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THE CRISES OF CHRISTIANITY AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

*As oppositions of contraries lend beauty to language,
so the beauty of the course of the world is achieved
by the opposition of contraries, arranged as it were by an*

Christianity is at a crisis. This does not mean that she is decreasing numerically. Over 570,000,000² persons avow themselves Christians. Neither does it mean that she is calling in her outposts. Every considerable country is being occupied by the missionaries of the cross. Nor yet does it mean that at home she is losing interest in social progress. As never before sociology is her study and philanthropy her passion.

What is meant is that while developing her philanthropy, she is detaching it from the church and even from Christ. A constantly growing number of Christians are advocating and are themselves supporting "welfare work" which is intentionally and often ostentatiously non-religious. What could be more suggestive, more alarming? The bouquet of roses is both beautiful and fragrant. In a day or two, however, its perfume will have gone and its beauty will have departed. It must be so with flowers that have been picked from the living bush. Can it be otherwise with social or charitable movements which have separated themselves from Christ, even if they have not in terms repudiated him? At best they are but flowers that have been picked.

Again, the crisis of Christianity appears in this, that while her missionaries are multiplying, their gospel, it would seem, here and there, little by little, is being depleted and emasculated. Such is the warning that has been coming to us

¹ *City of God*, I. xi. c. 18.

THOMAS CHALMERS

"The most marked mathematical forehead I ever met with—being far wider across the eye-brows than either Mr. Playfair's or Mr. Leslie's." So thought Scott's biographer, John Gibson Lockhart, as he sat one Sabbath in the Tron Church observing the countenance of the great preacher. Chalmers himself, when once asked by a friend what he thought himself fitted by nature to be, replied earnestly, "a military engineer." It would be interesting to run through the list of celebrated mathematicians and discover how many of them have been also great defenders of the Christian faith. I think of Newton, the friend of the stars and the expositor of the Apocalypse, and Blaise Pascal, the author of the "Thoughts" and still rated as one of the twelve great mathematicians. Most of the authorities on Chalmers agree in saying that had his whole strength and energy been devoted to mathematics he would have been a great genius in that field. Certainly his astronomical sermons, and, for that matter, nearly all of his printed discourses, show a range of imagination that could count the number of the stars. That mathematical sense for distance, for the spatial tracts of the universe, is clearly evident in his presentation of the Gospel and gives to his sermons not so much the tone of depth as of height. When one puts down a sermon by Chalmers one feels that Christianity is a big thing. "The exceeding greatness of His love toward us" is as marked a quality in the preaching and writing of Chalmers as it is in that of St. Paul.

This predilection for mathematics appeared when Chalmers was a student at St. Andrew's University where mathematics and *Edwards on the Will* were his favorite studies. It is not strange then that it was the greatness of God as the Creator and Upholder of the universe, rather than as the Author of eternal salvation, that engaged the enthusiasm of the young student. Years after he had left

the University we find this entry in his journal: "O that He possessed me with a sense of His holiness and love, as He at one time possessed me with a sense of His greatness and His power and His pervading energy! I remember when a student of divinity, I spent nearly a twelvemonth in a sort of mental elysium, and the one idea which ministered to my soul all its rapture was the magnificence of the godhead and the universal subordination of all things to one great purpose for which He evolved and was supporting creation." An amusing record of the survival of his penchant for mathematics is seen in the fact that when the new manse was built at Kilmany he laid out the grounds in geometrical figures. In his journal we find him confessing to the sin of vehemence against his horse as he was riding one day from Kilmany to Kirkaldy. The horse threw him so often that his mathematical bent began to assert itself and he fell to estimating the relative length of intervals between each fall and calculated how far a dozen falls could carry him. But the tenth fall was so severe that he abandoned the project and told his servant to dispose of the beast as best he could, but to conceal none of his faults. A horse with such a record found no buyers, and Chalmers finally traded him to a neighbour for a volume of Baxter. Whether it was the *Saints' Rest* is not related.

About the year 1790, if you and I had chanced to wander around the schoolhouse of the parish of Anstruther (spoken Anster) on the southeast coast of the country of Fife, we might have come upon a big-eyed lad of ten sitting in the coal hole and studying in its dirt and gloom the lessons for the neglect of which he had been banished to that place of punishment. Not long, however, will he have to stay in that pit, for although he often neglects his lessons he can get them very quickly and very thoroughly when once he applies himself to them. The lad in the coal hole is none other than Thomas Chalmers. His great grandfather was the minister of Elie, but his father and grandfather were ship owners and general merchants in the village of An-

struther. He was born on March 17th, 1780, being the sixth of fourteen children. At two years of age he was committed into the hands of a nurse whose deceitfulness and cruelty long haunted him. He was but three years old when he was glad to escape the cruelty of his nurse by being sent to the parish school. There he had for his master a Mr. Bryce, a poor teacher but an efficient flogger. His sight was beginning to fail when Thomas Chalmers appeared as a pupil, but his thirst for flogging survived the loss of vision. Stealthily would he creep behind a row of his victims listening for a sound that merited the rod. But the lads had arranged a system of signals whereby the boy who sat across from the threatened quarter would warn the one over whom the sightless tyrant had raised his rod, whereupon he would slip out of his seat and the blow fell on the hard and unflinching desk. He had for an assistant and successor a Mr. Daniel Ramsay who was as easy as his predecessor had been severe. Discharged from his post for an unfortunate act he was plunged in poverty. Dr. Chalmers remembered him and from time to time contributed to his support until his dying day. In later years this schoolmaster was wont to boast of two things; first, that he had been the teacher of Thomas Chalmers, and second, that he had received a letter from the Duke of Wellington in answer to one of his own in which he had said that the way to cure the ills of Ireland was "to take the taws in the tae hand and Testament in the tither."

At an early age Chalmers showed a marked predilection for the pulpit, for when he was only three he was found one evening walking up and down in the nursery and repeating the words of David's lament, "O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!" And as a child he would often get into a chair and preach to his brothers and sisters, taking for a text, "Let brotherly love continue." At twelve years he was matriculated at St. Andrews' University. There in that venerable University whose walls are washed by the

blue waters of the German Ocean and whose town is filled with the memories of John Knox, Wishart and Hamilton, the future king of the Scottish pulpit commenced his intellectual preparation. For the first two years most of his time was spent playing golf on the famous dunes, football and handball, at which last game he was unusually proficient, being left-handed. His third term at St. Andrews marked his mental awakening. He began to take that interest in mathematics which never quite forsook him. At the age of fifteen he was registered as a student in divinity and was soon engrossed in the study of *Edwards on the Will*.

Even as a college youth he gave promise of his future power. It was a custom for the students in theology to lead the public prayers in the University hall and the people of the town would flock to the hall to hear the prayers of this lad of sixteen. During these years he wrote a composition on the enthusiasm of Christianity. In November, 1842, more than forty years after the eulogy was penned, Chalmers and four hundred ministers of the Established Church were met in convocation at Edinburgh to deliberate on the disruption which was to cost them their homes and their living. It was a great day in the history of the Church in Scotland, indeed, of the whole Church, and when their leader sought to stir them to an enthusiasm equal to the occasion, he turned to that essay of college days and pronounced it with an effect that was overwhelming.

