CHAPTER V.

1839.

ST. PETER’S, DUNDEE.

T

HE 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. “For some time before,’ says Mr. Bonar in his admirable memoirs of M’Cheyne, “Mr. Burns had seen symptoms of deeper attention than usual, and real anxiety in some that had hitherto been careless. But it was after his return from Kilsyth that the people began to melt before the Lord. On Thursday, the second day after his return, at the close of the usual evening prayer-meeting in St. Peter’s, and when the minds of many were deeply solemnized by the tidings which had reached them, he spoke a few words about what had for some days detained him from them, and invited those to remain who felt the need of an outpour­ing of the Spirit to convert them. About a hundred remained; and at the conclusion of a solemn address to these anxious souls, suddenly the power of God seemed to descend, and all were bathed in tears. At a similar meeting, next evening, in the church, there was much melting of heart and intense desire after the Beloved of the Father; and on adjourning to the vestry the arm of the Lord was revealed. No sooner was the vestry-door opened to admit those who might feel anxious to con­verse, than a vast number pressed in with awful eagerness. It was like a pent-up flood breaking forth; tears were streaming from the eyes of many, and some fell on the ground, groaning, and weeping, and crying for mercy. Onward from that evening meetings were held every day for many weeks; and the extraordinary nature of the work justified and called for extraordinary services. The whole town was moved. Many believers doubted; the ungodly raged; but the Word of God grew mightily and prevailed.”

The scenes at Kilsyth 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 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. For its more authentic and inward history, however, I now gladly return to Mr. Burns’ own journal, which after a few broken and fragmentary notices, becomes again continuous and copious:—

*“August 24th.—*Iought to have been daily recording the wonders of the Lord’s love in this book, had they not been so many that I could not find time to speak of them all. I shall now however try to do so regularly, though in the briefest form. Since the 20th, many notable things have occurred. The church has been crowded every night, and many have been forced to go away without getting in. Mr. Reid assisted me on Wednesday, preaching in a very searching manner on regeneration from John iii., and Mr. Bonar from Kelso followed him on Job xxii. 21. I then myself prayed and spoke till near 11 p.m., on Joel ii. 28-32. On Thursday James Hamilton from Abernyte lectured on the young man, Mark x. 17, after which I read and commented on a passage from Robe’s narrative. Last night Mr. Baxter preached with much solemnity and more of the freeness of the gospel than usual, from Jeremiah xv. 15, after which I read another passage from Robe, and before pronouncing the blessing was led to speak particularly to Roman Catholics, and of our duty towards them. Mr. Roxburgh was there last night. Indeed we have daily not a few of the ministers in town and from a distance among the audience. On Thursday I was called to visit a Roman Catholic family, the mother very ill; they had been visited by the priest, but were not satisfied, and seemed to welcome me. I hear daily many interesting evidences that the work of the Lord is going on through his own mighty power. Some of the greatest drunkards have been abstaining from day to day from their cup of poison that they may attend our meetings, and they appear to be daily receiving deeper impressions. O Lord! grant that these may at last prove saving. I was told of a man last night who, though previously ungodly, had been so much impressed by attending the meetings, that his wife, a godly woman, missing him the other morning at the breakfast hour, found him in the other room on his knees, and again awaking at four in the morning and missing him from his bed, she rising found him in the same room with his Bible in his hand.”

Here follow a number of interesting cases.

