphatically "endured hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," and he bore the marks of it more or less to his grave.

## CHAPTER XI

1846 — 1847

## CALL TO THE CHINESE FIELD

My readers will remember a statement from my brother's own hand of the circumstances of his first consecration to the missionary work, and of the remarkable train of events by which the fulfillment of his purpose was temporarily, though, as it seemed, indefinitely delayed. That purpose still remained unchanged. He was still as much as ever, and all through those laborious and eventful intervening years, a missionary at heart, and only waited the intimation of the Master's will as to the time and the place of his appointed work. He had heard the general summons of the divine Commander, "Who will go for me?" and he had resolutely answered, "Here am I, send me." That answer had been recorded in heaven, and lived evermore within his heart. Amid all his home labours he spoke and acted under the solemn sense of it — spoke and acted as a missionary just about to go forth to a distant land, and only addressing a few parting words to his brethren at home ere the final summons to depart should reach him. How that summons came at last, and in what spirit it was obeyed, will be best told in his own words, in the continuation of the same statement just referred to, dated at sea: —

"Thursday, July 29<sup>th</sup>, 1847, lat. 25 30' south; lon. 28 40' west. — . . . From this time (July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1839) until the Disruption I appeared to have a special work to do in my own country, and having no call to the missionary field I thought no further of it than this, that I did not feel it would be lawful for me to settle at home, but only to comply with present calls of duty to preach the Word. In the year 1843, and still more in 1844, I found my heart very much drawn off from the home field — the days of God's great power with me seeming to be in a great measure past, and ecclesiastical questions having taken so deep a hold on the public mind, that it was not in a state as before to be dealt with simply about the question of conversion. In these circumstances I went at the call of some friends to Dublin in 1844 to try the field there, but finding no great opening I returned to Scotland, and the way being made very clearly open for my going on a visit to Canada, I sailed for Montreal, August 10. In Canada I found sufficient evidence that it was indeed the call of God which I obeyed in going to it; but after labouring there for nearly two years, and having gone over the ground which seemed providentially laid out for me, I felt that unless I were to remain there for life, the time was come for my departure. I was confirmed in this view by having had my mind afresh directed towards India by a letter from an acquaintance there, and also by a call from our Continental Committee to make use of my newly acquired knowledge of French by visiting the continent of Europe. I accordingly sailed from Quebec for Scotland on August 20<sup>th</sup>, 1846, having a deep impression that I should find no special work to do in Scotland that would detain me there longer than a few months, but feeling quite uncertain what would be my ultimate destination. On my arrival I was asked anew to go to the Continent, but against this there were objections. I did not see any prospect of doing much there during a brief visit, and I could not but reflect that at my period of life it must be now decided whether I was to preach from place to place to the end, or go to a heathen field, as originally destined. At any rate I felt that I could decide on nothing until I had paid a few visits to those home fields with which I had formerly been connected. This work occupied me during the autumn and the early part of the winter. I might have protracted the period indefinitely, being encompassed with invitations on every hand; but as I did not see or feel any special blessing in this work, I preached no more than I could not avoid doing, and then came the question, What is my duty with reference to the future? About the end of the year, at the time of the Parsee's ordination in Edinburgh, I arrived at the clear decision that I was not at liberty to labour any longer as hitherto without ascertaining whether our missionary committee would still desire me to fulfill my

original intention. I accordingly called on Dr. Candlish, and having laid before him my views, and joined with him in imploring divine guidance, he stated that he thought it was clearly my duty to go as originally destined to the heathen, provided that I found no special cause as heretofore to detain me, and said that he would confer with others on the subject. He did so, but found that though no one would object to my going if I wished to do so, yet as the Indian stations were all occupied, there was no special opening for me.

At this very time, and while they were actually conversing on the matter, a letter came to the convener of the Foreign Mission Committee, Dr. James Buchanan, from James Hamilton of Regent Square, London (convener of the English Presbyterian Church Missionary Committee), making earnest inquiry whether Dr. B. Could point out any minister or preacher in Scotland who might be suitable to go as their first missionary to China, seeing they had contemplated this mission for more than two years, but had as yet been disappointed in finding suitable agents. This seemed to Dr. B. A providential coincidence, and without communicating with me, he wrote mentioning a few names and mine among the rest. Some weeks elapsed without my hearing anything further on the subject but meanwhile my own experience more and more pointed my thoughts and desires to the foreign field, and at last in the beginning of February a letter came to me from Mr. Hamilton, in which, after reminding me of my original design and prospects regarding an eastern mission, he mentioned the position of their own missionary scheme, and asked what my views in regard to embarking in such an undertaking now were. As he wished a speedy answer I could only reply that the matter was too varied in its bearings and of too momentous a character to be at once decided on; but that it would be the subject of prayer and consideration, as well as of conference with the servants of God around me. On receipt of my letter, their missionary committee instructed Mr. Hamilton to send me an express and earnest call to become their church's first missionary to China. I received this, but still found myself unable to arrive at a final decision. Regarding the importance of the work there could be no doubt; but when I considered on the one hand the manner in which God had hitherto called me to labour, and the many calls at home and abroad which I still had to preach the Word as heretofore; and on the other considered the uncertainty of my being suited to the peculiarities of the Chinese field, I felt embarrassed, and though I wrote a letter of acceptance, I could not send it off, but rather suspended the case by letting them know my difficulties, and my need of delay, with a view of getting further light. I also urged them in the interval to look out for others, and mentioned two ministers to whom they might apply. Another ten days elapsed, during which I was in Edinburgh, as I had been for some time previously, preaching in St. Luke's, &c., and now also assisting Dr. Duncan in his junior Hebrew class, his health being imperfect. The call to China was gradually assuming more and more importance in my view, and though some of God's servants seemed to doubt whether it was a field suitable to my habits, &c., yet the prevailing opinion seemed to be that I ought to go. Feeling that I must resume communication with the English committee, I went out before doing so to Kilsyth, at the communion season on the first Sabbath of March, that I might sit, it might be, for the last time at the table of the Lord Jesus on earth with my beloved parents, and that I might have the aid of their counsel, and that of my cousins David and Charles J. Brown (of Glasgow and Edinburgh), who were expected to be my father's assistants. On the Monday after the communion I wrote to London again to let it be known that I was still weighing the matter brought before me, and that with a view to arrive at a final and satisfactory decision, I would be glad to be furnished with information in regard to the nature of the work in which they would wish or expect me to be engaged, and also to learn what length of time it would require to attain an adequate knowledge of the language with a view to preach the gospel in it. I also stated generally on the subject, 1st. That I did not make such inquiries as if difficulties would be sufficient to keep me back, were the path of duty in other respects plain; but simply in order that I might have full materials for comparing this call with others that were given me, as from France, &c. 2nd. That as devoted to the missionary work I felt that unless it appeared that God detained me at home by some special call, I must go to some field where Christ had not been named, &c. In reply to this letter Mr. Hamilton wrote that he believed the difficulties of the Chinese language had been overestimated, but that they expected about the end of March from China Mr. Hugh Matheson, one of their committee, who would bring them full and recent information, and that this would be communicated to me. At this time I spent four weeks preaching in Bute and Arran, and on the 10<sup>th</sup> of April, I went to Edinburgh to preach in Mr. Moody Stuart's. The impression of my duty now became so strong that I felt I could no longer hesitate

about signifying my willingness to go, and on Monday I wrote to that effect. I saw that I would dishonour my profession of the gospel, and thus wound the honour of Jesus, if I seemed to linger any longer; and though I had not heard again from London, I felt that on general grounds, and taking even the most discouraging view of the case, it was my duty to go forward. The committee met on this very day, and so discouraging was the view given by Mr. M. Of the field and of the missions there, as compared with our missions in India, that the committee resolved to recommend to the Synod about to meet at Sunderland the following Tuesday to give up thoughts of a mission to China, and begin in place a mission in Hindustan. When I heard of this decision, which the receipt of my letter did not seem to have altered, I was at a loss how to act, but saw that now matters were coming to a crisis, and that the issue would be either to shut up my path toward China or set me free from their call altogether. I did not feel any sympathy with their proposal to draw back, and fearing lest they might do so, and thus dishonour the command and promise of the exalted Jesus, I was the more pressed in spirit to go forward, that such a consequence might be avoided. I accordingly resolved to go up to Sunderland on the 20<sup>th</sup>, and meet the Synod on the matter. I did so, and on Wednesday the 21<sup>st</sup> I found that the Synod were bent on prosecuting the mission, and so on Thursday I was ordained to the work. . . . In this manner from step to step my path has been hedged up in this important matter; and now I find myself in the midst of the great ocean studying Chinese, and having the prospect, if the Lord will, of spending the rest of my days in that vast empire of heathen darkness. 'The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light, and to them that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.'"

One or two sentences from the ordinary entries in his journal will complete the history of this interesting juncture, and throw some additional light on the circumstances of the call which now came to him, and of the posture of his soul towards it: —

"The call to this work came to me some months before I had full light to comply with it but the way at last was made in all respects very plain. . . . On Tuesday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, I met in Glasgow James Denniston, returned from Jamaica, and on his way, if God will, to Constantinople as a missionary to the Jews. Thus, after so long an interval, we met again in the place where nine years before, at the University, he had given himself to the Lord to go to the circumcision, and I to go to the Gentiles. Having been so long engaged in other work, we had now the near prospect of entering on the fields in regard to which the vows of God were upon us. It was a confirming interview. To sovereign grace be the praise — the endless unutterable praise! . . . I came up to Sunderland to confer upon the matter," and "found to my joy that the mind of the Synod was to go forward; and I being now ready, and my way hedged in, I was next day ordained according to Acts 13, and the day following I was in London. The Presbytery of Newcastle ordained me — the only one within whose bounds I had previously laboured; Dr. Paterson presided (in his own church we were met), being the only minister remaining in his place of those with whom I had laboured in 1841, &c; William Chalmers preached at the ordination, being not only my cousin, but a minister born at Malacca, the centre of the early Chinese mission under Dr. Milne, &c. These were interesting coincidences; and still more so was the fact that Dr. Morrison, the first evangelical Chinese missionary, whose Chinese Bible I am now studying, was the son of an elder in the English Presbyterian Church, and was brought up as a Christian in the High Bridge Church, New-castle-on-Tyne, where, in 1841, I laboured for three months, little thinking of such a position as that which I now occupy."

My readers will willingly linger a little longer in the retrospect of this memorable ordination solemnity, which formed so important an era in the history of missions to the far East; and with this view will read with interest the following lines written at the time by an eye-witness, himself a devoted friend of the Chinese cause, and a deep sharer in all the hopes and fears and prayerful aspirations of that solemn time: —

"By far the most solemn and striking matter at the meeting of Synod has been the setting apart of William C. Burns as a missionary to China. Who could have believed that such would have taken place only two days before? Such an ordination has scarcely ever — if ever — taken place. It is perfectly marvellous. The thing was done suddenly (2 Chronicles 29:36), yet I cannot think hastily, for God hath evidently been preparing his servant for it these months past. The more I reflect upon all the circumstances since the time of our first speaking to him on the 21<sup>st</sup> December, when we told him of the strait in which the Church was for want of missionaries to China, up to the decision of the Synod on the 21<sup>st</sup> April to ordain him the very

next day, the more I am amazed at the wondrous things which have come to pass, and cannot doubt that God has been in them of a truth.

“On the 21<sup>st</sup> December, 1846, Mr. Burns was much at a loss as to the future; but seeing no open door, and no special call to labour at home, he placed himself in the hands of the Foreign Mission Committee to go to India, his original destination. The committee was obliged, from the state of their funds, to refuse his services. Shortly afterwards Mr. James Hamilton wrote to him, asking if he would go in the service of the English Presbyterian Church in the mission proposed to China. This was made the subject of much thought and prayer, and it was long before he could at all discover the path which the Lord was indicating in the matter. Dr. Duncan strongly urged him to go; others as decidedly dissuaded him, and endeavoured to show to him that Scotland had still claims upon him. He himself inclined to go for a time to the Continent, and it was long before he could see that he had any call from the English Presbyterian Church, or that China was the field to which he should devote himself. On the 10<sup>th</sup> April he was still in darkness; on the 11<sup>th</sup> he preached in Edinburgh (St. Luke's), from Jeremiah 15:16, and John 12:36, 'Walk while ye have the light. Light dawned upon him that day; his heart was enlarged towards the heathen; his prayers were full of pleadings on their behalf. Next morning he came to breakfast, and to our utter amazement told us he no longer saw his way to refuse the call, and intended to write to London to that effect that day. A note received the following morning mentioned that he had done so. His desire was to have a conference at the meeting of Synod the following week at Sunderland, when future plans might be decided upon.

“The very day he wrote his note, placing himself at the disposal of the Church for China, the Foreign Mission Committee had a meeting, when it was decided to abandon China — to undertake Central India instead. The information which the Committee had received regarding the number of missionaries already in the field, the difficulty of acquiring the language, and the country being still so generally closed, led to that conclusion. Mr. Burns was informed of that decision. An elaborate report was drawn up in his best style by Mr. Hamilton to lay before the Synod.

“Tuesday morning the 20<sup>th</sup> April, at nine o'clock, the committee met in Sunderland. After much consultation the brethren came to one mind, that we must not abandon China — the Church was committed to it — and Mr. Hamilton was instructed to draw up an entirely different report. No communication had been received from Mr. Burns; but the Church resolved that its duty was to keep by China, and to prosecute the missionary work there, as had been resolved upon two years before. Mr. Burns arrived in Sunderland the next day. His mind was unchanged. China was still his field, whether the Presbyterian Church abandoned it or no; and he was not a little amazed when he heard of the proceedings in committee the preceding day.

"The new report was read in Synod; Mr. Hamilton spoke and others followed. Mr. Welsh was asked to pray for guidance in the matter, and Mr. Burns was then invited to address the brethren. He did so; giving an account of his early life — his dedication to the missionary work — his arrest in Scotland, when the Lord gave testimony to the word of his grace, and the reasons for the resolution now formed. The people were much affected, as was the speaker; he was obliged frequently to pause, and at last to stop altogether. A meeting for conference was shortly afterwards summoned, at which he fully opened up his wishes in the matter, especially as regarded ordination. He wished to go forth only as an evangelist, not to administer sacraments; Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel, Acts 13. Was read; Mr. P. L. Miller prayed; and after much discussion it was resolved that he should be ordained the next day at ten o'clock, and proceed to China forthwith.

"The ordination services took place in a church in which he had often preached, and by a Presbytery (the only one in England) within whose bounds he had laboured for several months with no small success — a Presbytery from which Morrison also went forth, for his father was an elder of High Bridge Church, Newcastle; and not the least remarkable coincidence was the fact that the minister who preached had been born and baptized in China. The service was commenced by the Moderator, Mr.

Anderson, giving out Psalm 72:8-11. He read Acts 13, and sung Paraphrase 23:11-15: —

'Lo! former scenes, predicted once,  
Conspicuous rise to view;

And future scenes, predicted now,  
Shall be accomplish'd too,' &c.

The prayers were remarkable for enlargement and fervency — bearing upon every point connected with the solemn work of the day. Mr. Chalmers took as his text John 19:30, 'It is finished;' and viewed the words, 1St. In reference to God; 2nd. To man — closing with an application to the occasion — what was left for Christ's disciples to do. The ordination service was conducted by Dr. Paterson with extreme simplicity and apostolic fervour. After the questions had been satisfactorily answered, Mr. Burns knelt down — Dr. Paterson prayed, and laid hands on him — as did the other ministers, and so the first missionary of the English Presbyterian Church was 'set apart by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery.' The charge followed, which was suited to the occasion, and suited to the man to whom it was addressed. Psalm 98:1-4 was then sung: —

O sing a new song to the Lord,  
For wonders he hath done, &c.

"After the service, Mr. Miller, formerly of Dundee, and Mr. Irving of Falkirk, accompanied him to Dr. Paterson's house, and were afterwards joined by Mr. Nisbet, &c, where prayer was made, and at four o'clock Mr. B. Left for Newcastle, and preached that evening in Groat Market Chapel. I joined him there at ten o'clock. A considerable number were waiting to bid him farewell. We went to the lodging, sung Psalm 100, 'All people &c, read Mark 16, upon verse 3 of which he remarked how the women still went on, not knowing how the stone would be rolled away, and applied it to our duty in similar circumstances. We spoke of how marvellously the difficulties had been removed already in this matter. He was filled with astonishment at the way in which it had been gone about — so little of man in the whole matter — so little preparation in the sight of the world — and the Church so harmonious. We prayed together and then parted. The next morning at five o'clock, I heard his heavy foot pass my door in time for the train to London, on his way to China as the first missionary of the Presbyterian Church in England."

In finally accepting the call of the Synod to the Chinese field, my brother had declared himself willing, without returning even for a parting visit to Scotland, to proceed at once to his distant sphere of labour. It is said that when publicly asked in presence of the court how soon he could be ready to enter on his work, he replied, with prompt decision, "To-morrow." This resolute tone and attitude of spirit was eminently characteristic of him. As a man that warreth, he entangled not himself with the affairs of this life, and moved about ever as a free and unencumbered soldier, ready at a moment's warning to march at the Master's command to any quarter of the world. Amongst the memories of his old classic studies the miles expeditious I was ever, as I remember, a favourite name and idea with him, and to that model did he ever strive to discipline and brace his spirit. Long as he had doubted, and patiently as he had sought and waited for light as to the will of God in this matter, now that that will to him was clear he was utterly without hesitation and without fear. Even the difficulties which stood in the way, and which at that very time had been so greatly magnified as almost to have postponed for the time the attempt to enter a field so unpromising, instead of daunting, only fired his spirit, and made him more impatient to press on, like a brave soldier rushing to the breach in a forlorn hope. "This," writes he in his journal, "only strengthened my resolution to go forward, fearing lest the name of that Lord to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth might be dishonoured; and I came to Sunderland to confer about the matter, when I found to my joy that the mind of the Synod was to go forward" now then that the matter was decided, his voice was for immediate action.

The day before he had, I believe, left his father's house with the fixed resolution that so it should be. He did not say farewell to those that were at home in the house, but he none the less and solemnly took farewell. "I was," says an elder sister, "the only person at home when he left, our parents being both, I think, in the north. I remember Dr. Hamilton's letter earnestly asking him to be the pioneer missionary for whom the English Presbyterian Church had been so long seeking. This letter was followed by one from Mrs. Barbour, in which she reminded him that in an address to the Students' Missionary Association in Edinburgh he had said to this effect — that when young men gave themselves (i.e. Without baggage or heavy armour, and so always ready for march or battle.) to the Lord for the work of the ministry, they were not to prescribe to him where their field of labour should be, but should be willing to go anywhere, 'even to

China' I remember he smiled on reading this, and said he did not remember having said even to China, but went immediately and looked at the address, and said, \* Yes it is — even to China.' Before receiving this call he was studying the Gaelic, and seldom had the Gaelic psalm-book out of his hand, but soon after this we saw that the Gaelic was laid aside and the Encyclopedia was brought out, and he was busy studying the Chinese characters. I don't think he gave a decided answer to James Hamilton before the meeting of the Synod at Newcastle; but having heard that some timid persons were daunted by some difficulties that stood in the way, he said, "That's the very thing that makes my call clear to go," and at once packed his little carpet-bag to start for Newcastle. The day he went off he was long in papa's study in prayer, and then coming out he silently wrung my hand and looked solemnly round as if taking a farewell look of the house; he had his Breadalbane plaid over his arm, and after reaching the front-door he turned and hung it up in the lobby, taking one belonging to his mother instead, and giving me an expressive look as he did so. I was very much overcome, and watched his receding figure with the feeling that he would not return. I went into the study to give vent to my feelings, and found the Bible left open at Isaiah 64, 'Oh, that thou would rend the heavens,' &c. On going up to the drawing-room I found the Gaelic Testament and psalm-book neatly put into one of the shelves, as if he had done with them, and I then said, 'William will return no more.' In a very few days, as you know, it was all decided, and the first announcement we received was from Mr. Irving of Falkirk, who kindly came straight from the Synod meeting to give us the tidings." So he writes in his journal, the thread of which I now gladly resume: —

"I had fully, though not formally, taken leave of all friends in Scotland before coming up to the Synod, and therefore thought it duty to act upon the text, 'Let me first go and bid them farewell, &c, and without returning back to hasten on my way. This view approved itself to others, and I hoped to have gone off at once through France, and to have been in China in July by the steam communication lately established. This was overruled, however, on the ground that I would reach the field at a trying season, and by a trying route; and so it was resolved that I should wait for this present vessel, and in the interval visit the churches in this Synod. I have been accordingly in most of them — Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Brighton, London, &c. &c, and see much cause to adore the wisdom and grace of God in this delay. I do not hope again to see my dear parents before setting out; but my brother Islay and his wife from Dundee have come up to see me away, and were with me to-day along with two others occupied in my outfit (Mr. and Mrs. Ballantyne), when we took possession of my little cabin and of the ship for the Lord in the exercise of his worship. . . . My beloved parents still spared to us seem to rejoice in giving me up to the Lord for this 'honourable' work. Yes, 'it is an honourable work,' as Dr. M'Donald of Ferintosh said to me in his own veteran spirit, when the Lord permitted me to meet with him once more in Glasgow at the late communion there. . . . Before leaving Scotland I preached in Bute, Arran, &c., and had many calls to other places; but as no very special blessing seemed to attend the word, I did not feel myself at liberty to refuse a call to labour among the heathen, and that call came to me as one originally self-devoted to that work should the Lord call me. It is thus in one view a dark and solemn dispensation in my case to leave this land. I go away because, either through my sin or the people's, God's Spirit worketh not among us as in years past. But it may be that this is God's own way of shutting me out from the home field, and sending me far hence to other Gentiles. 'They essayed to preach the gospel, &c., but the Spirit suffered them not and then the vision of the man of Macedonia appeared, and they 'went over to help them.' Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord? A man's goings are of the Lord : how then can a man understand his own way? Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory. Hosanna! Amen."

In such a strain of exalted faith and hope, and with such solemn musings alike of the past and of the future, he closed the eventful period of his home and colonial ministry, and turned his face toward those new scenes to which his divine Master was pointing the way.

## CHAPTER XII

1847

## DEPARTURE FOR CHINA

The missionary's departure from England, though delayed in the manner above described, took place at last somewhat suddenly. The ship in which he was to sail, the *Mary Bannatyne*, was dropping slowly down the Channel under a light breeze towards Portsmouth, and it was expected that several days would elapse before we should have to join her there. He had accordingly made several preaching engagements for the intervening days, and was, on the evening of Tuesday, the 8<sup>th</sup> June, in the very act of entering the Scotch Church at Woolwich in fulfillment of one of these, when an express from London reached him, conveying the information that a favourable wind had sprung up and carried the ship by a rapid run to Portsmouth, and that not an hour was to be lost if he wished to join her before she sailed. He accordingly hastened at once to the railway station in hopes to catch the last train, but was, happily as it turned out, too late. Next morning he and I set out together, not without some fears of after all missing the passage, but arrived to our joy in good time. On reaching the harbor we saw the ship riding at anchor in the roads, and procuring a boat reached it in half an hour. Finding that the vessel would not after all sail till the evening, I resolved to remain on board, and return by the latest boat. We retired to the little cabin and spent the time in reading the sacred Word, and in pouring out our hearts in prayer, for the last time it might be in this world together. He read the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of St. John, and the last of 2 Timothy from the 10<sup>th</sup> verse to the end, accompanying the slow and interrupted reading with many gracious and quickening words out of the fullness of the heart. The latter passage especially he bade me mark and remember, and convey it to his friends and brethren at home as a parting message of love. Coming to the last words he paused for a moment and said: "The last words are, 'Salute Prisca,' &c.; this you must do for me; for I could not write," and burst into a flood of tears. We wept together. In the course of the afternoon he had shut himself up for an hour or two for the purpose of writing, and I saw afterwards on the table a sheet of paper half-written addressed to his mother; but the effort had been too much for him, and he had given it over. After again joining in prayer we embraced and parted, he again and again exclaiming as he lay upon my neck, "O! is it not blessed; is it not wondrous grace to be separated in this way, separated for such a cause and for such a work?" His last words were, "Remember our father and mother."

As we pushed off from the vessel's side, he called after me and pointed to his Bible, which he held up in his hand, as if to say that there was the only thing worth living for in all the world, and the one everlasting bond of union for those who are parted here. A fresh breeze sprung up; the light cutter flew before the wind, and in a few moments we had left the vessel far behind us; but long as I watched its lessening form in the deepening darkness, I seemed to see him standing in the same attitude still. I felt that I had parted not from a brother only, but from one far above me, a true and eminent saint of God. Just as we were nearing the shore they had drawn up their anchor and spread their sails to the winds.

Three hours afterwards he was again in his cabin, resuming with more calm and collected thoughts the interrupted letter to his mother: —

"On board the '*Mary Bannatyne* off Portsmouth, June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1847, 11.30 p.m. — My dear Mother, — My embarkation has been at the last, as I will tell in detail, rather sudden and hurried. I expected not to leave London until to-morrow morning, but the ship got quickly round to Portsmouth, and last night when entering the door of Mr. Thomson's church at Woolwich to preach, a messenger from London met me to say that I must get to Portsmouth without losing an hour lest the ship should be gone. I endeavoured accordingly to leave London by the last train, but was too late, and happily so, for in case I had got away I

would not have seen I.; but as it was graciously arranged, I came away at seven A.M., and had J., I and Mrs. I. to the station, and I all the way. He was on board during most of the day, and left us in the evening. My heart was too full to put pen to paper at that time, and I left as I thought all news for him to give; but since he went away I find that by our pilot I may still send a few lines, which I cannot omit the duty of attempting. I have now entered on a new sphere of duty and trial, I mean on board ship. Much fidelity and wisdom are needed to be a witness for the Lord in such circumstances, and I have in this matter, as well as with reference to ulterior designs, much need of fervent believing prayer. Do not forget us. May all that sail with us be given to Jesus. We have already begun worship in the cuddy, and I hope it may be continued throughout, if possible, morning and evening. I felt it a great privilege to have with me at the last. May this separation for the gospel be to each of us a blessing. Ah! what grace is manifested in such a separation! Why am I not, as many, going, forth in search of mammon; or put to sea, as some are, because they are unprofitable even in man's account on land? Who maketh thee to differ? O! to live under the full influence of Christ's constraining love! To us to live will thus be Christ, and to us to die will be gain. We know not the progress nor the end of this voyage, nor what news may reach us from Britain should we reach our destination. Yet I rejoice to go. I feel that I am where it is the Lord's gracious will that I should be, and I would join with all his people in praying, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' All the ends of the earth shall yet remember and turn to the Lord; and all the kindreds of the people shall do homage unto him; for the kingdom is the Lord's, and he is the Governor among the nations. On his vesture and on his thigh there is a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords! Now may the God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. Brethren, pray for us! Salute all the brethren for us. Thus in haste again writes, dearest mother, your affectionate son, — Wm. C. Burns."

Such was his farewell, full alike of solemn tenderness, and of brave, resolute hopefulness, to his native land, and to the home of his birth and early years. The progress of his voyage, and his unwearied labours for Christ in the narrow sphere now meanwhile assigned to him, will be best followed in the words of his own journal, of which, however, our space will only permit a very few extracts : —

"At Sea, Wednesday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1847 — It is now a fortnight since I embarked in this vessel; and thus far God hath graciously prospered our way. For a week after we set sail we were detained by contrary and, in general, stormy winds at the mouth of the British Channel, but since that time the weather has been delightful, and we have been wafted speedily on our way, so that to-morrow morning, if the wind continue favourable, we shall pass by Madeira. During the first few days I was rather sick, but I have been able from the beginning to do a little at my Chinese studies, and during the last few days my progress has been, I think, encouraging. We have had public worship every evening in the public cabin, and to-day I succeeded in getting it begun also in the morning. . . .

At Sea, lat. 23 south, lon. 29 west. Wednesday, July 28<sup>th</sup> — It is seven weeks this day since I came on board this vessel. Hitherto we have been all mercifully preserved, and have advanced steadily, though not very rapidly, on our voyage. Some of the crew have had illness, but they are again able for their duties. I have suffered a good deal, and still suffer almost daily, from nausea, which abridges my ability for close application to study. I am, however, able to do a little from day to day in acquiring the Chinese, and occasionally I make more rapid advances. The work is pleasant and profitable from the Bible being my text-book, and in consideration of the momentous end which I have in view. Morrison was enabled to accomplish a great work in preparing such a version of the New Testament as that which it is my privilege to study. I have felt much interested by his Memoirs, which I am again reading. He was a spiritual man as well as a man of strong natural parts, and was thus both naturally and by grace qualified for the work of translation. . . .

"I have been graciously permitted hitherto to maintain family worship in the cabin every evening and generally also in the morning, although with occasional difficulty, the desire not being as yet very great. The illness of one of the seamen opened my way a good deal in the fore-castle, and I now have worship there also at least twice a week. On Sabbaths all join with us excepting one or two. When shall the cry be heard among us: "What shall I do to be saved? Yesterday afternoon we passed Trinidad, a very

picturesque island, uninhabited except by a few goats and swine. It stands quite alone in the midst of this vast ocean. Should our voyage be favourable, we shall not again see land until near the Chinese seas. The Island of St. Paul's comes first in sight. I was glad to find on crossing the line that the heathenish practices which used to be common on shipboard, and of which Dr. Morrison gives an account in his journal forty years ago, had no place among us. All went on as usual, with only some passing allusions to the subject. Such changes among our seamen are hopeful.

Do thou thy glory far advance  
Above both sea and land, Psalm 37

"Lat. 33° south, lon. 14 west. Thursday, August 5<sup>th</sup> — This morning at half-past four o'clock, Thomas M'Leod, an apprentice in the ship, fell overboard and was drowned. They tried to render him assistance, but all was vain, as it was dark and rainy, and the wind was changing at the time. He was aged about seventeen, a native of Rothesay, and the son of a widow. The evening before last I had worship in the steerage or half-deck with him and some of the other men, and was led to speak specially of the danger of sudden death to which they were exposed. He seemed attentive, and answered me the question in the Shorter Catechism, 'What is Prayer?' I had also conversed and prayed with him previously when sick. This is all I can say of his case. He is, alas! now numbered with those whom 'the sea will give up' at the last day to stand before the great white throne. It is sad to see and feel how little this solemn event seems to affect us. Who can tell but it may be the precursor of other displays of the Lord's righteous hand? May I and others be taught to prepare for the Lord's coming! I am still enabled to continue worship morning and evening (with occasional interruptions in the morning) in the cabin. In the half-deck and in the fore-castle I have the fullest liberty to do all I can for these precious souls. I am sometimes refreshed in these exercises, though I cannot see any special evidences of fruit. 'Let us not be weary in well-doing.' We are now about 1600 miles from the Cape of Good Hope. The weather has been fine hitherto, but this being the winter season in these southern regions it is now becoming cold, and may be expected to be stormy. I go on pretty regularly with my Chinese, and find it gradually become more familiar, although it is evident from the nature of the language that it must require long practice to render it at all natural to a European mind and tongue. I occupy myself much in translating the English New Testament into Chinese, and comparing these rude attempts with Morrison's version. This I find an admirable method of mastering the substance of the language, although the peculiar Chinese manner of thought and expression can only be fully attained from studying native authors. This I am also practicing to a certain extent. . . .

"Entrance of Java Sea (opposite North Island), Saturday night, October 9<sup>th</sup> — I am now near the close of another week of mercy and faithfulness manifested toward me on the part of a redeeming covenant God. On Sabbath morning last we were in shallow water, but no land had been seen, the weather being thick. At ten A.M., the curtain was uplifted, and opposite my cabin window appeared the high land of Sumatra at the mouth of Sundae Straits. This joyful sight at this moment served to unite the passengers in a short meeting for divine worship when there seemed little likelihood of their assembling, the steward having brought word that neither the captain nor any of the crew could attend. I sung Psalm 115:1-4, 10, read and commented shortly on Ephesians 3, and concluded with prayer. I did not go to dinner, as I wished to seek a right view of the sin of trampling on the Lord's-day, and to praise him for his great mercy in saving our ship's company from the temptation to violate it at Anjer, as they might have done. . . . On Tuesday morning we were within ten miles of Anjer, sailing slowly over a glassy sea covered with the canoes of the Javanese and Malays fishing, or bringing off provisions to offer for sale. Six or seven canoes came under my cabin-window to trade with the captain, &c. I looked out to them, and when they stroked their naked arms and breasts to intimate that they wished clothes, I could only smile, shake my head, and hold up an open book (the book of God), to let them know that I was come to teach them, and not to trade or clothe their bodies. They understood (It had been for some days anticipated that they would reach Anjer on the Lord's-day.) my meaning, and looked to me again and again smiling, as if well pleased; and one man put his hands together as if in the attitude of prayer. In the afternoon God sent us for a short time a favourable breeze, which carried us to Anjer Bay about five o'clock; but left us outside the anchorage, which, owing to the current, we did not reach until seven A.M. Of Wednesday (October 6th). . . . On Saturday forenoon we

were in company of two vessels from London to China, the baroque Anne and fane, which sailed a fortnight before us, and the ship Marquis of Bute, which belongs to the same owners as this vessel, and sailed a month later. Her master, Captain Bannatyne, is from Rothesay. He was on board for some hours. It was indeed a cause of thankfulness that all this preceded the Lord's-day; and that on Sabbath (yesterday) no one came near us to be a cause of temptation. We had public worship on the poop as the day was fine. ... I preached from Matthew 28:18-20, 'All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, &c. And, lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.' I felt much supported in opening up briefly these mighty words, and had an opportunity of speaking to present circumstances among ourselves, while I showed on the one hand the duty of Christ's ministers, and on the other the duty and responsibility of those individuals, parents, masters, &c., to whom this gospel comes in obeying it themselves, and allowing it to have free course among those placed under them. The rest of the Sabbath I spent in my own cabin, and though there was no further meeting for worship on board, yet I trust the presence of God was among us. . . .

"Monday, October 25<sup>th</sup> — Since the previous date I have been able to do comparatively little at the Chinese on account of the heat, which has been very great and oppressive. We have made good progress during the last week, and are now about seven hundred miles only from our destination. We are to-day, however, nearly becalmed, and the future is with our God, who reigneth over all. . . . Taking into view the state of my own soul, and my future prospects in nearing the coast of China, I felt it duty to spend the rest of the day (Sunday, October 24<sup>th</sup>, after divine service) in my own cabin, and did not leave it to dinner or tea, or indeed at all. I trust my soul feasted in the Lord's presence, and upon his truth and grace. My heart visited many past scenes of labour and many far-distant friends and brethren in the faith of Jesus; and I enjoyed more than usual liberty and depth both in confessing sin and in pleading for grace to myself and others. ... I have often found of late the chapters in Mr. M'Cheyne's Calendar for the daily reading of the Scriptures exceedingly suitable to my wants. His Memoir and Remains also I find now more valuable than ever. I am reading also again, and with new interest as we approach the scene of his labours, the memoirs of Dr. Morrison the Chinese missionary. The earlier part of these memoirs especially contains a precious development of his very genuine and eminent spiritual character. He appears to have been indeed an upright servant of the living God. Oh! for grace to follow in this respect in his footsteps. Dr. Milne was a precious man of God, and his Chinese tracts — some of which I have — seem to be of much value. In these, his works, I doubt not, will follow him. His life by Philip has too much of Dr. Philip and too little of Dr. Milne to possess all the interest and importance which might belong to such a work. And yet some of the biographer's views seem striking and useful.