In 1798 Chalmers became a private tutor in a gentleman's family. In this work he was altogether unhappy. He was subjected to many affronts, and when he showed his independence, was charged by his employer with pride. Chalmers answered him thus:—"There are two kinds of pride, sir. There is the pride which lords it over inferiors, and there is that pride which rejoices in repressing the insolence of superiors. The first I have none of—the second I glory in." At the age of nineteen he was licensed by the Presbytery of St. Andrews. It was contrary to the rule to license

before the age of twenty-one, but a ministerial friend pleaded for him as a "lad o' pregnant parts." His first sermon was preached in a chapel near Liverpool. His brother James was one of the auditors and thus spoke of the sermon to his father. "His mode of delivery is expressive, his language beautiful, and his arguments very forcible and strong. It is the opinion of those who pretend to be judges, that he will shine in the pulpit, but as yet he is rather awkward in his appearance."

The first two winters after leaving St. Andrews were spent in Edinburgh where he took a particular interest in chemistry. His first stated preaching was as an assistant in the winter of 1801-2 in the parish of Cavers, on the banks of the Teviot. Few records remain of his work and experiences there, but the conclusion of his farewell sermon has these sentences on the satisfactions of religion: "You are in a world of care and suffering. . . . Hold fast to religion. It will console you amid the ills and perplexities of life; it will be unto you as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land; it will bless you in the evening of your days, and conduct you to the glories of an eternal world." In the autumn of 1804 he received the appointment as minister of the Parish of Kilmany, and at the same time was appointed to the Mathematical Assistantship at St. Andrews.

The traveler crossing the great bridge over the Firth of Tay into Dundee will be able to see on a clear day a sheltered and fertile valley not far from the Fifeshire coast. Into this valley Chalmers went as minister of the parish of Kilmany. It was an agricultural community and numbered about 150 families. Here Chalmers was ordained in May, 1803. At this time mathematics and not theology was his ruling passion, and his great success as a lecturer in mathematics at St. Andrews, where he was assistant professor, like all other success, brought upon him the enmity and jealousy of the professors and authorities at the University. He was summarily dismissed, and on the ground of incompetence. No quarrels are so violent as those among men of

abiliy in university circles. To clear his name from the reproach with which it had been impeached, Chalmers for a time gave lectures independently at St. Andrews to crowded classes. His enthusiasm for mathematics and for chemistry was unbounded. He gave popular demonstrations in chemistry for the benefit of his parishioners. On one occasion when he was explaining the power of bleaching liquids, one wife of Kilmany said to another: "Our minister is naething short o' a warlock; he was teaching the folk to clean claes without soap." "Aye woman," was the reply, "I wish he wad teach me to mak parritch without meal!"

During these first years of his ministry at Kilmany, Europe was in the midst of a mighty conflict with France and Napoleonism. At the very outset of his career, Chalmers saw in Bonaparte the destroyer of the liberties of Europe. The dread of invasion hung over Britain and the pulpits of the land rang with martial and patriotic exhortations. But few sermons could have been more stirring than that delivered at Kilmany by Chalmers and which concluded with the following sentences: "May that day when Bonaparte ascends the throne of Britain be the last of my existence; may I be the first to ascend the scaffold he erects to extinguish the worth and spirit of the country; may my blood mingle with the blood of patriots; and may I die at the foot of that altar on which British independence is to be the victim." There was the ardent spirit of the young patriot. But when we read this let us remember that one of the noblest addresses ever made in behalf of peace and against war was the sermon preached by Chalmers upon the conclusion of peace with France. How like the fears and hopes of men in the world-war were the fears and hopes of men then, when Britain was menaced not by German invasion but by the restless ambition of Napoleon. What better description of the relief and triumph of our own great day than those words of Chalmers when Napoleon fell: "The whole of Europe is now at rest from the tempest which convulsed it—and a solemn treaty with all its adjust-

ments and all its guarantees, promises a firm perpetuity to the repose of the world. We have long fought for a happier order of things, and at length we have established it. That gigantic ambition which stalked in triumph over the oldest and firmest of our monarches, is now laid—and can never again burst forth from the confinement of its prisonhold to waken a new uproar and to send forth new troubles over the face of a desolated world.”

The quiet of his retreat at Kilmany was broken by a visit to London where Chalmers heard and met many of the notable men of the day. Soon after his return he published his first book, a treatise on economics, well received by students of that science. It will by this time be apparent to all who read these lines that the ministerial duties of Chalmers were his last consideration. They were discharged perfunctorily, and it was not unnatural that his ministry had excited little note or comment. His thirst for scientific eminence and literary fame put all other work and occupation into the background. But Chalmers was on the border of a great change. “God”, said the New England philosopher, “enters every man’s life by a private door.” He entered Chalmers’ life by the door of sickness. His Christianity was light and superficial and his theology was nothing more than a proclamation of morality. This enthusiast in science and this lecturer in mathematics and chemistry and this writer of books on economics was 29 years of age, when, in the summer of 1809, he was stricken with a grave illness. For four months he never left his room and for almost a year was absent from his pulpit. He found that his ethical view of Christianity could not stand the scrutiny of the sick room and left him but a broken sword with which to ward off the blow of death. Feeling that he was soon to die, the unseen and the eternal began to displace the shadows which he had been pursuing. He resolved if spared to change his whole manner of life, and to devote all his energy and all his talent to the service of God and to train himself for eternity. At this time he began to write the

journal which must rank with the classics of devotion as a masterpiece of self-scrutiny and self-dedication, for it marks the course his troubled soul took in passing from the darkness of self-righteousness and vague morality into that light which shines for him who at length plants his feet upon the Rock of Ages. Let me quote his son-in-law and his biographer, Hanna: "Looking through the dimness we have been able only to discern a wasted invalid, lying with a volume of Lardner or Voltaire or Pascal spread out before him, rising to pace his room with weak and tottering step; wearied with the brief effort, reclining again, getting one or another of his sisters to read to him, or sending over to Galdry for Mr. Smith to wile away an evening hour by parish gossip, or by engaging in a game of cards. But there are hours of stillness and seclusion in that chamber, when the tread of the last enemy is heard at the door, and when the spirit, stirred up at the sound, revolves and revolves its eternal destinies. Into these no light can guide us; we can but wait and watch for the precious fruit they are afterwards to bear." Suffice it to say that out of that sickness Chalmers came forth with the oil of consecration upon his mighty brow. As Lord Roseberry phrased it in the address delivered in Glasgow upon the one hundredth anniversary of his settlement in that city, "An illness lifted him into a higher sphere, and he soared aloft. There he remained to the end in communion with the Divine." We find this entry in his diary for May the sixth: "Preached this Sunday, after a retirement of thirty-one weeks from all public duty, and have not felt myself the worse of it. Gracious God! reveal to me the importance and the extent of my duties, and may the glory and interest of religion be all my exertion and all my joy."