*“August* 28th.—On Saturday evening the congregation was large. I preached with very considerable assistance from God on Psalm xxiii., particularly with a reference to the day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, which by the recommenda­tion of the session I was to intimate for Tuesday, the fair-day. On Sabbath forenoon I preached with much of God’s presence and power from John iv. 10, and in the afternoon with still greater liberty from Romans viii. 34. In the forenoon the church was densely crowded, and in the afternoon every corner was filled, so that I could not, without much difficulty, force my way to the pulpit; hundreds were forced to be excluded. I never felt so powerfully as in the afternoon the absolute certainty of the believer’s acceptance as righteous through Jesus; and the people appeared to be much impressed, although I have not yet heard of any new cases of awakening or conversion. In the evening I thought it better not to preach, in order to save my bodily strength for preaching, as I had intimated I would, in the Meadows; but being told that a great crowd was assembled, I ran up to renew the charge on Satan’s hosts, and was told that Mr. Miller[[1]](#footnote-1) a preacher from Edinburgh, who had filled Mr. Lewis’ pulpit during the day, and was come along to be a hearer, would gladly assist me. When however I went up, the multitude had dispersed, and we would have given up thoughts of preaching had not a few pressed us to go on. Mr. Miller accordingly preached from John iii. 8 to a considerable number, which was rapidly increasing when we dismissed. On Monday night Mr. Macalister preached a truly admirable gospel sermon from John xii. 21, after which I intimated the fast for Tuesday, with remarks as I was enabled to make on the subject. We particularly agreed to keep from 10 to 11 in secret prayer by concert. On coming home I found a letter from the magis­trates interdicting the preaching in the Meadows for Tuesday, which did not surprise me, but led me to meditate solemnly on that approaching conflict with the world and Satan in which many will probably be called to die for the name of Jesus. O Lord! may Jesus Christ be magnified in me whether by life or by death! I immediately was led to see the pro­priety of exchanging the Meadows for St. Peter’s Churchyard, and accordingly next day, at the hour appointed, Mr. Baxter, Mr. Miller, and myself, after intimating the will of the magis­trates in the Meadows, walked, accompanied by a great number, from thence to the churchyard, where many were already assembled. Mr. Baxter began the services by praise and prayer, and I was then called after prayer to preach. I had however no enlargement, and after speaking about the usual time under great conscious desertion of the Spirit, I came to a close. Mr. Miller concluded with prayer and praise. In the evening Mr. Miller preached an interesting sermon from r Corinthians x. 31, after whom Mr. Walker from Edinburgh gave us a precious discourse on Psalm xxxix. 15. I think the Spirit of God was much among the people of God on this occasion, filling them with joy and wonder at the free and infinite love of Jehovah. This evening Mr. Walker preached an excellent sermon from 2 Corinthians vii. 5, after which I began to read Robe, where, finding an allusion to the Spirit convincing usually of particular sins, in the first place, I was led to speak in very plain terms of many prevailing sins, and especially of the peculiar sins of the fair-day. I had great liberty from the Spirit of God, I believe, to tell all I knew of the truth on these points, and O! may the Lord greatly bless for his own glory all his own truth which any of his servants have spoken, and pardon through the blood of Jesus all that we have said of our own invention, according to the darkness and folly of carnal reason.

“*September 2d.—*Inthe evening Mr. Macalister preached an excellent sermon on Song of Solomon ii. 16, after which I read Robe’s narrative, and engaged in prayer more than once for the outpouring of the Spirit, which I think we re­ceived more signally perhaps than on any former night, if we except the very first meetings. There were many crying bitterly, one fell down, and when near the end I stopped and sat down in silent prayer for five minutes, that all might bebrought to the point of embracing Jesus. The feeling was intense, though most calm and solemn, and to believers very sweet.

“*September 3.—*Inthe evening Mr. Somerville, who is on his way home from an excursion of three weeks in search of bodily vigour, preached from Genesis iii. 22, &c., a most impres­sive discourse, under which not a few, I am persuaded, were very much revived. After he had concluded and prayed, I read Robe, and felt so desirous to press home the glad tidings and to call down the Holy Ghost by more importunate prayer, that after the blessing had been pronounced I waited with nearly as many as could find seats out of the immense multitude who had been present till a quarter past eleven, partly instructing and exhorting them to an immediate accept­ance of Jesus, and partly praying for the Holy Ghost. There was no visible movement, but I trust some hearts were seen by Jesus moving towards him.

“*September* 4th,1839.—I had this forenoon a call from Mr. Morgan[[2]](#footnote-2) of Belfast, who had heard of the extraordinary move­ment among us when in Ireland, and being in Scotland felt induced to come and see its true character. He and I with Mr. Kirkaldy and Mr. Fairweather[[3]](#footnote-3) the preacher, walked together a long time on the river side, conversing on the subject of the work at Kilsyth and here, after which we came into my lodgings and engaged together in Divine worship, Mr. Morgan officiating with great suitableness to our present state. Before parting he kindly agreed to preach this evening, which he accordingly did at the usual hour. His text was Romans v. 20, 21. He treated the subject with great clear­ness and scriptural accuracy, and added many very useful directions suited to our present circumstances. He also told me of an interesting work of God going on during the last three months in Tipperary under Mr. Trench. He had called on his people to pray specially for the unconverted, and in consequence many were awakened, and already between one and two hundred had been to all appearance savingly con­verted to God. Mr. Morgan is a very interesting and most judicious man, and we wonder at the marvellous goodness of our God in sending him among us. It is, like all his other blessings towards us, to the everlasting praise of the glory of his grace. After he had concluded I read as usual a quota­tion from Robe and made a few remarks upon it. This day I also conversed with J. J., who is in a most interesting state, and wrote home a letter to the people of Kilsyth.”