"Monday, November 8<sup>th</sup> — Subsequently to the previous date for about ten or twelve days we had calms or very light winds, so that we made little progress except to the eastward. The captain was glad at getting so far to the east (close to the coast of Luzon, a large island belonging to the Spaniards, in which Manila is the chief port), as he counted on meeting the north-east monsoon, and so running direct across towards the north-west to Hong-Kong. But how short-sighted is human wisdom even in these natural things! On Saturday night last it began to blow a gale which continued to increase during the whole of Sabbath, and since this morning has been so very severe that some part of the main-mast has been blown away, and until this moment (half-past eight o'clock P.M.) we are running under bare poles, i.e. Unable to carry the smallest sail, at the mercy of the winds and waves, or more truly at the mercy of that living God 'who bringeth the wind out of his treasures.' During the day the wind was from the west, and we were fast drifting towards the land, which is thought to be very near. Had this continued our danger must have soon been imminent; but as it is ordered in the Lord's mercy, the wind has gone more into the south, and though the storm still rages we drift rather towards our wished-for port, and the hope of deliverance gladdens every heart. I trust these things are ordered for spiritual good to some or many, as well as to manifest the glory of a present God. I have been kept in perfect peace hitherto, I trust, from having the mind stayed on the Lord. The Lord has also wondrously again begun to open a door among us for delivering the testimony of his truth. On Thursday week I found unexpectedly a favourable opportunity of asking again that public worship should be resumed; and had the request granted cordially, although I was still to be confined to worship in the cuddy, and not to go into the fore-castle. I took the liberty thankfully; but again renewed my

protest against the restriction. Worship accordingly was held every night until this storm began, which made yesterday a silent Sabbath; and this evening, when I did not think of proposing worship, it was requested for the first time by one of the passengers. Thus I trust the truth is gaining ground among us. The moral atmosphere of our society has been for weeks past a good deal purified. Sung Psalm 46; read Isaiah 26.

"Tuesday Evening, November 9<sup>th</sup> — During last night the storm abated, and this morning revealed the land very near — about twelve or fifteen miles off. Had the storm overtaken us fifteen hours sooner our peril must have been imminent, as we were then within six or eight miles of the shore; and as it was, had the wind not changed from west to south we must soon have been in great jeopardy, and in still greater suspense and alarm. We have been during to-day advancing prosperously on our course, and I do trust that that almighty and holy Being whose mercies have been so great has still greater, even saving mercies in store for many among us. I am encouraged to hope this more than before, after having been much cast down about an hour ago. No one came at worship time, and the captain came in, looked at the barometer, and went on deck. I had gone into my cabin, and was spreading the matter before the Lord when the steward came to tell me the captain was waiting for worship. We had only him and Dr. Morrison, but the meeting was sweet; portion in order, Cornelius and Peter, &c. — opening of the door of faith to the Gentiles, Acts 10; and from some conversation after we had concluded I entertain the hope that I may soon have full liberty as before to visit among the crew. Should it be so, may the Holy Spirit be present giving liberty to preach Jesus crucified for sin as the refuge for dying souls, and spiritual liberty to every soul to receive him as a Saviour and Lord unto eternal life! Jesus hath the key of David. He openeth and no man shutteth. It is five months this day since I came on board this vessel. The Lord hath been gracious and true!

"Hong-Kong, Tuesday, December 7<sup>th</sup> — After the storm of November 8<sup>th</sup> we had favourable winds, and anchored in Hong-Kong Bay at midnight on Saturday the 13<sup>th</sup>. On Monday I came on shore, meeting a very kind and Christian welcome from the friends of the gospel here, and finding such doors of useful labour immediately opened to me, as confirm me in the soundness of those convictions of duty which brought me here. I am most comfortably boarded with a Mr. and Mrs. Power, close to the mission premises of the London Society. Mr. Stevenson (The Rev. George Stevenson, now of Pulteney Town, Wick, an early and much-valued friend, who had been invited to undertake the pastoral charge of the Free Church congregation at Hong-Kong, but had been by providential circumstances prevented.) has been prevented from coming out to minister to the Presbyterians here, and this gives me a greater hold of my own countrymen, to whom I have opportunity of preaching once every Lord's-day in the London Society's chapel. My progress in Chinese is slow compared with my desires; but still I hope encouraging considered in the view of the difficulties of this very peculiar and hard language. On my arrival I was permitted once more to hear from my beloved parents — all well.

Our deliverance from the perils of the deep appears now the greater, since we have heard within the last few days that the Anne and Jane from London, with which we were in company in the Java Sea, was on the 8<sup>th</sup> ult. Driven on shore near Manila and totally lost. All, however, were saved except one of the crew and a passenger, Mr. Rogers from Edinburgh, who were washed off a raft to which they had betaken themselves, and were drowned. Another vessel also narrowly escaped, getting into Manila with the loss of all her masts."

## CHAPTER XIII

1847

## THE FIELD AND ITS PIONEERS

"China proper is a compact territory. You would only need to cut off a few projections and fill up a few indentations in order to bring it into either a circle or a square; for its length and breadth are nearly equal. It includes more than a million square miles; and lying between the twentieth and forty-second parallels of northern latitude, it enjoys on the whole an excellent climate. Two noble rivers (The Hwang-ho and Yang-tse-kiang, the "Yellow River" and the "Son of the Ocean.") flow down its centre, and fertilize the most populous regions in the world. The ocean, sprinkled with islands, washes its eastern and southern coasts. The mountains of Tibet are its western barrier; and on the north it is still guarded by a wall thirteen hundred miles in length, which it cost the united labours of the nation to erect two thousand years ago. Over this wall or over these mountains, you instantly land on bleak deserts and barren wastes; and it is no wonder that in contrast with the encircling solitudes, the Chinese should have called their teeming soil, 'The Flowery Land.'

"Wide as the surface is, the swarming inhabitants require it all. From the safest calculations, as the imperial census, the present population cannot be less than three hundred and sixty millions, or a third of the world's inhabitants. To stow away such a multitude needs the utmost economy of room; and in its expedients for squeezing existence into the smallest possible compass, the Chinese continent resembles the cabin of a ship. Crops are grown in places where you would think none but the birds could have planted them; and in their anxiety to leave every inch available for culture, they contrive to put past themselves and their families in all inconceivable corners. They cannot double their area, but their genial sky allows them to double their harvests by sowing two crops in the year; and as land is so precious, many of this evenly-minded and compressible people are content to live on the water. Most of their rivers are strewn with these floating cottages."

But in truth the crowded life of the Chinese people is due not so much to the narrowness of the land, as to the variety of its surface. The sterile and inhospitable character of a large part of the empire compresses a population which on the average is not more dense than that of England into a comparatively limited space. To the west are vast mountain ranges, with giant peaks, frowning gorges, and forests of cedar and of pine; in the centre is a hilly region, gradually softening down into those gentle breezy slopes on which the tea plantations flourish; while to the east and seaward there stretch out wide and fertile plains, studded with towns and villages, and cultivated every inch like one vast garden. It is this last region that constitutes that teeming hive of human life with which we are familiar and of which alone till recently we could be said to possess any authentic knowledge. The people are quiet, industrious, orderly, mechanically civil, and artificially refined, deeply sunk indeed, like all heathen nations, in ungodliness and sin, but addicted rather to the quieter than the ruder vices. They are intensely sensual, but not fierce or cruel; though the very apathy and shallowness of their nature renders them on occasions singularly reckless of the shedding of blood. They love their children, and have more than any other heathen people of the sentiment of home and family life; and yet the inconvenience of an overcrowded country induces them to expose by myriads their female offspring.

Their religion is a strange medley of diverse creeds, dwelling together in peace, and blending more or less together in the ideas and life of the people. "The first of these was founded by Confucius in the sixth century. It is the religion of the literati, and of the present emperor; but there is no reason why it should be called a religion, except that its votaries believe in nothing besides. It consists of a few moral and practical maxims, and evades the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. The Confucians are the atheists

and the philosophic utilitarians of China. Next comes the Tao sect, whose founder, Laou-tsze, lived in the days of Confucius. Unlike the Confucians, who believe in nothing supernatural, the followers of Laou-tsze have peopled earth and air with all sorts of spirits and demons. They deal in magic, and are constantly consulting maniacs and others whom they deem possessed; and it used to be their great problem to discover the elixir of immortality. They are the fanatics of China. And then we have a sect not of Chinese but Indian origin, and far more popular than the other two, the Buddhists. The object of their ambition is to lose all personal identity, and be absorbed into Buddha. Contemplation and abstraction of mind are their highest enjoyments, and to lose all contact with earthly things — to live 'without looking, speaking, hearing, or smelling,' is the nearest approach to perfection. They are the mystics and ascetics of China." Such as it is, the religion of this strange and singular people obtrudes itself everywhere. The land teems with images. "Their temples, houses, streets, roads, hills, rivers, carriages, and ships, are full of idols; every room, niche, corner, door, and window, is plastered with charms, amulets, and emblems of idolatry."

Add to these particulars one or two characteristic features more, — their singular reverence for the tombs and for the memories of their ancestors, — their ancestral tablets and ancestral religious rites; their one written, and their many spoken, languages; their universal system of education and of literary examination and degrees, upon which, by a remarkable anticipation of our recent civil service reforms, the appointment to all public offices of trust and profit depends; their strange and whimsical, but often rich and showy costume — the tails and silk robes of the men, and the cramped feet of the women; their eager curiosity, especially in the inland districts, about the persons and the movements of strangers, making the hapless traveler often ten minutes after his arrival the centre of an excited crowd, which fills doors and windows, and almost stops the traffic of the streets; their fortune-tellers, their story-tellers, their jugglers, and their rude but vastly popular stage-plays, held in the open air, at the expense usually of some rich citizen, and open to all comers; their pleasant life in canals and rivers, in boats which serve often for weeks together both for locomotion and lodging, and which, moored close to the gate of some populous town or city, make the stranger at once at home in the place of his sojourning; their multitudinous and meaningless religious ceremonies, in which there is scarcely anything of religion or religious belief; and in fine, their measurement of time not by weeks but by the periodical recurrence of market-days, evermore painfully reminding the missionary that he dwells in a Sabbathless land; — and we shall be able to form a tolerably distinct idea of the circumstances and scenes in the midst of which we have now to place ourselves, and with which, in the course of our narrative, we shall become more and more familiar.

Towards this vast and interesting field the missionary spirit of the Christian Church was at a very early period directed. So early as the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century, missionaries from the Nestorian churches in Persia found their way to China. And from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, onward, to the present time, the Romish Church has scarcely ever been without its missionary representatives; some of them men of devoted zeal and rare ability — Francis Xavier pre-eminent above them all; to whom, however we may estimate the character of their work or the quality of its results, belongs the undoubted honour of having been first in the field, and of having held forth a bright example of enterprise and heroism, which the reformed churches were but too slow to follow. At the time at which our narrative begins, there were in China 170 Roman Catholic missionaries, and upwards of 200,000 converts.

In the year 1806 Robert Morrison, the first Protestant missionary to China, was set apart to the work in Swallow Street Scotch Church, London, under the auspices of the London Missionary Society, and arrived at Macao on September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1807. "There, in a warehouse which he rented, he plodded on in his secret labours at the language, hardly venturing out among the suspicious inhabitants, and hiding the lamp by which he studied behind a volume of Henry's Commentary, After ten years of toil he completed a herculean task, and printed in six quartos a Dictionary of Chinese; and after being joined by a like-minded labourer, Dr. Milne, had the happiness to translate into Chinese the entire Word, which, by the amazing ingenuity and industry of a brother missionary, was printed in a new and beautiful style." He was a man indeed singularly fitted by the gifts alike of nature and of grace for the work which he had undertaken, and specially at the particular stage which that work had then reached, with "talents rather of the solid than of the showy kind; fitted more for continued labour than for sudden bursts of genius," and with a shrewd caution which was of great price in "a station where one false step at the beginning might have delayed the

work for years." For eighteen long years he laboured on unobtrusively and unweariedly, himself but little seen, but his eye ever fixed on the Master and the Master's business. He died in 1834, having been preceded twelve years by his beloved brother and true yoke-fellow Dr. Milne. Though the time of fruit was not yet, they were honoured to gather some precious first fruits of China unto Christ, conspicuous amongst whom were Leang Afah and Keuh Agang, who long survived them as consistent disciples and zealous and successful preachers of the gospel. But their work was that of pioneers rather than of cultivators of the land; gathering little fruit themselves, but preparing the seed for many harvests yet to come. Their true monument is the Chinese Bible and the Chinese College, (The Anglo-Chinese College founded at Malacca, in 1818, for the cultivation of English and Chinese literature, and thereby promoting the propagation of Christianity in the Far East. Dr. Morrison himself made the munificent offering of 1500 sterling pounds towards the carrying out of this object, in which we must recognize the true precursor of the educational missionary institutes originated by Dr. Duff in Hindustan twenty years later.) and the enduring memory of that "work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope" in the midst of all discouragements and difficulties, by which, though dead, they yet speak to all that follow after them, and which shall be remembered to their honour in that day "when they that sowed and they that reaped shall rejoice together." They will be ever recognized and honoured as the true fathers of the Chinese Protestant Missions and of the Chinese Protestant Church.

With the opening of the five ports to foreign residents and foreign traffic in 1842, just eight years after Morrison had closed his work on earth, a great impulse was naturally given to the cause of Chinese missions, and representatives of all the great societies in Britain and in America speedily hastened to the field. Within four years there were already in China, or on the way to it, fifty Protestant missionaries. The field so long jealously guarded and hedged around was suddenly thrown open and lay white unto the harvest, and eager reapers were hastening from every side to cut it down.

Such were the main incidents in the past history of the work on which the subject of this memoir now entered, with the ardent zeal of a Xavier, with the patient constancy of a Morrison, and with a consecration of heart and an abnegation of self equal to any of those who had ever trod that distant shore.

## CHAPTER XIV

1847— 1850

## BREAKING GROUND

"Forty years have elapsed," said the Rev. James Hamilton, in his report to the Synod early in the next year, "since a young man, a native of Newcastle, and brought up in one of our Presbyterian Churches, effected his circuitous and almost clandestine passage as the first Protestant missionary to the Chinese empire. Arriving solitary on a shy and unwelcoming shore, with no Christian friend to cheer him, and no European arm to shelter him, that faithful servant of Jesus spent years of lonely and perilous toil in conquering a language with which scarce an Englishman had dared to grapple. But many a happy change, the harbinger of changes happier still, may thankfully be recognized in Mr. Burns' entrance on his work. Proceeding boldly to his destination, an honoured passenger in one of Britain's gallant argosies, and needing no alien interposition to smuggle the evangelist into a land which Britain then forbade the evangelist to tread, landing in open day, and beneath the glad assurance of the Union banner, he found the missionaries of two hemispheres, as well as Chinese Christians, there before him. And whilst we would join our dear friend in commemorating these bright distinctions of his lot, we record with special thankfulness the progress which he has already made as a Chinese scholar. The wonderful labours of Morrison and his coadjutors notwithstanding, the language still remains of all human dialects the mightiest barrier to intercourse; . . . and with all the helps afforded by his predecessors in this arduous work, and with all the facilities for quiet and unmolested study in an English settlement, we fully reckoned that years might pass before Mr. Burns could make any practical essay in that appalling tongue. Already, however, before faith and energy its terrors seem to disappear; and although it is only a year since our brother began to apply his mind to the study, and though he had only been two months arrived when last he wrote — we record it with joy and wonder — he was already attempting to publish the Word of life in the speech of Sinim. Having obtained access to the prisoners in the public jail, he was enabled to read the Scriptures to them, and even to address them briefly so that they understood."

To this last incident he thus refers in his journal of date January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1848: —

"During the past month I have been making some progress in the Chinese, and have had some opportunities of bringing into use the measure of knowledge already acquired. A fortnight ago Dr. Morrison asked me to go and visit in the prison three Chinese criminals under sentence of death for murder, and who were in deep distress and anxious to be visited by the ministers of Christ. Unable to do much, I felt called to do what I could; and as the execution of the sentence was delayed longer than usual in consequence of the absence of the governor, I had almost daily opportunities of meeting these poor men. I generally went alone, but at other times -in company with the Chinese preacher Chin-Seen. They were very anxious to hear of the way of salvation through Jesus, and evidently strove to understand my broken Chinese. Although unable to say much to them I made them read with me Christian books, and on several occasions I even joined with them in prayer, through the medium of their own tongue. They did not speak the Canton dialect, which I am chiefly studying, and this no doubt made my rude attempts less intelligible; yet I felt encouraged, and enjoyed, I think, something of the power of grace in praying with and for them. One of these poor men has received a commutation of his sentence."

This first beginning of his work in the sphere of direct missionary effort is characteristic, and must have been peculiarly congenial to him. Like that divine Master in whose steps he walked so closely, it was ever his delight most of all and first of all to care for those for whom few else cared, to leave the ninety and nine in the safe and quiet pastures, and go to seek the utterly lost in the far wilderness. The publicans and sinners in the highways and hedges, the neglected crowds of railway labourers or factory workers, the

soldiers in the rough barrack-room, or amid the terrible temptations of the great city streets, had ever, in his native land and in Canada, had a special attraction for him, as those to whom, as most needing, he owed the deepest debt of compassion and help. He loved to walk like Christ on the shady side of the world, and to be as a "brother born" to the sorrowful, the outcast, the forsaken. And so it was that in China by a singular coincidence it happened that his first care was directed to that very class to whom three hundred years before the apostolic Xavier had looked as the probable objects of his first missionary efforts — only that now in these happier times, it was not needful to become a prisoner in order to become the teacher of prisoners. It was quite in the spirit of his whole life thus immediately to begin his work with such imperfect means of communication as were then at his disposal, instead of waiting until a more perfect knowledge of the language should have given him the advantage of clear and fluent utterance. In haste to reach the souls of those he had come so far to seek, he was impatient of the last barrier that still separated him from them; and if he could not yet break down that partition wall, he might yet at least hold broken converse with them through those narrow chinks and openings which he had already made. He could speak only, indeed, with stammering words, and broken sentences; but those stammering words and broken sentences might still convey some grains of the precious gold — reflect some glimmerings of the eternal saving light — and that infinite blessing he dared not even for a moment withhold. Besides, while seeking to teach those poor prisoners the way of life, he would be at the same time learning something from them. He would sharpen and polish his rude instrument in the very act of using it, exercise his stammering tongue and correct his broken sentences, while by their means he sought to instruct and comfort others. It was on the same principle that, as he tells us in his first letter from Hong-Kong, he from the first attended regularly the daily Chinese service conducted by natives at the mission-house, and gave lessons in English to the boy that waited on him along with another, while "they repaid him with their Chinese, which he endeavoured to speak with them as best he could; sometimes succeeding in being understood, and sometimes provoking a smile only." Dr. Hamilton I believe is perfectly right in attributing his remarkable success in mastering the difficulties and disarming "the terrors" of this singular tongue mainly to the "faith and energy" with which he girded himself to the task. He had indeed naturally a more than ordinary faculty for the study of language, and that faculty had at an early period received the very best discipline and training; but the natural faculty was more than doubled by the intense and concentrated energy with which, when called for by the highest ends, he used it. Here, as in everything else which concerned the service of his divine Master, whatever his hand found to do he did it with his might. As before in the case of the French in Canada, so here he might be said for the time to have almost wholly lived in the element of Chinese thought and Chinese speech. He spoke Chinese, wrote Chinese, read Chinese, heard Chinese, and sang in Chinese, prayed in Chinese. Far into the night sometimes might his voice be heard reciting aloud the words, of life, or pouring out his heart before God, in the broken accents of that strange tongue which for Christ's sake he had determined with as little delay as possible to make his own. Six years after this, as I heard recently from a relative, when on a visit to England, he surprised a company of friends by suddenly pronouncing the blessing before meat in Chinese, and then calmly repeating the same in English. It was only an extreme instance of that which was in reality the ruling principle of his whole missionary life. From the first and in everything "to the Chinese he became as a Chinese that he might gain the Chinese" — lived in their world, thought their thoughts, spoke their words. It was thus alone, as it seems to me, that he was enabled in after-years, as the prompt and fearless pioneer of the missionary band, to make those rapid transitions from one sphere of labour to another, which required in each case the forgetting of one language and the learning of another. The acquiring of a new Chinese dialect was comparatively an easy task to him, because he lived habitually in a Chinese element, and was thoroughly imbued with the very spirit of all Chinese thought and speech.

The following extracts from his letters will still further illustrate the nature of his work, and the spirit which actuated him during the first, and necessarily in a great measure preparatory and tentative, part of his missionary life : —

"Hong-Kong, Dec. 27<sup>th</sup>, 1847 — My dear Mother, — I am again allowed the opportunity of addressing you from this distant shore, that you may know something of what I am doing, and that I may find at last some vent for those feelings which the thought of those from whom I am so far removed awakens. I have

been, since I last wrote, going on with my Chinese studies, and I desire to be thankful that I am enabled to make a little progress, while the difficulties that still remain to be encountered before I can attain to anything like a full mastery of the language, are so many that, were it not for the greatness of the end in view, I would be disposed to abandon the undertaking."

Then after referring to his visits to the prisoners, "It is encouraging," he continues, "even already to be able to point even in a few expressions to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world— to that Root of Jesse to whom the Gentiles are to seek and find his rest to be glorious. Among our own countrymen last Lord's-day was interesting, as that on which for the first time a congregation met here in connection with the Presbyterian Church. The place of meeting at present is central and convenient (an old bungalow, immediately behind the club-house); and though the numbers attending may not at first be very large, yet it is hoped that by the blessing of God this may form the beginning of that which shall issue in important results, both among the Chinese and amongst our own countrymen."

To this congregation he continued to minister during the whole period of his stated residence in Hong-Kong, without, however, undertaking the task of constituting a regular church, or "entangling himself in any way that might retard his labours among the Chinese." Meantime, while his spare time and spare thoughts were given to his countrymen, his main strength and his whole heart were still with those in whose behalf he had come, and with whom, in the whole circumstances of his life, he more and more identified himself. Leaving the comfortable lodging in a European family in which he had been at first received, he removed to a hired house of his own in the midst of the native population, where he might bury himself out of sight with Chinese companions and in a Chinese home. His mode of life there must have been a very humble one in the eyes even of his humbler neighbours, if one may judge from a significant incident which he afterwards playfully told me. There had been some commotion in the neighbourhood in consequence of some petty robbery or other misdemeanor, and an excited crowd was passing before the door in eager pursuit of the culprit. "Oh! you need not look there," cried one from amongst the throng, "it is only a poor foreigner."

On the 28th March, he again writes to his mother: — "After having had worship with my Chinese family (two servants, a teacher, and three boys) I take up my pen to endeavour to hold some kind of communication, from this distant region of the earth, with those who are dearest to me on it. I feel, as I did last time, the want of hearing from any of you; but I have been comforted in some degree by the absence of any bad news, whether by the papers or by Mrs. K.'s letters. May the living and true God be the God and Redeemer and portion of each of my beloved friends, and be more and more gracious to, and more and more glorious in the eyes of my beloved parents as they advance to the borders of the unseen and eternal world! May you be enabled to say with the divine Psalmist, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon the earth whom I desire besides thee: my flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever!' 'As for me I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness. May your faith be as the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day! Oh! that I might hear in this far land of those of our dear kindred that as yet love not Jesus, having the eye divinely opened to behold His beauty and preciousness! For myself I am here in the midst of a people of a strange language, and who know not the true God nor Jesus Christ whom he hath sent to be the light and life of men, and yet I cannot say that I am solitary or forsaken. I feel indeed more at home here than I did when I was last among you in Scotland, when the weight of that call which I believe I obeyed in coming here was resting upon me, and making me as a stranger among my own kindred. When I last wrote I had newly taken up my abode here with my Chinese domestics, and had been encouraged by feeling able to read and pray with them (though feebly) in their own tongue. My teacher had not then joined me, and I was uncertain whether he would succeed in getting a school formed on the principles of the gospel. In this, however, I have been encouraged beyond my expectation. He got a few boys to come from a little distance of his own acquaintance, and as soon as he opened the school others came from the neighbourhood of their own accord; so that for the last fortnight he has had regularly from twelve to fifteen scholars. Were we to make any effort I believe we could get more; but in the first instance I want to go on gradually until the character of the school becomes fixed on right principles, and until I see that it really promises to accomplish more than that which I sought it for at the outset, viz. Bringing me into such

intercourse with the people as might enable me to acquire the language as they speak it, and might open up the way for preaching the Word among them when I am able to do this. Three of the boys stay with us in the house, and all of them come regularly to worship in the morning, when we have a little meeting of seventeen or eighteen persons in all. The school is of course shut up on Sabbath, but the last two Sabbaths most of the boys have been with us most of the day learning a Christian book, and have also attended Chinese worship of their own accord at the chapel of the London Society, where a native at present officiates. Soon after the school was opened it was interesting to me one morning about six o'clock, and before any one was on foot but myself, to see a Chinese woman with a little boy of eleven or twelve knocking to be admitted to the school. I thought of that blessed time approaching when the mothers of China will bring their children to the feet of Jesus that he may bless them. The Chinese are diligent in learning after their own manner. They begin with the morning light and continue to con over their insipid task (insipid, as we would reckon it) until evening. They are an intelligent and interesting race, and when the gospel takes hold of them in elevating and saving power, they will be interesting in another manner."

Amid such quiet, patient, but unobtrusive labours the first fourteen months of his residence in Hong-Kong passed away. Longing for great things, yet not despising the day of small things, he was content meanwhile to occupy faithfully the narrow sphere assigned him, and to wait in patience till the great Master should open a wider door. The time, however, was now come for a further and bolder flight. His proficiency in the spoken language of the Canton province was now sufficient to enable him at least intelligibly to declare his message. The shores of continental China with its teeming towns and villages lay before his eyes, and he longed to be in the midst of the vast harvest-field. It was true that as yet the permissive liberty of intercourse with the native population was confined within the limits of the five open ports, nor had any Protestant missionary hitherto extended his labours much beyond their precincts. There would, he knew, be much difficulty and possibly some danger in the attempt; but there was no manifest impossibility, and impossibility alone was in his view a sufficient hindrance to one who would go forward in a great work in the name of the Lord. He would at least knock at the door, and see whether that divine almighty hand would open it. "You desired," said he in one of his letters, "that three doors might be opened to me, — the door of entrance into the language, the door of access into the country, and the door of admittance for the Lord's truth into men's hearts. The first of these has been opened in an encouraging degree already; and it now remains to seek by prayer and actual trial that the other two doors may be opened also." He announced accordingly the discontinuance both of his Sunday English services and of the Chinese school at Hong-Kong, and steadfastly turned his face towards the "regions beyond."

On January 29th, 1849, he writes: — The routine of my work hitherto has been in learning the Chinese language, with the important accompaniment of preaching from week to week among my own countrymen. Now, however, I am entering as far as can be foreseen on a new sphere and mode of labour, being about to discontinue my temporary position both among the Chinese and English, and go forth among the people of these shores with the Word of eternal life in my hands, and gradually also on my tongue. Yesterday (Sabbath, 28th) I intimated the discontinuance of my English preaching, and to-day I have given warning to my servants, &c, that the school, which is at present interrupted by the Chinese New Year, will not be again re-opened. To this decision I have been clearly led, as we have yet no prospect of any minister from Scotland, nor of any other missionary who might take up the educational part of the work among the Chinese, and I had but one alternative before me, viz. That of either proceeding to form a church and locating myself among my countrymen and in my Chinese school; or that of leaving both, and going forth into the field at large in order at once to attain in a proper manner the spoken language, and to spread abroad the gospel of salvation among these unsaved millions. This latter course I have felt it my duty to adopt, although it is one accompanied with many difficulties and dangers of different kinds. But the work must be done, and I am enabled joyfully to say, 'Lord, here am I, send me.' The young man who has been teaching the school and myself will not, I think, return to me; but the other two assistants will go forth, I trust, with me, and perhaps others also. Certainly my past habits and experience fit me above most preachers for attempting this mode of missionary work; but whether, and how far, I may be succeeded in it is with the Lord, at whose command alone I go forth. I need not add that in these circumstances I shall

have special need of special prayer to be made in my behalf, and in behalf of the people among whom I may be led from time to time. With love to all who love the Lord and seek his face, — I am, dear mother, your affectionate son, — Wm. C. Burns.”

The event fully justified the decision which he had taken, and the brave and resolute spirit in which he prepared himself for its accomplishment. The difficulties and dangers with which he laid his account were indeed not wanting, but in the midst of them all his way was opened and his course prospered to a degree which he had scarcely dared to hope. While there were frequent risks from the assaults of robbers and the jealous spirit and policy of the local authorities, he met everywhere amongst the great body of the people with that friendly reception which they have been since found in other cases to accord to any stranger who frankly casts himself upon their kindness. He possessed in large measure that genial human sympathy, and that quiet self-possession and promptitude of fit reply, which, Mr. Fortune tells us, form the best passports to the good humor and friendly entertainment of a Chinese crowd; and a foreigner who trusts himself in places where foreigners are rare must expect to live very much in the midst of crowds. So he found his way with comparatively little trouble or interruption from village to village, and seldom failed at least of a numerous and inquisitive, if not earnestly attentive audience. Even the personal privations and hardships which he had regarded as inevitable were much less serious than he had anticipated; so that he very soon sent back to Hong-Kong a heavy cloak which he had brought away with him, with the significant message that “he did not need to sleep on the hills.” His chief danger throughout arose from the general repute, sadly belied in his case, of the untold wealth possessed by foreigners, and the consequent sensation produced among the robber-class by the arrival of a European stranger. Anything therefore in the shape of gold, or that looked like gold; he found the greatest possible hindrance to his quiet and peaceful progress, and a light purse the necessary condition of a light heart. Years after this I remember that when I gave him a small pocket-Bible in place of a much valued one which he had lost, he said with a significant smile, that his only objection to it was the gilt clasp, which he feared would one day attract the greedy eyes of some Chinese robber, and cause the theft of the book for the sake of the gold — an apprehension which was soon afterwards in point of fact fulfilled.

From the following extracts it will be seen that such “perils of robbers” were the only serious perils he encountered in this difficult, and as it seemed to many at the time, somewhat daring undertaking — “at Shap-Pat-Hoeung (or Eighteen Villages), February 26<sup>th</sup>, 1849 — My dear Mother, — I have had the privilege of again hearing from you, and this privilege has been even greater than usual, from the fact which the date of this letter intimates, that I am now no more among our countrymen, but am dwelling among this heathen people — alone, were it not for the presence of a covenant God and Saviour. In following out the purpose intimated in my last, I left Hong-Kong on Wednesday the 7<sup>th</sup> current for the opposite continent of China, and have been, since that time, going from place to place with my Chinese assistants and one servant, much as I used to do in Scotland in days that are past. In some places I have spent only one day; in others I have remained for a longer time, the population being large and the door open. As yet I have been furthered and prospered far beyond what I looked for; and although the difficulties are many, even of an outward kind, yet I do not despond in looking to the future. One of our difficulties arises from the constant fear the people are in of robbers, who suppose, though in my case without cause, that foreigners have much money with them; and again in places where there are mandarins a foreigner is likely to be dislodged at once. This was my experience at first setting out; for I had spent only one night at Cowloon, opposite to Hong-Kong, when I was warned to remove, and so had to retreat for the time. The people also at present are in constant apprehension of war with England, and this makes them more suspicious of foreigners who come into their borders. But with all this I have hitherto had great liberty of access to the population, and as far as I have been able to declare my message I have found attentive, and in some cases earnestly attentive hearers. . . . The valley I am now in is full of villages, as its name intimates. It is also the seat of a market held nearly every third day, to which the people of the surrounding country resort, and this makes it an important centre of operations. Yesterday — the Christian Sabbath — was the market-day here. I was out among the people about three hours, and had much support from God. What need have I of the presence of the Lord of the Sabbath in a land like this, that I may not lose my own soul in seeking to save the souls of others! I shall probably need to leave this place soon, as the master of the house I am now in

does not promise us lodgings even for another night. But the Lord will provide. 'They shall not be ashamed that wait for me.'

At his first starting from Hong-Kong he had characteristically "left his assistants to direct the boat to any quarter," on the long extended coast, "they thought best," having "no other plan but that of making known the gospel by tracts and speech, leaving all the rest, as well as this the greatest, to the gracious care of God." And so he went on from day to day in his work of faith and patience, passing on from village to village with the divine message, which it was the joy of his life to declare, simply as the Unseen Hand of his Master seemed to open and point the way — now lingering for a while in one spot, now pressing rapidly on, as the Pillar of Cloud appeared to halt or to move onwards before him. "As soon as he reached a village, he commenced to read his Bible aloud, say, under the shade of a tree — soon the villagers began to gather, and he explained to them the nature and object of the Gospel. Usually someone would ask him at meal-time where he was to eat? and he as usually partook of what was set before him by some hospitable villager. As evening approached, someone would offer him a night's shelter; and thus he often went on from week to week, preaching the word, and lacking nothing." Meanwhile, it was his lot almost wholly "to plough in hope, and to sow in hope," — intensely longing for the fruit of souls, yet willing either to gather it in with his own hands or to sow the seeds of a harvest to be reaped by others. The entries in his journal are at this period singularly brief and hurried — mere jottings, evidently hastily noted down overnight in the midst of outward discomforts and almost constant movement — but only on that account speak the more impressively of the abundance and self-denying nature of his labours: —

"We went to Cowloon, but they took me to a school-house rented by the London Mission, and after one day's stay among a listless people we were obliged to leave in consequence of the mandarin's remonstrating with the landlord of the house. On Thursday the London missionaries came over, and I went back with them to the Chinese Medical Hospital (Hong-Kong). On Friday we again landed directly opposite at Tseen-Sha-Tein, had good openings and favour among the villages, and lodged in a mat-shed — I eating, as I had the previous day, and have done since, with my Chinese companions, but not putting on in the meantime any part of the Chinese dress. On Saturday we removed to Tseen Wan (Shallow Bay) village, a distance of perhaps twenty-five Chinese miles; the people very friendly, but generally speaking the Hak-ka, not the Puntée or Canton city dialect. Here we remained until Wednesday (yesterday), when we crossed the hills, a distance of 20 or 25 Chinese miles (probably 7 or 8 English miles), to this valley covered with villages (Shap-Pat-Hceung). To-day I have been out, and have had more encouragement in the aspect of the people, and also in my ability to communicate to them the great truths, (1) That there is but one true God, His character, &c.; (2) That all men are sinners — idolaters, &c.; and (3) That there is a Saviour, and only one, Jesus the Son of the living God. . . .

"Shum-Chan, March 5<sup>th</sup>, Monday. — Came here on Friday, after being six days at Shap-Pat-Hceung, and three days at Sin-Teen. People friendly. Arrived on the market-day. Great press to see the foreigner, but all friendly. On Saturday messenger arrived from Hong-Kong — robbed by the way of the money he was bringing. In my own room — not an every-day privilege in this land. — Oh! for the Spirit of grace to improve it.

"Chinese Hospital, Hong-Kong, March 29<sup>th</sup>. — We stayed at Shum-Chan until Wednesday the 14<sup>th</sup>, visiting the surrounding villages. 14<sup>th</sup>. Removed westward to Sheung-Poo-Tan, visiting villages to the west, Kak-Teen, Kong-Ha, Wong-Kong, &c, eight days. At Sheun-Poo-Tan, people very friendly and attentive — Kak-Teen, not so. Thursday, returned to Shum-Chan; invited to go back into the country; crossed the Yuen-Long, and thence on foot to Pai-Teung beside Cap-Shui-Man, and thence by boat to this place — way prospered- arrived here at six o'clock P.M., just as Dr. Hirschberg, a dear brother who gives us lodging here, was about to land from Cowloon, to which he goes every Monday. Here I have ordered a Chinese dress, and I trust that next week I may again go forth into the country. The seven weeks I have already spent there have been full of encouragement."