His life henceforth is an answer to that prayer, and we behold a great and commanding personality, the sole object of whose exertion and interest is the glory of religion. He who had given all his time to chemistry and mathematics and economics, now, with deep contrition for the past neg-

lect, began the systematic study of the Bible. One of his most frequent visitors was a neighbor, John Bonthron. Being admitted to easy familiarity with Chalmers, he once said to him, "I find you aye busy, sir, with one thing or another, but come when I may, I never find you at your studies for the Sabbath." "Oh, an hour or two on the Saturday evening is quite enough for that" was the minister's reply. But now all was different, and always on entering the manse, John found the minister poring over the pages of the Bible. The contrast was so great that he said to him on one occasion, "I never come in now, sir, but I find you aye at your Bible." "All too little, John, all too little" was the significant reply.

The change was soon to show itself in the Kilmany church. His sermons now burned with a zeal that had hitherto been absent. The greatness and the glory of the Atonement seized upon his soul and that enthusiasm quickly communicated itself to others. The scanty congregation was multiplied until the church could not contain them and the fame of this fiery evangelist began to spread far and wide. What the burden of his preaching was, this anecdote will describe: Two young men who had heard him preach one day met as the congregation dispersed. The one said to his friend, "Did you feel anything particularly in church today? I never felt myself to be a lost sinner till today, when I was listening to that sermon." "It is very strange," said his companion, "it was just the same with me." It was proposed that they kneel in prayer beneath the shade of a nearby tree. There they poured out their souls to God. Both dated their conversion from that day. For years they kept up the practice, kneeling together each day in that trysting place of the soul.

The change that came over the preaching of Chalmers is best described for us by Chalmers himself in one of the farewell addresses when he was leaving Kilmany: "I cannot but record the effect of an actual though undesigned experiment which I prosecuted for upwards of twelve years

among you. For the greater part of that time I could expatiate on the manners of dishonesty, on the villainy of falsehood, on the despicable arts of calumny; in a word, upon all those deformities of character which awake the natural indignation of the human heart against the pests and the disturbers of human society. It never occurred to me that all this might have been done, and yet every soul of every hearer might have remained in full alienation from God. . . . But the interesting fact is, that during the whole of that period in which I made no attempt against the natural enmity of the mind to God, I certainly did press the reformations of honour and truth and integrity among my people, but I never once heard of any such reformations having been effected amongst them. I am not sensible that all the vehemence with which I urged the virtues and the proprieties of social life had the weight of a feather on the moral habits of my parishioners. And it was not till I got impressed by the utter alienation of the heart in all its desires and affections from God; it was not till reconciliation to Him became the distinct and the prominent object of my ministerial exertions; it was not till the free offer of forgiveness through the blood of Christ was urged upon their acceptance, and the Holy Spirit given through the channel of Christ's mediation to all who ask Him was set before them as the unceasing object of their dependence and their prayers, that I ever heard of any of those subordinate reformations which I aforesaid made the earnest and the zealous, but, I am afraid, at the same time, the ultimate object of my earlier ministrations. You have taught me to preach Christ is the only effective way of preaching morality in all its branches; and out of your humble cottages have I gathered a lesson which I pray God that I may be enabled to carry, with all its simplicity, into a wider theatre."

Kilmany was too small a station for such a burning and a shining light, and in November, 1814, after twelve years of service in that peaceful valley, Chalmers was called to

the ministry of the Tron Church in Glasgow. Evangelical religion was at low ebb when Chalmers appeared in the pulpit of the Tron Church, and infidelity and deism wore a thin disguise. The great doctrines of Christianity were openly scorned and repudiated by the learned and influential. The coming of Chalmers changed everything. His great intellect and his burning enthusiasm brought multitudes back to an appreciation of the truth of the Gospel, and even those whose heart remained unmoved were compelled to confess that the doctrines which Chalmers proclaimed were indeed the doctrines of the Bible and of Christianity.

One of the events of his ministry in the Tron Church was the delivery of the celebrated *Astronomical Discourses*. The purpose of these discourses was to answer the argument brought against Christianity on the ground of the vastness and variety of the worlds which lie scattered in the immeasurable fields of space. This planet was held to be too mean a stage for the sublime tragedy of redemption. On every Thursday when these sermons were delivered, a great concourse of people could be seen pouring down the street that led to the black and fortress-like church. Banks, coffee rooms, clubs and drawing rooms were forsaken, and all the interests of the world receded into the background as for two hours the great preacher led his hearers through the vastness of the universe, overwhelming them with the pettiness of this terrestrial globe and the physical insignificance of man, but only to thrill them with his glowing periods on the condescension of the Almighty Creator and Redeemer in coming to die for man, and to send them back to their daily tasks with the deep conviction that the chief interests of life are those interests which human salvation involves, and with the words of the Psalmist ringing in their ears, "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels; Thou has crowned him with glory and honour." In 1817 these sermons were given to the press. In ten weeks 6000 copies had been sold; within a year 20,000 copies were in circulation. Scott's

Tales of a Landlord were issued at the same time and for almost a whole year the *Astronomical Discourses* of Chalmers kept abreast with the tales of the greatest of Scottish novelists. These sermons made Chalmers' name and fame secure throughout Britain. Even Hazlit wrote of them, "These sermons ran like wildfire throughout the country, were the darlings of the watering places, were laid on the windows of inns, and were to be met with in all the places of public resort." Perhaps in those sermons Chalmers dealt with doubts that had never suggested themselves to the majority of his hearers. After all, the great doubts rise out of the pains of personal experience and not from a survey of the order of this or other worlds.

An incident in Chalmers' Glasgow ministry was his association with the gifted but unfortunate Edward Irving, the friend of Carlyle and the lover of his young pupil, Jane Welsh. After seven years of teaching, Irving had been licensed at Kircaldy and came up to Edinburgh to pursue his studies. The long course of apprenticeship was over, the young licentiate stood ready for his task, but no door was open. Fully prepared to preach, yet nobody wanted to hear him. Ready to go into the vineyard, but no man had hired him. He was beginning to droop in spirits, as well he might have done, when he was requested to preach for Dr. Andrew Thomson in St. George's Church, Edinburgh. In the congregation, by careful arrangement, sat the great Dr. Chalmers just then launching out in the experiment of St. John's parish in Glasgow, and looking for an assistant. Irving's hopes beat high and then sank as the weeks passed and still no intimation from Chalmers. Despairing of any opening in Scotland, he resolved upon some apostolic missionary tour in Persia, going out with no connections or backing, but as the first disciples went forth to preach Christ. At Greenock he intended to take a boat that would go south to the Solway, but once on board, found it starting for the Highlands. He leaped from the deck, and in a strange caprice, boarded the first boat that he saw, one sail-

ing for Belfast. In Ireland he was forthwith arrested as a suspicious character, but was rescued from jail by the Presbyterian minister, Dr. Hanna, father of the biographer of Chalmers. In heedless gloom, he wandered about over the north of Ireland, once standing behind a pillar in St. Patrick's during high mass, and a poor woman plucking him by the coat-tails till he was forced to kneel. At length he was handed a letter from his father-in-law with an enclosure from Dr. Chalmers not one word of which he had been able to decipher. This was an invitation to become Chalmers' helper at St. John's.