Here he begins a fresh volume of the Journal, which is inscribed “A Record of the Lord’s Marvellous Doings for me and many other Sinners at Dundee, 1839,” and which consists for the first seventy-four pages of notices of individual cases of awakening and earnest inquiry, all deeply interesting, but too brief and fragmentary to be here presented. This part had been evidently examined in the following year, in connection with the after-history of the individuals referred to, by Mr. M’Cheyne, in whose hand­writing I find appended to many of the names such preg­nant entries as the following: “Holds on her way rejoicing, October, 1840;” “I trust goes on well and steadily, Octo­ber, 1840;” “Admitted her to the communion; she seems a true disciple of Christ, October, 1840;” “Admitted her joyfully to the Lord’s table, April, 1840;” &c.

“*September* 13th*.—*I went at two o’clock to M’Kenzie’s Square and preached to one or two hundred, many of whom, alas! were from other quarters. I spoke from the words, Corinthians xv. 55-57, at first with great want of faith and power, but after I had stopped and prayed, with very con­siderable liberty. When I was just going to begin the last prayer two gentlemen came near, whom I supposed to be one of our physicians and a friend, who had been passing accidentally and been attracted by the sound, but after I had done, one of them, a reverend-looking oldish man, was gone, and the other came up and told me that this was Cesar Malan from Geneva, and that he was Robert Haldane, W.S., Edinburgh. I at once recognized him, having sometimes called on him in the days of my vanity when with Uncle A. in Edinburgh. He told me that Malan was desirous to preach this evening, which I intimated with joy to the people as they were dispersing. How marvellous are the Lord’s ways towards me and his people here! He is sending his servants to us from east and west and north and south! Surely he has some great work of his glorious grace to do among us. All the glory shall be *his!*

“Went to the church, where I met Malan, Mr. Baxter, and Mr. M’Leod, just translated from the Gaelic chapel, Edinburgh. Malan, after solemnly engaging in prayer, went to the pulpit, where he again knelt down and prayed for a minute or two in silence. He then prayed aloud shortly, sang, and then prayed sweetly at greater length. He read the 14th of John, and preached from the 27th verse. His heads were that the peace of Jesus was, 1st, a sovereign peace; 2d, a just peace; 3d, an all-ruling peace; 4th, aglorious peace. His great design appeared to be to press on believers, ‘in the name of Jesus,’ the duty of believing that they *are* saved. His teaching seemed to me to differ from that which is common among our best ministers, *not* in hold­ing that assurance is of the essence of faith, which he seemed plainly not to do; nor in anything at variance with particular redemption, which he seemed also to hold distinctly, speaking always of Jesus dying for ‘his beloved church,’ &c.; but in pressing us very specially to believe in the name of Jesus as the Son of God with adoration and love, and again pressing all who do so to believe that they *are* saved, because God says so, not seeming to notice or to suppose the case of those who do not know whether they believe or not. He illustrated the effect of true faith in the witness of God by the following anecdote: One day when Bonaparte was reviewing some troops, the bridle of his horse slipped from his hand and his horse galloped off. A common soldier ran and laying hold of the bridle brought back the horse to the emperor’s hand, when he addressed him and said, ‘Well done, captain.’ The soldier inquired, ‘Of what regiment, sire?’ ‘Of the guards,’ answered Napoleon, pleased, with his instant belief in his word. The emperor rode off, the soldier threw down his musket, and though he had no epaulets on his shoulders, no sword by his side, nor any other mark of his advancement than the word of the emperor, he ran and joined the staff of commanding officers. They laughed at him and said, ‘What have you to do here?’ He replied, ‘I am captain of the guards.’ They were amazed, but he said, ‘The emperor has said so, and therefore I am.’ In like manner, though the word of God, ‘he that believeth *hath* everlasting life,’ is not confirmed by the feelings of the believer, he ought to take the word of God as true because he has said it, and thus honour him as a God of truth, and rejoice with joy unspeakable. He told us plainly that we ought not to pray for the *beginning of* faith in Jesus in ourselves, though we might pray for its increase, but that we must *believe* and pray *in faith.* He seems to fear all excitement in divine worship, going to the very opposite extreme from the Methodists, saying as he did to me, that this leads men away from the simple testimony of God; and he told me he thought I had far too much when he heard me speak a few words and pray in the afternoon. I cannot, however, agree with him altogether, and I think many facts in regard to the preaching which has been most honoured in this land prove that that which is accompanied with the deepest impression of the truth on the speaker’s soul, and consequently most affects the hearers, is in general most blessed for leading men to flee from the wrath to come.