Brief as these itinerary notes are, they will give the reader a tolerably distinct idea of the character of the missionary's life and work during this first and tentative effort to carry the gospel message into the interior of the Chinese territory. The lodging in the "mat-shed;" the frequent alarms of robbers; the arrival of the messenger from Hong-Kong without the expected money supplies; the summary dismissal by the mandarin,

and the friendly bearing of the people generally; the eager rush at the market town "to see the foreigner;" the valleys thick-sown with villages; the journeys on foot over the hills; the significant and touching allusion to the rare privilege of a night "in his own room;" the brief breathing time of retirement and prayer, in the midst of the poor and suffering, in the Chinese hospital, — all, naked as they are alike of detail and coloring, form together the elements of a picture of apostolic faith and zeal, and self-denying labour which rises to the mind's eye as vivid as it is impressive and rare.

After about a week's repose, Mr. Burns was again at his work (April 1<sup>st</sup>), and continued his evangelistic movements amongst the continental villages for about six weeks longer, pushing his way still further inland to the north and the west. At the close of that period, however, the hot and rainy season rendered further progress for the present impracticable, while at the same time the more suspicious and less friendly attitude of the people as he advanced westward gradually more and more closed the door against him. He accordingly returned to Hong-Kong, and took up his abode in a manner somewhat more permanent, under the friendly roof of his endeared friend Dr. Hirschberg, first on Morrison's Hill, and then at his new hospital in Victoria.

Here he remained, with only one brief interruption, for the next eight months, perfecting his knowledge of the Chinese language, and becoming, as he says, less and less "at home with the pen and more with the Chinese pencil;" doing the work of a Barnabas amongst the sick and suffering in the hospital beside him; and co-operating zealously with his esteemed host in all his other works and labours of love. But the nature of his occupations during this quiet interval, as well as the views and aspirations which animated him, will be best learned from his own words, which will appropriately close the history of this first stage of his Chinese life:—

A Chinese Hospital, Hong-Kong, June list, 1849. — My dear Mother, — My last letter would not prepare you for hearing from me again so soon, and that too from this place. I went on last occasion more to the westward (having already visited a good part of those who speak my dialect to the north), and there we found the people everywhere so averse to the presence of a foreigner, that after sleeping nine successive nights on the water in going from place to place, and not being allowed to lodge on shore, I returned here, where I have again resumed my quiet studies, and where I enjoy opportunities of doing what I can amongst this people, not only in speaking to the patients in the hospital, but in visiting others in the neighbourhood. The season also at present, both from great rain and great heat, is not so favourable for that mode of life which I have been following for some previous months on the opposite continent. I trust that in due time my path may be further opened, and that it may graciously be made plain by the Lord in what way and in what place I am to be more permanently employed upon these shores. I do not think at present of returning to the continent, but it is possible that my path may be made plain to do so sooner than I can anticipate. Perhaps you are by this time aware that Dr. James Young, a much valued friend here, offered himself some time ago to the Presbyterian Church in England as a missionary. The last mail has brought to him the intimation of his offer of service being accepted; but where and how we may be located and employed on these shores is not yet fully determined; nor can Dr. Y. leave his present employment until the close of the present year. It was a great mercy that in my last journey as well as in the two previous ones I was preserved from every danger, although surrounded with perils seen and unseen. The night before I landed here we were not, I suppose, above half a mile from a Macao passage-boat when it was attacked by pirates and robbed with the loss of some lives. The firing was so loud that, in the darkness, we supposed it must be some English war-steamer in pursuit of pirates. I was at this time on board the Chinese passage-boat from Canton, and no evil was allowed to come nigh to us. The person who has charge of the Chinese hospital where I am now lodged is a converted Jew, Dr. Hirschberg, connected with the London Missionary Society. I have long enjoyed his friendship, and now for a season I am very favorably situated in lodging with him, both for learning the language and for speaking a little among the patients who come seeking cure to their bodily diseases. It is little indeed, however, that I can add regarding tokens of an encouraging nature among the people. But the day of mercy and deliverance promised will come, and then these ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord. You have need to pray for all of us who labour here, that we may be endued with a patient and persevering spirit, for the natural and spiritual difficulties of the field are of no common kind. . . . Commend me, dear mother, to the prayers of God's people. May you and

my father never forget me, when, either one or both, you draw near the glorious high throne of our Father in heaven. Jesus is the way. In His blood we have access: in Him we are complete!”

Again, about a month after, July 25th, he writes : — “I take up my pen (not so much used in these days as my Chinese pencil) to write a few lines that you may know something of my present affairs. During the past month I have been quietly resident here; and while I have thus enjoyed much leisure for study, I have also had daily opportunities of taking part, both as a hearer and as a speaker, in the meetings which are held for the good of the patients and of the household. As I had no present need for my former native assistants who journeyed with me on the mainland, they left me more than a month ago, and I am thus in the meantime alone, and co-operating with others as formerly at home and in my own tongue. This kind of position suits me, and will probably continue to be my position here until at least Dr. Young is ready to join me, which is not until the beginning of next year. . . . You will remember me, dear father, to all who ask of my welfare, and engage the praying to pray much and more in our behalf, and that China's gates may be opened to the King of glory! “

One more effort (November, 1849) to resume his evangelistic labours on the mainland, in which he was met with obstacles still more formidable than on the last occasion, and returned, robbed and stripped of everything but the clothes necessary to cover him, and his work at Hong-Kong and its vicinity closed. He sailed with Dr. Young, whose brief but bright career was for the next four years intimately associated with his, for Canton on the last day of February, 1850.

## CHAPTER XV

1850-51

## CANTON

We have already remarked that Mr. Burns, labours on Chinese soil had been hitherto mainly preparatory and tentative. The question of a permanent centre of operations for the infant mission had not even yet been determined. The balance of opinion, however, in the home committee had been for some time back turning more and more decidedly towards Amoy, and in this judgment Dr. Young very strongly concurred. Mr. Burns himself so far acquiesced in it as to have actually taken his passage for that port on September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1849, when his course was arrested by an attack of fever, brought on as he thought by the anxieties of the decision and exposure to the sun during the numerous "salutations" of a hurried leave-taking. The decision, however, had clearly not been taken without some misgiving.

On his recovery from illness the suspended purpose was for the present silently dropped, and was never afterwards resumed, until he had fully proved by prayer and earnest effort whether another and still wider door nearer at hand were not open to him. It is probable that from the first, and whilst wandering amongst the villages opposite Hong-Kong, his eye had been turned towards Canton, the great centre of life in Southern China, towards which at each successive movement westward he approached nearer and nearer. Cowloon, the point at which he first landed, is distant from that city only about ninety miles, and the whole district lying between, and which he had been since traversing, might be regarded as in its immediate vicinity, and as the natural pathway of advance towards it. It was the great centre, too, of that dialect which for the last two years he had been so laboriously studying, and which was the only form of the Chinese spoken language which as yet he knew.

The prospect at the outset was not very encouraging, nor did it on further trial greatly brighten. The door of entrance even to a settled residence in the city was never fully opened to him. He succeeded, indeed, at last, after many harassing disappointments, in securing the expiring lease of a lodging from a brother missionary about to return to Scotland; but that was only for a period of eight months, and at its close his position would be as unfixed and as uncertain as ever. In other respects, too, the aspect of the field was scarcely more promising. Whilst he enjoyed abundant opportunities of sowing the precious seed, and was seldom without a goodly group of apparently attentive hearers, yet it seemed to him that his words did not tell upon them. There was attention more or less fixed, but no impression. They listened to the truth, and possibly carried away some glimpses of it, but it did not take hold and keep hold of them. Few of his casual hearers ever came back of their own accord to hear him again, or sought the preacher out to inquire further of his message and his doctrine. He was even tempted sometimes to doubt if the Chinese were in their present state even susceptible of those deep spiritual impressions which he had seen in former days and longed to see again; whether a lengthened period of preparation, and the long and patient sowing of many labourers, might not be necessary ere any one might hope to "return rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him." Yet he went on patiently and hopefully, and speaks of himself as happy here and in the midst of his self-denying and apparently unproductive work as "he could be anywhere in all the world." There is nothing in his life, as it seems to me, more admirable, and in the whole circumstances of the case more remarkable, than this patient and steadfast continuance in well-doing in the midst of the most prosaic and uninteresting labours, and amid the dead calm of a more than heathen apathy, equally as when borne along by the exhilarating breath of sympathetic enthusiasm and almost uninterrupted success. "The two works," says Mr. Moody Stuart, "were singularly diverse in their character, and were such as have rarely, if ever before, been allotted to one man to accomplish. Those who knew William Burns only as the enthusiastic preacher from town to town throughout the land would have looked upon him as the last man

in the Church who, after eight years of what seemed the highest religious excitement, with thousands crowding to hear him, would set himself to what was then reckoned the almost hopeless task of thoroughly mastering the Chinese language; would seclude himself from his own countrymen, and live among a people so different, teaching their children that he might learn their language, and then adopt their dress, and their ways, till in strange places the authorities were sometimes slow to believe him when he claimed to be an Englishman."Such mainly had been his work for many months at Hong-Kong, and such too, at least not more exciting or spirit-stirring, was his life at Canton. Meanwhile Dr. Young had gone on before him to Amoy, and wrote from month to month most hopefully of the prospects of the work there, and urged him earnestly to join him. He still hesitated. There was not much indeed in the way of positive encouragement to detain him at Canton; no "great and effectual door" visibly open to him and loudly calling upon him to enter; but yet there was not, on the other hand, any clear and decisive indication that God had no work for him to do there. It even seemed to him sometimes as the months passed on as though a prospect of ultimate success were beginning to dawn upon him, and as he saw the stolid countenances of his hearers now and then lightening up with something like intelligent and earnest interest, his heart yearned over them with a wistful hopefulness, and he felt as if he could not leave them so long as the faintest hope of a day of power and blessing among them remained: — "If you do not hear," said he, "so interesting accounts from Canton" (as those recently received from Amoy), "you must ascribe it in part to the defects of your correspondent, but still more, it may be, to the difficulties of this very important station — a station so difficult and important, that I believe no agent who is in any degree suited for it, and who has a heart to love and labour for its proud and suspicious people, should be encouraged to leave it. Last Tuesday evening, when looking on an assembly of from fifty to sixty engaged listeners, while a native was addressing them before I did so, my heart said, 'How can I leave these dear and precious souls for whom there are so few to care? I can now tell them of the way of life with some measure of clearness and acceptance, and so long as God gives me standing ground to gather and address them, I must go on to do so, leaving the issues in His own hand, with whom it is to bless and save! Help us to maintain the combat in this great heathen city, until its gates are opened to the King of glory! Brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified!"

But those distinct intimations of the Master's will, for which he had so long waited, came, as he thought, at last. The door he had sought and hoped to enter was finally closed; the standing-ground which alone he desiderated as a warrant to remain was taken from him. Shortly after the expiry of the lease, he had received notice to remove from the premises he had hitherto occupied, and all efforts to obtain another suitable station had failed. This, taken in connection with the open door and brightening prospects at Amoy, seemed to him decisive of the path of duty. Difficulties in the ordinary sense of the word had little influence with him: rather only did they rouse him to a more determined resolution to "go forward" in the course of service set before him, in the strength of Him before whom the mountains flow down, and whose word is "not bound;" but the slightest indication of His will, the faintest whisper of His voice, was to him imperative. Such an intimation had now, he believed, been distinctly given to him; and he prepared himself without delay to obey it. He sailed from Canton, (Though there seemed to be no "open door" for him, there were after a residence of sixteen months, in June, 1851, and reached Amoy on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of next month.)

## CHAPTER XVI

1851-54

## AMOY

A sail of four hundred miles in a north-easterly direction from Hong-Kong, along a bold and precipitous coast, rising occasionally to a commanding elevation, brings us to a group of islands scattered over the wide and spacious estuary of one of those rivers which here and there break the continuity of the rocky barrier. One of these is Amoy, separated from the mainland only by a narrow channel, in the midst of which again lies the smaller islet of Ku-long-soo, facing the town and harbor, and forming in the waters between an inner and safer anchorage. In approaching the city through this inlet, a long line of fortifications, rising from the water's edge and bristling with cannon, frowns upon us from the right, and would be indeed a formidable defense were an invading enemy simple enough to advance in this direction. Though only a small island of nine or ten miles diameter, and consisting mainly of rugged and barren hills, with here and there cultivated valleys running up between them, it contains within its narrow bounds upwards of a hundred towns and villages, and a population of 250,000 souls.

Of this teeming hive of human life, about 150,000 are congregated in the city which occupies the south-west corner several missionaries, at the time, labouring there, as we believe there still are of the island. It is a poor place, with close narrow streets, and rather more dirty than most other Chinese towns. "The people have generally an emaciated and sallow appearance, partly from poverty and the crowded state in which they live, but also from the prevalence of opium-smoking. There are upwards of 600 public opium-smoking places, and the drug is said to be used very extensively in private houses."

Though not a place of very great commercial importance, it is, by its position and easy means of communication, a most convenient and commanding centre for missionary operations. Though within the limits of Southern China, it yet forms a sort of advanced post towards the north, with which communication is frequent and easy. Before it lies the vast province of Fo-kien, the great black-tea country, with its teeming myriads of industrious, peaceful, and comparatively friendly people; and behind it, at the distance of a few hours' sail, the beautiful island of Formosa, with its three millions of Chinese-speaking inhabitants. Within a distance of ninety miles is a population of some millions, speaking nearly the same dialect, and accessible in many parts by canal and river navigation. The city of Chang-chow alone, of which Amoy may be said to be the port, lying a few miles up the river, contains a population of from 200,000 to 500,000 souls. The view here as described by travelers is magnificent. "I had heard," says the Rev. Wm. Gillespie, of the London Missionary Society, "of the plain of Chang-chow; now I saw it. From a hill at the back of the city, yet within the walls, a grand panorama presented itself. There lay stretching far up the country a rich and luxuriant strath, and a noble river winding along at the foot of the hills. It reminded me of the strath of Tay."

Over this wide and fertile garden of souls the Christian missionary is free, with scarcely any hindrance, to roam at large. "In visiting Amoy," says the same writer just quoted, "the first thing that strikes a foreigner coming from the south, is the feeling of delight which he experiences in rambling everywhere unmolested. After being forcibly turned back on entering within the gates of the southern metropolis, as has been my experience repeatedly, it is pleasant to revel in the unrestrained luxury of rambling through the streets and everywhere within and without the walls of Cap-che, Amoy, Chang-chow, &c."

When Dr. Young reached Amoy in March, 1850, he found two bands of labourers already on the field: — Messrs. Stronachand Young of the London Society, and Messrs. Talmage and Doty of the American Board of Missions. Both of them had hopefully broken ground, and numbered at this time between them twenty adult converts, of whom eight belonged to the former, and twelve to the latter. Into hearty sympathy and co-operation with these brethren Dr. Young at once entered, whilst devoting himself specially to that department of the work which more peculiarly belonged to him. He was soon at the head of two native schools numbering together thirty children, who rapidly grew to eighty, and "over some of whom he was in

due time permitted to rejoice as Christians," besides a hospital for the sick, in which while he ministered to the diseases of the body, two native evangelists pointed the way to the Divine Physician of souls. He was especially useful in curing the disease of opium-smoking, by the introduction of a medicine which soothed the imperious craving for the noxious drug, and thus rendered the effort to break off the habit more easy. By means of this treatment many permanent cures were effected, and the demand for the medicine was soon so great as to become a self-supporting business. Into the work thus hopefully begun Mr. Burns at once threw himself with characteristic energy, locating himself in the midst of the native population in an upper chamber above the school, and commencing the study of the Amoy dialect with the sound of Chinese voices perpetually in his ears. A few days afterwards he gives his first impressions of the place and of the work in a letter to his mother: —

"Amoy, July 25<sup>th</sup>, 1851.— My dear Mother, — As you see from the date I am now at Amoy, having left Canton only a few days after I last wrote you, and having been here already ten days. My expectations of getting the house I had in view at Canton were completely disappointed, and my way seemed hedged up to come here. I embarked accordingly at Whampoa in the English baroque Herald for Amoy on the evening of June 26<sup>th</sup>, and after spending the Sabbath and Monday at Hong-Kong by the way, we reached here on the forenoon of July 5<sup>th</sup>. The passage was a delightful one, and very refreshing to the bodily frame after sixteen months in Canton. The days I spent in Hong-Kong were pleasant. I had two opportunities of preaching in Chinese, and stayed with my old friend Dr. Hirschberg. ... I have found a very kind Christian welcome among the missionary brethren, English and American, here, and my expectations are more than exceeded in all I have seen as yet of Amoy as a place and as a missionary station. I stayed for three nights with Mr. and Mrs. Stronach of the London Missionary Society, members of old in the Albany Street Congregational Church, Edinburgh; and I am now very much to my mind lodged in the middle of the Chinese population, in a little room connected with the school which was made over to Dr. Young by an American missionary on his removal here a year ago. Thus settled down amid Chinese voices, and with a Christian native servant (who prays with me; I cannot yet pray with him in his own dialect), and a Chinese teacher who comes daily, I am endeavouring to exchange my Canton for the Amoy Chinese. To speak this new dialect publicly and well may require a good deal of time; but even already I can make myself easily understood about common things, and am able to follow a good deal of what I hear in Chinese preaching. Dr. and Mrs. Young are well, and seem to be getting on well, through the divine blessing and guidance. I feel it a great privilege to be connected with him as well as with the other missionary brethren here, who all go on in much harmony, and not without tokens of divine encouragement. The people here present a striking contrast to the people of Canton in their feelings and deportment towards foreigners. Here all is quiet and friendly, and although there is here also a great apathy on the subject of the gospel, yet a good many seem to listen with attention, and the missionaries have inquirers who come to be taught. I was preaching last Sabbath-day (in English of course) from the words: 'Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold' (Matthew 24); and, alas! I felt they were solemnly applicable to my own state of heart. Unless the Lord the Spirit continually uphold and quicken, oh! how benumbing is daily contact with heathenism! But the Lord is faithful, and has promised to be 'as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.' May you and all God's professing people in a land more favoured, but, alas! also more guilty, experience much of the Lord's own presence, power, and blessing, and when the enemy comes in as a flood, may the Spirit of the Lord — yea, it is said, 'the Spirit of the Lord shall— lift up a standard against him.'"

His allusion here, as well as often in other letters, to the "benumbing influence of continual contact with heathenism," and the danger generally of losing the keen edge and high tone of practical godliness while dwelling in a land in which all the usual means and incentives of the spiritual life are in so great a measure withdrawn, is at once touching and instructive, and suggests to us an aspect of the missionary life which most of us at home but little think of. We are apt to regard the Christian missionary as, by the very act of his consecration to so sublime a vocation, at once raised to a region of exalted faith and fervour far above us, in which all the ordinary perils. To the life of the soul are unknown. The idea of a carnal, formal, perfunctory, unspiritual, and common-place missionary seems to us almost a contradiction in terms. We think naturally of those brave athletes of the Cross very much as ordinary Christians in early days thought of

the ascetic recluses of the desert, as men by the very nature of their calling pre-eminently devoted in heart to God, and almost as a matter of course and ipso facto, "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." No mistake, I believe, can be more grievous. The whole history of missionary life and labour abundantly shows how possible it is to lose the life of faith, even while seeking the propagation of the faith; to leave house and home and kindred for Christ's sake and the gospel's, and yet in a heathen land to breathe little either of the love of Christ or the grace of the gospel. Most of us little think how hard a thing it must be for a solitary wanderer in such a land as China, to maintain the life of Christian godliness in the very atmosphere and element of heathenism — without a Sabbath; without Christian fellowship or brotherhood; without a Christian face to look into or a

Christian hand to grasp; with an utter disbelief of all Christian truths, and of everything belonging to a higher world, looking out from the eyes of all around him; with nothing left to feed the inner springs of the soul, but his Bible, his closet (if indeed he can command a closet), and his God. The brightest lamp will burn dim in an impure and rarified atmosphere. It is only by a special miracle that the children of Israel can thrive and be of fair countenance on the pulse and water of Babylon. The palm-tree of the desert "knoweth not when heat cometh," but it is because its roots are watered by hidden springs far underground.

We can understand then how it was that the subject of this memoir, while wandering amid the heathen villages on the mainland, so intensely longed for a Sabbath at Hong-Kong, and so continually cast himself on the succor of his brethren's prayers, not only for the success of his labours, but for the very life of his own soul. "The wilderness and the solitary place" were indeed often made glad for him, and the parched ground became as "a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water;" but he felt that it was so, and could only be so, by a special miracle of grace.

The effort "to exchange the Canton for the Amoy Chinese," did not prove so arduous a one as he had probably expected. Imbued as he now was with the spirit and fundamental principles of the language, the transition from one form of it to another became to him comparatively natural and easy. While, as we have seen, he was from the first able to make himself understood on common matters, and to comprehend a good deal of what he heard in the public worship of God, its unaccustomed form soon became sufficiently familiar to him to admit of his himself using it in public discourse. By the beginning of the next year we find him again at his congenial work of spreading the good news of the kingdom among the towns and villages around, where the name of Christ had not yet been named: of date February 7, 1852, he writes in his journal: —

"I am now engaged a good deal in the work of spreading the gospel among this people, being in the gracious arrangements of God's providence favoured with the co-operation of professing Christians, both in-doors and in the open air. One of these, baptized since I came here by the American missionaries, aids me regularly and others from time to time. We have meetings in the chapel of Sai-Hang, where Dr. Young resides, but get greater numbers in the open air when giving addresses in the open places of the city. During this week I also went to the neighbouring country (on the island) among the villages, spending a night in one of these in the house of my servant, and preaching the word with my companions T. and K. in six different villages. . . . The work increases in interest and hopefulness. 'Thy kingdom come!'"

In another excursion (March 16th) he crossed over to the mainland directly opposite Amoy; and in the course of seven days made a circuit of thirty villages, sowing everywhere plenteously the precious seed. Everywhere they were most kindly welcomed, everywhere met with numerous, willing, and often attentive audiences, were everywhere hospitably entertained by the people free of charge; and such was the missionary's sense of the promising aspect of the field, and of the urgent need of additional labourers to reap the ripening harvest, that he gave a whole year's salary to the funds of the Committee to hasten on the work. "Surely," said the convener in giving in the next report, "that field is ripe unto harvest, when the reaper sends home his own wages to fetch out another labourer!"

The next year his expedition took a wider range, including the great city of Chang-chow, already referred to as the chief centre of population in this part of the province.

"Amoy, May 16<sup>th</sup>, 1853 — Last month I had the privilege of paying a visit to Chang-chow-foo, a large city in this neighbourhood, at the distance of about 30 English miles. We left Amoy on the morning of April 13, and returned here on the 26<sup>th</sup>, being-absent about a fortnight, nine days of which were spent at Chang-chow, preaching to large and very interesting audiences both inside and outside the city. A week or two before our going, two native Christians, of the American Mission here, had visited Chang-chow, and preached to crowds for a number of days with much encouragement; and as they were purposing to go again, at the earnest desire especially of one of them, it was arranged that I should also go, although there was some reason to fear that, unless God should graciously open our way, there might be some unwillingness on the part of the authorities to allow a foreigner to pay more than a brief visit, or to preach at large to the people. To avoid difficulty as far as possible, it was arranged that we should live on the river, in the boat which carried us there, going on shore only to preach. On our arrival we immediately went on shore, and being at once surrounded by many people, we had a fine opportunity, within a few steps of our boat, of preaching the Word of Life fully and without hindrance. We continued thus to preach on the bank of the river for three days, going upwards from our boat in the morning, and downwards in the afternoon, and addressing large companies for three or four hours at a time, until we had exhausted all the suitable stations near the river. We then went inwards, but still outside the walls, and at the very first station at which we preached, a man came forward and pressed us to go further on, and preach again opposite his house. This man the following morning came and was with us at worship in our boat; and when it began to rain, and our boat was more uncomfortable, the same individual opened his house to us, and here we stayed (making the man a small remuneration) for five days; and going on from this as our head-quarters, still inwards, we enjoyed the fullest liberty, both within and without the city, of preaching to large and very much engaged audiences. I do not think, upon the whole, that I have spent so interesting a season, or enjoyed so fine an opportunity of preaching the Word of Life since I came to China, as during these nine days. The people were everywhere urgent in requesting that a place might be opened for the regular preaching of the gospel among them; and I am glad to say that the American Mission here have already sent two of the members of the native church to open an out-station in this important and very promising locality. Since our return here there have also three individuals come here at their own expense, to inquire further into the nature of the gospel. The native Christians with me were the same with whom I went last year in making some visits to the neighbourhood; and I have pleasure in adding, that they seem to be moved by love to the Saviour, and to the souls of their fellow-countrymen, in giving themselves to this work.'

In a private letter of the same date, after referring more briefly to the above particulars, he adds, "We had all" (himself and three Chinese evangelists) "full work; for our meetings (of course in the open air) generally lasted three or four hours, becoming the longer the more interesting. You would have rejoiced could you have seen me the last two evenings of our stay addressing a large and attentive audience until the moon was up (it generally fell to me to speak last); I felt thankful, indeed, in such circumstances that it was my privilege to be sent to China to preach Christ crucified as the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. The time at which we were thus engaged was just during the meeting of the English Synod, and we may believe that in this the promise is fulfilled, 'While they are yet speaking, I will hear.'"

To anyone who ever knew the writer of these lines, and who remembers how sparing he was of his words, and how jealously guarded in everything that related to himself, how little account too he made of mere surface appearances of interest and attention, it must be evident how much more is implied in such expressions as coming from him, than that which meets the eye. Evidently when he speaks thus his words must have been visibly telling on the hearts of his hearers, and he must have felt sure from the hushed silence and earnest look with which they listened to him, that a power was at work within them mightier than his words, and such as he had never known on Chinese soil before. At Canton he had complained that though the Chinese listened with a sort of listless attention to the gospel message, it never seemed to "take hold" of the Chinese mind. It was clearly taking hold of the Chinese mind now.

His power of access, indeed, to the confidence and regard of the Chinese people, and the influence he exerted over them, seems to have been something remarkable, and far beyond what one would ever

gather from anything he ever said of himself. Indeed the chief difficulty of his biographer arises from his rigid habit of understating, rather than amplifying everything that regarded himself, and confining himself not only to the real truth, but to the bare and naked truth. He had such a horror of the over coloring of facts of which the advocates of missions have been sometimes accused, that he did not always give to his statements the true and adequate colours of life, so that justly to estimate his work, we must often look at it rather as it was judged of by others, than as it was regarded by himself.

The sequel of the history, as regards that brief day of grace for Chang-chow, is sad and tragic. In October 13<sup>th</sup> of the same year he writes: —

"About the middle of May the native assistant, whom I have alluded to as co-operating with me here, went to Chang-chow along with another belonging to the same mission, and rented, as a place of meeting, the house of a man whom I alluded to in my May letter as having, in April, received us into his house, and taken some interest in our work. They had gone but two days when the local rebellion broke out in this neighbourhood, and had had in Chang-chow but one Sabbath's services when the insurgents reached that city. The man who had rented them his house took part with the insurgents, which led the native brethren to remove their lodgings to another place, that they might not be involved. When the insurgents had got possession of the city but two days, in consequence of their showing a disposition to rob and plunder, the populace on a sudden rose en masse upon them, and put nearly all who were within the city to an instant death! How little did we suppose when in April preaching the gospel in these streets, that in the course of a short month they were to be flowing with human blood! At the time of this awful massacre both the native brethren from Amoy were within the city; and as being strangers, from the same part of the country as the insurgents, they were in imminent danger of being reckoned as belonging to them, and sharing in their dreadful end. The one who is now here early saw his danger, and with difficulty made his escape, by dropping from the city walls. The other, a native of Canton province, was more fearless, being in company with some friends engaged in business in Chang-chow. He also did escape at this time, although not without much danger; but having delayed to leave the city, as his companion wished him, and return to Amoy, he was the following morning, on a sudden, arrested by a band of the populace, and, despite all his friends could do, was dragged before the mandarin, and instantly beheaded! His companion having separated from him the day before this occurred, and with great difficulty made his way home to Amoy, it was several weeks before we heard of the affecting event. Nor was this all, — the man who had rented them his house, having openly joined the insurgents, was seized in the street by the populace, and publicly beheaded! This was the melancholy end of one who, though not a man of good character among his countrymen, had a few weeks before welcomed us in our mission, joined us in all our services, and seemed to have, at least, the joy of a stony-ground hearer, if nothing more. Since that time the people of Chang-chow city have been engaged in almost constant fighting with the insurgent party; and although the insurgents have not been able again to recover the city, yet to the present hour it is so shut up, that almost no communication can be carried on between it and Amoy. The sufferings of its inhabitants have been, and still are, very great. A native of the city who had become interested in the gospel message, and who, as well as other two, came down to Amoy in April on purpose to hear it more fully, was also in great peril of being seized and put to death, like the others. His house was surrounded by armed men, and he only made his escape by getting through the roof, and running along the tops of the houses; with difficulty, after some weeks of wandering, he got here, and has remained under this roof since; it being still unsafe for him to return home."

But the fire thus kindled at Chang-chow was never wholly extinguished. Fanned by the occasional visits of other missionaries, and by the fostering care of the neighbouring native church of Chioh-bey in connection with the American Board, it still burned on with more or less of vitality and fervour through all the changes of an outwardly checkered and disastrous history. Persecution came, but only braced and purified the more the faith of the little flock. The house in which they were assembled was more than once assaulted by ruffians, the furniture broken, and the roof, door, and windows almost riddled with stones; yet the constancy of the believers remained unshaken, and the number of inquirers increased. At length "in January, 1862, Mr. Douglas visited the city in company with one of the American brethren, and had the privilege of baptizing six men, the first-fruits of this long and perilous sowing time of more than eight years,

and soon after four more were baptized." The last glimpse we have of Chang-chow is a singularly sad one. First taken by the Nanking rebels towards the close of 1864, and then retaken by the Imperial forces early in the next year, it suffered so terribly from the destructive violence of both, as to be reduced to a scene of utter desolation. "I remained," says one of the missionaries, who visited it soon after its recapture, "within the walls for three hours, and walked through a great part of the city. It is one mass of ruins, and I know it is within the mark for me to say that not ten houses out of a hundred are left standing. The large suburbs outside the west and south gates are entirely destroyed. There were a few persons inside attempting to clear away the rubbish; but, alas! how different from the streams and crowds of people I once had to jostle my way through! I never saw a sacked city before, and I trust I may never see another. No human being can give you an idea of the harrowing sight. Here and there we would come upon a woman sitting weeping over the ruins of what was once her home, — weeping bitterly. On asking one or two such persons some questions, we would find that husband, sons, all were gone, and she alone left to mourn the bitter loss. We entered the once famed Chang-chow with a sad heart, and left it with a sadder." But there still linger amongst the ruins the remnants of a people whose hopes are not bound up with the wreck of their earthly homes, but who "look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Of date March 12th, 1853, and exactly a month before his visit to Chang-chow, I find the following brief entry in his journal, in reference to a department of work of a very different kind, but which had been occupying much of his time and thoughts for several months past: —

"In the great mercy and by the gracious and constant aid of the Lord and Saviour I was enabled on the 10<sup>th</sup> to complete the last revised copy of Bunyan's Pilgrim (1<sup>st</sup> part) in Chinese, which has occupied us from June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1852, until now, with the exception of a month at the end of last summer, when through feverish sickness I was obliged to lay it aside. The whole has been looked over by Messrs. Doty & A. Stronach with their teachers, and the work has been benefited by a number of their suggestions. One hour after finishing the last sheet in the form in which it will be printed, I received from Shanghai a copy of the Pilgrim in Chinese, printed two years ago by Mr. Muirhead of the London Society, chiefly for the use of pupils. It is not, however, a continuous translation of the whole."

This work was to him in a very eminent degree a labour of love. The admiration and love of early years grew upon him, as the studious care of a translator brought him into closer contact with the thoughts and more intimate sympathy with the spirit of the wondrous dreamer. It was a subject of continual interest to watch the effect of the mystic allegory on another mind, and especially on a Chinese mind. One graphic incident of this kind I remember his telling me a year or two afterwards. When occupied with the inimitable portraiture of Ignorance, the Chinese teacher, who was working with him, and who was then only half a Christian, was greatly taken with the flippant and copious talker, whose fluent tongue and knowledge of all subjects, physical and meta-physical, human and divine, positively enchanted him, and drew forth audible expressions of admiration and delight as he proceeded with his task; and it was only when the character had fully developed itself and the glittering tinsel fell off from the base metal beneath, that noisy approbation gave place to a silent thoughtfulness which showed that the master had achieved his object. He was pleased also to mark how in several instances the imagery of the dream fell singularly in with some of the familiar incidents of Chinese life, as in the inscriptions set up by the wayside to commemorate important events, and admonish wayfarers. The book has been since appropriately embellished with a series of very spirited illustrations by Mr. Adams, a Scottish artist, who has happily succeeded in adapting the incidents of the story to the characteristic physiognomy and costume of Chinese life.

Another task of a similar kind in which he was engaged about this time, was the editing of a collection of hymns for Chinese worship, which from the first became a great favourite, especially with the children, and has since appeared in improved and enlarged editions. During his visit to this country two years afterwards he used to talk with delight of the ardour with which the young and fervent converts used to recite or sing these hymns, especially a series of twelve didactic and practical rhymes composed by one of the London missionaries, and which, like the songs of the Reformation, had been much blessed in deepening in many hearts the lines of Christian doctrine and duty. One of these in particular I distinctly recall, with the very

cadence of the tune to which he used to sing it to us in the characteristic style of his Chinese children in the faith: —

Strait is the gate, and rough the way  
That leads to heaven and endless day;  
    Few enter in, and very few  
    Their journey to the end pursue.

For we with sin's desires must fight,  
Mouth, ears, and eyes must guard aright,  
    In all we do must act by rule,  
    Rein in the heart nor play the fool.

We must not covet sordid pelf,  
    Nor injure men to profit self,  
    Must careful be to speak the truth,  
And far must flee from lusts of youth.

We must not cast an envious eye  
On those whose earthly place is high,  
Nor look with proud and scornful thought  
On those who fill the meanest lot.

This heart of pride must be laid low,  
We must love men, though hate they show;  
Serve God, though to our worldly loss,  
Believe in Christ, and bear his Cross.

Alas, weak, men, devoid of grace,  
    How can we run this holy race?  
Jesus, from heaven Thy Spirit send  
    To guide and help us to the end!\*

\*Words translated from the Chinese by W. C. Burns, & amended by Rev. J. D. Burns of Hampstead, 1855.

## CHAPTER XVII

1854

## FIRST-FRUITS

Hitherto the abundant and patient labours which we have been recording had been rewarded only by hopeful appearances and fair promise, but the missionary was soon to witness greater things than these. On the 18th of January, 1854, Mr. Johnston, shortly after his arrival, wrote: "God has tried the faith and patience of our brethren in denying them the privilege of gathering fruit in this life as yet, and at present we cannot even speak of the blossoms and buddings of the spiritual vintage." Most singularly it happened that at the very time when these words were written events were in progress in a village not twenty miles distant which rendered them no longer true, and which may be said to have opened a new era in the history of the mission. Mr. Burns left Amoy on the 9<sup>th</sup> January on another preaching tour, taking with him as usual as his companions and assistants two native evangelists, C. C. and T. C. The former had been with him before in almost all his evangelistic journeys since he came to Amoy, and was a man in some respects remarkable. He had belonged in the days of his heathen darkness to the class, so numerous in China, of fortune-tellers, and possessed in large measure the fortune-teller's fluency of speech and readiness of resource. Attracted by the preaching of the gospel at the American Chapel, he had had his heart touched by the simple home question of a missionary, "Are you well? Is your heart at peace?" and sought and found the peace of God. Rejoicing in that pearl of great price himself, it was his delight henceforth to proclaim and commend it to others, and to this end he freely devoted those peculiar gifts which he had formerly employed in the pursuit of unlawful gain. He was quick, buoyant, nimble, fertile in argument, anecdote, and happy illustration, ever prompt for action, and ready with the fit word at the fitting time. The other, a schoolmaster, had been sorely puzzled to understand how the Christian preachers should spend their days telling those gospel stories to the people, without ever asking for money or apparently seeking any earthly reward. He had often enough listened at the corners of the streets to the professional story-tellers of his own country, and well remembered how adroitly they used to stop at the most thrilling part of the tale, and keep the expectant crowd in suspense until they had been well paid to tell the rest. He resolved in his heart to get to the bottom of the matter. He listened with awakened interest to the Word of Life, found out the great secret, and became a teller of the good news of grace himself.