This call was the dawning of the day for him. He did little preaching, and when it was announced that he was to preach, he would meet groups of the kirk folk coming away from the door, saying one to the other, "It's no himself the day." This must have been mortifying to Irving, with the consciousness of his great still slumbering parts. But his chief work was among the poor, then in great destitution and on the verge of revolt and insurrection. He carried with him a priestly air that was new for Scotland and saluted every cottage he entered with the words, "Peace be with you!" He had been there only two years when he was invited to become minister of the Scotch Chapel in Hatton Garden, London, a poor, brokendown church with a dispirited band of worshippers. He gladly accepted, and from the very first seems to have felt that he had come to his own. To Jane Welsh, whom he addresses as "my lovely pupil", he writes: "I have become all at once full of hope and activity. My intellect long unused to expand itself, is now awakening again, and truth is revealing itself to my mind. And perhaps the dreams and longings of my fair correspondent may yet be realized."

Within a year after his settlement in that obscure parish, and among that handful of people, Irving had reached the pinnacle of fame and renown. The London crowds fought for admission to his church, and orators, poets, philosophers, statesmen, soldiers, scientists, and members of the nobility

were his constant hearers. It is generally said that Mr Canning, who was responsible for the Monroe doctrine among other things, was responsible for making Irving the vogue in London. Sir James Mackintosh reported to Canning a phrase from the prayer of Irving the previous Sunday, when he prayed for some bereaved children as "thrown upon the fatherhood of God." The phrase took the ear of Canning, who declared that he must hear this man. He went the next Sunday and was captivated. In the Commons that week, some bill about the Church of England was up, and a member supporting it spoke of the inevitable connection between talent and proper reward. Canning said that, on the contrary, in an obscure chapel, he had heard a poorly compensated minister of the Caledonian church preach the most eloquent sermon he had ever listened to. If Canning said it, it must be so; and with that, the great and notable began to frequent his church. Other men have had mobs hanging about their church doors, but here was a mob of the aristocrats of the British Empire.

Coleridge, with whom Irving had become intimate, and whose "moonshine phantasm" he drank in eagerly, was an occasional hearer, and this is his testimony: "Irving the Scotch preacher is certainly the greatest orator I ever heard, (N.B. I make and mean the same distinction between oratory and eloquence as between the mouth plus the wind-pipe and the brain plus the heart), he is however a man of great simplicity, of overflowing affections and enthusiastically in earnest." Coleridge and Canning are only striking representatives of a vast number of distinguished witnesses.

De Quincey in his *London Reminiscences* gives us his opinion of Irving, "He had a fervid nature, a most energetic will and aspirations after something greater than he could find in life." Then he bears witness to his power as a preacher and an orator. "He was unquestionably, by many, many degrees, the greatest orator of our times. Of him, indeed, more than of any man whom I have yet seen throughout my whole experience, it might be said, with

truth and with emphasis, that he was a Boanerges, a son of thunder; and, in a sense, even awful and unhappy for himself, it might be affirmed that he had a demon within himself. He was the only man of our times who realized one's idea of Paul preaching at Athens, or defending himself before Agrippa. Terrific meteor! unhappy son of fervid genius, which mastered thyself even more than the rapt audiences which at times hung upon thy lips! Were the cup of life once again presented to thy lips, wouldst thou drink again, or wouldst thou not rather turn away from it with shuddering abomination? Sleep, Boanerges! and let the memory of man settle upon thy colossal powers, without a thought of those intellectual aberrations which were more powerful for thy ruin than for the misleading of others!"

The sad story of Irving's eclipse, his plunging into the quagmire of chiliasm and his listening to the "tongues", his expulsion from the Church of Scotland, and his untimely death belongs elsewhere. Those who are interested will find a sympathetic sketch in Carlyle's *Reminiscences*. Seldom if ever have two such sons of genius stood together in the same pulpit. It is strange that even under the shadow of Dr. Chalmers the great abilities of Irving should have occasioned no comment in Glasgow. The truth is the Scotch never took to Irving and only flocked to hear him when he had been discovered elsewhere and was world-famous. He had "ower muckle gran'ner," the folk said, and his "chaotic splendours" were too much for them. The sagacious comment of Chalmers after hearing one of Irving's prophetic discourses is good advice for some of our ministers today,—“It were surely better, if instead of addressing himself to the faculty of curiosity, he dealt with the faculty of conscience.” Yet Chalmers was not blind to the beauty of much that Irving said, for after speaking of his obscurity and extravagance, he adds, “but now and then gleams of exquisite beauty.” Unquestionably Irving was the greater genius of the two, but they were both Sons of Thunder, Irving, however, speaking in grander and

more prophetlike tones. Carlyle's comparison of the two is worth reading: "Irving's discourses were far more opulent in ingenious thought than Chalmers', which indeed were usually the triumphant onrush of one idea with its satellites and supporters. But Irving wanted in definite head and backbone, so that on arriving you might see clearly where and how. That was mostly a defect one felt in traversing those grand forest avenues of his with their multifarious outlooks to right and left. Sermons an hour long or more. It flowed along, not as a swift flowing river, but as a broad, deep and meandering one. Sometime it left on you the impression almost of a fine noteworthy lake. Noteworthy always; nobody could mistake it for the discourse or other than an uncommon man."

Dr. Chalmers' Glasgow ministry was marked by his great experiment in Christian sociology. From the very first he had emphasized the parish idea of the ministry and considered himself the minister of the people living within the bounds of the parish where his church was located. Though he had many hearers and supporters beyond the bounds of his parish, his pastoral services were to those within the parish. He viewed with alarm the increasing poverty and degradation of the great cities and felt that the only power which could check it was the application of the Christian religion, and in the transforming power of that religion he had a magnificent faith. In 1819 he removed from the Tron Church to the new church of St. John's, built for him by the City Council and where he was to have freedom in carrying out some of his plans of parochial organization. His new parish had, by his own census, about 10,000 souls, one-third of whom were unconnected with any church. For the greater part they were weavers, laborers and factory workers. To the Christianization of this portion of Glasgow's population, Chalmers gave himself with unbounded energy and enthusiasm. The parish was divided into twenty-five districts and he appointed an elder and a deacon to each district to take the oversight of the

spiritual and temporal necessities to those under their charge. The fund for the poor raised by legal assessment was relinquished and the Session of St. John's Church was permitted to retain the church-door collections, which hitherto had been turned over to the General Session, a body composed of all the ministers and elders of the city, and administered by them according to the needs of the several parishes. Chalmers was now left to administer these collections taken in his parish for the needs of the parish. Lest it should be said by any that his scheme worked because of his personal popularity and the offerings received from the large congregations that waited upon his preaching, he set apart for the poor fund only the offering taken at the third service in the evening, when the poorest of the parish were in attendance. Even with this small sum, less than three hundred pounds, he was able to care for the indigent. The great success of his method was due to the fact of careful supervision and painstaking investigation. The public assessment system had encouraged improvidence, drunkenness and idleness, but Chalmers' agents were instructed to show no favor to those whose condition was the result of their own folly or perversity. The result was that all the poor were cared for, but the cost of it, instead of being fourteen hundred pounds, as it was under the old system, was only two hundred and eighty pounds. For a number of years after Chalmers left Glasgow, the system worked with an equal success, and was finally abandoned only because of the unfavorable attitude of the city authorities which compelled the parish of St. John's, although it had relinquished all aid from the legal assessment fund, to contribute to that fund.