*“September* 14th.*—. . .* Icalled at the M.’s, and found these sisters rejoicing with solemn delight in the death of their beloved sister with all its remarkable circumstances, which so clearly mark the hand of the gracious Lord who has called her to his kingdom and glory![[4]](#footnote-4) They told me many interesting and affecting facts regarding her last days. She appears to have fed with remarkable relish upon Christ in the word during her last days, and especially the night and morning before her departure. I prayed with them, and felt drawn uncommonly near to the divine presence of our Father in heaven. We entreated earnestly that as the Lord had not allowed her to manifest her love to him in the world, he might show his love to her by making her death the means of quickening many souls. O Lord Jesus, hear this prayer, and answer it abundantly to-morrow, yea, to-night! Coming home at six I found many gathered together praying and singing praises; . . . went in and prayed with the young men and women in the other room. I had much nearness to God with unspeakable composure of soul, which, praise be to the Lord, has never been ruffled during these remarkable days; though many of them were very much affected, and all seemed to realize eternity and the preciousness of Jesus! It was indeed a sweet season. W. L. came and joined the meeting with great joy, which broke in upon him with such power at the meeting last night, that he went home in trans­porting ecstasy. This is a sweet youth. Lord, make him a minister of thy gospel.” . . .

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 joywhich 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 I 9th, “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 hungering 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 11), “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 fulness, 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 fulness and in power. Thus the alternations of feeling, and conse­quent liberty of speech, indicated in the following extracts are only examples of what we find characteristic of his entire ministry:

“In the evening Mr. Lewis of St. David’s preached from John x. 10 in a very interesting and edifying way, after which I engaged in prayer, and found so much enlargement that I continued for more than fifty minutes, and at one time got so near a view of the glory of Emmanuel that I could hardly proceed.

*“Sabbath, October* 6th*,* 1839.—I rose at a quarter past nine, and felt very strong even after the incessant duties of Satur­day, so wonderfully does the Lord refresh me with sweet sleep. In the forenoon I preached with much comfort, though not with much depth of experience or present feeling of the truth, from Romans iii. 20, 21. In the afternoon I preached from 1 John i. 3, last clause, and was much more assisted than in the forenoon, getting a nearer view of Jehovah, and a firmer hold of the truth and also of men’s consciences. The congregation seemed much solemnized; I saw some young converts rejoicing greatly, and during the last Psalm a young woman was so deeply wounded that she could not restrain her feelings, and cried aloud for mercy from the Lord. In the evening I preached in Hiltown church from Job xxxiii. 23, 24. At first, and especially when I should have spoken of the Lord’s terrors from the words ‘going down to the pit,’ I was much deserted, and was forced to be both bare and brief; but when I came to speak of the Lord’s love and mercy I got such an insight into the subject that its glorious grace almost overcame me, the tears were flowing from my eyes, and I was enabled to speak with some degree of tenderness both in expounding the truth and in afterwards applying it to men’s hearts. I could not but thank the Lord for restraining me from too much terror, and giving me on this occasion a message of love, perhaps, to some of the gainsayers. The crowd was most dense, and many hundreds were standing without or obliged to go away. A blessed Sabbath.”