The course of the missionary band lay first across the wide estuary which is closed in by Amoy and its companion group of islands, amid scenery which the missionaries describe as remarkably resembling the Frith of Clyde, with "its beautiful variety of hill and island and far reaches of the sea, at one moment lost sight of and again seen stretching far round promontory, creek, and bay"— then, for some eight or ten miles further along the course of a fine winding river. Their first halting-place was at a market-town on its banks of about two or three thousand inhabitants, called Pechuia (White-water Market), and the commercial centre of a considerable district, full of agricultural villages, where their course was arrested in a manner to them as unexpected as it was delightful. "Here," says Mr. Doty of the American Mission, "they intended to begin working, expecting, after a few days at longest, to go forward, making known the gospel message as they might have opportunity, and just where the Master might providentially lead them. But for two months continuously the brethren were shut up to this one place and the nearest villages, in holding forth day and night the Word of Life. Almost at the very first declaration of the truth, some persons were interested, and became earnest inquirers. From that time to the present the work has been gradually gaining in importance. Mr. Burns has rented a small building, the upper floor for his dwelling, while the lower is a preaching place. This is visited by many persons, who come in on market-days from all the surrounding region for purposes of trade. There are twelve such days in each month. Public worship is held

on the Sabbath and every evening, and is attended by a goodly number of apparently interested listeners. Of a few, hope is indulged that they have really passed from death unto life. Numbers have renounced their idols. Some have burned and destroyed them. Others have given them to the brethren to be thus dealt with. Two of our native brethren are constantly employed in connection with Mr. Burns.

"In March, Mr. Burns and two brethren made a tour of some weeks further in the interior, visiting some places to which they had been earnestly invited by persons who had visited them at Pechuia. While they were absent, two other native brethren continued the labours at the first place. At this time it was my privilege to make a short visit there. I found such an awakened interest and spirit of inquiry as I had never before met with among Chinese. It did seem as if the Holy Spirit was at work. The most marked cases are of young men of some education, and endowed with considerable zeal and energy. These are very active in efforts to awaken the attention of others. From the first there have been opposers of the movement, and recently there has been manifested a disposition to annoy and disturb the public worship. There are firm idolaters there, and the spirit of persecution is not wanting."

Mr. Burns' own statement is to the same effect, though couched, as his manner was, in scrupulously guarded and naked terms, and while giving some additional details, traces briefly the further progress of the work: —

"It is exactly four months," he writes, May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1854, "since I first set out this season on a missionary tour; and you are already aware that God so remarkably opened the door in the place to which we first went, that we found it our clear duty to remain at that place as our head-quarters for a longer period than we had intended— visiting the numerous villages and market-towns within our reach, while we carried on regular services at Pechuia, our central station. The work there was so interesting that we felt it could not be abandoned, but as we were anxious to extend our efforts to one or two central positions farther inland, it was necessary that other agents should take our place in order to leave us free to go forward. Accordingly, when, two months ago, I returned from Amoy to Pechuia, an addition was made to the number of native assistants, and leaving two of these to occupy Pechuia, I proceeded on the 9<sup>th</sup> of March farther inland, in company with the two native Christian companions with whom I had originally set out on the 9<sup>th</sup> of January from Amoy. The place to which we first went is a market-town, somewhat smaller than Pechuia, named Bay-pay (Horse-flat), and distant from the former place, across the hills, about nine English miles. To this place we had been invited by several persons, and here we remained (well-lodged and free of rent) for eleven days, in the course of which we visited and preached at almost all the villages in the neighbourhood, from thirty to fifty in number. We were almost everywhere favorably received, and our message listened to with attention, although there were no cases, as at Pechuia, of persons coming out and declaring themselves on the side of the gospel. While at Bay-pay, we heard it reported that at Pechuia one family had publicly destroyed their idols and ancestral tablets (the latter the dearest objects of Chinese idolatry), and that another man had closed his shop on the Lord's-day, refusing admittance to a person who wished to trade with him. Both of these reports, so interesting to us, turned out to be true. "From Bay-pay we proceeded four or five English miles farther on to Poolamkio (South-bank Bridge). Here we were on the sea-coast; I suppose about fifteen miles south of the entrance to Amoy harbor. We were well received here also, and would have gladly remained for a week or two, proceeding still farther south, as we were invited to do, but our books, &c, were becoming low, and our lodging — which would have been very comfortable had we had sole possession of it — being partly occupied by opium-smokers and gamblers, we resolved, after a stay of only four days, on returning to Pechuia. On arriving, we found to our delight that the work there had made decided progress in our absence. The two native Christians (members of the American Mission Church at Amoy) whom we had left in charge seem to have been much aided in teaching the people. The preaching room had been crowded every night to a late hour by from forty to sixty persons, and those who had from the beginning shown an attachment to the truth had evidently advanced in knowledge and earnestness of spirit, and resolved to obey the gospel at the risk of much reproach and opposition. In our absence the station had also had the benefit of a short visit from Mr. Doty of the American Mission. After returning from our inland tour, we continued our meetings at Pechuia with much encouragement, several members of the native church in Amoy having successively come out of their own accord to aid in the work. During the last two or three weeks, however, the aspect of things at Pechuia has

been considerably changed; for while those on the side of the gospel seem to go on in a way that fills our hearts with thankfulness, and our mouths with praise, a disposition has been shown on the part of others to interrupt our meetings, which has obliged us at night to hold them upstairs, and more privately. The state of the weather also at this rainy season has prevented us from doing so much as before among adjacent villages. When I left Pechuia last Monday, it seemed that, including young and old, there might be about twenty persons who have declared themselves on the side of the gospel, but some of these are children, and two or three are women whom we have not seen — mothers who have received the truth from their sons or husbands. Among the number of those who are attached to the gospel are two whole families of six members each. The eldest son in one of these families, a promising youth of twenty, early showed much decision, having, on the birth-day of like god of the furnace] taken his god and put it in the fire. The idol having been but in part consumed, his mother discovered among the ashes a part of its head, and father and mother together beat their son severely; but some of the other Pechuia inquirers having gone to comfort the young man, and reason with his parents, their views underwent so sudden and entire a change, that in a day or two afterwards they, with their four sons, brought out all their idols and ancestral tablets and publicly destroyed them in the view of the people. The father I have two or three times met with, and he seems, along with his four sons (an interesting set of boys), to be in a promising state of mind. The other family is that of a respectable cloth-dealer, whose shop is in the same street with our lodging. This family has passed through remarkable trials, which seem to have prepared them for receiving the gospel on its first announcement, they having twice lost all their property by robbers; and on the second of these occasions having had their house burned, to cover the robbers' retreat — when the whole family were obliged to leap from an upper story, and yet escaped unhurt! They are a very interesting family, and have in one point shown more decision than I have before seen in China, having (while yet only inquirers) shut their shop on the last eight Sabbaths, even although two of these Sabbaths were market-days. The family adjoining our house is literally divided — two against three, and three against two. The elder brother and his wife oppose, — they live by making paper images used in idolatrous processions, for burning to the dead, &c.; the mother, second son, with the youngest, who is a mere boy, are on the side of the gospel. The second son formerly made images with his elder brother, but has now given up his trade, and has begun a general business in one half of the shop which they have in common. It is curious thus to notice that on the Lord's-day the younger brother's side of the shop is closed, while the elder brother's side remains open! This young man, when we were absent farther inland, went down to Amoy with the desire of being admitted into the visible church; and though he has not yet been baptized, the American missionaries, who examined him, were astonished and delighted by the evidence which he gave them of knowledge, repentance, and faith; and would have admitted him a month ago, along with ten others (Amoy people), had it not been that my two native companions, returning the day before to Amoy, urged the expediency of delay!"

"So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." There was everywhere the stir and glad excitement of a busy harvest-field. There were all the signs of the coming of the kingdom of God after the true model of apostolic times; the general and wide-spread interest, individual decision and self-sacrifice, the division of families, the separation of brother from brother for Christ's sake and the gospel's, the test of persecution and the fierce opposition of adversaries around the wide and effectual door, the joy of first love, and the spontaneous spread of the sacred influence from village to village, and from heart to heart. Well might Mr. Burns write, in regard to these encouraging tokens, in words which mean much as coming from him: —

"What I see here makes me call to mind former days of the Lord's power in my native land. In my circle of observation I have hardly seen so promising an appearance of the coming of God's kingdom since I came to China. . . . You will see from what I have stated that there is indeed much to encourage prayer and effort in behalf of this benighted people; and that we have also cause for admiring thankfulness to our covenant God and Saviour. In my own experience the Lord's goodness is so great and unceasing that while friends in Scotland may look upon me as an exile, I feel as much at home here as I would wish to do on this side of the Jordan."

The cases of some of the individual converts who were the first-fruits of this gospel harvest are briefly referred to by Mr. Burns in one of the letters just quoted; but one or two additional particulars may be given from the letters of other missionaries: —

“Of Soma, the youngest child of the family of the cloth-merchant above referred to as having all together embraced the gospel, the following interesting incident is related. When the old father was going to Amoy as a candidate for baptism, Soma asked to be allowed to accompany him for the same purpose. He was told he was too young, and that he might fall back if he made a profession when he was only a little boy. To this he made the touching reply, I Jesus has promised to carry the lambs in his arms. As I am only a little boy it will be easier for Jesus to carry me.’ No further words were needed; Soma accompanied his father, and was soon afterwards baptized. Mr. Johnston, who relates this story, adds that the mother, He-Se, received all her Christian instruction from the male members of the family, as she dared not attend the public preaching; but her sons repeated to her much of what they heard, and she was the first female baptized in Pechuia. “Another mother said she, too, wished to be a member of the religion of Jesus, because it had made such a wonderful change in her- son. \* It must be a good thing/ she said, Ho be connected with such a person as Jesus.”

It will have been noticed that the religious movement we are now describing was not confined to Pechuia, but extended more or less over the whole district, with its scattered villages, of which it forms the centre. At Bay-pay especially, the work, if less striking in its manifestations at the outset, was in the end even more steady and progressive. It became speedily the seat of a fervent and prosperous church, which has continued to this day to grow in numbers, in zeal, and in fruitfulness. Tried in a more than usual degree by the blasts of persecution, it has nobly stood the test, and proved itself to be one of those trees of God's planting, “which shaking fastens more.” It was constituted into a regular Christian community almost as early as its elder sister at Pechuia, and numbered in 1865 on its communion roll more than twice as many members. It was in reference to this favoured field of labour that one of the missionaries afterwards wrote, in returning from the delightful work of instructing inquirers and examining candidates for baptism; — “After winding about among the hills, and on emerging from a narrow rocky path, the whole rich plain in which Pechuia stands burst at once upon our view. About two months before, in returning, the labourers were just beginning to let in the irrigating waters and to break up the hardened soil; but now it was all covered with the verdure of the growing rice — a beautiful emblem of the spiritual harvest which the Lord was so rapidly gathering by our hands.”

Meanwhile at Amoy also the spiritual work of the missionaries grew sensibly in interest and fruitfulness. It seemed as if the mother church there had been moved to jealousy by the fervour and love of her own daughters in the faith. The earnest attention of hearers at all the chapels deepened, and inquirers multiplied. The arrival of one and another too from distant stations, who had travelled all the way in search of the priceless pearl, must have chide the tardy steps of those who had heard the divine call before them, but were halting between two opinions:

“We have great reason,” writes Mr. Doty, “for thankful praise to the God of grace for the tokens of his favour that we are enjoying in our work here. Knowing there were some persons waiting an opportunity to offer themselves as applicants for church-membership, sometime in January we appointed a special meeting for the purpose. We were both surprised and cheered to find about thirty persons of both sexes, and of ages varying from twenty years up to near seventy, convened. Though among this number were many whom we cannot regard as proper subjects for church-membership, yet most have manifested, and still do continue to manifest, an interest in their soul's salvation.

“We found that there was a spirit of inquiry and awakening, quite unknown to us as to its extent, among those who had been stately hearing the word. From the time of that first meeting for conference and examination, we have felt it to be our duty to continue to hold similar services, and so to meet with those who wish instruction, or desire to be received to church-fellowship. A part of the time we have held the meeting once in two weeks, generally once a week, though in some instances twice. In these meetings we are usually engaged from three to four hours, during which time we may converse with or examine, as the case may be, three or four individuals in the most searching manner, both as to their experimental knowledge of the Holy Spirit's work in the heart, and their acquaintance with Christian doctrine. This brings

us into the closest personal contact with their minds, and enables us to give instruction, to correct misconceptions of truth, guide the inquiring, encourage, warn, and exhort, so as to meet the difficulties of each individual, and the profit of all. Of those applying, after several examinations, ten were admitted to baptism on the last Sabbath of last month, March 26. Two of these are women, one aged sixty-eight years, the other forty-seven; while of the males, their ages range from twenty to sixty-four years. Our meetings continue to be attended with unabated solemnity and interest, and by increasing numbers. Among those recently baptized, as well as among those asking to be numbered among God's professing people, there are several cases manifesting more clearly the work of the Spirit with power than anything we have heretofore seen among the Chinese. Our brethren of the London Society's Mission are sharing largely in this blessed visitation. They have recently received seventeen, nine of whom were women, to church-fellowship, and numbers more are asking for the same privilege."

It was amid exhilarating influences and prospects like these that Mr. Burns made a brief visit to this country during the summer and autumn of 1854. The occasion of his journey was a sad one. His valued colleague Dr. Young had, at the close of the previous year, suffered a heavy affliction in the unexpected removal of an endeared partner, whose life had seemed alike invaluable to himself and to the cause for which he laboured; and though he seemed at first to rally from the blow, it soon appeared that he had received both in mind and body so severe a shock as to render a return to his native land for a season indispensable. It was necessary that someone should accompany him on the voyage, and it was decided after brief conference that Mr. Burns should undertake that duty. How tenderly he watched over his friend during what was to both a singularly trying journey, and how lovingly he cared for those dear to him after his early and sudden removal, it is not for me to tell; but it will be remembered in his behalf in the great day. Dr. Young died at Musselburgh on the nth of February, 1855, having laboured only for four years in the work to which he had devoted himself; but having accomplished much in little time. He will be ever remembered with honour, as one of the first pioneers and patient sowers in a field of toil, of which he was only beginning to reap the fruit when his Master summoned him away. Many in Scotland will remember the Chinese Christian nurse who accompanied him to Edinburgh in charge of his child, and who was one of the first-fruits of his faithful labours in China. She had been baptized the previous year along with her own son and fifteen others at Amoy. "She was, we believe, the first converted Chinese woman that had been in Scotland. She could not escape observation as she sat in the church-pew, with deep thought on her countenance, poring over the Chinese hymn-book, bound in black, which she held in her dark bony hand. A red rose, after the fashion of her country, set in evergreen leaves, on the knot of her jet hair, tightly combed back, relieved the brown face almost grim with gravity. Her black peering eyes watched the preacher. The unknown tongue did not weary her. She was in the house of God and among the friends of Jesus, and longed all the week long for the Lord's-day. When greeted by any friend at the close of the service, her face could hardly be recognized as the same. Her sparkling eye and a look of laughter irradiated it all over. When asked if she did not weary in this country, she said to the missionary, 'Here where I can speak so little to man, I speak the more to God.' At leaving Edinburgh she said she had been happy there, but she knew it was because she loved the Saviour she had received so much kindness.

"Those who remained after the crowded meeting in St. Luke's Church, can never forget the animated dialogue carried on in Chinese between Mr. Burns and Boo-a, to whom it was very trying to appear in the great assembly, but for the willingness she felt to profess her faith in Christ before her Scottish brethren, one of whom had first carried the gospel to her family in China. Her son had already been baptized; but when her daughters were mentioned she pointed to her brow, where the water of baptism had been sprinkled, and sorrowfully shook her head. The Sabbath before her departure she sat down at the Lord's Table, by her own earnest desire, and much enjoyed the ordinance. There the disciples of Jesus from the east and the west, the north and the south, can meet and understand the common language of its sacred symbols, feeding through them on the one Saviour, even while the barrier of varied tongues prevents other intercourse."

In the meanwhile Mr. Burns was actively engaged in endeavouring to extend and deepen the interest in the Chinese cause, which had already begun to be felt in Scotland, and which had shortly before led to the

formation of an auxiliary society in aid of the English mission. He sought especially to engage the interest of those congregations amongst whom he had chiefly laboured in former years, and who would thus most readily respond to his calls both by active efforts and by prayers. Those who then renewed their acquaintance with him were struck with the change which so short an interval of years had made upon him. The effects of a tropical climate, combined with almost incessant and exhausting labours, had sensibly told upon the vigour of a frame, which the rigors of a Canadian winter had already partially- broken. The fresh, sanguine, youthful, even boyish look, which his early hearers remembered so well, had given place to an aspect of ripe and almost fading manhood, which seemed to tell of the lapse not of six but of twenty years. His countenance was sallow, his brow furrowed, his head tinged with gray, and his eye if still bright was bright with a milder brightness. His spirit too had become riper and more mellow. Time and experience had wrought in him a gracious sweetness and human kindness of temper, which in the young Boanerges were less conspicuous. He was more genial, more loving, more freely communicative and companionable, less restrained and austere, than in former days. There was less fire perhaps, but even more fervour; less of the Baptist — more of the Christ. It seemed as if the exalted tone of Christian devotedness which he ever sustained were now less with him a matter of effort and struggle, and more of a holy habit in which grace had become as a second nature. Comparative exile too from the household of faith, amid heathen scenes and heathen faces, made his heart warm towards his Christian brethren, and pour itself forth in fuller loving converse, as one that felt more than ever at home. "His intercourse with us in private," writes his esteemed brother-in-law, the

Rev. Thomas Bain of Cupar Angus, "was of a much more genial and social character, while at the same time equally hallowed and Christ-like. He took great interest in the children, taking down all their names that he might remember them individually in prayer." His preaching too was considerably altered. The fiery intensity and somewhat spasmodic energy of former days had given place to a more full and equable flow of spiritual instruction and fervent appeal; while the frequent allusion and illustrative anecdote from the scenes of his distant field of labour, perpetually reminded the hearer that the evangelist had become the missionary. In every other way too we were reminded of this. While his bodily presence was in Scotland, it was evident that his heart and more than half his thoughts were still in China. He talked of Chinese scenes, sung Chinese hymns, recited far into the night Chinese chapters and psalms, and abounded in details of Chinese customs, traits, and ways of life, such as he too seldom indulged in his letters. Nor was he forgotten by those whom he thus so continually remembered. Of this he received a peculiarly touching proof in a letter addressed to him as their spiritual father by the infant church at Pechuia, which in the naive simplicity and freshness of its fervent and loving words breathes the very spirit of apostolic times, and which well deserves a permanent record in connection with his life and labours. The benignant look of strange delight with which, one morning in the Free Church manse at Kilsyth, he pored over this precious scroll, and deciphered and explained to us its mystic hieroglyphic lines, is to me a picture never to be forgotten. It was to the following effect: —

"Given to be inspected by Mr. Burns and all the disciples." We, who have received the grace of Jesus Christ, send a letter to pastor Wm. Burns, {lit. Shepherd-teacher Pin-ui-lim). We wish that God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ may give to all the holy disciples in the Church grace and peace. Now we wish you to know that you are to pray to God for us; for you came to our market-town, and unfolded the gracious command of God, causing us to obtain the grace of God. Now, we have a number of things to say, we must send this communication. We wish you deeply to thank God for us that in the intercalary seventh month and thirteenth day, pastor Johnston (lit. Shepherd-teacher Jin-siii) established a free school here; there is twelve attending it. Formerly, in the third month, a man, whose name is CkuH-sttri, belonging to the village of Chieng-choan (pure fount village), heard you preaching in the village of Hui-tsau (pottery village). Many thanks to the Holy Spirit who opened his blinded heart, so that in the seventh month he sent a communication to the church at Amoy, praying the brethren to go to the village. They went and spoke for several days, and all the villagers with delighted heart listened. Also in the town of Chioh-bey, the Holy Spirit is powerfully working {lit. Influencing, moving); the people generally (man, man) desire to hear the gospel. The brethren and missionaries have gone together several times; and now, in the village of Ka-lang, there are two men, Ctieng-soan and Sut-mut, who are joining heart with the brethren in prayer. Teacher!

we, in this place, with united heart, pray, and bitterly (i.e. Earnestly) beg of God to give you a level plain (i.e. Prosperous journey) to go home, and beg of God again to give you a level plain (good journey) quickly to come. Teacher! you know that our faith is thin (i.e. Weak) and in danger. Many thanks to our Lord and God, who defends us as the apple of the eye. Teacher! from the time that we parted with you in the seventh month, we have been meditating on our Lord Jesus' love to sinners, in giving up His life for them; also thinking of your benevolence and good conduct, your faith in the Lord, and compassion for us. We have heard the gospel but a few months; our faith is not yet firm (Hard, solid). Teacher! you know that we are like sheep that have lost their shepherd, or an infant that has lost its milk. Many thanks to the Holy Spirit, our Lord, morning and evening (i.e. Continually), comforts our hearts, [and gives us] peace. And in the seventh month, the twenty-fourth day, the brethren with united heart prayed, and shedding tears, bitterly begged of God again to send a number of pastors, quickly to come, again to teach the gospel. We wish that God our Father may grant this prayer, which is exactly that which the heart desires, (i.e. Amen.) "Then follow nine names, being those of all the members of the church at Pechuia at the date when the letter was written. It was learned afterwards that they had subsequently addressed a similar appeal to the American missionaries, every sentence of which, Mr. Talmage writes, was prayed over. "They would write a sentence, and then pray, and then write another sentence, and then pray again." Well might an ardent friend of the cause exclaim in reference to this deeply affecting incident: — "Never did a more touching appeal come from a heathen land for ambassadors of Christ! China is thus in truth stretching out her hands to God!"

While the native Christian disciples thus spoke for themselves, the most cheering tidings also reached him from other quarters of their steadfastness and joy, as well as of the extension of the sacred influence throughout the district around.

Such good news from the far country of his adoption must have been to the missionary "as cold water to a thirsty soul," and would make him eagerly long to return to the work from which he had been so abruptly called away. He sailed again for China in the ship Challenger on the 9th March, along with the Rev. Carstairs Douglas, M.A., a distinguished alumnus of Glasgow University and of the New College, Edinburgh, who had devoted himself to the Chinese cause, and who was ordained by the Free Church Presbytery of Glasgow on the 21st of February, 1855.

## CHAPTER XVIII

1855— 1858

## SHANGHAE, SWATOW, ETC.

Instead of resuming at once his interrupted labours in the province of Fo-kien, Mr. Burns proceeded in the first instance to the north, with the view of attempting if possible to reach the head-quarters of the Taeping rebels, then established at Nanking, and at the very crisis of their singular and mysterious career. The most contradictory rumors had prevailed with regard to the real character and probable result of that movement, and especially as to the relation of its leaders to the Christian faith; and a strong desire existed in many quarters that some of the missionaries then in China should put themselves in communication with them, with the view of at once ascertaining the real state of the case, and taking advantage of any opportunities which might present themselves for furthering the Christian cause. The difficulties in the way of such an undertaking were notoriously very great, and Mr. Burns was evidently not sanguine as to its prosperous accomplishment; but still he deemed it his duty, according to his wont, resolutely to make the attempt, and thus prove whether it were the will of God or no. The expedition proved unsuccessful; but the account he gives of it, written sometime after, is interesting, and may be appropriately here introduced, as continuing in the most authentic form the thread of our narrative : —

“I see from the Witness of May 8th, received to-day, that in a reference made to a letter from Amoy, it is said, 'Mr. B. preached for some days to crowds of the gay inhabitants of this city (Soo-chow), on his return from an attempt to reach the patriot camp at Nanking.' This statement is incorrect, as I only passed through the suburbs of the city in a boat, and this under the surveillance of mandarin officers, who did not, however, hinder the distribution of books and tracts as we passed along. As, for important reasons, I forbade at the time any account of this attempt to reach Nanking being published at Shanghae, and when writing home I purposely made the most meager allusion to it, it is no wonder if misstatements more important than the one above quoted should be made by anyone who had occasion to refer to the matter. It occurs to me that now it may not be without use to take this opportunity of giving some details regarding that journey, as it was one on which, though it failed as regards its primary object, I experienced more than usual marks of the Lord's gracious care and guidance. It was about the beginning of August, 1855, ten days after reaching Shanghae from England, that, in company with a Chinese servant from the neighbourhood of Shanghae, and who having gone with a missionary (Mr. Milne) to England, returned with Mr. Douglas and myself in the Challenge?', I set out in a Woo-sung boat to try whether the way were open to reach the insurgent camp. I went in my own dress, and had resolved that unless permitted to proceed without disguise or artifice, I should return, or rather confine my efforts in making known divine truth to those whom we should meet on the way, or who should hinder us from going on to the desired destination. After proceeding rather slowly, I think for three days and a half, up the Yang-tze-Kiang, we were on a Saturday favoured with a prosperous wind, which bore us rapidly on against the stream of the river, and brought us early in the afternoon to Tau-T'oo, a town not far below Chin-keang-foo, and situated at one of the openings of the Great Canal into the Yang-tze-Kiang. Our getting thus far without impediment was not a little remarkable, for we had already passed two Imperial outposts, and at Tan-T'oo our boat was lying in the midst of a mandarin encampment. How was this, you will ask? We were just passing the head of a large island in the river, and running with a fresh breeze towards Pagoda Hill (I suppose from ten to twenty miles below Chin-kea-ig-foo), when, at the mouth of a creek on the south side of the river, we met the first trace of the Imperial forces encompassing the insurgents. A number of boats were moored here, and as we approached one of them pushed off to meet us and examine what we were. I felt that now, unless God remarkably favoured us, our journey must at once come to an end, and, hid in the cabin of the boat, I

prayed that the Lord would graciously interpose. The boat pushed out to meet us, waving a flag and calling us to wait and give account of ourselves; but the boatmen, no doubt alarmed, told them they had a foreigner on board, and ran on. The guard-boat, whether satisfied or not, saw that it was too late to overtake us, and, no doubt reporting that all was right, returned to their station. Shortly after this, in consequence of a bend in the river at Pagoda Hill, the boat made a tack towards the north bank, and this course I saw would directly bring us to a mandarin encampment with a guard-ship anchored in front of it. I might have told the boatman to make his course short and try to keep clear of further inquiries, but I felt this would have been a subterfuge; and so running straight on, I soon heard the cry of voices inquiring what we were, the boatmen also were calling loudly that I should come out and take the responsibility on myself. I now expected we should be boarded and detained; but coming out I found that there was no small boat near, but only a company of twenty or thirty persons looking on us from the mandarin vessel. I almost involuntarily bowed to them; they graciously returned the salutation; the boat was put about, and we were gone again upon our course without remark or hindrance! Our character was now of course established, by having passed successfully these outer guards, and about three P.M. We took up our place at Tan-T'oo without inquiry made, among the boats of the Imperial soldiers. As the day was Saturday, I resolved to spend the Sabbath at Tau-T'oo, and here my companion and myself (he was then considerably interested in the gospel and is now a professing Christian and assistant-preacher in the hospital of the London Mission at Shanghae) on Saturday afternoon and the whole of Sabbath had a full opportunity of making known the truth and distributing books both among the inhabitants of the town and the mandarin soldiers, who were congregated to the number of some thousands in it. No one seemed to wonder at our visit, or to suspect that we had any design of going among the insurgents. Indeed the people were afraid to allude to the insurgent party at all. The town had been already in their hands and might soon be so again. Our boatmen, who had been prevailed on to come thus far, now obstinately refused to proceed farther. We had often reasoned with them on the subject; but, to cut the matter short, the head-man (there were three boatmen), on our getting moored at Tan-T'oo said, somewhat curtly, 'Now, if you want to go to Nanking, you can get out and walk.' No offer of reward would induce them to go a step further. They said it was just possible that we might get to Nanking alive; but that I, and still more they, could not hope to return. Their boat would be lost, &c; but it was said, 'You will be remunerated.' They replied, 'Of what use will money be when we have lost our lives?' Finding them thus decided, and seeing no other way open consistently with truth and integrity, I arrived unwillingly at the conclusion that, if after the Sabbath was past, circumstances wore the same aspect, this attempt to reach the insurgents must be abandoned. I had asked the boatmen where they would propose to go in case of not proceeding farther towards Nanking. They replied, 'We will return to Shanghae by the Great Canal' (literally, as they call it, \* Transport -provision -River'). This course recommended itself as second best, if the original one must be abandoned; and so, early on Monday morning, finding the way to Nanking closed, we passed through Tan-T'oo into the Great Canal on our homeward route. In entering the canal we had to pass a custom-house, but a bow to the officials from our boat, coupled no doubt with the thought that if we had come too far from home, we were at any rate now turning the head homewards — this sufficed to gain us a free entrance. We now went on to the district city of Tan-yang, distant about twenty miles. We were examined at the custom-house as we arrived, and such a visit from a foreigner seemed to excite surprise. We were however going, as everyone could see, in the right direction (Shanghae), and had come from an unsuspected quarter, Tan-T'oo; thus we were allowed to pass, and a present of books was received with politeness. After passing a little farther along the canal, which skirts I believe the south and east of the city, we brought to near the south gate, and from the boats and the population on shore were soon surrounded by a large crowd, eager to look at the foreigner (an uncommon sight in these parts), and also to get possession of the books we were distributing. At this time I had but an imperfect knowledge of the Shang-hae colloquial and that would but poorly serve here, owing to a difference of dialect. Still I could say a few things which they understood — their anxiety to comprehend no doubt quickening their apprehension. I would have got on to all appearance well in this work, but a drawback arose through the uninvited assistance of a number of Cant 011 men — soldiers or followers of military officers from the south. Having some greater acquaintance with foreigners than the natives of the locality, and finding I could converse with them in their own dialect,

they were too officious in their friendship to me, as well as harsh and overbearing to the crowds who pressed forward to get books. To avoid the crowd, they almost forced me on board one of their mandarin boats; but I had hardly got on board until the crowd pressed after us down the sloping bank, and by the pressure behind, those next to the water were in danger of getting a plunge. One man went down, and on seeing this I rushed on shore, and with some effort regained a position on the level ground. Perhaps it was on account of this little confusion, that when I got to our boat I found that some people had been there from the mandarin's office requesting that we should remove farther off from the city. The boatmen wished to get quite away; but after moving on to near the east gate, they consented to bring to there for the night. The following morning I went on shore with books, and walked along the bank of the canal by the foot of the city wall towards the south gate, where we had been the previous day. Here I was met by a kind of policeman, who asked me what my object was in coming, and said the district magistrate wished to know. Having had little previous acquaintance with Chinese mandarins, and having a good supply of books, I said that if the mandarin wished to make any inquiries about me, I would be happy to go in person with him to his office. He said this would be still better, and so we walked on, in by the gate, through streets and fields, and at last to the office. I did not see the magistrate, but great numbers of people collected, both officials and people from the town, and to them, while in waiting, I had opportunity of giving books and saying a few words in regard to the first principles of divine truth. After some delay, one or two of the magistrate's assistants came out to inspect me, and having asked through the policeman who brought me there, whether I was willing to leave their city, the same policeman conducted me through the city by another route to the east gate, and so back to our boat. It seemed for the moment that the matter was ended, and that we had nothing to do but to go on our way peaceably; but after a short time the original policeman and one or two more came and asked my companion (he had not been with me in the city, I was alone) to go on shore as they wanted to speak to him. He was about to go, when I became alarmed, and said to them that if anyone was to be beaten (signing to that effect) it was I and not he, and that if he went I must go also. They said there was no fear of that, and that if I went also it would be better. I got some books and we went ashore outside the east gate. In a small hall we found an assistant magistrate seated in full dress waiting for us. We were called to sit together at his left hand, the place of honour, and he proceeded to ask at my companion about me and our objects in coming. In answer to the inquiry who I was, we put down in writing that I was a disciple of Jesus and a publisher of [His] religion. He saw I was a foreigner, but never thought of asking to what particular country I belonged, and in writing we did not think of making reference to this. He said with Chinese politeness, that as on the way to Shanghae people might give us trouble, an escort would be sent with us! and that they would very soon be ready to set out. I expressed the hope that they would not prevent us from distributing our books. He said that full liberty would be given us to do this. We then returned to our boat, the original policeman and another remaining on board to see that we did not get out of sight. We should have remained here until our escort was ready, but the poor people were so clamorous for books that the ire of the old policeman was aroused, and at last, when all other means failed, he ordered the boatman to move on for about a mile or so from the city. All the way we were followed on the banks by earnest applicants for books, and it was truly amusing to see the policeman at one time chiding and remonstrating with the people for thus following us, and then once or twice when his eye fell on an acquaintance among the applicants, his zeal for his office was forgotten, and he came in to get from us a large book j'or his friend (I always told I was an Englishman.) At last when we had got to a considerable distance from the city, the evening was falling, and as we had neither wine nor opium for the policeman, he thought of going back to the city, got his arms full of books for his friends and left us. Poor man! he had not gone far, we were told, until the people mobbed him and took his books from him. The sight of this poor people, so eager to get our books, but alas! so little able to understand them, was fitted to affect the heart. May the day soon come when the Christian teacher shall have liberty to go and make known to them fully the love of God in the gift of His Son for sinners, and the power of the blood of Jesus to cleanse from all sin. After the policeman left us we had still many applicants for books; our boatmen moved on, and in their eagerness to gain their object, several from time to time went into the water and swam to our boat (a distance of only a yard or two). But how could you give a book to a man who had to swim with it on shore? the book, one would think, must get wet. But nay, the Chinese are in

many things singular; here was a new expedient. The swimmer got his book, placed it on his brow, made it firm there by his tail tied round his head, and swam to the bank! As it was becoming dark we reached a market-town extending for some distance on both sides of the canal, and here no sooner had we arrived than our coming became known (I know not how), and from that moment onward until our stock of books was more than two-thirds exhausted, we were beset by crowds of applicants, and among them a larger number than usual of respectable people, and even several Buddhist priests. It was well nigh midnight when our escort — two retainers of the mandarin's office — made up to us here in their boat. They seemed alarmed lest we should have got beyond their reach, and were proportionally glad to find us here quietly waiting them. We were glad also that our book distribution had advanced so rapidly during the short respite allowed us. Our escort were intelligent men, and conversed with us at length in our boat before going to rest in their own. Next day we moved on to the interior department city of Chang-chow, where our escort was changed, those from Tan-yang returning home, and two from Chang-chow accompanying us to the next city, viz. The district city of Woo-seih, like Chang-chow situated on the banks of the Great Canal. Here again our conductors gave place to others, or rather, I think, to one only, who the following day accompanied us to the famed city of Soo-chow, the allusion to which in the newspaper you have sent me has given occasion for this unusually long narrative. The stage from Woo-seih to Soo-chow was rather longer than usual, and the afternoon was so advanced when we reached one of the principal city gates, that our escort was just in time to get in before the gate was shut. In the former times of China's peace, and Soo-chow's famed grandeur, the gates would not shut so early as now, when the sound of rebellion is heard so near as at Nanking and Chin-keang. It was in passing through a long suburb on our way to the city gate that we had an opportunity of witnessing, in the many gaily decorated pleasure-boats we passed, evidence at once of the wealth and the moral pollution of this famed city. It was during this transit, too, that in this crowded street of 'Vanity Fair' we distributed the word of life in the form of tracts and copies of the Scripture. Our escort, on this occasion an old man, not so lettered as some of his predecessors, was most diligent in this work, aiding us in it as if for this alone he had been sent. Some came in boats to get books, and some reached out with bamboo basket-hooks from their doors and windows opening to the canal. (These basket-hooks they use for picking up things from the water.) This, alas! was all that we were able to do at Soo-chow; others have been able to make a somewhat longer stay, and to do more, and the time is coming fast, we trust, when Soo-chow, like Corinth, will receive the gospel, and many of its people exchange their luxuries for higher and more enduring pleasures, being 'washed and sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.'"