Dr. Chalmers liked to refer to the "prosperous management of human nature" as one of the great enterprises of the human spirit. His experience for four years in the parish of St. John's is a noble chapter in the history of the management of human nature. Together with the care for the poor went the instruction of the ignorant. Two

schoolhouses were built and more than 700 children received instruction for a nominal fee of 2 shillings per quarter. In each district Sabbath Schools were instituted and monthly meetings of the teachers, both of the Sabbath School and the secular, were held. Dr. Chalmers generally attended these meetings, giving the whole influence of his personality to the carrying out of his favorite scheme. The vision that he had for the masses of the working people is reflected in these sentences taken from the address delivered by Dr. Chalmers at the opening of the first of the parish schools: "There will, I prophesy, if the world is to stand, there will be a great amelioration in the life of general humanity. The labouring classes are destined to attain a far more secure place of comfort and independence in the commonwealth than they have ever yet occupied, and this will come about not as the fruit of any victory gained on the arena of angry and discordant politics, but far more surely as the result of growing virtue and intelligence and worth among the labourers themselves. I trust the time is coming when humble life will be dignified both by leisure and by literature, when the work of the day will be succeeded by the reading and the improving conversations of the evening, when many a lettered sage as well as many an enlightened Christian will be met with even in the lowest walks of society, when the elements of science and philanthropy and high scholarship will so ripen throughout the general mind of the country as to exalt it prodigiously above the level of its present character and acquirements."

There was no little surprise, when, after eight years in Glasgow, Dr. Chalmers gave up his pulpit and relinquished his cherished scheme of social amelioration to accept the post of Professor of Moral Philosophy at St. Andrews. He had been working at high pressure and was probably glad of a breathing spell. His own vast popularity as a preacher had begun to wear on him. At least so we judge from the following passage in which he urges his assistant in the work at St. John's to "earn if not a proud, at least a

peaceful popularity—the popularity of the heart—the only popularity that is worth aspiring after—the popularity that is won in the bosom of families and at the side of death-beds,” and then adds these significant sentences: “There is another, a high and a far sounding popularity, which is indeed a most worthless article, felt by all who have it most to be greatly more oppressive than gratifying—a popularity of stare, and pressure, and animal heat, and a whole tribe of other annoyances which it brings around the person of its unfortunate victim—a popularity which rifles home of its sweets, and by elevating man above all his fellows places him in a region of desolation, where the intimacies of human fellowship are unfelt, and where he stands a conspicuous mark for the shafts of malice, and envy, and detraction—a popularity which, with its head among storms and its feet on the treacherous quicksands, has nothing to lull the agonies of its tottering existence but the hosannahs of a drivelling generation.”

St. Andrews was the first place in Scotland where the lamp of the Gospel had been lighted. If you have visited the town you have seen the prison of John Knox and the grim column of St. Regulus which stands there as a monument to primitive Christianity and against which the storms of ten centuries have beaten in vain. There Hamilton had perished in the flames, there Wishart won the martyr's crown, and there Knox had first preached the Gospel, and off its shores toiled in the French galleys. Amid memories like this Chalmers labored mightily for the Kingdom of God. He was there only a few years, but in that brief period there went out from St. Andrews some of the great missionaries of the church, Nesbit, Mackay, Ewart and Alexander Duff.

From St. Andrews, Chalmers was called to the most honorable and most important office in the gift of the Church of Scotland, the Professorship of Divinity at Edinburgh University. He was in the midst of these high tasks when the great crisis arose which ended in disruption. The

division was not one of doctrine, but of polity. There had long been growing unrest in the Church of Scotland over the attitude of the Courts towards the Church. Men who were unacceptable to the churches would be presented for the living, and when the Presbytery refused to install such a minister, the Courts ruled that the livings depended upon the Church's obedience to the judicial mandates. The crisis came in the famous Strathbogie case when seven ministers had been suspended by the Assembly for installing against the orders of the Assembly a minister for whom only one person out of a parish of three thousand had voted. The Courts ruled that these seven ministers alone constituted the true Presbytery of Strathbogie and followed this ruling with an interdict which forbade any other minister to preach the Gospel, not only in the churches and school-houses, but on any spot within the bounds of several parishes. Chalmers, M'Cheyne and Guthrie hastened to disobey the interdict. May, 1843, was a great day in the history of the Scottish Church. Four hundred ministers, renouncing their churches and their livings, withdrew from the Assembly, led by Chalmers, and walking three abreast, marched down the streets of Edinburgh to form the Assembly of the Free Church. Lord Jeffrey was sitting reading in his room when the news was brought to him that more than four hundred ministers had gone out. He flung aside the book he was reading and leaping to his feet exclaimed, "I'm proud of my country; there is not another country upon earth where such a deed could have been done." With that great deed the name of Thomas Chalmers will be forever associated, and his was the eloquent voice that rang out in Presbyteries and Assemblies, in town halls and in lonely highland glens, calling upon the people to support and maintain the new establishment.

I have already "adverted," if I may use a Chalmerian verb, to the fact that in his college days at St. Andrews, Chalmers had composed an oration, *Christian Enthusiasm*, and that it was a part of this college oration that he re-

produced when 40 years later, he stood up before 400 evangelical ministers deliberating about disruption and thrilled them with his own enthusiasm. The following is an excerpt from that speech: "Enthusiasm is a virtue rarely produced in a state of calm and unruffled repose. It flourishes in adversity. It kindles in the hour of danger, and rises to deeds of renown. The terrors of persecution only serve to awaken the energy of its purposes. It swells in the pride of integrity, and, great in the purity of its cause, it can scatter defiance amid a host of enemies. The magnanimity of the primitive Christians is beyond example in history. It could withstand the ruin of interests, the desertion of friends, the triumphant joy of enemies, the storms of popular indignation, the fury of a vindictive priesthood, the torments of martyrdom. The faith of immortality emboldened their profession of the gospel, and armed them with contempt of death."

This eminent scientist, this political economist, this ecclesiastical statesman, this superb preacher was lodged in a personality of delightful simplicity and intense humanity. He, who could in his astronomical sermons, invade the solar spaces and tell the number of the stars, could also heal the broken hearted, and the same personality which poured forth its matchless periods over the greatness of God as seen in creation and in redemption, could also kneel in a lonely cottar's hut and mingle his tears with the father and mother over the bed of a dying infant. The same man, who carried on a correspondence with Peel and the political leaders of his day with regard to social conditions, was no cloistered economist, but went himself among the poor and knew their downsitting and their uprising. He won not only the admiration but the affection of men, and when he was buried, his old beadle at St. John's in Glasgow walked all the way to Edinburgh to be present at the funeral.

He was a great traveler and lived to fulfill his ambition of ascending the tower of every cathedral in England. He thus describes a hostess at one of the houses where he

stopped: "She never asks the same thing twice of me, but she makes up for this by the exceeding multitude of these things, such as, if my tea is right, if I take cream, if I am fond of little or much cream, if I would take butter to my cake, when I take a loaf—if I take butter to my white bread—if I move from one part of the room to another, whether I would not like to sit on the sofa—after I have sat there, whether I would like to stretch out my legs upon it—after I have done that, whether I would let her wheel it nearer the fire—when I move to my bedroom, whether the fire is right, whether I would like the blinds wound up. To reply even once to her indefinite number of proposals is fatigue enough, I can assure you: nor is the fatigue at all alleviated when, instead of coming forth a second time with each she comes forth with a most vehement asseveration, accompanied by uplifted hands, that she will let me do as I like, that she will not interfere, that I shall have liberty at her house." Upon hearing from a friend that they were distressed in the like manner by their housekeeper, he writes in his journal, "Let me not think that any strange thing hath happened to us, or that any affliction hath overtaken us which is not common to our brethren in the world."