But anon the Beloved had withdrawn Himself and was gone:

*“Friday, October* 10th.—Mr. M’Donald met me along with Mr. Millar at Mr. Thain’s gate, and we drove up together, praying each by himself for the solemn work of the evening. On arriving, we found Mr. Gillies and Mr. Mitchell of Persie Chapel waiting us. With these dear brethren we had much prayer, but I was too little in secret, partly from want of time and partly from feeling the need of mental relaxation after the all-engrossing and incessant duties of the previous days. I went in consequence to the pulpit under a load of self-dependence, and with much unbelief, which combined to intercept or prevent the rich communications of the power of the Spirit. I was, in consequence, in a considerable mea­sure left to myself, and though in the first prayer, after strug­gling long to get through the clouds which shut out my soul from the light of God’s countenance, I did get some sweet and melting glimpses of Emmanuel at the Father’s right hand; yet inpreaching, which I did from Isaiah liv. 5, I was confined almost entirely to exposition of doctrine, and was not allowed to open and search and alarm the consciences of the secure by any hortatory application of the subject.”

Amid these 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 xxxiii. 23;” and “saw not a few in tears,” as he was himself “considerably moved, not so much when preaching, as when expounding briefly Philippians ii. 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* 24th.—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 sec 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 iii. 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[[5]](#footnote-5) 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 ciii., ‘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 viii. 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 Green-side Female School, under the conduct of Miss Haldane and other pious ladies.

“*Edinburgh, November* 1st*.—*Ispent the whole of this forenoon till half-past twelve in private with the Lord, and enjoyed more of his glorious presence humbling and elevating my soul than I have had for some time past when alone (O! for a day every week to spend entirely in the secret of his presence!) At one o’clock I preached for the Senior Female Society in St. George’s Church to a congregation composed of the genteel society of Edinburgh. I was carried *far above* the *conscious* desire of the favour, and the *conscious* fear of man; and in preaching from Isaiah xlii. 21, I felt much more of the presence of the Holy Spirit enlightening my mind in the knowledge of Christ, and melting my heart under a view of his glory and his love, than I have for some time enjoyed in public.

“*November* 4th*.—*Attwo o’clock I set out for St. Andrews in company with James Hamilton, where we arrived at half-past four, and found Mr. Lothian come to dinner to meet me at Dr. Briggs’. At seven o’clock we adjourned to the place of meeting, which was fixed to be the Secession church, holding about five hundred, in consequence of my aunt having been led to understand that I would not be allowed the parish church. This, however, does not seem to have been the case, as Dr. Buist, when he heard it rumoured that he had refused me his church, wrote to aunt, saying that it was a mistake, and that he would give it if desired. The church was crowded by the élite of the town, including Sir David Brew­ster, &c. Mr. Taylor.[[6]](#footnote-6), the minister, began with singing and prayer, and after Mr. Lothian had said a few words, I entered the Secession pulpit and preached after prayer and praise to a most attentive and solemnized audience from Isaiah xlii. 21. A number of individuals remained to converse about the state of their souls, most of them deeply affected, and some of them only for the first time.

“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 to about fifty or sixty people from John iv. 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 camest 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:

“Had a letter from dear Mr. M’Cheyne, written in a spirit of joy for the work of the Lord, which shows a great triumph, I think, of divine grace over the natural jealousy of the human heart. O Lord, I would praise thee with all my heart for this, and would entreat that when thy dear servant the pastor of this people is restored to them, he may be honoured a hundredfold more in winning souls to Christ than I have been in thine infinite and sovereign mercy. Amen.

*“Sabbath, November* 17th*,* 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 xv.) 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 for ever in the crown of Emmanuel the Redeemer! ‘Glory to the Lamb that was slain!’

*“November* 18th.—Ispent the greater part of this day alone, excluding all visitors, with the exception of the M.’s of Roseangle, with the B.’s, and Miss H., who called and conversed with me together about the work of God. I wished retirement, partly to rest and partly to write to Mr. M’Cheyne and a number of other persons in different places, who must be considering me the most careless correspondent that could be imagined. I was tired, however, and was obliged to go out a considerable part of the day, so that I only got five pages written to Mr. M’Cheyne. 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 inglory, throughout the endless ages of eternity.

*“Friday, November* 23d, 1839.—I got safely home at four o’clock (from Dunfermline), and after dining with Mr. Thorns atfive 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 xxiii. 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.”

1. The late Rev. Patrick L Miller, afterwards of Wallacetown (Dundee) and Newcastle. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Now Dr. Morgan. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Afterwards minister of Free Church, Botriphnie, Banffshire. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Elizabeth Miller, who died very suddenly, but in the perfect peace of God, while conversing with him in the vestry of St. Peter’s Church, September 13, 1839. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Of Milton Church, Glasgow, now of New College, Edinburgh. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The Rev. James Taylor, D.D., now of Glasgow. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)