For the next six months he continued to make his headquarters at Shanghae, from which as a centre he made frequent and extensive excursions amongst the towns and villages around. Living for the most part in his boat, and following leisurely the course of the canals and rivers which here spread like a net-work over the whole face of the country, he scattered far and near the precious seed over a rich and fertile region, which, with the contiguous plain of Ningpo to the south, may be well described as the very garden of China. Stretching out in an unbroken expanse for twenty or thirty miles from the sea-board to the hills, "one vast rice-field," dotted over with towns and villages, and with dark clumps of mulberry-trees — with the white or brown sails of innumerable river craft everywhere in sight moving over the tranquil land — it is rapturously described by travelers, particularly by Mr. Fortune, as the very picture of smiling plenty, teeming population, and peaceful industry. Had the traveler stood there two months after, one of the white sails he saw might have been that of the devoted missionary unweariedly pursuing his sacred calling, amid the crowds of other voyagers "running to and fro" along those shining pathways on other errands. But his eye rested not upon the opulent beauty of the land, but upon the homes of its people, over whom his heart yearned, as he saw them wholly given to the cares of the present life, or to vain idolatrous rites which blindly pointed to another. "Remember me," says he, "from this place, in the midst of a people of a strange tongue, and yet as if at home, to all who love the Lord Jesus and seek the coming of his kingdom and the gathering in of his elect ones in China. O let such pray for us! Ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence, and give Him no rest until He establish and make Jerusalem praise in the whole earth."

The following extracts will give a still more distinct idea of the nature of his labours at this time: "Shanghae, December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1855. — I write these lines on board a river-boat, which has been my principal habitation during the past three months, and in which I returned to this place on Monday last, after an absence in the surrounding country of twenty-six days. The last place we visited was a market-town, Min-hang, about halfway between Sing-kiang and Shanghae, and here we were prepared to meet with less attention than usual, as the place is often trodden by foreign feet, and there are few among the missionaries, I suppose, who have not been there. However, in this case our fears were disappointed and our hopes much more than exceeded, for during the Saturday and Sabbath which we spent at this place, we had usually large and attentive audiences, and on the Sabbath evening, when it was getting dark, we still continued to preach to an engaged audience, with whom at the close I felt at liberty to join in public prayer to the living and true God in the name of Jesus. It is not generally our custom thus to pray with the people, preaching as we do in the public street, &c, and alas! too frequently to a people not prepared to join in spirit with us."

Now and then the peculiarity of the circumstances would impart a certain tinge of romance to the scene. That strange sermon, for instance, under cloud of night, in a lone inland village, by the light of lanterns, suggests a picture singularly vivid and striking: — "When it was dark we halted for the night at Chung-too-keon (or Passage-for-all-Bridge), where there are but a few houses, and where we little thought of finding a congregation. However, we had hardly halted before we were arrested by the sound of a multitude of voices as of a crowd dispersing, and were informed that there had been a stage-play going on of an unusually immoral kind, and that the people had now dispersed, so that it was too late to reach them. However, we went ashore, and although the mass of these poor heathens were gone, we still found as many as we could address with effect, lingering about the gambling and eating house. The people had their lanterns and we had ours, and, amid the darkness thus broken, we addressed a multitude of precious souls, assisted graciously by our God to speak with more than usual earnestness and liberty of speech; the people also, as if panic-struck by being overtaken by such a message in such circumstances, listened with a fixed and serious interest. I called on them to join with us in prayer to the true God, in the name of the Saviour of sinners that he would deliver them from their sins, and save them from the punishment which sin was preparing for them. At the beginning of the address to God's throne there was some noise of voices, but towards the close all was breathless stillness. My companion and I were encouraged by thus meeting, as if by God's special guidance, with opportunities of declaring his truth and calling fellow-sinners to repentance."

But a field already occupied by so many missionaries, and so "often trodden by foreign feet," could scarcely be an altogether congenial sphere of operations to one who felt himself especially called to the work of an evangelistic pioneer. Accordingly, within less than two months from the date of the lines just quoted, he was again on his way to another and distant part of the country. A Christian friend, Captain Bowers, of the merchant ship the Geelong, had spoken in high terms of Swatow, a rising commercial mart at the eastern extremity of the Canton province, and the chief port of the department of Tie-chew, as an advantageous centre for missionary operations; and being himself about to sail thither, offered him a free passage should he be disposed to go and reconnoiter the ground. An invitation coming to him in this unsought and apparently providential way, and reaching him too at a time when no special attachment bound him to any other sphere, and when he was as it were waiting for a summons to some new service from the Master, came to him with all the force of a divine call; and he resolved, after brief but prayerful consideration, to close with it. It is probable also that he was on other grounds not indisposed to turn his face once more towards the Canton district, where seven years before he had begun his evangelistic labours in China, and which he had been compelled reluctantly to leave, without having made such full proof of his ministry as he had hoped and desired. He sailed from Shanghae early in March, and reached Swatow about the middle of that month. His next date is from that place, March 31, 1856: —

"Swatow, March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1856. — When I last wrote to you I was on the point of leaving Shanghae for this place in company with Mr. Taylor of the Chinese Evangelization Society. We left on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March, and, after a favourable passage of six days, arrived here on the 12<sup>th</sup>. We were very averse to the thought of being located even temporarily on the island (Double Island), on which some of our countrymen have, by

compact with the local magistrates, taken up their head-quarters, but were anxious, if possible, to find a location in the Chinese town of Swatow, which is on a promontory of the mainland, five English miles further up, at the mouth of the river Han. We were apprehensive lest we should not be permitted thus to locate ourselves; but in the gracious and all-governing providence of our God and Saviour, we found favour and assistance from those whom we least expected to aid us, viz. The Canton merchants here, who are the agents or correspondents of the foreigners (our countrymen) down the river; and two days after our arrival we were, to our own surprise and joy, enabled to take possession of the lodging which we have since been occupying unmolested. Our lodging is not indeed large, being only a small upper flat of a house occupied below as a shop; but it is sufficient for our present wants, and we are the more thankful for it as of vacant houses here there are almost none. Swatow is not a very large place, but it is growing at present very rapidly, and has all the appearance of being in a few years a place of great importance. During the first ten days after our arrival, the Geelong lay at anchor along with another ship off the town discharging cargo, and Captain Bowers continued to show us the same Christian kindness which he had manifested in bringing us here free of charge. Mr. Taylor and myself came here quite undecided whether we should be able to attempt more than simply to make a running visit for the purpose of Scripture and tract distribution to the open parts of the country; but now that we see more fully the importance of this region as a vast and unoccupied scene for missionary labour, we are anxious, before going further, to prepare ourselves for the purpose of teaching the people orally by acquiring some knowledge of their dialect. This is a comparatively easy work in my case, the dialect spoken here being, as I formerly mentioned, very similar to that spoken at Amoy. We have as yet done very little in the way of active labour among this people, but would pray that our zeal may increase with our ability to improve the openings for usefulness that may be afforded us. We have much need, as everyone must see who considers our present position, of special grace to support and render us useful. For this grace may many be led to pray, that for the gift bestowed on us by the means of many persons, thanks may be afterwards given by many in our behalf, should it please the God of grace to preserve us in his truth and love, and make us a means of blessing to some of these dying millions."

While the aspect of the field in a moral and spiritual point of view was at first by no means encouraging, the representations given to him of its great importance had not been exaggerated. Situated on a narrow channel connecting two wide and spacious basins, the one running into the land and the other opening out to the sea, Swatow possesses all the advantages of a convenient and commodious commercial centre. Behind it is an extensive, opulent, and densely peopled district, for whose produce and enterprise it affords a natural outlet; while before it lies the direct and open pathway to all the commerce of the world. At about five miles' distance, near the entrance of the outer harbor, is the subordinate port and foreign station of Double Island, affording a convenient anchorage for vessels approaching either from the north or from the south. As a commercial mart it is only of recent formation, but has been rapidly growing in wealth and importance, and was two years after this advanced to a new position, by being placed by treaty amongst the number of the ports legally open to foreign residence and foreign traffic. It is, far more than even Hong-Kong or Canton, the true key to the whole district south of Amoy, from which it is distant along the coast-line about 150 miles. The prospect, however, of a prosperous entrance into this new and untried field did not at first on further trial become more promising. Three months after, Mr. Burns was as it were still endeavouring in vain to affect a landing on what seemed an iron-bound and inhospitable shore.

At Nan-yang, ten miles from Swatow, July 16<sup>th</sup>, 1856. — During the last fortnight I have been moving from place to place, making known the gospel message and distributing tracts, &c, in company with two professing Christians, natives of this district, who came up from Hong-Kong fully a month ago, sent by Mr. Johnson, an American missionary, to co-operate with us. Previously to their coming, I had been out on a missionary tour accompanied by a servant only. . . Had we obtained a place suitable for indoor preaching at Swatow, I would not have ventured at this hot season to go about in the country. Difficulties, however, have been thrown in the way of our obtaining such a place, and so no other course has been left open but the one we are now following. We have met as yet with but little decided encouragement, but still something is done to spread an incipient knowledge of the truth, and in a field which has been so little cultivated we must not be discouraged if we meet not with immediate success."

Still as ever his eyes were unto the Lord, the salvation of Israel, as his one source of strength and hope of victory. Great indeed and heavy was the stone that closed the sepulcher in which slept this heathen people; but he went forth in the strength of One who by one touch of His hand could roll it away: — "I need perhaps as much as ever I did since I came to China the presence and power of God's quickening Spirit, to maintain divine love and compassion for souls in my heart. Are there those who feel for us in this unbroken field of heathenism, and cry to God with spiritual agonizing for the descent of the Spirit in his life-giving and converting power? The God of grace grant to us such helpers, for the glory of his own great name!"

He was every day painfully reminded of the urgent need of such help, and of the utter vanity of any other. Well might he, in contemplating the case of that blinded, debased, and almost savage people, have adopted the cry of Valignano, in looking across to that rock-bound coast, "O rock, rock, when wilt thou open?"

To the other difficulties of this arduous and trying service, "perils of robbers" were, as on many former occasions, added. In a postscript to one of the letters just quoted, he writes: — "About two o'clock a.m., or past midnight, July 18<sup>th</sup>, 1856. We have just been visited by robbers, who have taken all but the clothes we wear, without however doing us any injury. This is a new call to pity, and to pray for this poor people, sunk so low in darkness and sin. One of our numbers, it is proposed, shall return to Swatow to get a small supply of money and books, while the other Christian and I go on to another town to await his return. We are preserved in much peace, and have just been joining in praise and prayer for this poor people."

A momentary gleam of light seemed now to break upon them in the unexpected kindness and cordiality of the people in some of the villages which they visited; but the sky was soon again overcast, and a train of events followed which might well have issued in a sad and tragic conclusion. The history will be best told in his own words, in a letter bearing the unexpected date of.....

"Canton, October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1856 — My Dear Sir, When I last wrote you in the middle of July, I and my companions had just been robbed in our lodgings at a village about sixteen miles from Swatow. The following day one of my companions returned to Swatow with my letters, and to obtain a fresh supply of books and money, while my other Christian companion and I went forward, as we had intended, to the town of Tang-leng, about six miles further on. We were without money, but God provided support for us in a way that was new to me. The people who took our books gladly contributed small sums of cash for our support, and the first day we thus collected enough to keep us for two days; a countryman also, going the same road, volunteered to carry our bag of books for us; it was heavy for our shoulders, but easy for his, and he said he would want no money, but only a book. Thus the Lord helped us in going forward on his work, instead of turning back to Swatow for help. At Tang-leng we were very well received. In the neighbourhood there are two native Christians, converted in connection with the American Baptist Mission in Siam, and who, though they are left much to themselves, seem to follow the Lord in sincerity. With these we had much pleasure in meeting on the Lord's-day, and at other times. A heavy and continued fall of rain detained us at Tang-leng for some weeks, without our being able to do much abroad; and at last, on Monday, August 18<sup>th</sup>, we left this town, intending to return to Swatow. Our course by water leading us to within five or six miles of the Chaic-chow-foo (chief city of the Chaou-chow department), we agreed to pay it a visit; but fearing lest we should give offence to the authorities, we determined, instead of living on shore, to make the boat which conveyed us there our head-quarters while we remained. On Tuesday the 19<sup>th</sup> we went on shore, and were particularly well received by the people. The demand for our books among persons able to read them was unusually great. In the meantime, however, an alarming report of the presence of a foreigner outside the city having been carried to the authorities, we were in the evening suddenly arrested in our boat, and, with all our books, &c, taken prisoners into the city. The same night we were examined publicly by the district magistrate, and after the interval of a day we were examined anew by a deputy (I suppose) of Che-foo, or chief magistrate of the department. On these occasions my companions and myself had valuable opportunities of making known something of the gospel, and of the character and objects of Christ's disciples in China; and as there was a great demand for our books, the work of many days seemed to be crowded into one or two. The magistrates examined us with great

mildness and deliberation, seeming anxious to obtain information rather than to find fault; and on the evening of the 21<sup>st</sup>, the day of our second examination, a sub-official was deputed to inform us that the magistrates found we had been arrested on a false report, and that if the Canton merchants at Swatow, or any one of them, would stand security for us, we would be allowed to return to that place. The Canton merchants (through whom the trade in foreign vessels is carried on at Swatow), on being written to, came forward in the kindest manner with the document required; but in the meantime, it appears, the magistrates had reflected that, having once arrested a foreigner, confined and examined him, they could not, according to law or with safety to themselves, give him up -to any other than a foreign consul, and so I was told that I would be sent to Canton. On Saturday the 30<sup>th</sup> I was put on board a river-boat, and carried about a mile above the city. Here we remained until Tuesday morning, when, being joined by a number of officials, high and low, in all occupying four river-boats, and going to Canton, some in connection with my case, and some on other business, we at last commenced our journey. I was provided with a servant, and with whatever food I wished, at the expense of the government; and had I been well, and had with me a good supply of Christian books, I might have enjoyed the journey much. As the case was, my books were nearly all gone; and as to my health, a slight cold which I had caught before coming to the city had, through excitement, &c, taken the form of an intermittent fever, with chills (ague), which, violent at first, continued more or less during all my journey. Our course lay first up the Chaou-chow river against a rapid stream, through Ken-ying-chow, and then, when the river ceased to be navigable, we crossed the country through a hill-pass — a distance of about twenty miles — to where another river, flowing down through Heong-chow to Canton, becomes navigable for boats of considerable size. The first part of the journey was tedious, and (including days on which we halted until our business at the various cities we passed was concluded) we were on the way in all "thirty-one days. The news of our arrest, and of my being sent to Canton, had reached Hong-Kong, and through the great kindness of many friends who felt anxious for my safety, and could not explain why we should be so long on the way, inquiries were made for us at the office of the native authorities in Canton. It was perhaps owing to this in part, that on reaching Canton on the morning of September 30<sup>th</sup>, instead of being taken to the mandarin's office, two men were sent by the authorities to conduct me straight from the boat to the office of the British consul. The consul has had a communication from the governor-general about the case. I did not see it, but the consul informed me that it was conceived in a mild strain, much more so than he had expected; and I am thus wonderfully preserved, and freed from the infliction of any punishment or penalty. I am sorry to add that there is reason to fear my two companions are still confined at Chaou-chow-foo, though the governor-general assures the consul they have been sent to their native districts (in the Chaou-chow department), to be liberated on finding proper security. . . . Looking at the lenient view of our case which the native authorities both at Chaou-chow and here seemed led to take, I was disposed, now that my health is graciously restored, to proceed very soon back to Swatow, in the hope of being able to prosecute the missionary work there unmolested; but yesterday, when in the act of making arrangements for going to Hong-Kong, I was met by a message from the British plenipotentiary, conveyed to me by the consul, to the effect that, after the representations of the imperial commissioner, he should deem it imprudent and improper that I should return to the district from which I have been sent. Met by such a message, from such a quarter, I think it will be my duty to delay making any movement of the kind I contemplated, at least until I hear from Mr. Taylor about his plans and prospects, and until the native brethren, as we hope they soon may, be released. . . . In the meantime, if shut up for a season at Canton, I am in the midst of kind missionary brethren, American and English; and my acquaintance with the Canton dialect, now revived, should save me, through the grace of God, from spending my time unprofitably. The field is the world; the seed is the Word of God. Most of those who came down with me from Chaou-chow were Canton men; they treated me with much respect and kindness, and with them, in the course of the month we spent together, I had many conversations on the subject of the gospel, which I trust may not prove altogether useless. Looking back on the whole scene through which I have passed, and contrasting the life and favour granted us with the misconstruction and suffering to which we might have been subjected, I cannot but adore the wonderful goodness and power of Him to whom the kingdom belongs, and who unceasingly cares even for the most unworthy of his servants. While the people of God have need to pray for us that we may be guided to act aright, and not to rush into

danger without cause, they have surely cause to give praise for deliverance vouchsafed, and for opportunities, such as seldom occur, of making known something of the truth of the gospel to men in authority, and to many others.

. . . With Christian regards to all friends, I am, ever yours, — Wm. C. Burns.”

There fortunately exists also a Chinese account of these events, which is so curiously characteristic, that I am tempted here to reproduce it as a supplement to the missionary's own narrative. It is contained in the official statement addressed by Commissioner Yeh to the British consul Mr. Parkes in delivering up his prisoner to him, and gives us a vivid glimpse into the interior economy and life of that singular people.

“COMMISSIONER YEH TO CONSUL PARKES.

\* Translation.

"Yeh, High Imperial Commissioner, Governor-General of the Two Kwang Provinces, &c, addresses this declaration to H. S. Parkes, Esq., Her Britannic Majesty's Consul at Canton.

"I have before me an official report from Wang-Ching, Chief Magistrate of the district of Hae-yang, in the department of Chaou-chow, which contains the following statements : — "It being the duty of your subordinate to act with Le-scuen-fang, the major commanding at this city (Chaou-chow), in the inspection of the defenses of the place, we suddenly observed, whilst engaged in this service, three persons seated in a boat on the river whose appearance had something in it that was unusual. We found in their boat, and took possession of, seven volumes of foreign books, and three sheet tracts; but these were the only things they had with them. On examining the men themselves, we observed that they all of them had shaven heads, and wore their hair plaited in a queue, and were dressed in Chinese costume. The face of one of them, however, had rather a strange look; his speech in respect to tone and mode of expression being not very similar to that of the Chinese. We, therefore, interrogated him carefully, whereupon he stated to us that his true name was Pin-wei-lm (William Burns); that he was an Englishman, aged 42 years, and, as a teacher of the religion of Jesus, had been for some time past engaged in exhorting his fellow-men to do good deeds. In 1847 he left his native land and travelled to China, and took up his residence first at Victoria, where he lived two years, and afterwards in the foreign factories at Canton, where he remained for more than one. Subsequently, he visited Shanghae, Amoy, and other places, and there spent several years; wherever he went he made himself acquainted with the languages of the Chinese, and by this means he delivered his exhortations to the people, and explained to them the books of Jesus, but without receiving from any one the least remuneration. In 1854 he embarked in a steamer from Amoy, on a visit to his native home, and in

December, 1855, joined himself to one of his countrymen, surnamed Tae, who was going to Shanghae to trade. 'I accompanied him thither,' said Burns, 'in his vessel; but from Shanghae Tae returned home again, whilst I remained there and engaged myself in the distribution of Christian books. In the sixth month of the present year (July), I left Shanghae, and took passage in a foreign sailing vessel to Shantow (Swatow), in the district of Chinghae. There I fell in on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month (August 12) with Le-a-yuen and Chin-a-seun, the two Chinese who have now been seized with me. I called upon them to be my guides, and we proceeded in company to Yen-fan, and from thence came on to this city, where we had it in contemplation to distribute some of our books. Scarcely, however, had we arrived at the river's bank on the 19<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month (19<sup>th</sup> August), when to our surprise we found ourselves under surveillance, and deprived of our liberty. We entertained, however, no other views or intentions than those which we have stated, and declare that these statements are strictly true.'

"Such is the account given by the missionary, William Burns, who, together with his seven volumes of foreign books and his three sheet tracts, was given over into the charge of an officer, and brought in custody to this office.

"Having examined the above report, I (the imperial commissioner) have to observe thereon that the inland river of the city of Chaou-chow is not one of the ports open to (foreign) commerce; and it has never on that account been frequented by foreigners. I cannot but look upon it, therefore, as exceedingly improper that William Burns (admitting him to be an Englishman) should change his own dress, shave his

head, and assuming the costume of the Chinese, penetrate into the interior in so irregular a manner. And although, when closely examined by the magistrate, he firmly maintained that religious teaching and the distribution of books formed his sole object and occupation, it may certainly be asked, why does William Burns leave Shang-hae and come to Chaou-chow, just at a time when Kiang-nan and the other provinces are the scene of hostilities? Or, can it be that a person, dressed in the garb and speaking the language of China, is really an Englishman, or may he not be falsely assuming that character to further some mischievous ends?

"I have directed Heu, the assistant Nan-hae magistrate, to hand him over to the consul of the said nation, in order that he may ascertain the truth respecting him, and keep him under restraint; and I hereby, by means of this declaration, make known to him (the consul) the above particulars.

"William Burns, seven volumes of foreign books, and three sheet tracts, accompany this declaration. "Heenfung, 6<sup>th</sup> year, 9<sup>th</sup> month, 2<sup>nd</sup> day. (September 30, 1856.)"

Another characteristic incident related by his friend and fellow-labourer, Dr. De la Porte, may be here introduced, as completing the history of these deeply interesting events: — "When he was arrested in August, 1856, and brought before the chief magistrate of the Chaou-chow department, the magistrate required him to go down on both knees to be examined, as is the practice in China. Mr. B. very firmly but respectfully refused, saying that he would go down on one knee, as he would do to his sovereign, Queen Victoria; but that he would only go down on both knees to the King of kings. The magistrate was struck by this answer, solemnly and respectfully uttered, and allowed the missionary to be examined on one knee."

There were several circumstances connected with the time and position of affairs in which these events took place which rendered them peculiarly critical, and which led him ever after to regard their peaceful issue as a remarkable instance of the Lord's gracious leading and providential care. His arrest and confinement took place immediately on the eve of the hostilities which that year broke out between the British and Chinese powers, and just before the commencement of those sanguinary proceedings on the part of Commissioner Yeh, which sent a thrill of horror throughout the civilized world. Had he arrived at Canton while these events were in progress, it is not difficult to see what the swift and terrible issue would have been! It will be remembered, too, that he had been, shortly before his arrival in this province, actually on his way to the head-quarters of the rebel army, on an unknown errand, to which the habitual jealousy of the Chinese authorities might easily have ascribed a sinister purpose. Alive to the danger of such misconstruction he had refrained at the time from giving even to his friends any account of that journey, which might afterwards find its way into the Shanghae papers, and thus lead to possible complications and interruption of his work, and it remained in consequence up to this hour totally unknown to the Chinese authorities. Had it been otherwise, and had any written trace of the journey and the inquiries connected with it existed on the records of any Chinese court, it would have been infallibly brought to light in connection with the inquiries consequent on the present arrest, and lent strong colour to the suspicion which his Chinese garb, coupled with his foreign look and accent, seemed to have awakened.

"Had an account of the journey," he wrote afterwards (June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1858), "been published at the time in the Shanghae newspaper, as would probably have been the case had it not been interdicted, it is quite possible that the Chinese authorities in this quarter might have got some hint of the circumstance, when two years ago I was detained with two companions at the Foo city (Chaou-chow). It would in that case have seemed to them evident that I was a rebel in disguise, and the result can be but little doubtful. As the case stood, our countrymen in this neighbourhood knowing nothing of the said journey, none of the Chinese in their employ could even have it in their power to cast suspicion on us. I thought it also a special mercy that in neither of the examinations by the authorities at the Foo city was a single allusion made to the rebel party, nor any entangling questions put as to where I went and with what objects when journeying in the neighbourhood of Shanghae. Had such questions been put, then I might have seemed to be self-convicted of abetting the rebellion, and so have been summarily dealt with as an enemy of the government. The possibility of this was painted in painful colours to my mind when suffering from fever in my confinement, but from all these fears and dangers the Lord wonderfully delivered me. It would have been indeed a different thing to suffer as a supposed rebel, and to suffer 'as a Christian. This latter privilege

was given to my native companions when beaten on the face and imprisoned for months; from the former I was most graciously and completely saved."

Notwithstanding Dr. Bowring's friendly advice he was induced soon afterwards to return to Swatow, with the view especially of inquiring after his native brethren who were still in captivity at the Foo city. It was painful to him to find on his arrival there that they had been treated by the authorities with a cruel severity which they had not dared to use towards a British subject; but at the same time he rejoiced greatly that they had been enabled to witness a good confession in behalf of Christ in the presence of their heathen adversaries. Beaten forty blows on the cheek with an instrument resembling the sole of a shoe, they adhered unflinchingly to their testimony to the truth and preciousness of the gospel, as the one only remedy for the ills of the soul, and returned to their prison only to pray and sing praises to God, and to labour daily for the salvation of their fellow-captives, one of whom, to their great joy, was in due time given them for their hire. At length, after four months' imprisonment, they were, at Mr. Burns' intercession, set at liberty.

Meanwhile he had received at Swatow an unexpectedly cordial welcome from those to whom he had before preached, "enjoying favour in the sight of rich and poor, the rulers and the ruled." He was enabled at last to effect a permanent settlement in the place, and to resume his interrupted labours under more favourable auspices, and with brighter prospects of success. Having engaged the valuable co-operation of a medical man of the Wesleyan denomination, Dr. De la Porte, then practicing amongst the foreign shipping at Double Island, he was enabled to combine the beneficent ministries of a medical mission with his usual evangelistic operations, and thus more rapidly win his way to the confidence and regard of the native community. Two days of each week were regularly employed in connection with this work, when he acted as interpreter between the physician, as yet imperfectly acquainted with the language, and the patients, as they came one by one to tell their case, while two native evangelists were engaged in another room, ministering the word of spiritual healing to the crowd of impotent folk who were waiting their time to be heard. About forty or fifty sufferers would thus be prescribed for in one day, while, at the same time, unnumbered seeds of saving truth were cast in faith upon the waters, to be found, it may be, after many days.

In this way the preaching of the word, on week-days and on Sabbath-days, both to the foreign visitors and to the native community, went on steadily and in perfect peace, notwithstanding the rumors of war between the Chinese and British powers then raging in their immediate neighbourhood. It seemed to him as if the passing events of that stirring drama were far better known, and excited a far livelier interest, amongst his friends at home than amongst those living within a hundred miles of the scene of action; and from first to last, the friendly relation in which he stood both to the authorities and to the people around him remained undisturbed.

"A week or two ago," he writes, January 30, 1857, "the principal local authority in this place, when sick, invited Dr. De la Porte's medical assistance, and was very grateful for the aid thus given him; and we are on such friendly terms with the authorities here, that it was in the small fort in the town, and from the military officer in charge of it, that we the other day got the news of the progress of the war, which had just come by steamer from Hong-Kong. He passed as we were speaking to the people near the fort, listened with some interest, and then invited us to take tea and converse with him, not only about the quarrel at Canton with the English, but about the gospel of Christ."

Only by two incidents was he brought into closer and more personal contact with the political events then passing around him. The one was a proposal made to him in a very gratifying way by Lord Panmure, that he should undertake the office of chaplain to the British forces in that quarter, with the usual rank and salary of a major in the army. He respectfully but decidedly declined the appointment, chiefly on the ground that his connection with the invading army would be ever afterwards remembered by the Chinese, and thus leave upon him, as it were, an indelible stamp, most prejudicial to the success of the higher ministry to which he had devoted his life. Lord Panmure entirely appreciated the high motives by which he had been actuated, and replied in terms of Christian courtesy, which must have been most gratifying to him.

The other incident was the arrival of Lord Elgin at the port of Swatow, in the course of his important mission to the court of Peking, and is thus briefly alluded to by Mr. Burns: — “Lord Elgin in his way to the north called in at Swatow, about a month ago. I was invited to breakfast with him, on board H.M. Steamship Furious and had a full opportunity of expressing to him my convictions and feelings on various points — the coolie trade, opium, &c. He made particular inquiries in regard to the progress of the missionary work among this people, and also heard in detail the facts connected with my arrest, &c, in 1856.”

He ever afterwards retained the deepest respect for that distinguished and esteemed nobleman, who afterwards, when Governor-general of India, corresponded with him in the kindest manner, in regard to a matter in which he had occasion to ask his friendly intervention. It was no doubt in great measure in consequence of this visit, and the observations and inquiries then made, that we owe the fact that Swatow was, by the treaties then under consideration, added to the number of the free and open ports. The following extracts from a letter to one of his sisters furnishes an additional reason for his prudent declination of the chaplaincy, and gives at the same time one or two interesting glimpses of his occupations and mode of life at this time : —

"Swatow, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1858. — My dear Sister, — . . . During the past few weeks I have been almost constantly resident, not at the Chinese town of Swatow (my proper station), but at Dr. De la Porte's (Double Island). I came down at first for a change of air, but after getting the full benefit of this I am still for a little detained here by superintending some repairs and improvements in the Dr.'s house. I need to attend to this rather than he, not only because I understand the language, but because, in the view of his going to England, I consented to take his cottage, &c, from him, wishing to hold the situation in behalf of the mission cause generally as well as for present use. We have the workmen about us, and have some of them always with us at evening worship. Among other things we are at present engaged, like the patriarchs, in digging a well, and as the position is rather elevated, we need to go deep in order to find 'springing water' such as Isaac found, Genesis 26:19. You allude to the invitation given me to become chaplain to the Presbyterian soldiers in China. I have lately had a very kind acknowledgment from the War Office of my letter declining the appointment. As I had refused on grounds connected with my occupation as a missionary, Lord Panmure will not press the appointment on me. Unless the Lord in his providence should shut me up to such a course of acting, I feel more and more that I could not safely leave for a moment the position I occupy; and had I accepted the appointment, I would have found on the one hand at least, up to the present time, that the troops among whom I was expected to be, had gone to India instead of coming here, and on the other hand would have been in the greatest danger, from knowing Chinese, of being diverted from my proper work, and sinking down into a kind of interpreter about all and sundry matters. Mr. L, whom you once wrote to me about after he had been in Glasgow, has lately got into a position somewhat of this kind. He is now at Canton assisting generally the provisional government established there by the English and French until matters are settled at Peking. He about a year ago disagreed somehow with the Chinese Evangelization Society, and became government school (Chinese) inspector in Hong-Kong, and from the newspapers I have just seen that he is gone to Canton in the capacity I have mentioned. . . . — Your affectionate brother, — Wm. C. Burns.”

The carpentry labours here referred to were only a recurrence to the occupations and acquired skill of former days, when as a boy he lifted up his axe upon the trees around the manse of Kilsyth. Now he found the change obscene and the bracing exercise of great advantage to him, "as tending powerfully to reinvigorate his physical powers, after being a good deal tired through a too confined position at Swatow." It spoke well for the solidity and workmanlike character of his work that as his friends afterwards remarked, in a terrible hurricane which shortly after passed over the district, sweeping away the entire shipping and demolishing a great part of the houses both at Swatow and Double Island, his was the only house amongst those in its vicinity which stood the blast. One other incident of a startling and solemn kind marked the period of his residence at Swatow. A terrible visitation of cholera passed, during several months, over the whole district of which it forms the centre, and created a wide-spread terror which brought out in a striking and affecting way the gross blindness and superstition of the people: — "It is melancholy to see the means

to which the people resort in order to free themselves from this dreadful visitation of God's hand. First, they had a procession of lanterns, each house furnishing one or more large lanterns, with bearers for them. This was continued for three successive nights. Next they had a public procession, continued during the day and a great part of the night, with drums and gongs making a discordant noise to drive away evil spirits from the streets; this was accompanied too with plays and exhibitions of all sorts of finery, children on horseback, &c. Our doors or windows were shut, so that I can give no description of what I did not wish to see. Again the people went out in procession to a neighbouring field, and drew water to drink, a cupful of which was ordered as a recipe against the disease. These means having failed, for the last week or more all animal food, fish or flesh, has been forbidden. On one day no one was to wash clothes; and, to my surprise, on Monday, 19<sup>th</sup>, when I went up from Double Island, the town appeared like a forest of shipping, high flag-staffs being erected in all directions, formed of long bamboos, fixed the one above the other, and some as high as a ship's mast; to these are attached small flags: and at night small lanterns are suspended from them. In what way these things are expected to be beneficial I cannot ascertain. The only answer to be got is that they are ordered by their idols; and this brings out the most affecting feature of the whole. There are young lads who either really are possessed by evil spirits or feign to be so, and in a kind of raving madness give out what are looked upon as the oracular voice of the idol whom the people worship. There are two principal idols' temples in Swatow; and both of these idols have been in succession personated by these insane youths, by whom this blinded people are led! It is by such direction that all the foregoing remedies have been used to save them from cholera! Not one word is heard of the need of repentance, or of turning from any of the sins in which this people are lying, and in which they seem to go on with as unblushing boldness as before. How true that darkness covereth the earth and gross darkness the people! What need that He should arise and shine who is the Light of the world! In the midst of such a people how weak and helpless does all mere human instrumentality appear, and what need have God's people to pray for us that in these circumstances our faith may not fail, and that we may not sit down in despondency, but still persevere in doing the work of the Lord among this people!"

One or two further extracts from his correspondence will complete the history of his labours here, which were marked by no other memorable event or important change, save only the gradual opening up of the field and the increasing interest and hopefulness of his work. His remarkable reception and hospitable treatment at the town of Tat-haw-poe is especially interesting, as an instance of the manner in which he often overcame difficulties by simply confronting them in the spirit of faith and prayer, and found favour in the sight of those from whom hostility and opposition only had been expected : —

"Swatow, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1857. — Whatever change we can mark is in the way of progress. The medical work brings an increasing number of persons about us, to whom we seek to make known the truth, and gives us, in connection with our efforts to diffuse the truths of the gospel, a very favourable position in the eyes of the community. There is a district of country, Phoo-ning, at a distance varying from thirty to fifty English miles, from which we have had of late an unusual number of visitors, both men and women. They have taken lodgings near us for a succession of days, and not only have seemed to value the medical aid for which they came, but have very generally attended all our daily religious services, and have shown a more than common interest in our message. That district of country seems particularly afflicted with a species of leprosy and some persons suffering from this and other diseases having received benefit, the poor people form parties and come out, at no inconsiderable trouble and expense to themselves. Those that come to us from this and other quarters we generally make the bearers of tracts and Scriptures to their villages; and sometimes when we neglect to supply them, they apply of their own accord. . . .

"A week or two ago a large party of women thus came, having hired a boat for themselves, and many of them seemed a good deal interested in our message. One old matron of seventy-three I was especially interested with. Staying opposite she was often below stairs. She came generally to worship, and by her serious and intelligent look one might hope that she understood something of what was taught her. One evening, after she retired from worship, I heard her, across the street, mentioning the Saviour's name, and she appeared to be attempting to pray."

"Swatow, June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1858— My dear Mother, — Dr. De la Porte is at last about to leave us. He was here seeing patients yesterday, as I suppose, for the last time, and to-morrow, if the Lord will, I go down to

Double Island to see him away. He goes down to Hong-Kong in the expectation of finding a vessel in which to sail for England. It was affecting yesterday to join with him in prayer, probably for the last time, in a place where we have had so many meetings at the mercy-seat, and when he was gone, the thought that Ave should see him not again here caused a tender pang which found relief only in looking up to Him who hath said, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' — Wm. C. Burns."