Like most ministers and most churches, Chalmers was annoyed by one of those female pests whose attentions and ministrations belong to that vague "No man's land" which lies somewhere between the comic and the tragic. This daft creature would take a seat not far from the pulpit, sometimes on the pulpit stairs, and sometimes would prevent the precentor at the close of the sermon by starting with a loud voice Dr. Chalmers' favorite tune, "Scarborough." Her affection for the doctor she firmly believed to be warmly returned. "Mrs. Chalmers, folk said, was his wife, but she kent better, and so did the doctor himsel'." Dr. Chalmers at first suffered her gladly but at length became seized with a nervous terror of her, and on one occasion, finding her ensconced in the pulpit by his side, cried out to his beadle, "John, I must be delivered conclusively

from that woman!" Alas! it is easier to wish and to order than to be delivered, for this is the kind that cometh not out save by fasting and prayer, and sometimes not even then. This woman became possessed with the hallucination that Dr. Chalmers' wife was starving him to death, and at any moment she was likely to confront the doctor on a street corner with a supply of porridge, saying, "Come noo, Doctor, do come, and get a plate of parritch: I hae fine meal the noo." A year after he had left Glasgow and was on a return visit, he burst suddenly into the house of one of his elders, taking refuge from the woman, crying, "that daft woman is in pursuit of me." Such women recall the watchword of Gideon's pursuit of the Midianites, "Faint, yet pursuing."

But there are daft men as well as daft women. One of these fellows interrupted Dr. Chalmers on a busy morning and got a hearing on the ground that he was in great religious distress. He was troubled about Melchizedek. After Dr. Chalmers had spent a half hour in trying to enlighten him and help him with his difficulty, the knave took the opportunity to ask for money. Dr. Chalmers saw the deception and with a whirlwind of anger catapulted him out of the house, saying in a terrible voice, "Not a penny! Not a penny! And to bring your hypocrisy on the shoulders of Melchizedek!"

As a pulpit preacher, Chalmers has few, if any, equals in the history of Christianity. He was not an out-of-doors orator like Whitefield or Peter the Hermit, or Wesley, nor a popular assembly preacher like Spurgeon, but as a pulpit preacher, speaking amid the order and solemnity of the House of God to an eager and expectant multitude, the records of the church may be searched in vain for one who wielded the "sublime thunders" of Chalmers. And the remarkable thing is that his was the eloquence of the manuscript. The perusal of any of those strange sermons with their long periodic sentences rolling up to a climax, sentence after sentence, like successive waves on the sea-

shore, will let the reader know that that kind of eloquence would have been absolutely impossible in extempore or memoriter preaching.

One of the events of the Kilmany ministry was a visit paid to Chalmers by Andrew Fuller, the celebrated Baptist divine. Mr. Fuller urged upon Chalmers preaching without notes. "If that man," he said to his friend, "would but throw away his papers in the pulpit, he would be the king of Scotland." Chalmers made an eager but unsuccessful attempt to carry out this advice. After several attempts he returned to his manuscript, likening himself to a full bottle which when turned upside down discharges itself slowly and with jerks and stops, while the nearly empty bottle discharges itself fluently. At that time there was a popular prejudice against the manuscript in Scotland and a friend of Chalmers expressed his surprise to a country woman of Fife that she who hated reading so much should yet be so fond of Chalmers. "Nae doubt," the woman answered, "but it's fell readin' thon!"

At the very outset of his ministry, Chalmers rid himself of one of the superstitions that hampered the ministers of his day and still more fetters the ministers of the present day, viz., the fear of using a sermon that had already been preached. Thomas Guthrie, a youthful contemporary of Chalmers, and as popular, in his way, as a preacher as Chalmers had been, relates how his parishioner, Hugh Miller, wondered how a minister could come forth Sunday after Sunday with even one good and finished discourse. He tells too of how Robert Hall, when asked the number of discourses a minister could prepare in a week, answered, "If he is a deep thinker and a great condenser, he may get up one: if he is an ordinary man, two: but if he is an ass, sir, he will produce half a dozen!" Chalmers wrote comparatively few sermons, and recommended a like practise to his students. Dean Ramsay tells of hearing his sermon on the love of God in the parish church at Haddington, and when he expressed his pleasure to Chalmers at being pres-

ent, the latter said, "I felt rather uncomfortable, for I saw a gentleman present who must have been hearing it for the fourth time." The remarkable thing was that bending over an old faded manuscript he could glow with the same enthusiasm that had marked the first delivery of the sermon. People got to know his sermons and went all the more eagerly to hear them a second, third or even a fourth time. His favorite sermon was the text from Isaiah xxvii. 3-5, "Fury is not in me: who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me: and he shall make peace with me." This sermon is interesting as being one in which Chalmers follows closely the divisions of the text, taking up each clause in succession, an unusual method for him. It is a textual sermon and as near to an expository sermon as he comes in any sermon I have read. He preached it twice at Kilmany, 1814 and 1815, and after an interval of about twenty years he re-employed it, remoulding it. From that time on he used it very frequently and those who heard him often became very well acquainted with the sermon. Few authors have put first the books their readers liked, and, although in delivery this sermon seems to have been very effective, the reader of the printed sermons would probably regard this one on "Fury not in God" as one of his least powerful efforts. Certainly it has almost nothing of that pictorial language and sweep of imagination which characterizes the other discourses.

In common with all great preachers the homiletical method of Chalmers was strictly topical. He never wearies you or detains you with an explanation of the contextual association of the passage he has chosen for his text, but immediately gets to his proposition and drives ahead. After you have read the first paragraph or two, you know the sermon: all that follows will be a reiteration and development of that main idea. Carlyle, in that passage where he contrasts the manner of Chalmers with that of Edward

Irving, sums it all up when he describes his sermons as "the triumphant onrush of one idea with its satellites and supporters." Even the reader of the printed sermon, with the voice silent and the flashing eye quenched, gets this impression of the triumphant and impatient onrush of one idea.

In common again with the greatest preachers, Chalmers quotes hardly at all. I know of just three of his sermons in which there are quotations from the poets. His favorite quotation, and that with which he concludes his *Institutes of Theology*, was this from Gambold, the Moravian:

"I'm apt to think, the man
That could surround the sum of things, and spy
The heart of God and secrets of His empire,
Would speak but love. With him the bright result
Would change the hue of intermediate scenes,
And make one thing of all theology."

He never preached without thorough preparation, describing his mind as "slow, but ardent", but he had the rare faculty of being able to compose anywhere and at any time. He was no cloistered homilete, but a Christian gladiator in the midst of great undertakings. Some of his best passages were penned while waiting for a change of horses, or before breakfast, at a wayside inn. His plan was to get in five hours of study each day, and he was very conscientious about seeing that each day had its "proportion."