"Swatow, September 15<sup>th</sup>, 1858. — Four weeks ago, after the assistants and I had specially sought the divine direction, we determined that two of them should go direct to Tat-haw-poe (a large town about 4 or 5 miles from Double Island) from Swatow, and that the following day, August 17<sup>th</sup>, one of them should join me at Double Island, and conduct me from there to Tat-haw-poe. He failed to come for me on the day appointed, and next morning came to say that, at Tat-haw-poe had just been posted up a Canton proclamation, warning the people from having anything to do with the English, and that it was a question I must myself decide whether I would venture to go or not. There was some reason to fear that no one would give me lodging, but I thought it my duty to go, and, wonderful to say, just as we were about to conclude addressing the people, a man of respectability invited us into his hong, gave us a kind welcome, asked where I was to lodge, and when he found that there was but poor accommodation in the shop where my assistants were staying, he pressed us to come to him, leading me from room to room, and desiring me to take which one I preferred. Finally he put me into his own room and one of the assistants into the adjoining and there I remained for several days. Though passing the night in this gentleman's hong, we continued to take our meals in the shop where the assistants had been lodging, until on Saturday morning, August 21<sup>st</sup>, the shop man informed us that his landlord had, on the previous night, given him notice, that he must on no account admit foreigners into his shop, and that therefore I must cease to come. On this we went and made known the matter to our host, asking him whether he shared in the fears of this man. He made no account of the matter at all, and said that though, from the near approach of a Chinese term, he was a good deal occupied, and could not attend to us as he wished, if I would come again in a few days, he would give us an unoccupied part of his house to stay in as long as we liked. "In this he was not deceiving us; for while I returned back to Double Island on that day, one of the assistants continued to remain in his house, and yesterday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, I returned from a second visit of six days, and have now a room waiting me whenever I am able to go."

But the work at Swatow, at least for the present, was now drawing to a close. The departure of Dr. De la Porte had greatly abridged his power of effectively occupying the field, and at the same time urgent invitations came to him from his brethren at Amoy, to return, at least for a season, to the scene of his former labours amongst the villages of Fokien. After much hesitation he consented, on the understanding that the Rev. George Smith, a young missionary of great devotedness and high promise, who had recently joined their number, should meanwhile, more or less permanently, take his place at Swatow. He had as yet reaped but little fruit of his labours in this field; he could not count one single decided convert from amongst all the multitudes to whom he had here declared the Word of life; but he had thoroughly broken up the ground, and plenteously sowed the seeds of a harvest, to be gathered in by those that should come after him, and enter into his labours.

He sailed for Amoy about the middle of October, 1858, and reached that place in safety a few days after. His next letter is, alike in its date and its subject-matter, deeply touching, and a brief extract from it will fitly close this chapter: — "Amoy, November 25<sup>th</sup>, 1858 — I am sitting in the room formerly occupied by our dear and respected brother and fellow-labourer who is now no more with us, but has, like his divine Master, left us an example that we should follow his steps, in order that we may overcome like him at last through the blood of the Lamb and the word of his testimony! On the occasion of his so sudden removal from us I felt unable in any suitable manner to write to any of his kindred, although I took the pen in hand more than once to do so. On coming up here four weeks ago, I went to see the spot where his mortal remains are laid. It is as yet marked by no monumental stone, but is side by side with the graves of not a few members, old and young, of the missionary circle, and with many of them we trust he will rise in glory at the Lord's coming. What a lesson to us, and to all! When little more than a year ago I visited Amoy, I had much sweet intercourse with him; and as the vessel that conveyed me back to Swatow left the harbor, he stood on the balcony above, and waved to me until we were out of sight. Now we may imagine him from a higher

elevation, beckoning us to follow on in the Christian race, laying aside every weight, and running that we may reach the prize — the crown of life, which we believe has been already given to him by his Saviour and Lord.”

## CHAPTER XIX

1858-63

## OLD SCENES AND NEW

While Mr. Burns was thus laboriously preparing the way for future labourers in the comparatively hard and unkindly soil around Swatow, his missionary brethren had been reaping a rich and almost continuous harvest at the parent station of Amoy. His young colleague, Mr. Douglas, had entered on his work at a most auspicious moment, and had abundantly shared in that blessing which for the last three years had so signally rested on that favoured field, and on all connected with it. The number of converts and of inquirers in connection with all the societies increased rapidly; the zeal, love, and hopeful faith, alike of missionaries and of native disciples, deepened; and the Word of the Lord sounded out more and more widely over the whole region round. The valleys of the hill country, on the mainland to the west, had become in particular one wide and busy harvest field of souls. The sacred fire, kindled the year before at a single spot, spread gradually, chiefly through the spontaneous zeal of converts and native evangelists, to the towns and villages around, and one living church after another rose up as lights amid the darkness. Speedily the daughter societies of Bay-pay and Chioh-bey rivaled alike in numbers and in fervour the mother congregation at Pechuia, while lesser groups of Christian worshippers were scattered here and there over the valleys and hills. In the absence of European labourers, or of trained native evangelists, the members of the infant churches themselves became the willing and zealous messengers of the Cross, and the Word of the Lord spread as by its own divine inherent might from village to village, and from heart to heart. Sometimes even it would be found that a single soul having heard the divine message, perhaps only once at some central mission station, had carried some living seeds of truth home to some sequestered village among the hills, and there alone, amid heathen idolaters, by feeble prayers to the true God, and rude endeavours to keep the Christian Sabbath, nursed the sacred germ, until some Christian evangelist came to water and to foster it. The aspect of the scene, as it presented itself to the young missionary on his first survey of the field, was thus exceedingly exhilarating.

"A glorious work of God' said he (Jan. 3, 1856), "has been wrought in this place, and He is working still, and by his dealings we seem warranted to expect that all this is but the merest beginning of the abundant blessing that he is about to bestow on this place and neighbourhood. For several years after this port was opened the labours seemed almost in vain, and when about seven years ago the drops began to fall, they were very few; but somewhat about two years ago, the conversions became more numerous, and now the number of living adult members is — London Missionary Society, here and at Ko-lang- soo, 150; American Mission here, 100; at Chioh-bey, 22; and our station at Pechuia, 25. Of these the London Society has 39 female members, and the Americans about the same number. You can now judge by what I have said as to the past and the present; while as to the future, our hopes rest, under the mercy and love of God, on various reasons, — partly the zeal and prayerfulness stirred up at home, partly on the singularly steady progress and continued proportional increase of the converting work, which is also peculiarly free from any excesses of enthusiasm or superstition; and very much on the fact that the converts, almost all, are full of zeal to lead their relatives and friends to become partakers of the like precious faith, and to instruct in the Scriptures and 'the doctrine' those who are younger in Christ; they seem, so far as I can see, to delight to tell those who are still without, of the grace and peace which they have found.

"There are altogether fifteen native Christians employed as colporteurs and evangelists by the various missions; these assist in conducting the services in the chapels, and quite as often conduct them

themselves; they also go out into the streets, and the neighbouring villages and towns, distributing tracts and Testaments, preaching and conversing with the people."

When about a year after his arrival the missionary was able himself to preach in the Chinese language, the evangelistic work went on still more vigorously. From the wise and judicious director, he became now the energetic leader of the company of preachers, traversing in every direction the whole region round Amoy, till there was scarcely one important centre of population on either side of the Chang-chow estuary in which the joyful sound had not been heard. Old stations flourished, and new fields opened up, which seemed scarcely less ripe for the harvest. Seldom did a month pass in which there were not in some of the churches inquirers to be instructed, and converts to be baptized; while the old members, for the most part, visibly grew in faith, in knowledge, and in Christian activity and zeal. A numerous "school of the prophets," too, for the training of native evangelists and teachers, flourished under the missionary's own care, at the central station at Amoy, and held out the prospect of still more active and extensive operations in the time to come.

But this bright picture had also its darker shadow. "It is impossible but that offences shall come." Tares will ever mingle with the wheat even in the richest and fairest fields of the Church, and the infant churches of Fokien were no exceptions to this universal rule. The mother congregation at Pechuia, in particular, had become latterly the subject of grave solicitude to the missionaries. Dissensions had arisen about the building of a chapel; one or two cases of scandal had occurred amongst the members; death and change had of late visibly thinned the ranks of the little society, while few new disciples were rising up to fill the vacant places. It seemed indeed as if the fresh spirit of life, under which at first they had grown exceedingly, at once in numbers and in fervour, had passed away, and that the work had become stationary, or even retrograde. It was in these circumstances that Mr. Burns had been urged by his brother missionary to return, at least for a season, to the scene of his former labours, and to bear his share of the increasing anxieties and responsibility of their common work.

On his arrival at Pechuia he found the evils of which he had heard less serious than he had feared, but still sufficiently grave to call for prompt and vigorous corrective measures.

On Feb. 2 2d, 1859, he writes from Amoy: — "There are two persons there who have fallen away from their Christian profession; but neither of them had from the beginning, as far as I learn, any marked evidence of a work of grace. The only really melancholy case that I know of, is one who was chapel-keeper, and afterwards a preacher, but who, there is reason to fear, has again fallen under the power of opium - smoking."

The general aspect of affairs, however, as it presented itself to him after so long an absence, was on the whole most cheering. "I wonder," says he, "more than ever I did at the reality and preciousness of the work of the divine Spirit at Pechuia and the neighbouring stations. May the time be near when new and like glorious manifestations of the Lord's saving power shall be witnessed in this and in all lands! . . . Yesterday we had about forty of the converts in this neighbourhood assembled at the communion at Pechuia; and to-day, in coming here, fully a dozen accompanied me, most of them returning home. It was a sweet contrast with the state of things five years ago, when we first visited Pechuia, and when in this whole neighbourhood there was probably not a single follower of the Lamb. 'These, where had they been?' These from the land of Sinim! Oh! glorious day, when the fullness of the Gentiles shall be converted unto Emmanuel; when all nations shall be blessed in Him, and all nations shall call him blessed! Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Take unto thee thy great power and reign."

Two of the offending members were, after all gentler means of remedy had been tried in vain, cut off from communion, while two others were subjected to the faithful but loving discipline of the Church, with a view to their repentance and restoration. Remedial measures, too, of a more permanent kind were at the same time adopted. A regular body of office-bearers, according to the Presbyterian model, was constituted at Pechuia, as had been already done at Amoy and Chioh-bey; the whole proceedings of the election being conducted in a most orderly manner, in an assembly of the native church itself. Another measure not less memorable originated with the native brethren themselves, and is in its whole circumstances and history deeply touching.

"A fortnight ago," writes Mr. Burns, "at the instance of one of the elders at Chioh-bey (who is one of the Pechuia converts and was one of the chief founders, as he is one of the pillars of the Chioh-bey church), the Pechuia, in concert with the Chioh-bey church, observed a season of solemn prayer and fasting, that they might seek the return of the Lord's favour to Pechuia. I was at Chioh-bey when this season was observed — Tuesday, the 16<sup>th</sup> of August. There was a large attendance of church members, and when the elder I have alluded to, I-ju began to pray, he was so affected that he could hardly proceed. The preacher at Chioh-bey, Tow-lo, who began his work as a preacher at Pechuia in 1854, was also sobbing aloud. It was evident that the Lord was in the midst of us."

Another event of the deepest interest occurred this year, which is so strikingly illustrative of the whole character of the mission, and of the infant churches to which it has given birth, that I shall relate the circumstances at length in the words of one of the missionaries.

"Last month," says Mr. Douglas, "a step in advance was taken by the Amoy church, which seems to me most important, and the most cheering which has been taken since that church was organized. It was the setting apart of two native evangelists, entirely supported by the native church in Amoy, under the care of the American missionaries. "The novelty and cheering interest of this step does not lie in the use of native evangelists. These have long been employed, and found quite indispensable in the instruction and extension of the Church. But the singular interest of what has just been begun is that these two native evangelists are as completely independent of foreign money, as the ministers of Canada or Australia. Of course the church itself is still dependent for instruction on the foreign missionaries and on agents paid by them; but in the case of these two new evangelists, a beginning has been made of the self-supporting principle.

"It was after abundant prayer and careful counting of the cost, that this work was begun. The choice of the two brethren honoured by the Master to undertake this office was quite independent of the missionaries, the names being only submitted for approval or rejection after the choice, before the setting apart. On that day the native members of the other church at Amoy, that, namely, under the care of the London Missionary Society, was invited to be present. Almost all the missionaries of the several societies were there. And already both that church and the younger churches on the mainland are considering whether they be able to follow the example so well set to them.

"The field chosen for these new labourers is the unevangelized portion of the island of Amoy, which is just the whole island (about thirty miles in circumference), except the town itself. How wonderful and glorious the ways of God! While he is opening up our way to the towns and cities at a greater distance around, he is taking care that the populous villages of the immediate neighbourhood be not neglected." Amid these interesting and fruitful pastoral cares, the more extended and aggressive work of the mission went on vigorously — the missionaries "using the I Gospel Boat' as their home in going from place to place in evangelistic work, for which the rivers of China afford so great facility." Another attempt was made to affect a permanent lodgment within the walls of the great city of Chang-chow, but was for the time defeated in consequence of a singular incident.

"A week ago," writes Mr. Burns, "we were living near the district magistrate's office. He had gone out about midnight, on Sabbath the 13<sup>th</sup>, to inspect the streets, and just as he was passing our lodging, one of the assistants, when the other had gone to rest, suddenly, in the fullness of his heart, began aloud to sing a Christian hymn. The unusual sound attracted the mandarin, he listened, and hearing that a foreigner was there, he next day sent to ask us to leave the city."

In another direction, however, some hopeful tokens had begun to appear in places to which Mr. Douglas' eye had been long and anxiously turned. At Anhai, a town of about 18,000 or 20,000 inhabitants, situated at the head of a long inlet, about thirty-five miles north-east from Amoy, an opening had been found for the truth, which soon led to the establishment of a regular mission station, and to the foundation of one of the most numerous and fruitful of the Chinese native churches.

It was in the midst of these interesting and congenial labours that Mr. Burns received the following touching lines from his early friend, James Hamilton, which I am tempted to insert as a fragrant memorial both of the writer himself and of that gracious and benignant friend whose character he embalms: —

"48 Euston Square, London, N.W., May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1859. — My Dear Friend, — Two hours ago I received a notification of what will doubtless be communicated to you in fuller detail from home — the entrance into his everlasting rest of your beloved father, on the morning of Sabbath last. It was only a few weeks after his retirement from his ministerial work; so that the heavenly Sabbath has followed sooner than he hoped. It has been a wonderfully serene and blameless life, and in the remarkable visitation of his people twenty years ago he has been a rarely happy minister. The announcement has sent my own thoughts back to Kilsyth and Strathblane, and to incidents that transpired 'full many years ago.' To you in your far place of sojourn the tidings will be very affecting. It is touching to think that you will see his face no more; but oh! how blessed is his own case, who now sees Jesus face to face, and who from a life of prayer has passed to one of praise.

"Last January I saw him and your dear mother in Glasgow; they had come in to attend the meeting on behalf of China in Free St. Matthew's (Dr. S. Miller's). Your father seemed to me very much the same as ever. He sat on a chair which was placed for him beside the pulpit, and the congregation evidently eyed him with much reverence and affection. "'The fathers, where are they?' I often feel it solemn now to know that we are getting into the fore-front; no generation any longer between ourselves and the great reckoning.

"With love to all the brethren, I remain, affectionately yours, "James Hamilton."

In October, 1859, Mr. Burns was again on his way towards a new and distant sphere of labour. The special service for which he had come to Fokien, and for which the peculiar relation in which he stood to the inland churches there gave him a special advantage, had been satisfactorily accomplished, and now he longed to return to his old work of pioneering the way of other labourers in regions where the gospel had not yet found an entrance. The nearest and most natural centre of operations was Fuh-chow — the capital city of the province to which Amoy belongs, and here accordingly he spent most of the next year — quickly acquiring the new dialect, preparing a hymn-book for the use of the infant church, and unweariedly sowing, as usual, the gospel-seed. Of these labours the following notice has been kindly furnished to me by an esteemed Christian brother.

"When Mr. Burns," says the Rev. C. Hartwell, one of the oldest missionaries of the American Board at Fuh-chow, "first came to Fuh-chow in October, 1859, he divided his labours between preaching in English and studying and preaching in Chinese. He spent his Sabbaths at the 'Pagoda Anchorage'" ("Pagoda Anchorage" is the place where large ships lie, about twelve miles below the city; it is so called from a pagoda on "Pagoda Island.") preaching on ship-board to seamen and others who came to his services. The week-days he spent at Fuh-chow, studying the spoken dialect, and for a short time preaching two evenings in a week in the Amoy dialect, to the tin-foil beaters and others from the Amoy region living here, who were induced by special invitation to attend his services in our church. . . .

"Besides attending the services of other missionaries, he himself held others in our churches, in which at first the native helpers did the preaching, he simply directing the exercises, and occasionally suggesting points to them upon which he wished them to speak. He was quite successful in this mode of effort, and the helpers as well as others were benefited by the meetings. . . .

"He also assisted us by visiting some of our out-stations in the country, and labouring in these places. One of our present out-stations was commenced by him. We had opened a chapel some miles back of the place in a smaller village, but had been unable to secure one in this large village until his effort was successful. He laboured at this place for some time, and several persons manifested some interest in the truth, but none of them have yet given evidence of piety. When he left Fuh-chow the last time, he gave funds to employ an extra helper for this village for some time, and the out-station has been fully manned by us ever since; but, for unknown reasons, it has hitherto proved our least successful field of labour.

"Not desiring to open a new mission at Fuh-chow, during his stay here, Mr. Burns sought to aid each of the three missions already established, as opportunity offered and occasion seemed to require. He did not confine his assistance to any one of them. He sought for openings where he could be useful in promoting the work generally, and in this he was very successful. His catholicity of feeling made him ever ready to aid at any weak point.

"The particulars in which, as it seems to me, he most aided our mission — and in fact the others also— were his excellent influence upon our native assistants, and in successfully introducing the use of colloquial hymns among us in our worship. "Our helpers soon learned to feel a great regard for Mr. Burns, and their piety was quickened and deepened apparently through his influence. His power over them arose from his own deep piety; his accurate knowledge of the Chinese language; the great fund of Christian knowledge at his command; and the singleness of purpose which he ever manifested. We felt it to be a privilege to have our native preachers under his influence and instruction.

"Previous to his coming among us all our hymns used in worship had been in the written language, as had been the case elsewhere generally in China. His attempt, though not the only one, was the first which was successful in introducing the use of colloquial hymns for this purpose. With the aid of native preachers he prepared some of the hymns used at Amoy and Swatow, in the spoken dialect of Fuh-chow. These he first printed in sheet form, and used them in street-preaching and chapel-preaching, till he was convinced that they were in a good colloquial style, and then he published them as amended in a book form, and they soon came into general use among us. He showed his usual enthusiasm in introducing his hymns, and the force of his character had much weight in overcoming the prejudices of our better educated Christians to the general use of colloquial hymns. Our hymn-book has been much enlarged, but the hymns prepared by Mr. Burns are still general favourites. His influence for good here, doubtless, will be perpetuated for a long time to come through the use of these hymns."

In September of the next year (1860) he returned to the neighbourhood of Amoy, in consequence of some trying circumstances to which we shall have presently to refer in greater detail; and then, after only a brief stay, passed on to his old home at Swatow, where he found to his joy that the wilderness which he had left so short a time before had begun in a remarkable manner to blossom, under the able and devoted labours of his successor, Mr. Smith. The day after his arrival he preached to the natives, and the change for the better that had come over the people in their desire to hear the gospel since his first visit, five years previously, affected him almost to tears on the occasion. Here also he compiled a hymn-book in the colloquial dialect, which proved a precious boon to the young converts.

He returned to Fuh-chow in the course of the next year, and continued his labours there for some months longer. But, meanwhile, events had occurred in the neighbourhood of Amoy which required his presence there for a more lengthened period, and which ultimately led to his removal to the capital city of Peking.

Allusion has already been made more than once to the fiery trial to which these infant churches have been almost continually exposed through the bitter opposition and hostility of their heathen fellow-countrymen. The political jealousy of the ruling class, and the religious rancor of the people, united in common antipathy to the professors of a strange and alien faith. The mandarins suspected the foreign creed; the multitude hated the singular and exclusive worship. To the philosophic Confucian they were obnoxious as fanatics; to the superstitious devotee, as enemies of the gods and despisers of the ancestral rites. Hence a general and constant sentiment of mingled suspicion, dislike, and fear, which was ever in danger, on the least provocation, of breaking out into open acts of hostility and lawless violence. They were seldom, indeed, called to witness for their divine Master unto blood; never, perhaps, except when some terrible misconception might involve the Christian evangelist in supposed complicity with the schemes of traitors and rebels; but short of this there was scarcely any extreme of hardship and suffering to which they might not be subjected. Their houses were spoiled. Their property was destroyed. Their rice-fields were laid waste. Their cattle were driven away. Their pine-trees were cut down. They were refused the use of the public wells. Their supply of labourers was cut off by hostile combination in time of harvest. Their places of worship were rudely assailed, and their sacred assemblies interrupted, without hope of protection or redress from any native authority. One or two instances of this petty but vexatious persecution may be given from the letters of the missionaries. Thus one of the members of the Bay-pay church, of the name of Wat, had been called upon to pay the accustomed tribute in support of the idolatrous ceremonies at one of the great feasts. He refused. Forthwith he was denied water from the public well, and his son was beaten in attempting to fetch it. Then they cut down a large number of his pine-trees, which formed a considerable portion of his property; and as he appealed for redress in vain,

they proceeded next to cut down his fruit-trees. Other members of the same church had their rice-fields and other property plundered, and at one time three of the female candidates for baptism were severely beaten by their relatives. At Yam-tsau, in the Swatow district, one poor widow had her house plundered on the Lord's-day when she was at church; another member had his field of sugar-cane destroyed; a third had his fowls stolen; and all were constantly exposed to the scoffs and reproaches of their fellow-villagers and the unbelieving members of their own families. Sometimes the malicious designs of the adversary were defeated in singular ways, or signally overruled for good. One day the police entered the premises of the old cloth merchant at Pechuia, intending to plunder or perhaps to seize him. Being rather deaf, he did not hear their demand, but he said, "O yes; I know what you have come for," and taking down some of his goods, and pointing to the rest, he said, "Take them, take them all, and I'll go with you, too; but I am old, and rather deaf; take my boys, too, and my little girl there. We are all Christians, we are not afraid; we will go with you."

The men, astonished at this novel reception, left the premises without injuring any of the inmates, or touching an article of their property. While one was thus preserved by his own simple and unworldly faith, another was succored by the brotherly love of his fellow-disciples. An old farmer, who resided about five miles from Khi-boey, a village about thirty miles to the south-west of Pechuia, having become a Christian, his heathen neighbours evinced their bitter dislike by refusing at harvest time to give him the least assistance in reaping his rice-fields. On hearing of the old man's trouble, the brethren at Khi-boey at once resolved to go to his help; a band of them started one evening for the farm, and commencing operations early next morning, they worked so heartily that the fields were all reaped in one day, to the surprise of the neighbours, and to the comfort and relief of their brother in distress. Such trials as these had fallen of late with peculiar severity on some of the village churches in the Pechuia district, and called for some vigorous intervention in their behalf on the part of their spiritual overseers. The case of Bay-pay has been already incidentally alluded to. More recently at the above-mentioned village of Khi-boey, where an interesting and prosperous church had been recently established, the disciples had been called to pass, while yet, as it were, in their very infancy, through a great fight of affliction.

"On hearing of the disturbances, Mr. Swanson at once repaired to Khi-boey, and was gratified to find that though the persecution still raged, the converts were keeping firm and hopeful, and that fourteen of them were in a state of preparedness for baptism. No house could be had for divine service, and they had to gather under the shade of a magnificent lung-yen tree. The persecution ceased for a time, but the missionaries were soon again summoned to interpose in their behalf. Chioh, in whose house the Christians had been in the habit of assembling, was driven from his home, and on his attempting to take refuge in the house of another Christian, the roof was broken in by a mob, and Chioh prevented from entering. His widowed sister was then attacked, and her son threatened with death unless they complied with their demand for money; a sword was brandished over the lad's head, while they required that he should cease to worship God. This he resolutely refused, declaring himself ready to die rather than renounce his faith. Chioh and another went down to Amoy for advice, and Mr. Burns at once returned with them to see what could be done. While he was attempting to pacify the enraged villagers, one of the converts was set upon by a number of men armed with bludgeons and pikes, and severely beaten, and might have been killed, but for his timely intervention."

No one assuredly was ever in a better position to interfere in such a case than one who for so many years, and amid all his wanderings amongst this heathen people, had so simply and wholly cast himself on the care of his divine Master, and had never in any single instance invoked the succor of the secular arm in his own defense. The rights which he had never sought to enforce in his own behalf he could the more boldly and freely, and with the greater effect, plead in behalf of others. Ever ready himself to suffer; he was prompt to hold his protecting shield over those who were less able to suffer than he. He spoke accordingly in their behalf with a resolute force and decision which, in dealing with secular matters, was not usual with him. A formal representation was made to the Chinese authorities, through the British consul, who himself took up the case very cordially, and threatened that, if immediate justice were not done, he would report the case to Peking. This produced the desired result. It was promised that the stolen property should be restored, and money given in compensation for property destroyed. But the Christians,

before consenting to this offer, preferred consulting Mr. Burns at Amoy, who at once came again to their aid, and obtained from the magistrates the following terms : —

- (1.) Restoration, so far as possible, of the very articles stolen;
- (2.) A bond from the enemies to guarantee their non-interference with the Christians; and
- (3.) A proclamation to be issued, exhorting the people not to interfere with the Christians.

"Most happily all this was agreed to, and the enemies seeing the turn matters were taking, and fearing the violence of their own authorities, prayed for the interposition of the missionaries in their behalf. Mr. Burns gladly used his influence accordingly, and thus all ended well. The stolen property was restored in presence of the mandarins, Mr. Burns, and an immense concourse of people. The poor Christians carried their pigs and led back their oxen to the homes from which they had so lately been driven, rejoicing, and yet we hope humble. On the same day the enemies entered into a bond not to interfere with those who were, or might become Christians, and not to annoy them in any way. In a few days after, the mandarins issued a proclamation, intimating that the case was now settled, and strictly forbidding all persons from interfering with any one 'who may enter the holy religion of Jesus/ Not the least remarkable feature in the termination of these disturbances was, that the enemies looked upon the missionaries as their best friends, for having shielded them from the severity of the mandarins."

Thus for once, and in behalf of Christ's "little ones," had "the Man of the Book" sustained the character of the vigorous, sagacious, and successful diplomatist. The storm for the present passed away. Then for a season had the churches rest throughout the towns and villages of Fokien. But the permanent relations of the native Christians towards their heathen countrymen were still in a very uncertain and precarious state, and it was thought important that Mr. Burns should proceed to Peking, with the view of obtaining a personal interview with Sir Frederick Bruce, and thus, if possible, effecting a more secure and satisfactory settlement. He left Amoy accordingly, and arrived at the capital, in October, 1863, thus entering on the last period of his missionary career.

## CHAPTER XX

1863-68

## PEKING AND NIEU-CHWANG

In tracing the last footsteps of my lamented brother at Peking and Nieu-chwang, I have been happily furnished with such ample materials from the hands of loving brethren of different Christian communions, that it will scarcely be necessary for me to do aught more than simply to quote their tender and graphic words. Some of these communications have come so spontaneously, and from quarters to me so unexpected, that it has seemed but as the breathing fragrance of precious ointment, which must flow forth, and which cannot be hid, when the alabaster box is broken. To this part of our narrative the following vivid and interesting notices, from the pen of S. Wells Williams, LL.D., Secretary of the United States Legation at Peking, will form a peculiarly appropriate introduction — all the more so that they are in part retrospective, touching the missionary's career at various points, where the paths of the two friends crossed one another during the course of twenty years : —

"When I recall," says this distinguished scholar and missionary, "the voice and form of Mr. Burns, they revive my earliest notions of one of the old Hebrew prophets, of a man whose high vocation had somewhat separated him from common communion with those around him; this idea impressed itself so much upon my mind when I first met him in Hong-Kong, in Sept. 1848, that it always invested his character and name, and does so even more now that he has gone. Our intercourse was of the most cordial nature; but being a printer, and having no work with him, I was not so much thrown into his company as he was with Dr. Hobson at Canton, Mr. Doty at Amoy, and others who had chapels where he could preach. I have therefore not so many recollections of Mr. Burns as might be inferred from an acquaintance of twenty years, and have not preserved a single line of his writing.

"His determination and singleness of purpose in the mission work were illustrated in his account of the way he began the study of the language on his voyage to China. The only book which he could find in London to aid him in this study was my English and Chinese Vocabulary; with this he procured a volume of Matthew's Gospel, and perhaps a tract or two. He then examined the first verses of the 2d chapter, learned the figures so as to distinguish the verses, and taking the first characters, hunted through the Vocabulary till he found them as the Chinese equivalents of the English words, reconstructing the sentences, as he found one word after the other, until he had found out the sound, meaning, and radical of each character. Then he wrote them over and over, until he had acquired them thoroughly. This tedious way of learning the characters was continued until he arrived in Hong-Kong; but no one, unless acquainted with the Chinese language, can fully appreciate the tedium of acquiring its characters otherwise than by beginning with the radicals. I think he went over nearly the whole Gospel in this way before the end of the voyage, and then sat down to the study with a preparation and zest that few have brought to the task. It was a pleasant gratification to me to learn that the time spent on that small vocabulary had helped Mr. Burns in his labours, for I remembered how helpless I felt on my voyage out fifteen years before, when I had no possible means of learning a single character, and reached the country quite ignorant of the people and their language.

"I went to Canton, and saw no more of Mr. Burns until he came to that city to live in 1850. Before that date I heard of his having been robbed of all his baggage while living on the mainland, opposite Hong-Kong, whither he had gone to see what could be done in effecting a settlement among the people. The thieves broke up his quarters, and while he was present helped themselves to clothes, books, and money as they pleased, leaving him just enough garments for protection, and means to get back to Hong-Kong. One fellow had his hone and being puzzled to know its use, brought it to Mr. Burns to learn what it was fit for,

and was patiently taught the mode of sharpening a razor or knife on it. These ruffians did not belong to the villagers, but the latter made no attempt to defend or protect the foreigner. But, no doubt, this beginning had its salutary effect upon them."

From another informant I am enabled to add one or two further touches to this characteristic and romantic incident. He had, it would appear, with some hesitation, and without any clear indication of the Master's will, proceeded westward beyond the range of his first labours, into a part of the country where the people were notoriously less accessible and friendly; and being afraid that he had run, without being sent, into the midst of unknown difficulties and dangers, he had lain long awake in anxious and pensive questioning. While still thus musing he became suddenly aware of the presence in the chamber of two muffled figures, who, approaching with stealthy steps and blackened faces to his bedside, stood over him with naked swords held to his breast. "Do no violence, my friends," he said calmly, "and you shall have all I have;" and then followed the characteristic scene described by Dr. Williams. When the landlord of the house came in next morning to condole with his guest on his loss, "Poor fellows!" said he, "let us pray for them." The robbers took with them literally all he had, save only the contents of a loose bag, which lay in a corner of the room, and which, seeming to contain nothing but useless papers, had fortunately been neglected by them. Beneath the papers, however, there were some shreds of under garment, of which the missionary contrived to make for himself an outlandish costume, in which he found his way back to the sea-coast, and thence to Hong-Kong; waiting under cover in the boat until the return of a messenger supplied him with the means of appearing on shore in a more appropriate garb.

"He was induced ere long," continues Dr. Williams, "by the little success the work had at Canton, to go further north, and try to reach people who lived away from so much contact as the Cantonese had with foreigners. He found the work more congenial at Amoy and Swatow, where, and in their vicinity, he spent many years, and did a great and lasting work in extending missionary labours among their rural populations, and founding Christian communities. . . .

"After Mr. Burns' return to China, I saw nothing of him till he had reached Hong-Kong, after his liberation by Governor Yeh at Canton, in October, 1856, after they had brought him overland to that city from Chaouchow-foo by way of Kiaying-chow. He there learned that some of the native Christians, who had been with him at Swatow before his own arrest, were in prison, and he wished to get near to them so that he might do what he could for their welfare. There was no vessel going to Swatow except a small native junk, and we dissuaded Mr. Burns from embarking in such a rickety craft at so late a period of the year, even as a matter of time; for by a little delay he would no doubt find a safer vessel, which would land him there quicker. But nothing would move him. He had heard the voice of God, and felt no fears as to the result of the voyage. He left that night in her, reaching Swatow after nearly a month's tedious coasting, which however was, I suppose, no loss to him, for he preached to the crew, and suffered no derangement in his plans by the delay. This example of our friend, in regarding the people wherever he met them as his audience, is one that cannot be too strongly urged upon all heralds of the gospel in heathen lands. Yet this feature of his mind had its effect in deterring those around him from giving him advice when he asked it, inasmuch as he followed his inward convictions sometimes when outward arguments tended the other way. In this instance, the time of the year, and the unsettled condition of the coast, would have weighed with most men to seek another mode of conveyance; but whether such a course as he took in such dilemmas — that of seeking a manifestation of some kind to know what the will of God is — would answer for all, or whether all are capable of hearing the inward voice, is a curious question. I have never known another person who had as little hesitation in following what he regarded as this inward monition and guidance. In this instance there was no long weighing of the reasons, nor much discussion upon their value; he had looked squarely at both sides, and his choice had no revision.

"After a lapse of six years, during which Mr. Burns had proved his devotion to the mission work in Fokien and Kiangsu by travelling and preaching, he and I arrived in Amoy the same day, he from Fuh-chow in April, 1862. "Travel and exposure had made their marks on him, but he was still vigorous, and was projecting new trips in the surrounding country, then opening more than ever to the preaching of the gospel; and I was glad to hear how the work had progressed since the day he told me the story about Pechuia, eight years before, on board the Powhatan. I took a review of the twenty years which had elapsed since Dr. Abeel and

Bishop Boone left Macao, in February, 1842, to begin a mission at Amoy, where the latter buried his admirable wife, and the former laboured on in faith and patience until others came to his help, and others to theirs, until we now see a Christian community preparing to take its place as an acknowledged fact in Chinese society. In laying the foundations of this blessed superstructure, few have done more to the glory of God than William Burns. "The purpose for which he came to Peking in 1864, to endeavour to obtain the same recognition of the civil rights of Protestants that the Roman Catholics had, was not attained in the manner he wished; but his mission was not fruitless. He made known the condition of the missions in Fokien province to the late Sir Frederick Bruce, and gave him a juster perception of the mode of carrying on missionary work than he had before, and the nature of the disabilities under which the converts then laboured. Sir Frederick declared that Mr. Burns was one of the most fascinating men in representing a case that he had ever met, and gave one a clear idea of whatever he undertook to describe.

"The daily routine of the life he led in Peking for three years was very uniform. He dwelt by himself in one room, his own servant occupying the next, and almost every day visited one or other of the mission chapels connected with the four missions in the city. The version of the second part of the Pilgrim's Progress is likely to be the most permanent of his literary labours in the northern dialect; for his Peep of Day and the version of the Psalms in tetrameters are less acceptable to native taste. He visited frequently at the houses of his friends, who were always cheered by his presence, and towards the last part of his stay he gave all his strength to preaching the gospel to such audiences as were gathered in the chapels."

In another letter Dr. Williams adds: — "In Peking I saw more of him than previously, and enjoyed his visits at my house greatly; he was particularly interested in the progress, causes, and conduct of the slavery war in the United States, and kept up a minute acquaintance with its events, studying the geography of the seats of war, the character of the principal leaders and generals, and the changes of public sentiment as the war developed more and more the detestable nature of the bondage of the slave."

To another valued friend and true yoke-fellow in the work of Christ, the Rev. Joseph Edkins, M.A., of the London Missionary Society, I am indebted for the following graphic and touching memorials, which will form a fitting sequel to Dr. Williams' narrative, and give to us a still more distinct idea of the nature of his work, and of his manner of life, during those quiet and comparatively uneventful years — the land of Beulah of a life which had had in full measure its Hills of Difficulty, its combats with Apollyon, and its solemn witnessings in Vanity Fair, as well as blessed glimpses of the Celestial City from the heights of the Delectable Hills : — "The Rev. W. C. Burns came to Peking in 1863, and at once opened to Sir Frederick Bruce the matter to attempt the settlement of which he had come. He went to stay with Rev. W. H. Collins (C.M.S.), who met him as he entered the city gate, and at once claimed him as a guest. It was not his object, however, to live with any of the mission families. He wished a house for himself. A small house with a little self-contained court was rented for him at 2s. 6d., a month. Here he lived for four years. This house had a south exposure. On the west was Mr. Burns' room, with its two chairs, table, and khang. This last, used through all the north of China, is a brick structure at one end of the room, permeated by a winding flue, and when required can be heated from the front through an opening partly in the floor, and partly in the brick khang. On the east side was the servant's room, used also as kitchen. One servant was sufficient to buy, to cook, and to keep the house. When the servant went out, Mr. Burns stayed at home. This simplicity of living was happiness to our lost friend. He enjoyed quietness, and the luxury of having few things to take care of. He delighted to live on little, that he might have more to give to the cause of God. He was a generous friend to the poor, to hospitals, to various mission schemes.

"In the summer, according to Peking custom, he had an awning' of reed-mats extended over his court. This, in north China, greatly helps the people to pass the summer in comfort. In the evening the mats of the awning are drawn open sufficiently to admit the night air. We have a hot short summer, at an average of 90, as we have a cold winter averaging 15, when the ice never thaws till the opening of spring, but remains a foot thick through the season. Our friend had a small clay stove lit for the season. Here he sat summer and winter with his teacher, engaged for a good part of each year in hymn-making and translation.

"His first work in Peking was a volume of hymns, about fifty in number. These were chiefly translations from home hymns, or hymns used in the south of China rehabilitated in the mandarin dialect. When he had

printed this collection, he undertook a translation of the Peep of Day in fifty chapters. This work is in the Peking dialect.

"The Pilgrim's Progress was his next work. Formerly at Amoy he had translated this book in a simple style. He now resolved to render it again into Chinese, adopting the dialect of Peking. The first and second parts are complete in two thick volumes. Some of the copies are illustrated with wood-cuts.

Some additions are found to the text in the second part, where an attempt has been made to increase the usefulness of the work to native women by showing the principles that should rule in Christian marriage.

"Immediately after the completion of this work, he commenced a translation of the Psalms from the Hebrew. It was published in the spring of 1867, a year before his death. It is composed in four-word sentences throughout, so as to assume a regular appearance of symmetry; but this advantage has been gained at the expense of smoothness. To each psalm there is an introduction stating the argument. There are also many text-references to the New Testament and other parts of Scripture. These additions add much to the value of the book.

"While engaged constantly in these literary enterprises, Mr. Burns never intermitted preaching when not physically incapacitated for it. He preached much at the chapel of the London Mission hospital, within two or three minutes' walk of his residence. His assistance here was annually recognized by Dr. Dudgeon in the printed report. He preached also very frequently at a chapel of Dr. Martin's outside of the east gate, and at another more than a mile north of the London Mission hospital, belonging to the American Board. He also officiated occasionally at Mr. Collins' chapel, belonging to the Church Missionary Society, on the west side of the city. His services at all these places were very acceptable, and given with the greatest good-will and the most catholic spirit: he thus aimed at the glory of Christ independently of his particular denomination, and was in this respect an example worthy of imitation, for the maintenance of sectarian distinctions in China may be regarded as almost unnecessary. The truth that we are all one in Christ Jesus may well unite missionaries of different communions in heart and practice. Whenever the Church of Christ in China becomes strong enough to be separated from the British and American missionary organizations, it will be advisable for them to unite in one church system of their own, framed in a manner consonant with Scripture; but adapted for China, and not modeled after any of the existing sects of Western Christendom. With this theory Mr. Burns' practice well agreed.

He was at home with all Protestant Christians, and was greatly loved by all his brethren. His manly character, his sober views, his practical good sense, his kindly sociality, his mental strength, his moral decision, and his consistent and unaffected piety made him a friend greatly valued by us all. We enjoyed his coming to sit in the evenings, to share with us in his simple abstemious way at the social meal, to unite with us in family worship, or to join in the exercises of the week-evening prayer-meeting. He frequently preached in English at the Sunday evening service, held for the benefit of the mission families, and was always welcomed as one whose sermons were invariably characterized by solidity and faithfulness. He impressed his auditors with the fact, that he was a man of power and devotedness, a man whose atmosphere was prayer, and whose daily food was Scripture.

"With his large-hearted kindness, and great willingness to do evangelistic work whenever and wherever there was an opening, he went no fewer than four times on journeys connected with the country work of the London Mission at Peking. The first occasion was to Shen-cheu, a city south-south-west of Peking, and distant 170 miles. He went in response to an invitation from the people, who wished a preacher to come and tell them the gospel. He stayed there about three weeks, and when he left thought that at least two of the natives were suitable for baptism. The Bible distributor who was with him thought there were four. Mr. Burns was very cautious in giving an opinion with regard to the fitness of applicants for baptism. His habit was to be stern in requiring decided sacrifices on the part of the inquirer, such as should constitute indubitable proof of his sincerity. It was perhaps this feeling which prevented his ever baptizing converts. He left that for other missionaries to do, claiming on all occasions, as an evangelist and not a pastor, the privilege of exemption from responsibility."

In the autumn of 1867, he left Peking, urged forward as usual by the necessity that he ever felt laid upon him, of withdrawing from a field which was comparatively well occupied and cared for, and proceeding to others more neglected. His life at Peking had been peculiarly pleasant to him, and his friends and his work

congenial; but he was all the more prepared to hear the voice that summoned him to a sterner and more self-denying service elsewhere. For the following account of the circumstances of his departure, and of his journey to Nieu-chwang, I am again indebted to Mr. Edkins' graphic pen: —

“Wang-hwan, who was baptized by me in Peking four years ago, is a native of a village about thirty miles from Peking, and six miles from Tsai-yii, where at that time the London Mission had a chapel. He heard Mr. Burns occasionally at Tsai-yii, and was afterwards brought to decision for the gospel in connection with the work of one of our catechists, for a time in charge at the chapel at Tsai-yii, and who is now dead. Wang-hwan became a changed man, and after his baptism in the hospital chapel, Peking, appeared to his neighbours a very different person from what he once was. They saw in him a man peaceable and well-behaved, whereas he had once been the opposite.

“Mr. Burns took him with him after much consideration, and was influenced more by satisfactory evidence of deep interest in religion and a love for prayer, than by any ability that he showed. He had had the education of a small country farmer, that is three or four years' schooling, just enough to enable him to transact ordinary business. Since that time he has improved himself. When Mr. Burns left Peking for Tientsin, in the autumn of 1867, it was still an open question whether he would go to Nieu-chwang or to Shantung. I had been laying before him a request from Shantung from several persons for a preacher. If he had gone there he would have passed through the villages where the Methodist New Connexion Mission and our own are situated, and his experience in manifestations of the spiritual life both in Christian countries and in China would have rendered his testimony to the character of these Christians one of great value.

“But his sense of duty and his knowledge of the need of a missionary at Nieu-chwang, led him there in preference. The captain of the native junk in which he went would take no money from him for the passage. This was on account of his character, and that of the catechist. Going not for trade but to do good, it appeared to this heathen sailor unreasonable to accept payment of passage money. Arrived at Nieu-chwang they began to seek a house, and found one at last in the out-skirts. Here they became domiciled and public and private services were daily held. Many persons attended, and the hearts of our departed brother and of the catechist were cheered. “On Sundays Mr. Burns performed worship in English at the consulate as long as his health allowed.”

Of the general course of his life and labours during the few remaining days of his earthly ministry, the following brief recollections of the mate of a trading vessel which happened at that time to touch at the port of Nieu-chwang, afford an interesting and life-like glimpse: —

“In October, 1867,” says this Christian seaman, in a communication printed in the *Sunday at Home*, “I left Che-foo, in the baroque *Lady Alice*, for Nieu-chwang, where we arrived about the 6th. I had learned from the missionaries at Che-foo that a missionary of the name of Burns was at Nieu-chwang. The first Lord's-day after arrival our captain and second mate went on shore to the British consul's office. This was the only place for worship at Nieu-chwang, except the meeting on board our vessel. It being the second mate's turn on shore, I told him if the minister was dressed like a Chinaman, to introduce himself to him, and deliver a message for me. On his return at dinner-time I was much cheered and delighted to hear that it was Mr. Burns that held the service, and that the service was no formal ceremony, nor with enticing words of man's wisdom, but very earnest and very faithful, warning them to attend to the salvation of their souls, and commending godliness as profitable in all things. After the service my friend carried out my wishes, and met a hearty welcome from Mr. Burns, who was himself cheered at hearing there were some belonging to our ship professing to be the ransomed of the Lord, and trying in some feeble way to acknowledge him and commend him to others.

“He sent me an invitation to come and see him on a certain day of the week, I forget now which day. His Chinese servant was to meet me on my landing, and conduct me to him. I landed at the appointed time, and was conducted accordingly to the missionary I had never seen. I shall not soon forget it, for we seemed to meet as friends that had been acquainted for a long time. I felt perfectly at home with him. Mr. Burns walked up and down the yard of his house arm-in-arm with me, and talked to me as a friend, brother, or father, in the most kind and familiar manner. As iron sharpeneth iron, so did the countenance of a man his friend that day.

"He told about how the Lord had guided him to that place (Nieu-chwang). He had many friends, he said, where he had been staying for four years before, and was very comfortable; but he wanted to come to Nieu-chwang because there was no one labouring there. He said we must not study comfort: they that go to the front of the battle get the blessing; the sulkers get no blessing. I have often thought of that since, for indeed it was a word in season to me at the time. He told me how he arrived there in a junk, or native vessel, and how kind they were to him, and how he had been guided to the house he was then living in. He spoke as seeing the dealing of God in his providence in all his ways. . . . "It was a very happy time, I think, to both — a time of refreshing. I did not stay late, as I had some mile and a half to walk. The Chinaman again conducted me back. We started with the understanding that Mr. Burns was to visit our ship, I think the next evening; so when I got on board I obtained permission from the captain for us to hold a meeting in the cabin. I hoisted my Bethel flag in the afternoon, and when our friend came on board we told him we had the royal standard flying, 'for I suppose you belong to the royal family.' He took tea with me and the second mate (the captain was on shore), and in the evening, when all the crew were with us, he gave an address about the Saviour and the woman of Samaria. There was one illustration I remember which shows his homely and forcible way of putting things. He compared the woman of Samaria to a fish with the hook in its mouth, twisting about, trying to get loose; but the more it tried to clear itself the firmer hold the hook got of it. The whole of the address was very interesting and very earnest, and was well received.

"After he had done, he requested one of us to engage in prayer. Our cook, a black man, by the name of Caesar, offered a very earnest prayer. It was, indeed, pleasant^ in this dry and barren land, thus, for a short time, to dwell together in unity. After our meeting was ended not one offered to move; and our dear friend, sitting at the head of the table, told us about his travels in China, and of his being taken prisoner with two Chinese converts, and sent through the country, with many other things which are probably well known. Thus our time soon flew away, till the parting had to take place. Our cook had a set of Wesleyan hymn-books, which we used for worship. He sent Mr. Burns one, with which he was very pleased, and talked of translating it into the Chinese language. This was one of the happiest evenings of our voyage. . . . He spoke to me very affectionately about his mother, and most of his affairs. When the time drew near for us to part he handed me the Bible and bade me read something. I read the 103 Psalm, and could not help (nor need I try to) giving vent to my feelings while reading it, there seemed such a blessing flowing from it. It was like the river whose streams make glad the city of God. I think we could set to our seal that the word of God is true. After we had prayed, Mr. Burns said, 'The Lord is nigh to all that call upon him;' and we both joined in saying, 'to all that call upon him in truth.' . . .

"When parting I spoke to him of his kindness, and the great honour I had received from him, when he put his arms around me, and said, 'Don't mention it, don't mention it! Our meeting is providential.' Thus we parted. The Chinaman again conducted me back in the beautiful still moonlight. I cannot attempt to describe the sweet and blessed meditation I had while returning to my ship. I have thus simply spoken of my meeting, intercourse, and parting with a blessed man of God, the remembrance of which is still dear and sweet to me. I have good reasons to look back to this time, and praise that God who has been so merciful to me in all my wanderings. Mr. Burns was a saving shield to me in God's providence at that place, and as an angel of the Lord.

Blest be the tie that binds  
Our hearts in Christian love.

'By this shall all men know ye are my disciples, if ye love one another; and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him that is begotten of him.' Mr. Burns was an Israelite indeed. . . . "He then seemed," wrote Caesar the black cook in a postscript to the above, "to me to have been well advanced in years. Nevertheless he moved about and spoke the Word of Life as brisk as can be expected from a man of thirty years of age. He said we all wanted stirring up; and so he did stir us up on board of the ship, for he made a lasting impression on my mind. He spoke freely and boldly about the changes pertaining to that world which is to come. He put me in mind of one who had already gone through his refining process. He appeared then to be ripe for glory, if we may use the term, and I feel sure that he is 'gone home' to the city of the living God, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, who was waiting, no doubt, to welcome

his ransomed and faithful one. He gave me the Pilgrim's Progress that he translated while he was out there, from English into the Chinese language. His last words to me were, 'Pray for me.' He also wrote the words down on the book he gave me, so that I should not forget. Last night, unknowingly, I prayed for him for the last time. So now my prayers cease from last night, and turn to praise; and I shall expect to meet him face to face."

On the 21<sup>st</sup> November, he wrote the following lines, breathing his usual cheerful and happy spirit, to his valued colleague, Mr. Douglas, one of the last letters of any length he ever wrote on earth : —

"Nieu-chwang, November 21<sup>st</sup>, 1867. — Dear Mr. Douglas, — Your letter of August 31st reached me this P.M. Per steamer Mancku, and as she is the last vessel for this season, I hasten to send a few lines by her to Shanghae. Many thanks for the life-like photograph of yourself which you have sent me. You are more like the man that you were intended to be with than without the beard. May it please God in his mercy long to preserve you in the health and vigour which you seemed to have enjoyed when the likeness was taken, and may your soul 'prosper and be in health even as the body 'prosper!' . . . It seems to me that no place more suitable (or perhaps so suitable) could be recommended to the Irish Presbyterians than Nieu-chwang, and Manchuria beyond, a vast, open, and unoccupied field, with a fine climate, and a population comparatively well off in a worldly point of view. In writing home I have already made this suggestion, and I hope that on consideration you will see your way to second my proposal. If the Irish were here, would this not be a fine place to come to from the south for a change of air? and you yourself, when needing such a change, would enjoy the opportunity of using and increasing your Mandarin. Mr. Cowie, too, would be only sent back to his Che-foo dialect, a great part of the people in this town being from that quarter. You can have no idea of the extent of the trade that is carried on here in grain and oil, as well as bean-cake, furs, &c. &c. I shall only mention what was told me by a gentleman connected with the imperial customs, viz.: that two years ago it was estimated that during one winter 80,000 carts came to this place from the interior laden with grain and oil. It is common for from 500 to 1000 to come in on a single day during the winter months; and throughout all the region which furnishes this supply, including the provinces of the Amour and Kirzn, as well as the province of Kwan-tung, pure Mandarin is universally spoken. Mr. Meadows is now absent on a three months' journey to the north and east, passing through the centre of these three provinces. Romish priests are found here and there, but the only representative of the Protestant churches is my solitary self! . . . As to the repairs at Pechuia, I shall be glad that you put me down, say, for the sum of 20 sterling, but it will be the end of February before I can furnish you with an order on our treasurer for that amount, my accounts for the year being already made up. I am rejoiced to hear that while man is repairing the chapel, God himself is again graciously putting forth his hand to repair the spiritual walls of that little church. May backsliders return to their first love, as well as additions be made to the church of such as shall be saved!' Who was that young man — an assistant of Dr. Maxwell's — who was lost in the Formosa Channel? Not, I hope, the young man from Chioh-bey, who was afterwards chapel-keeper at Sinkoeya? I must now conclude, as it is getting late. Pray for us, and commend us to the prayers of the churches. I should have mentioned that Mr. Williamson of Che-foo, who was lately here, left a native assistant to sell books here during the winter. He and the man who came with me from Peking occupy themselves in this work in the principal street, preaching at the same time to the people. I join them generally during a part of the time, and the opportunity is a valuable one, especially as our house is too retired for collecting passers-by. A separate house we thought we had got for preaching was at last held back, and is now an opium-smoking den! Christian love to all the brethren. Yours affectionately, — Wm. C. Burns."

The following letter, which came to me altogether unsought, just as I was approaching this part of my task, will tell almost all that now remains to be said, and in terms than which the fondest affection could have desired nothing more loving or tender: —

"Nieu-chwang) 6<sup>th</sup> July, 1869 — My dear Sir, — When in conversation with an intimate friend of your late brother the Rev. Wm. C. Burns, I related the particulars of my last interview with him, which occurred a few days before his death; and as far as I know, the last hour when he was in full possession of his faculties. I was then informed that you were gradually collecting material for a book which should illustrate his missionary labours in China, and was pressed to repeat to you what I knew of his closing life. This is difficult to do in a letter; it is difficult to express in writing what I might so easily relate to you by word of mouth,

without entering rather at length into his previous life, i.e. At this port, as you are aware, it was in August, 1867, that he arrived at Nieu-chwang; for the purpose, as he then said, of seeing what could be done toward establishing a mission in the province of Manchuria. He was accompanied by a native Christian of Peking to assist him in his labours. With them they brought only their personal clothing, and Bibles and books for distribution. I had never seen your brother before; but at my first interview was impressed with the earnest simplicity of his manner, and the cheerfulness which I afterwards noticed he at all times carried with him. A few days after this I went to visit him in the native town at a small inn where he was then staying. I found him lying down in a very small apartment, which was destitute of every comfort. He was ill, but arose to meet me. He would allow no expressions of pity for the want of these comforts, and soon made me forget them in listening to the history of his labours at Peking, while making translations of various works. I was from that moment very fully impressed with the genuineness of the love which had actuated his motives in devoting his life to the work of a missionary. A little later on he had found a house wherein to begin his labours. His days were spent in preaching to the inhabitants in the streets, distributing and selling books. Sundays, he preached to the foreigners in the foreign settlement in the forenoon; and in the afternoon to the natives at his house, which for all intents and purposes was recognized as the Christian chapel. It was delightful to see how faithfully he performed his duties, — how on every Sabbath morning he appeared in our settlement punctual to the hour, having to come nearly two miles through the heat, and through the cold, and often to encounter the bad roads of the country. By his kindly manner, his spotless reputation, his Christian earnestness, he drew a goodly number to listen to him. As he talked on, his face became all alive with the deep faith he had in the truths he endeavoured to communicate; and his face often and often became radiant with a light, revealing the love which warmed him into eloquence. He seemed to possess a zeal which might have belonged to the earlier days, when apostles went forth so fearless and with so much love. One could not but observe this peculiar power which he possessed. For a moment he would speak with great force, and then change to tones of gentleness which were as impressive as they were child-like in their utterance. All this and far more you must know. Observing these characteristics, led me to have confidence in the impressions he was likely to give to the natives. Even in the short time he spent among them here, a few learned to inquire into the Christian doctrines.

"Early in January he was taken ill with a cold which brought on fever, from which he never recovered. For weeks and months he lingered in helpless weakness. I went to see him often. One day he said, 'I have been thinking that perhaps this is to be my last illness.' From that time he frequently told me of his hopes and his fears. As he lay upon his bed, he thought out his plans for the future, and his sole desire to live seemed to be that he might labour to carry them out for the good of those he had come along. For a long time he would insist upon his assistant preaching in the next room, that he might listen. And nearly up to the time of his death, he would have him and his servant — who by-the-by was becoming a Christian through his teaching — conduct the morning and evening prayers by his bedside. When he spoke of life, he said what he himself would do. When he spoke of death, he prayed that others might be found to continue the work he had begun. When talking of either he was equally resigned — always cheerful, always happy. If he had fears at all, they must have appertained more to the things of this world than to the other. And in preparing for this he was preparing for the other. You know how he arranged for the support of his native assistant after his death and until such a time as a foreigner should arrive. I will not therefore repeat." And now I come to speak of the last hours. One evening about six o'clock, I went to see him. I found him suffering from hard and difficult breathing, and I felt that death was near. So I sat by him and talked of the hour which was coming — of the life which was beyond. In reply to my inquiry whether there was anything I could do for him after he was gone, he said, 'No, I have arranged everything; all I have to ask is that you will keep your promise in regard to my wishes for this mission.' I began to repeat to him familiar passages from the Scriptures, in which he joined as often as his strength would allow; he would listen until I came to the lines which he loved the most, when he would say them aloud, his voice though very low, yet singularly deep. When I began the psalm, 'The Lord is my Shepherd,' a beautiful smile broke over his countenance and he pressed my hand more firmly; and his voice assumed, with all its weakness, something of the old depth as we came to the words, 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil.' When with much fervour he had repeated the Lord's Prayer, we sat in silence. He assured me he was very

happy. And thus he died, as it were, among the people with whom he had cast his lot; indeed we might almost say among the very scenes with which he had identified his life. One who could have watched his declining days when he naturally, more or less, gave expression to his views, would have marked with interest the contrast between the mind and thoughts so trained to higher themes, and the heart so contented with lowly things. The little room in which he died had but few comforts, certainly no luxuries. The form on which he slept, a table, two chairs, two book-cases, and an open-grate, foreign stove made up the furniture. The light came into the room through a large paper window. But I shall long remember the solemn hour which I have endeavoured to describe to you. The assistant sat at his feet weeping, now and then raising his eyes upward in silent prayer, and the servant on one side watching with tenderness his wants. And these two simple-minded natives, judging from their life and sayings since, must have profited by his last injunctions. And so after the years of toil he passed away into the other world. 'God,' he said, 'will carry on the good work.' 'Ah! no, I have no fears for that.'

"It was a rare privilege to have known your brother. His firmness of purpose was remarkable; his Christian faith supporting to himself, as well as encouraging to others; his gentleness most touching; his happiness genuine. And to me these incidents which I have related contain more than I am able to express."

One or two further touches from like loving hands will complete the picture of this calm and radiant sun-setting. The following reminiscences of his humble native assistant, Wang-hwang, have been kindly furnished to me by Mr. Edkins, who took them down from his own lips: — "While he was here," says Mr. Edkins, in continuation of the notes already quoted, "I questioned him about Mr. Burns' last words of testimony to the gospel, in the service of which he lived and died. What he said is here appended. 'It was the 28<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> (Chinese) month when we arrived, and we were five days waiting at Takoo (the port at the mouth of the Tien-tsin river). While there we went daily from our boat to preach in the streets. When we went on board the junk, the captain declined to attend our services; but on the third day he and the two cooks joined us. When Mr. Burns offered him passage-money, the captain said, 'I know you are not going to seek gain, for in that case you would certainly travel by steamer, or by a foreign sailing vessel. He belongs to a fishing village called Tien-kia-tsui, a few miles north of Takoo on the coast.

"We went on well till the 16<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month. On this day Mr. Burns was taken ill, and lay for ninety-four days, when his spirit fled. He had felt pleasure in preaching that day. Many foreigners were present, which rejoiced him. When he came back from the English service, and saw sixty or seventy Chinese pressing in to hear, he said, 'I will preach to them.' He preached for two hours. After this he felt no appetite, took no food, and lay down weary. About eleven o'clock P.M. He waked shaking with cold. For twenty days after this he did not leave the house. When prayer time came, he said, 'Come to my bedside, I will still preach to you. So the little band of inquirers gathered with Wang-hwan round the sick missionary, for whom it was appointed that he should soon go home.

"When his illness became severe, he made me promise that I would stay at Nieu-chwang. When we left Peking he was afraid, he told me, lest he should take the wrong man, a man different in mind and aim to himself. I said I would certainly stay at Nieu-chwang and carry out his injunctions. 'But,' he said, 'you have no strength or learning, and you must therefore be the more careful to be right, and to do what is right, so as to secure favour from God and approval from man. You must pray much for aid.'

"One time when his sickness was severe he lay as if asleep, when in a moment I heard him talking. I asked him what he was saying. He replied, 'Ah! did you hear? I was saying over the 121<sup>st</sup> Psalm. I was speaking with God, not with you.'

"Another time he laughed. I asked him why? He said, 'God was speaking with me, and this made my heart glad.'

"Two days later, he said to me, 'God tells me to go. I have some things to say to you. As to my burial, I wish to have no new clothes bought, but to be buried in these.' (Referring to his Chinese clothing. The custom of the country is to buy a new suit, and lay the deceased in his coffin with complete dress as if living. It is quite a common thing to draw on the new clothing some hours before the death takes place.) He further said, 'Do not let the funeral be on Sunday. At the burial read 1 Cor. 15<sup>th</sup> chapter. Pray with the inquirers. Tell them to be sure to come and see me again in the place to which I am going. Do not weep

after my death. Do not pray for me, but pray for the living. Diligently pray, and God will certainly send you a missionary.

"At another time, when he was a little better, a letter came from his mother. It said, 'Do not think of me, but of your work. He told me what his mother said, and her words rejoiced him greatly. He added, 'She says I am a knife that must be worn out by cutting, not by rusting. He wished it might be so. He also said, 'I am one of four brothers' (or 'I have four brothers'), 'one of them I would wish to exhort, but I shall not now have the opportunity. I hope others may do so.'

"He urged me to believe as he did, pray as he did, read diligently as he did, and use my mind as he did, 'and,' said he, 'God will help you to preach.'

"If you are reproached, bear it patiently. To be patient is to glorify God. I was not sorry when in the south the time of suffering came, nor should you be. Think of what some missionaries have had to suffer, and such things should rather be rejoiced in as proof of God's care.

"You can be my substitute when the new missionaries come. I cannot be here to receive them. You can do so, and must act for me. You must have the same heart as I have.

"I felt in Peking that my work there was done. It was a trial to leave friends. Yet for the gospel I could not but go. We shall meet again in heaven; and think of the knife. You must be one of God's knives.

"If there are inquirers, you must be careful to lead them in the right path, remembering that you are yourself not very strong nor learned. Take care to be diligent. Be indulgent to inquirers, exhort them much, and be very mindful of the example you set them, lest you should dishonour your Saviour, and cause sorrow to your pastor and friends. Always think of this.

"I am very happy. I do not fear death. After death there is unspeakable happiness to be hoped for. Do not think I am sad at the thought of dying. I am not at all so. God's promises are true, and I fear not. My work has been little, but I have not knowingly disobeyed God's commands.'

"The inquirers, five or six in number, went in to see him. He said, 'You see in me proof that the Christian doctrine is true. I am well supported now, and this strength which is given me, not to shrink at the approach of death, you can take as proof that what I believe is true; my illness, my decaying body, are also a testimony to the truth of the Bible. When I am gone you will have no missionary here. You must therefore pray much and think and read much that you may understand well. I have left friends and home to come here for the sake of this gospel that now supports me. I rely on God now. Listen you to him, and let us resolve all to meet in heaven. Hope for this. Live for this.'"

It was in the midst of this "time of languishing," and when the shadows of the great night began visibly to close around him, that he wrote in his own hand, still clear and strong as of old, the following touching lines to his mother — embodying his last solemn testimony in behalf of Christ, and of that great cause to which he had devoted his life: —

"To My Mother.

"At the end of last year I got a severe chill which has not yet left the system, producing chilliness and fever every night, and for the last two nights this has been followed by perspiration, which rapidly diminishes the strength. Unless it should please God to rebuke the disease, it is evident what the end must soon be, and I write these lines beforehand to say that I am happy and ready through the abounding grace of God either to live or to die. May the God of all consolation comfort you when the tidings of my decease shall reach you, and through the redeeming blood of Jesus may we meet with joy before the throne above!  
— Wm. C. Burns.

"Nieu-chwang, Jan. 15<sup>th</sup>, 1868.

"P.S. — Dr. Watson is very kind, and does everything in his power for my recovery."

To this is attached on a small fragment of Chinese paper, also in his own hand — a list of the texts on which he had preached at Nieu-chwang, from a tender feeling obviously that she to whom he wrote would like to see it. Perhaps there are other eyes that may linger over the lines with mournful interest. It will be observed that the first two Sabbaths are blank, in consequence of the suffering and enfeebled state in which he arrived from Peking.

"TEXTS PREACHED ON AT NIEU-CHWANG.

Sept. 1st, No meeting.

Sept. 8th, No meeting.  
 Sept. 15th, John 3:16.  
 Sept. 22d, John 15:14.  
 Sept. 29th, Gal. 5:16.  
 Oct. 6th, Mat. 5:3-12.  
 Oct. 13th, John 6:27.  
 Oct. 20th, Luke 18:1-14.  
 Oct. 27th, Luke 19:1-10.  
 Nov. 3d, Mr. Williamson, John 4:14.  
 Nov. 10th, Mat. 15:1-13.  
 Nov. 17th, John 1:29.  
 Nov. 24th, Isaiah 55:6-7.  
 Dec. 1 st, Luke 15 (a good day).  
 Dec. 8th, Luke 18:18-23.  
 Dec. 15th, James 4:7, 8.  
 Dec. 22d, Rom. 3:20-22.  
 Dec. 29th, Rev. 20:11-15.

Thus his last public testimony was to the same great truth of which he had witnessed so powerfully on the streets of Newcastle twenty-seven years before, and the overwhelming conviction of which had so often imparted an almost preter-natural terribleness and grandeur to his words.

The tide of life now gently ebbed away. He spoke little even on those subjects that were dearest to him, lying for long days and nights in silence that was broken only by the soft footsteps of his Chinese assistant, and by the voices of the worshippers from time to time in the neighbouring room, in which it was his delight to know that his loved work was still carried on. His peace was calm and deep, but undemonstrative — like that of the river which speaks only by its silence and by the soft whispering of the reeds and lapping of the waters on its banks. "He did not speak much," wrote the Rev. A. Williamson, "on religious subjects either to Chinese or foreigners; and when he did, the burden of his remarks was that he was prepared to die or to live as the Lord might determine." "About a month after the commencement of his illness," says another friend who often visited him at this time, "he began to apprehend its fatal issue, but said he was quite prepared. After six weeks or so, his fresh looks began to leave him. The brightness of his eye faded, and gradually he became like an old decaying man." Yet now and then the old fire would for a moment awake, and impart an expiring energy alike to his voice and his frame. "Finding a decided change for the worse and great distress in breathing, the gentleman just referred to repeated several portions of Scripture, among others Psalm 23. Hesitating at the words, 'Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.' Mr. Burns took it up, and in a deep strong voice continued and finished the Psalm. He also greatly relished John 14, 'Let not your heart be troubled,' and on closing the exercise with the Lord's Prayer, Mr. Burns suddenly became emphatic, and repeated the latter portion and doxology, 'For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,' with extraordinary power and decision. This was the last time he manifested any power of mind. Afterwards he only evinced recognition, and at last hardly spoke or even opened his eyes. Thus he passed away."

This is the last glimpse we have of him ere he passes out of sight. On the afternoon of the day on which he died, the kind doctor who had so tenderly watched over him throughout, hearing that he was worse, hastened, in company with the consular assistant, to his bedside, but just too late to see him die, though the heart and pulse were still beating when they arrived. He was buried in the foreign graveyard, according to the simple rites of the Presbyterian Church, Dr. Watson, according to his own express desire, reading those grand words in 1 Cor. 15:42-57: "So also is the resurrection of the dead; it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory," &c.

It was a dreary and desolate place, and the river was fast washing it away, but Dr. Watson informs me in his last letter that the precious dust has been since removed to a piece of ground recently purchased by the foreign residents for a cemetery. "We hope," says he, "to make our new burying-ground somewhat like

such a place at home, where occasionally we may walk, and call back to memory the lives of those we loved." There the place of his grave is marked, according to the terms of his will, by a modest head-stone, bearing the following simple legend: —

TO THE MEMORY

OF THE

REV. WILLIAM C. BURNS, A.M.,

MISSIONARY TO THE CHINESE,

From the Presbyterian Church in England.

Born at Dun, Scotland, April 1st, 1815.

Arrived in China, November 1847.

Died at Port of Nieu-chwang,

4th April, 1868.

II. CORINTHIANS, Chapter V.

His beloved colleague Mr. Douglas, who, on hearing of the critical nature of his illness, had hastened from Amoy, that he might minister to him in his time of need, found on his arrival that he had already — two months before — passed away, leaving behind him a general sentiment of deep and reverential sorrow both among the European and native residents, conspicuous among whom was his faithful assistant Wang, who still wore the hair of his head and beard unshaven, after the manner of his people in their deepest mourning for a father or a mother.

## CHAPTER XXI

## CONCLUSION

“So your loved and honoured William,” wrote the Rev. Dr. C. J. Brown to his mother, on hearing the tidings of his death, “has obtained the fulfillment of Christ's prayer, ‘Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.’ I am confident that amid the sorrow of your great loss, you are enabled to give thanks and say, ‘It is the Lord:’ ‘It is well.’ He makes no mistake as to the time, or the place, or the way of removing his servants to be with himself. Your dear William's history has, in fact, been one so palpably stamped with the signatures of a divine leading, that it were unlawful to entertain a doubt that the Lord just saw his work done, and the time, for him, of the everlasting rest arrived. I confess that I was quite unprepared for the tidings. I had dreamed that there remained for William a time of coming home (necessitated of course by his serious illness); that you would have the happiness of embracing him once more; that we should all see again his grave benevolent countenance; and that the Church and the cause of China and her missions might be greatly benefited. But now that the Lord has given his own unerring decision, I think I can see things that go to reconcile me to it, even apart from its simple unerringness as given by Him. I am not sure that William would have taken kindly to going up and down this country and talking. China and its labours, far from the ear and eye of man, was his sphere. He had literally buried himself in that vast land — a noble, living burial! No doubt, also, his system was spent. He had done his work (not a short one, be it remembered) in such a manner that even his robust constitution “was undermined. And so things have just reached their natural close.”

Doubtless this is the true reading of the matter, so far as it can be read by us on this side the veil. If now I must speak more of the character and work of my beloved and lamented brother, it must still be in the words of others; and for this there are abundant materials in the numerous and most touching tributes to his noble life and precious labours which have spontaneously come from every side. Of these it is fitting that I should quote first the words of his esteemed colleague and friend, the Rev. W. S. Swanson, in a sermon preached at Amoy shortly after receiving the tidings of his death: —

“And now that his life has closed, so far as regards earth, it remains as a precious legacy to us who are left. In reviewing it, what shall we say were the main characteristics of this man? He was a thorough scholar, with a well-furnished and an active mind; he possessed in no ordinary degree a sound judgment, and a large amount of common sense; he was one of the ablest and most popular preachers of his day; he was a man of great energy, indomitable perseverance, and of ardent zeal. But not these properties severally, nor all combined, seem to me to be the reason to account for the power he possessed, the success that followed his public work, or the mark he has left behind him.

“In personal intercourse with him one thing struck me above all others — his prayerfulness; and herein I believe we get some insight into his remarkable success and power. No matter what he did, or had to do, whether of importance or of a nature you might call trivial, he made it a matter of prayer. This prayerfulness of his seems to me to be the outstanding feature of his Christian life and his missionary work.