Thomas Guthrie was the pioneer of the modern pictorial school of preaching. In Chalmers there is almost nothing by way of elaborated illustration from the natural world, and never have I come across anecdotes such as abound in the sermons of Guthrie. Yet in his best moods, Chalmers was highly pictorial in his language. There is a wealth of figurative language; in the printed page it is cold and wearisome, but when spoken with glowing heat we can well imagine how effective it must have been.

The altogether unusual thing in the sermon of Chalmers

was the combination of pith of intellect and the riches of imagery. The moment one sets out with him on the stream of his sermon, one feels one's self caught in a powerful current of thought, sweeping irresistibly onward; one feels that Christianity is a grand thing, the outworking of a mighty plan, and that a superior mind is describing it and proclaiming it. But as one is swept along on this current of thought, one's eyes behold rare beauties, the blue sky overhead, or drifting clouds, the little hamlets that lie along the banks, the play of sunlight or moonlight on the waters. To change my figure, the pillars of the temple of Christian faith you find in Chalmers' sermons, but also the "lily work" on the tops of the pillars. Some preachers have been mighty for the foundation work, and some experts for the "lily work," but few have combined these two gifts in their preaching as did Chalmers.

As an example of his method of illustration, take the following masterpiece from the essay on the "Abuse of Endowments," where he speaks of a few chosen professors, working quietly with a small body of superior students: "They sit upon a hill apart, and there breathe of an ethereal element, in the calm brightness of the upper region, rather than the glare and gorgeousness by which the eye of the multitude is dazzled. It is not the eclat of a bonfire for the regaling of a mob, but the ensuring, though quiet lustre of a star." Or this from the sermon on Cruelty to Animals: "The whole earth labours and is in violence because of his cruelties; and from the Amphitheatre of sentient Nature there sounds in fancy's ear the bleat of one wide and universal suffering—a dreadful homage to the power of Nature's constituted lord." Or this from the sermon on Universal Peace: "We have only to blow the trumpet of war and proclaim to man the hour of his opportunity, that his character may show itself in its essential elements—and that we may see how many in this, our moral and enlightened day, would spring forward as a jubilee of delight, and prowl like the wild men of the woods, amidst scenes of

rapacity and cruelty and violence." Or this on the power of Prayer from the sermon on the Efficacy of Prayer and the Uniformity of Nature, where he speaks of the influence of the prayer of a mother for her sailor lad at sea: "A woman's feeble cry may have overruled the elemental war: and hushed into silence this wild frenzy of the winds and waves: and evoked the gentler breezes from the cave of their slumbers: and wafted the vessel of her dearest hopes, and which held the first and fondest of her earthly treasures, to its desired haven." These excerpts are sufficient to show that when those multitudes heard Chalmers preaching, they not only heard truth, facts and their demonstration, but they saw pictures painted by a master hand.

Occasionally Chalmers took a daring journey into the realm of imagination. Perhaps the noblest example of this is the conclusion to his most widely known sermon on the Expulsive Power of a New Affection. His purpose is to sum up the thought of the sermon that the mere demonstration of the world's vanity is not sufficient to win the heart from the love of the world, but that there must be set forth another object as more worthy of its attachment. He conceives of a man standing on the verge of this pleasant world and surveying all its glories and beauties, and then looking off into the abyss of space:

"Think you that he would bid a voluntary adieu to all the brightness and all the beauty that were before him upon earth, and commit himself to the frightful solitude away from it. Would he leave its peopled dwelling places, and become a solitary wanderer through the fields of nonentity? If space offered him nothing but a wilderness, would he for it abandon the homebred scenes of life and of cheerfulness that lay so near, and exerted such a power of urgency to detain him? Would not he cling to the regions of sense, and of life, and of society?—and shrinking away from the desolation that was beyond it, would not he be glad to keep his firm footing on the territory of this world, and to take shelter under the silver canopy that was stretched over it?

"But if, during the time of his contemplation, some happy

island of the blest had floated by: and there had burst upon his senses the light of its surpassing glories, and its sounds of sweeter melody; and he clearly saw, that there, a purer beauty rested upon every field, and a more heartfelt joy spread itself among all the families; and he could discern there a peace, and a piety, and a benevolence, which put a moral gladness into every bosom, and united the whole society in one rejoicing sympathy with each other, and with the beneficent Father of them all. Could he further see, that pain and mortality were there unknown; and above all, that signals of welcome were hung out, and an avenue of communication was made for him—perceive you not, that what was before the wilderness, would become the land of invitation; and that now the world would be the wilderness? What unpeopled space could not do, can be done by space teeming with beatific scenes and beatific society. And let the existing tendencies of the heart be what they may to the scene that is near and visible around us, still if another stood revealed to the prospect of man, either through the channel of faith, or through the channel of his senses—then, without violence done to the constitution of his moral nature, may he die unto the present world, and live to the lovelier world that stands in the distance away from it.”

We have spoken of the order and content of the sermons: now for the manner and method of the preacher as he stood in his pulpit. I think this can best be explained out of the mouth of three distinguished witnesses who heard him preach. Scott’s biographer, Lockhart, in “Peter’s Letters” thus reproduces for us the scene in the Tron Church, Glasgow, the Sabbath he was present:

“I was a good deal surprised and perplexed with the first glimpse I obtained of his countenance, for the light that streamed faintly upon it for the moment, did not reveal anything like that general outline of feature and visage for which my fancy had, by some strange working of presentiment, prepared me. By and bye, however, the light became stronger, and I was enabled to study the minutiae of his face pretty leisurely, while he leaned forward and read aloud the words of the psalm—for that is always done in Scotland, not by the clerk, but the clergyman himself. At first sight, no doubt, his face is a coarse one—but a mys-

terious kind of meaning breathes from every part of it, that such as have eyes to see, cannot be long without discovering. It is very pale, and the large half-closed eyelids have a certain drooping melancholy weight about them, which interested me very much, I understood not why. The lips, too, are singularly pensive in their mode of falling down at the sides, although there is no want of richness and vigor in their central fulness of curve. The upper lip, from the nose downwards, is separated by a very deep line, which gives a sort of leonine firmness of expression to all the lower part of the face. The cheeks are square and strong, in texture like pieces of marble, with the cheekbones very broad and prominent. The eyes themselves are light in colour, and have a strange dreamy heaviness, that conveys any idea rather than that of dulness, but which contrasts, in a wonderful manner, with the dazzling watery glare they exhibit when expanded in their sockets, and illuminated into all their flame and fervour, in some moment of high entranced enthusiasm. But the shape of the forehead is perhaps the most singular part of the whole visage; and, indeed, it presents a mixture so very singular, of forms commonly exhibited only in the widest separation, that it is no wonder I should have required some little time to comprehend the meaning of it. In the first place, it is, without exception, the most marked mathematical forehead I ever met with—being far wider across the eye-brows than either Mr. Playfair's or Mr. Leslie's—and having the eye-brows themselves lifted up at their exterior ends quite out of the usual line—a peculiarity which Spurzheim had remarked in the countenances of almost all the great mathematical or calculating geniuses—such, for example, if I rightly remember, of Sir Isaac Newton himself—Kaestener—Euler—and many others. Immediately above the extraordinary breadth of this region, which, in the heads of most mathematical persons, is surmounted by no fine points of organization whatever—immediately above this, in the forehead of Dr. Chalmers, there is an arch of Imagination, carrying out the summit boldly and roundly, in a style to which the heads of very few poets present any thing comparable—while over this again there is a grand apex of high and solemn Veneration and Love—such as might have graced the bust of Plato himself—and such as, in living men, I had never beheld equalled in any bust but the ma-

jestic head of Canova. The whole is edged with a few crisp dark locks, which stand forth boldly, and afford a fine relief to the deathlike paleness of those massive temples.