“Another very marked feature of his character was his faithfulness. You never could mistake what he was, nor whose servant he considered himself to be. He believed, as we all do, that Christ and the world could not amalgamate; and he was faithful to his belief. And what was the result? The testimony of those who care little for Christ and the things of his kingdom are unanimous in this, that he was a faithful, earnest, and consistent Christian; and this testimony they never withheld. Agree or not with him as they might, they did not fail to perceive, and were not slow to acknowledge, the faithfulness of the man to the great Master he served. This faithfulness made him sometimes seem harsh, it may be, to some, and not so regardful as they might have wished him to be of the feelings of others. But this could be thought only by those who did not know him. He was very tender, and very chary of giving offence; but not so much so as

to prevent him from denouncing where denunciation was needed, or rebuking where rebuke seemed to him to be required.

"There is one other point in his character to which I must refer, and then I have done. To many he seemed eccentric, and to some morose. He was neither. There might be some shadow of seeming evidence for the former; there was none for the latter. He set a high ideal before himself as the ideal of the Christian missionary; and he did not hesitate to adopt any mode of life, or to enter upon any course of action, that seemed to him to be necessary, or even beneficial, to the proper carrying on of the work he came to do. As I have said already, the motive from which he acted was always the same; and one hardly dared to blame him in matters of no importance whatever when this was known. And now when we look back on his history, we may perhaps be led to believe that even in regard to the mode and localities of his missionary life, he acted in the way which, in his case, and with his peculiar and most marked individuality, was calculated to be of most benefit."

The feature of his Christian life here first referred to, is so pre-eminently characteristic, that I am tempted to add the following words of another: —

"Above all," says an able writer in the *Sunday at Home*, "Mr. Burns was a man of prayer. No one could be long in his company without discovering that. All the week long 'he filled the fountains of his spirit with prayer/ and on Sabbath the full fountain gave forth its abundant treasures. There was freshness, simplicity, a scriptural force and directness in his prayers that formed the best of all preparations for the discourse that was to follow. Out of doors, we have often felt, as we heard him preach, that the opening prayer of the service was like the ploughing up of the field, it so opened the heart, and quickened and informed the conscience; the sermon that followed was the sowing of the seed in the prepared soil; and the concluding prayer was like the after harrowing of the ground, fixing down the seed that had been sown."

To anyone in the least degree acquainted with him, or who had come even for a day into casual contact with him, it would not have been needful to have said even this much in regard to that which was in truth so much a part of himself, as to be inseparable from his very idea. His whole life was literally a life of prayer, and his whole ministry a series of battles fought at the mercy-seat. A friend who was under the same roof with him the day before he began his labours in St. Peter's, tells me that after walking round the parish with one of the elders, whose guest he was, he shut himself up in his chamber, and was found long afterwards lying on his face in an agony of prayer — the source doubtless of the holy calm which so struck the hearers on the succeeding morning. ("I had the privilege of getting acquainted with him at the commencement of his ministry in St. Peter's, Dundee, while he resided at The Crescent, with Mr. P. H. Thorns; in whose family I had been resident governess for several years. The day after he came to us, Mr. Thorns took him out to show him the boundaries of the parish, and to see a few of the people in St. Peter's district. They returned in the evening. Mr. Burns went to his room, and whilst we waited for his coming down stairs to dinner, we heard a heavy groan. Thinking he had been taken ill, Mrs. Thorns ran up stairs, and found him lying on his face on the floor groaning before the Lord! He had gotten such an overwhelming sense of his responsibility for the souls of that people that he could then think of nothing else. In his absence of mind, he had left his door partially open, which Mrs. Thorns shut; and we did not see him again till late in the evening, when he came for the family worship. His prayer then was one continued strain of self-loathing, and pleading for mercy through 'the blood of the Lamb of God.' It happened that his room was next to mine, and all that night I heard him still groaning in prayer!") There is an entry in his journal, during the time of his residence in Edinburgh, which is perhaps too sacred to quote, but to which I cannot withhold a reference in this connection. He seems to have possessed a private key to the church of St. Luke's, and there we find him, at least on one occasion, "detained" a whole night in solitary prayer "before the Lord." Such incidents as these let us far into the secret of where his great strength lay. The Rev. Dr. Talmage, of the American Board of Missions, who, along with his admirable and lamented colleague, Mr. Doty, knew him so well during his early labours at Amoy, adds one or two characteristic traits which his friends will delight to recognize: — "He was," he says, "very careful of his health, avoiding unnecessary exposure, abstemious in his diet, and very particular in regard to his clothing, guarding against sudden changes of temperature. Although living by himself, he made it a rule to take tea, and spend a part or the whole of the evening of every day of the week, except one, with some one of the missionary families. We

all enjoyed greatly, and felt profited by this social intercourse with him. . . . He also carefully watched the indications of Providence, expecting to be led in the right way. I may mention a fact to illustrate this. He had planned a visit with some of our native helpers to the island of Quemoy, situated on the north-east side of the entrance to Amoy harbor. The day appointed to go proved rainy; from this he gathered that he should go in some other direction. While meditating on this subject an inquirer from a village near Pechuia came to his room, and requested him to visit the region of his native place. This was forthwith decided on. On their way to the boat they were met by an elderly man, an inquirer, who, on learning in what direction they were going, told them that he had a son in business at the village of Pechuia, and invited them to go to his son's shop, who, he said, would give them a hearty welcome. Such were the leadings of Providence, by which the gospel was first carried to that region. The remarkable blessings which followed that visit are well known. . . .

"His greatest power in preaching seemed to me to consist in the manner in which he quoted the Holy Scriptures. In this I do not think that I have ever heard him surpassed. Hence, in labouring among the Chinese, it was over the native Christians and inquirers that he exerted his greatest influence for good.

On this account it seemed to some (perhaps to all) of us that his labours would have been still more efficient if he had remained longer, or had settled down permanently in some one district of country, instead of pursuing so desultory a course of labour. A man with his gifts, I should suppose, would be just adapted to a field of labour such as Amoy now is, where there are so many small churches and companies of inquirers scattered throughout the region, and where the good seed of the Word has been sown so widely. Such a field would have had more likeness to those fields in Scotland and Canada, where his labours had been so wonderfully blessed.

"I say it seemed, for knowing his earnestness in seeking the divine guidance, we dare not say that he did not obtain it.

"He was a great (not perhaps in the eyes of the world) and good man; but he regarded himself as having peculiarities, and did not think that others should adopt his plan of labour."

Of the style of his preaching at his best times, I cannot better speak than in the words of a writer already quoted: —

"His voice was clear, full, and of a great compass and power. By nearly constant use, indoors and out, it's finer tones were roughened when we heard it; but, for all the purposes of an evangelist, it was one of the finest we have ever heard. In preaching he used no notes, had but little action, and no art. His power was solely, humanly speaking, from the weight, clearness, abundance, and vigour of his matter, and from the vivid force of his own feelings and convictions of the truth of what he was uttering. He believed, and therefore spoke. God was visible to him as he preached; and so he soon became visible also to at least some of his hearers. He used but few illustrations, and when he did use them they were short and telling. His style was firm, terse, Saxon, abounding in short sentences; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. Sometimes you would have thought, in listening to some of his solemn appeals, that you were hearing a new chapter of the Bible when first spoken by a living prophet. His manner was not only solemn, but pre-eminently solemnizing. Few — we might say none — that came to laugh remained long in the laughing mood. He was a man, whether in the pulpit or out of it, whom you might treat many ways, but you could nowhere, no when, laugh at him. And if you tried to argue with him, you came away, if victorious in your own eyes, at least thoroughly conscious that you had grappled with no despicable, no common adversary. He was ever calm, cool, self-possessed. Preaching one day in Montreal Mr. Burns was roughly handled by a Popish crowd, some of whom threw stones, by one of which Mr. Burns was cut in the face. A party of the 93<sup>rd</sup> Highlanders heard of the fracas, and rushed to the rescue, headed by one Hector M'Pherson, now labouring as a missionary at St. Martin's, near Perth, and to whom the preaching of Mr. Burns had been blessed. To the earnest inquiry of the soldier, 'What's all this?' Mr. Burns quietly wiped off the blood, and with a smile said, 'Never mind; it's only a little wound received in the Master's service.' If in preaching, indoors or out, he was in any way interrupted; he was never flurried, and knew well how to turn any interruption to his own advantage. A friend has often graphically repeated to the writer an instance illustrative of this. Once on a fine summer Sabbath evening, he was preaching to a vast crowd at the

approach to a railway station. A tall man, slightly intoxicated, in the outer edge of the crowd was rudely interrupting, and interjecting occasional comments, exciting the risibility of those around him. Mr. Burns paused a moment, turned his eyes on the man: 'You are tall .and strong; but you are not too tall for a coffin, nor too strong for the worms! You are tall and strong; but not too tall for the grave, nor too strong for death! You are tall and strong; but you will soon have to stand forth, one of the crowds, before the great white throne; and how will you face the Judge of the whole earth! Tall and strong as you are, you cannot be hid from God; the rocks and mountains will not cover you; his all-seeing eye is on you now!' This was spoken with a slow deliberation that made every word tell, not only on the man, but on the crowd.' It was absolutely withering and terrible,' our informant used to say; the man was sobered in one moment. He seemed to bow himself down, as if to hide himself from that eye, and became at once the most attentive, and eager and respectful listener the preacher had."

In regard to the manner of his outer life, no man ever held himself more absolutely loose to the world, and to the things that are in the world. Literally he deemed not that anything that he possessed was his own, save only that he might use it in the service of Christ and human souls. Scrupulously exact and methodical in the use of his means, and rigid in his economy as regarded himself, he was conspicuously bountiful and free-handed in the dispensation of them to others. His whole income, from the first day on which he had any income to the last, was thus spent, with the exception only of what was necessary to supply for himself the barest necessities of life, and an annual gift of love to his one surviving parent. He literally fulfilled his own ideal, as conveyed in words that have been often quoted: — "The happiest state of a Christian on earth seems to be this — that he should have few wants. If a man have Christ in his heart, and heaven before his eye, and only as much of temporal blessings as is just needful to carry him safely through life, then pain and sorrow have little to shoot at — such a man has very little to lose. To be in union with Him, who is the Shepherd of Israel, and to walk very near to Him who is a sun and shield — that comprehends all that a poor sinner requires to make him happy between this and heaven."

How vividly do I remember the moment, a little more than a year ago, when the trunk which had come home from China containing nearly all of property that he left behind him in the world was opened, amid a group of young and wondering faces, — a few sheets of Chinese printed matter, a Chinese and an English Bible, an old writing-case, one or two small books, a Chinese lantern, a single Chinese dress, and the blue flag of the "Gospel Boat." "Surely," whispered one little one amid the awestruck silence, "surely he must have been very poor!" There was One, we felt, standing amongst us, though unseen, who for his sake had been poorer still.

Of the results of his work in the Chinese field it is difficult to speak. Undoubtedly his life there was far more powerful as an influence than as an agency. It was not so much by what he said, or by what he did, as by what he was, that he made his presence felt over so wide a surface of that vast land, and that "being dead, he yet speaketh." "I never expect to see his like again," says an esteemed missionary of another communion, who only knew him for a very short time. "We are all, as I believe, serving God in our divine vocations, with greater gladness, and more fervid zeal, from having communed with your brother in his heavenly walk and noble aspirations." "Know him, sir?" exclaimed another, with almost indignant surprise, when asked if he knew a brother missionary of the name of William Burns, "all China knows him; he is the holiest man alive." His life, in short, was "a sign" to all who came in contact with him, and in the face of a luxurious and self-indulgent age, of an absolute consecration of heart to God, which knew no reserves, flinched from no sacrifices, and in very deed counted all things loss for Christ. In fine, to use the words of the Rev. James Johnston, once his colleague in mission work, and since for many years the esteemed secretary of the Scottish Committee: —

"Reckoned by the number of conversions under his direct preaching, the results are small; measured by the effect of his personal influence, the results are great. From the nature of the work for which he was specially qualified, and to which he entirely gave himself — that of a pioneer or evangelist — he could not expect to reap the fruits himself. His work was to break up the ground and sow the seed, not to gather the harvest. No man in this age, so far as we know, has so entirely devoted himself to this self-denying work. Again and again has our departed brother laboured for years in some dark and unpromising field, and just when the first streak of dawn appeared on the horizon, he would leave another to enjoy the glorious

sunrise, while he buried himself in some other region sunk in heathen darkness. Again and again have we seen him thus in prayers and tears sowing the precious seed, and as soon as he saw the green shoots appear above the dark soil, he would leave to others the arduous yet happy task of reaping the harvest, and begin again his appointed work in breaking up the fallow-ground. The full extent of his great life-work will not be known until that day when He that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together. The faith and patience of this devoted servant of God is an example to the Church, and to every labourer in the Lord's vineyard, teaching us not to live upon the stimulus of a present success, even in the conversion of souls. No man enjoyed so great success as he did, or thirsted for the salvation of sinners with more intense longing than he, yet have we seen him labouring for seven years, according to his own testimony, ' without seeing one soul brought to Christ f yet labouring on only with increased diligence and prayer, until he saw, as he shortly did, the awakening at Pechuia, which reminded him of Kilsyth. His influence in this way has been extended over a larger field, and with his strongly marked individuality he left the impress of his character and piety wherever he went. Missionaries felt it, and blessed God for even a casual acquaintance with William Burns; converts felt it, and have been heard to say that they got their idea of what the Saviour was on earth from the holy calm and warm love, and earnest zeal of Mr. Burns'. 'Walk with God.' The converts in many parts of China, and their children, will remember his high type of piety. His many translations of Scripture and sacred books, like the Pilgrim's Progress and Line tipon Line, will prove a rich legacy to the Church, and his psalms and hymns in different dialects will help the faith and fan the love of the Christian disciples, and spread abroad the Saviour's name among the heathen in the new songs sung in their hearing by the converts at their work, or by the way, and in their worship in the church and family. As a mission, we bless God for all that our departed brother was, and for all that he did. . He was God's gift to us, and while we fondly looked forward to a longer life, and further conquests in the new and vast region on which he had entered with impaired strength but undiminished zeal, we bow to our Father's will in his removal on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April. His grave stands on the borders of the great kingdom of Manchuria, the advanced post of Christian conquests, beyond the northern limits of China. The little mound casts its shadow over many lands for where is Burns not loved and mourned? But his life is the Church's legacy, and loudly calls for self-sacrifice and devotion to the cause of Christ, and especially the cause of missions. His indomitable spirit beckons us to the field of conflict and of victory, while his four last converts, the conquest of his death-bed, stand like sentinels by his grave, and pray and long for the advance of the Church's hosts."

In stature he was about the middle height, of strong, muscular, and well-knit frame, and with a ruddy and pleasant countenance, which is but faintly recalled by the worn and aged features of his Chinese picture, but which will doubtless appear again in glorified form when He comes who maketh all things new.

#### IN MEMORIAM.

As gazed the prophet on the ascending car,  
 Swept by its fiery steeds away and far,  
 So, with the burning tear and flashing eye,  
 I trace thy glorious pathway to the sky.  
 Lone like the Tishbite, as the Baptist bold,  
 Cast in a rare and apostolic mould;  
 Earnest, unselfish, consecrated, true,  
 "With nothing but the noblest end in view;  
 Choosing to toil in distant fields unsown,  
 Contented to be poor and little known,  
 Faithful to death. O man of God, well done!  
 Thy fight is ended, and thy crown is won.

God shall have all the glory! Only grace

Made thee to differ. Let us man abase!  
 With deep, emphatic tone thy dying word,  
 Thy last, was this — "Thine is the kingdom, Lord,  
 The power, and glory!" Thus the final flame  
 Of the burnt-offering to Jehovah's name  
 Ascended from the altar! Life thus given  
 To God, must have its secret springs in heaven.

O William Burns! we will not call thee dead,  
 Though lies thy body in its narrow bed  
 In far-off China. Though Manchuria keeps  
 Thy dust, which in the Lord securely sleeps,  
 Thy spirit lives with Jesus: and where He,  
 Thy Master, dwells, 'tis meet that thou shouldst be.  
 There is no death in his divine embrace!  
 There is no life but where they see His face!

And now, Lord, let thy servant's mantle fall  
 Upon another! Since thy solemn call  
 To preach the truth in China has been heard,  
 Grant that a double portion be conferred  
 Of the same spirit on the gentler head  
 Of some Elisha who may raise the dead,  
 And fill the widow's cruse, and heal the spring,  
 And make the desolate of heart to sing;  
 And stand, though feeble, fearless, since he knows  
 Thy host angelic guards him from his foes;  
 "Whose life an image fairer still might be  
 Of Christ of Nazareth and Galilee —  
 Of thine, O spotless Lamb of Calvary!

China, I breathe for thee a brother's prayer:  
 Unnumbered are thy millions. Father, hear  
 The groans we cannot! Oh, thine arm make bare,  
 And reap thy harvest of salvation there.  
 The fullness of the Gentiles, like a sea  
 Immense, O God, be gathered unto Thee!  
 Then Israel save; and with his saintly train,  
 Send us Immanuel over all to reign!

H. Grattan Guinness.

APPENDIX.

ADDITIONAL REMINISCENCES.

Additional communications from Mr. Douglas and Mr. Swanson reached my hand just as the first edition of this work had left the press. They seem to me, however, so valuable that I gladly avail myself of the opportunity of a fresh impression to insert here as much of them as is compatible with the limits of a brief appendix. Mr. Douglas devotes the chief part of his letter to the correction of certain "mistakes and mis-statements, some made by opponents, some by over-zealous or ill-informed friends." In case I may myself in the foregoing pages have used expressions, or quoted words used by others, fitted in any measure to encourage such errors, I am very glad to be able in this way to provide the corrective. Mr. Douglas first notices the very prevalent impression,

"(1) That he was gloomy. He was indeed often reserved towards strangers; and his faithful rebukes of sin might tend to create an impression that his mind was gloomy. But in fact he was genial and hearty. Especially among his friends this warm and happy character of his mind was very conspicuous. Though he usually liked to live alone (especially in a room connected with some chapel or hospital), so as to be fully master of his own time, yet he was fond of having some missionary as a companion in going about the country: and he delighted to spend his evenings with missionaries and their families, or with any like-minded friend. He had a keen sense of the ludicrous, and was fond of a hearty laugh, which was often the effect of his conversation when he unbent his mind among his intimate friends. Jokes upon words he did not relish: the form of the ludicrous which was most congenial to him was what may be in general styled the humorous, as, for instance, anecdotes about remarkable adventures or strange mistakes, examples of unexpected skill in escaping from a dilemma or a difficulty, and singular traits of national peculiarities or personal character. I recollect one occasion, when ... On board the Challenger, while reading aloud the speech of Tertullus before Felix, he burst into a fit of laughter, and having recovered his composure explained that it appeared irresistibly ludicrous as being so like what a Chinaman would say in similar circumstances. He had a wonderful fund of varied anecdotes, both of the graver and the lighter sort, connected with his wide-spread evangelistic labours in so many lands, which gave a great charm to his society. In him also was well exemplified that text, 'Is any merry? let him sing psalms.' He was extremely fond of sacred music, and delighted in singing psalms and hymns, both alone and with others, both in English and Chinese. His acquaintance with music was a great help to him in his mission work, as well as a means of keeping up his cheerful, joyous spirit.

"(2) That he was careless of his comfort: e.g., such absurd stories as his being ready to leave England for China with a carpet-bag; that he went about in China without a change of dress, 'ready with only scrip and staff,' as I see in a recent Dublin tract. The fact is that he was exceedingly careful of his health, and for that reason, of his comfort, both in regard to clothing and food and general care of himself. Of clothing he had always an abundant supply suited to the different states of weather. . . . When I began to go with him into the country, I was struck with the large quantity both of bedding and body-clothes which he carried with him (more than I have seen other missionaries use), for we must carry our bedding as well as our changes of dress. His explanation to me was that he always made himself comfortable wherever he went, just as if he were at home. He was also very particular about having his dress thoroughly clean and well arranged. In summer he was so careful in airing his clothes that it was a frequent proviso in appointing a meeting to consult on any matter, 'if it be not a north wind,' as that is the best wind for airing clothes. . . . "As to food (both its material and its preparation) he was very particular. While in Amoy and its neighbourhood he used to eat heartily, especially of pork. I suspect that his spare diet at Nieu-chwang must have been the result of a general feeling of weakness and want of appetite. I recollect hearing that before his last illness he was observed to complain of being exhausted even by the walk (about a mile) from his lodging to the foreign settlement there. But whatever was the cause of the spare diet at Nieu-chwang, the quantity of his food while at Amoy was much about the same as that of his brethren. "When at all out of sorts he was very careful of himself, and he used to recommend similar care to others. He used often to blame me for not taking what he considered sufficient rest in the hot weather.

"(3) That he was generally engaged in pioneering work, & mistake into which even Mr. Johnston has fallen. (Mr. Johnston's view and that of Mr. Douglas I think admit of reconciliation. Mr. J., whom I have quoted

with so much pleasure in the body of the work, meant, as I understood him, to distinguish my brother's work simply as evangelistic, and not pastoral, and on that account necessarily in large measure that of a pioneer — visiting and exploring fields of missionary labour rather than stately cultivating them. This I think really was the distinctive idea and purpose of his life, though in prosecuting this object he made the existing missions and missionary churches in every case his starting-point, and thus spent much of his time and strength in co-operating with other missionaries. His labours on the mainland opposite Hong-Kong, his early excursions amongst the villages around Amoy, his journeys along the canals and rivers of the Shanghai plain, his tentative operations at Swatow, his last days at Nieu-chwang — were of the former sort; his labours at Hong-Kong, at Amoy, at Fuh-chow, at Peking — were of the latter. I am glad, however, that Mr. Douglas has called special attention to an aspect of his missionary life which had been too much overlooked.) The fact is that he was usually assisting other missionaries in work already begun. A phrase very frequently on his lips was, 'Do not let anyone be sent out to co-operate with me: I co-operate with others.' I am not certain of the exact character of his work during the three years before he first came to Amoy. Certainly about half that time he was residing in Hong-Kong and in Canton, and during most of the remainder was co-operating, I think, with the German missionaries. The only periods of any length after that time that can be properly called 'pioneering' are his first stay at Swatow (somewhat over two years), and the few months of his residence at Nieu-chwang. But in the Swatow region he had been preceded by the German missionary Lechler; indeed one special reason of his going there was to carry on the work of Mr. Lechler, which had been for some time suspended, and soon after going there he found one of Lechler's converts, a man of very decided character. In his later visits to Swatow, as well as at Amoy, Fuh-chow, Shanghai, and Peking, almost his whole work was co-operating with the missionaries previously settled there, usually in stations already begun or a place where a spirit of inquiry had been already excited.

"(4) That he was a Baptist. This report has been industriously spread in some quarters, being founded on the facts that he never administered baptism and that on some occasions he worked along with Baptists. I need hardly remind you that he firmly held the scriptural authority of infant baptism, and also of sprinkling, whether as applied to children or adults; and that his sole reason for never baptizing was the desire of so avoiding anything like a pastoral relationship. Again, his occasional co-operation with Baptists merely arose from the catholic spirit in which he could co-operate with Christians of any evangelical denomination, along with the circumstance that on one or two occasions the persons who happened to be most thrown in his way were Baptists. By the same style of reasoning it would be easy to prove him an Independent, a Methodist, a Lutheran, or even an Episcopalian, or all of them at once.

"(5) That he approved of the mode of action of the Plymouth Brethren or of the 'China Inland Mission? I need hardly say — as it is so abundantly manifest — that he had no sympathy with the doctrines and church order (or rather the want of definite doctrine and utter absence of church order) which characterize the Plymouth Brethren. . . .

"In regard to his own mode of action, he did not set himself up as a pattern to be copied in these respects. On the contrary, he was accustomed to defend his mode of action, not as a rule to be followed by others, but as a course suited to the special character of his own mind.

"He used to speak of himself as one of those supernumeraries or light-armed soldiers of whom a small proportion may be attached to the regular troops. . . .

"As regards the so-called 'Inland Mission,' his previous acquaintance with Mr. Taylor, and his catholic manner of 'hoping all things,' led him indeed in a private letter (published apparently without any authority) to express his hope that good might come of that movement; but in that very letter he stated very distinctly his disbelief of the practicability (under existing circumstances) of establishing missionaries permanently at such vast distances in the interior as 'all the provinces where there is yet no missionary.'

"He has often given expression to his decided opinion that the standard of the qualifications of missionaries ought not to be lowered, as what the Chinese field specially needs is not merely men who can preach a little simple truth, but men fully furnished with the gifts and learning, as well as the piety and zeal,

necessary for wisely watching over the infant churches and native assistants, and for the great work of teaching and training the future ministry of China. Over and over he decidedly refused offers of that very kind of under- educated labourers which the 'Inland Mission' so largely employs.

It is a common mistake in determining the views of any historical person to use passages from all parts of his writings, and incidents from all periods of his life, as of equal value, regardless of the law of change and progression which acts on all human minds. To the influence of this law Mr. Burns was no exception. It may be well to indicate a few examples.

"(1) As to Residence at the Ports.

"In his earlier letters there is often found a tendency to depreciate work at the treaty ports, and a desire that missionaries should mainly reside or travel about in the interior. But afterwards, as he found the difficulties of obtaining healthy residences in the interior, and as the climate began to tell on his own constitution, originally so very strong, and as the importance appeared of having strong churches at these centres of ever-increasing influence, his views were gradually modified; and while he still urged a greater amount of country work than had been usual in other missions, he was more alive to the need of having comfortable healthy residences at the treaty ports, as points from which to act on the interior. Of this no stronger proof could be desired than the fact that when he left Peking it was not to go to any of the great cities in the interior, but to settle at the port of Nieu-chwang, a place of comparatively small population, which derives its chief importance from being the treaty port of Manchuria.

"(2) As to Colloquial Hymns.

"During the year (1858-9) that we were together at Amoy, he strenuously opposed the attempt to make more colloquial hymns than the thirteen then in use (made by the Rev. W. Young, now in Australia), and urged in opposition the claims of hymns in the literary style, especially of the 'Sin-si hap-swan,' a collection in the literary style which he had made some years before. But very rapidly he not only changed these views, but set himself vigorously to make hymns in the colloquials of Swatow, Fuh-chow, Peking, and of Amoy itself. The hymns in the literary style are no longer used at public worship in the chapels here; and in the collection of sixty colloquial hymns used by the Presbyterian Church here (under the care of the American mission and our own) there are five hymns almost exactly as they came from his hand, and five others which are about half by him, and there is about the same proportion in the hymn-book of the L. M. S. At Swatow, Fuh-chow, and Peking also many of his colloquial hymns continue to be used in the several missions."

In a subsequent letter Mr. Douglas sends me the following deeply touching document, the last lines ever traced by the dying missionary's hand, and bearing date about a month after his parting message to his mother.

"It is very touching," writes Mr. Douglas, "to copy out again these minute details about his friends, especially his Chinese friends, and that wonderful composing of his own epitaph when face to face with death: so calm and collected and peaceful; and those last strokes which he ever traced with the pen, his own old well-known hand, yet strangely altered, irregular and trembling from extreme weakness — 'Wm. C. Burns,' on that 25th February when all his intercourse with old friends, even by pen and paper, came to an end:"—

"For Rev. Carstairs Douglas, Amoy.

"I got a severe chill at the end of the year, which has resulted in a low fever, preventing me from getting refreshing sleep, and so bringing down my strength. In case I should be taken away, I take my pen to say that Dr. Watson will send down my boxes to your address when he meets with a suitable vessel. The key of the overland trunks I shall enclose in this (there is a spare one), and in one of them the keys of the other boxes will be found. The Chinese clothes can be given to old acquaintances, among whom do not forget Tan-tai. (One of the deacons of the L.M.S. at Amoy.) The Dr.'s watch can be restored to him; my own watch can go home with the overland trunks when there is an opportunity. There is some new flannel and

a few pairs of new socks which are at your disposal. Of four coloured silk handkerchiefs please give two to my friend Mr. A. Stronach. I would wish all my packets of letters (which Mr. Swanson took out of my chest of drawers, and put along with books, &c, in a box — you must remember it) to be put in one of the overland's, and sent home along with such as are at present in the boxes. I suppose it will be best to prepare a grave-stone at Amoy, and send it up well packed. For the inscription I would suggest, 'To the memory of the Rev. Wm. C. Burns, A.M., missionary to the Chinese from the Presbyterian Church in England. Bom at Dun, Scotland, April 1st, 1815. Arrived in China, November, 1847. Died at Nieu-chwang . . . 1868, aged 53. 2 Corinthians 5th chapter.'

' I have more than 300 taels at the British consulate, and when all local expenses are paid, Dr. Watson will remit what remains to your address to pay for the grave-stone, my subscription for Pechuia, &c. As to my present state of feeling, I may refer to the words of Paul, Phil. 1:23, &c. &c.

"Port of Nieu-chwang, Jan. 22d, 1868."

[Thus far in his own hand: what follows is written by dictation.]

"P.S. Of my Chinese articles the following I should like sent home to my relatives in my overland trunks: — 1st, A new port-wine coloured camlet 'ma-kwa.' (Sort of jacket worn over the long gown.) 2nd, A long gown of blue merino (or some such fabric), clean, though not new. 3rd, A woven silk or floss sash. 4th, A Chinese leather-covered pillow. (Stiff and round.) 5th, A new Chinese pouch (for tying round the abdomen). 6th, A pair of ivory chop-sticks. A feather fan.

"7th, The long fur gown may perhaps suit yourself as a winter house-gown. The fur ma-kwa may be given to the native pastor of the Hok-tai church. (Also called Tek-chhiu-kha, or the second church of Amoy.) To Tau-lo, the pastor of the Sin-koe — a native church, may be given a blue gown of heavy and excellent silk, along with a pair of Chinese leggings of flowered blue silk, and not wadded. The cloth ma-kwa with silk lining may be given to Tan-tai. Four or five good gowns I would wish sent down to Swatow to be distributed to A-kee and Kilin of our mission, and A-sun and I-u of the American mission. For A-kcfi may be selected a blue silk gown of inferior quality to that given to Tau-lo, also a full-length camlet ma-kwa which I have worn a good deal. Then you must still find gowns for such men as I-ju, Liong-lo, Bu-liet. Other articles you can distribute north and south among the most worthy assistants and members, not forgetting my old friend Nui at Pechuia. In making your distribution please consult with your brethren Messrs. Cowie and Macgregor.

"I already have asked you to give two silk coloured handkerchiefs to Mr. A. Stronach. Of the three remaining white ones please take for yourself, and ask Mr. Cowie and Mr. Macgregor each to accept a coloured one.

"Mr. Sandeman's Geneva watch which I left in Mr. Swanson's hands, I should wish returned to his mother (Mrs. Sandeman) or sister. "The knife, fork, and most, if not all, of the spoons in the leather case which you gave me belong, I believe, to Mr. Swanson, and should be returned to him.

"The chest of drawers and cane-bottomed couch I leave for the use of the mission: the members can arrange at any time who has the most need of them. There are three volumes of Morrison's Dictionary, the gift to me of the Rev. Mr. Keedy of London, which have been lent to Mr. Johnson of the Amer. Bapt. Mission, Swatow, for a number of years. He should be requested to give a receipt for the same, and promise in case of his leaving China, or prospective decease, to return these to our mission at Swatow. — 25th February, 1868, [Signed with his own hand.] "Wm. C. Burns."

Mr. Swanson has written an important paper on the general history of the Amoy mission, of which I cannot now avail myself, but which I hope will appear in another form. The following glimpse, however, of my brother's last visit to Amoy is so bright and life-like that I gladly insert it here: —

"In 1862 he came here from Fuh-chow. He arrived in the spring of that year, and remained in Amoy till August of the year following, when he left for Peking. Mr. Douglas left Amoy for a furlough home in June of 1862. It was during this last visit that I learned to know, love, and value Mr. Burns: and I can never think of that time without recalling our companying together, and without thanking God for permitting me to know him as I then did. Although he refused to take any part with me in the examination of inquirers, the

administration of ordinances, and the general business of the mission, yet his labours and his advice were most valuable. He visited the stations regularly, and preached every Sabbath-day. I can recall how heartily and zealously he threw himself into the breach to help the persecuted brethren at Khi-boey; and I am certain that it was his wisdom and tact that were mainly instrumental in bringing matters to a happy conclusion in that region.

"At that time our American brethren and we jointly had a station at Chang-chow. The native church there had long been forced to meet in a small, confined house, quite unfit for a chapel in such an immense city as Chang-chow. They succeeded in getting a large and commodious house suited for a chapel. We expected some disturbance at its opening, and our expectations were not unfounded. There was some trouble. Mr. Burns went up soon after the opening, stayed in the chapel for two weeks or so, and then Dr. Carnegie and I joined him there. The doctor soon became most popular, and patients came crowding in. Mr. Burns, myself, and the native evangelists had some excellent opportunities for preaching, and I remember yet how delighted he seemed to be to see us all as busy as we could be with this work.

"During this time Mr. Burns also made several visits to our then most northerly station, Anhai. We frequently went there as well as to the other stations together. On these journeys he has again and again given me accounts of his life and labours in Scotland, England, and Canada. We often sat up till far on in the morning — I, a most eager listener to the deeply interesting details of his labours.

"While we were in Amoy together we saw each other twice daily. He lived in a room in the Amoy Medical Missionary Hospital, and there I went to see him daily at 11 o'clock in the forenoon, he coming to see me about 5 o'clock in the evening. He had always some very nicely boiled rice and a delicate little pork-chop for me, and used to force me to eat. Oftentimes I used to feel weary and oppressed with a number of things connected with such a scattered and extensive field of labour as that of our mission. I can yet recall his loving, kindly manner, how he used to pat me on the shoulder, lead me to the side of the room where stood a large bamboo couch, and kneel down and pray. These prayers I shall never forget. I was young and inexperienced then, and felt keenly the weight of responsibility that was on me, but he always had a kind word to encourage me. I can remember well one such day when I felt more than usually troubled on account of some mission matters, when he clapped me on the back and told me to keep my mind easy, for if I were pastor of a church at home, and had some troublesome elders or cantankerous deacons, it would be worse for me than even such trials as I had in Amoy.

'But I cannot omit one thing so bright, so profitable to us during that brief season. He spent most of his evenings in the houses of his brother missionaries, and in our house he was naturally more frequently than in any other. He was one of the most genial, cheerful men I ever met, but he took great care as to when, how, and where he unbent himself. The presence of any one with whom he had not full sympathy immediately made him quiet, and I have seen him sit long in such circumstances without uttering a single word.

"His short expositions at family worship were always remarkable and most deeply interesting. Mrs. Swanson and he were great friends, and seemed always to understand one another. I remember yet his great anxiety about her at one time when she was rather indisposed.

"He left me for Peking in August, 1863. I saw him on board ship, and very soon after our getting on board the ship left the inner harbor. Next day I saw she was still at anchor off Amoy. I went out to see him, and stayed two hours with him. We prayed together, and I turned to leave. He sent his love to my wife, and I think I hear him yet saying, 'The Lord bless her and Willy' (my little boy) 'and yourself.' I saw him no more, and shall not see him again till, I trust, we meet above."

Long months ago, with anxious heart and sore,  
 We prayed for him, whom our dim fancy's sight  
 Saw, faintly labouring, 'mid the harvests white,  
                   On Sinim's distant shore;  
 For selfishly we grudged that one who bore  
 So well the fiercest onset of the fight,  
 And used so well the arms of heavenly might,

Should give the conflict o'er.  
But even while, with blind, weak love we pray'd  
Thus for the toil-worn, bowed, and weary one,  
The Master, more compassionate, had said —  
"Rest now, thou soldier, rest! Servant, well done!  
"Let others hold thy plough, and wield thy blade,  
"And wrestle for the crown which thou hast won."  
July 8, 1868. W. B.

(Lines by an unknown hand, which appeared in the public prints immediately after the tidings of Mr. Burns' death, reached Scotland.)

THE END

Editor



Peter-John Parsisis (Also Known as Bryan Edwin Dean)