"Singular as is this conformation, I know not that anything less singular could have satisfied my imagination after hearing this man preach. You have read his Sermons, and, therefore, I need not say anything about the subject and style of the one I heard, because it was in all respects very similar to those which have been printed. But of all human compositions, there is none surely which loses so much as a sermon does, when it is made to address itself to the eye of a solitary student in his closet—and not to the thrilling ears of a mighty mingled congregation, through the very voice which nature has enriched with notes more expressive than words can ever be, of the meanings and feelings of its author. Neither, perhaps, did the world ever possess any orator, whose minutest peculiarities of gesture and voice have more power in increasing the effect of what he says—whose delivery, in other words, is the first, and the second, and the third excellence of his oratory, more truly than is that of Dr. Chalmers. And yet, were the spirit of the man less gifted than it is, there is no question these, his lesser peculiarities, would never have been numbered among his points of excellence. His voice is neither strong nor melodious. His gestures are neither easy nor graceful; but, on the contrary, extremely rude and awkward—his pronunciation is not only broadly national, but broadly provincial—distorting almost every word he utters into some barbarous novelty, which, had his hearer leisure to think of such things, might be productive of an effect at once ludicrous and offensive in a singular degree.

"But of a truth, these are things which no listener can attend to while this great preacher stands before him, armed with all the weapons of the most commanding eloquence, and swaying all around him with its imperial rule. At first, indeed, there is nothing to make one suspect what riches are in store. He commences in a low drawling key, which has not even the merit of being solemn—and advances from sentence to sentence, and from paragraph to paragraph, while you seek in vain to catch a single echo that gives promise of that which is to come. There is, on the contrary, an appearance of constraint about him, that affects and distresses you—you are afraid that his breast is weak,

and that even the slight exertion he makes may be too much for it. But then with what tenfold richness does this dim preliminary curtain make the glories of his eloquence to shine forth, when the heated spirit at length shakes from it its chill confining fetters, and bursts out elate and rejoicing in 'the full splendour of its disimprisoned wings!'

The delightful author of *Rab and His Friends*, Dr. John Brown, thus relates what he saw and heard and felt the first time he sat under the preaching of Chalmers:

"We remember well our first hearing Dr. Chalmers. We were in a moorland district in Tweeddale, rejoicing in the country, after nine months of the High School. We heard that the famous preacher was to be at a neighboring parish church, and off we set, a cartful of irrepressible youngsters. 'Calm was all nature as a resting wheel.' The crows, instead of making wing, were impudent and sat still; the cart-horses were standing, knowing the day, at the field-gates, gossiping and gazing, idle and happy; the moor was stretching away in the pale sunlight—vast, dim, melancholy, like a sea; everywhere were to be seen the gathering people, 'sprinklings of blithe company;' the country-side seemed moving to the centre. As we entered the kirk we saw a notorious character, a drover who had much of the brutal look of what he worked in, with the knowing eye of a man of the city, a sort of big Peter Bell,—

'He had a hardness in his eye,
He had a hardness in his cheek.'

He was our terror, and we not only wondered, but were afraid when we saw him going in. The kirk was full as it could hold. How different it looks to a brisk town congregation! There was a fine leisureliness and vague stare; all the dignity and vacancy of animals; eyebrows raised and mouths open, as is the habit with those who speak little and look much, and at far-off objects. The minister came in, homely in his dress and gait, but having a great look about him, like a mountain among hills. The High School boys thought him like a 'big one of ourselves'; he looks vaguely round upon his audience, as if he saw in it one great object, not many. We shall never forget his smile, its general benignity,—how he let the light of his countenance fall on us! He read a few verses quietly; then prayed briefly, sol-

emly, with his eyes wide open all the time, but not seeing. Then he gave out his text; we forget it, but its subject was 'Death reigns.' He stated slowly, calmly, the simple meaning of the words; what death was, and how and why it reigned; then suddenly he started and looked like a man who had seen some great sight, and was breathless to declare it; he told us how death reigned,—everywhere, at all times, in all places; how we all know it, how we would yet know more of it. The drover, who sat down in the table-seat opposite, was gazing up in a state of stupid excitement; he seemed restless, but never kept his eye from the speaker. The tide set in; everything added to its power, deep called to deep, imagery and illustration poured in; and every now and then the theme, the simple, terrible statement, was repeated in some lucid interval. After overwhelming us with proofs of the reign of Death, and transferring to us his intense urgency and emotion; and after shrieking, as if in despair, these words, 'Death is a tremendous necessity,'—he suddenly looked beyond us as if into some distant region, and cried out, 'Behold a mightier—who is this? He cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, glorious in his apparel, speaking in righteousness, traveling in the greatness of his strength, mighty to save.' Then, in a few plain sentences, he stated the truth as to sin entering, and death by sin, and death passing upon all. Then he took fire once more, and enforced, with redoubled energy and richness, the freeness, the simplicity, the security, the sufficiency of the great method of justification. How astonished and impressed we all were! He was at the full thunder of his power; the whole man was in an agony of earnestness. The drover was weeping like a child, the tears running down his ruddy, coarse cheeks, his face opened out and smoothed like an infant's; his whole body stirred with emotion. We all had insensibly been drawn out of our seats, and were converging towards the wonderful speaker. And when he sat down, after warning each one of us to remember who it was, and what it was, that followed death on his pale horse, and how alone we could escape—we all sunk back into our seats. How beautiful to our eyes did the thunderer look,—exhausted, but sweet and pure! How he poured out his soul before his God in giving thanks for sending the Abolisher of Death! Then, a short psalm, and all was ended.

"We went home quieter than we came; we did not recount the foals with their long legs and roguish eyes, and their sedate mothers; we did not speculate upon whose dog that was, and whether that was a crow or a man in the dim moor,—we thought of other things. That voice, that face; those great, simple, living thoughts, those floods of resistless eloquence; that piercing, shattering voice,—'that tremendous necessity.' "

My last witness is George Gilfillan, the author of *The Bards of the Bible*. He tells of hearing Chalmers preach the beautiful sermon on Rev. xxii.—Heaven a Place not a State:

"Being near-sighted, and the morning rather dim, we could not catch a distinct glimpse of his features, we saw only a dark mass of a man bustling up the pulpit stairs, as if in some dread and desperate haste. We heard next a hoarse voice, first giving out the psalm in a tone of rapid familiar energy, and after it was sung and prayer was over, announcing the text, 'He that is unjust let him be unjust still (stull, he pronounced it) he that is filthy (fulthy, he called it), let him be filthy still, and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still, and he that is holy, let him be holy still.' And then, like an eagle leaving a mountain cliff, he launched out at once on his subject, and soared on without any diminution of energy or flutter of wing for an hour and more. The discourse . . . had two or three magnificent passages, which made the audience for a season one soul—a burst, especially, we remember, in reference to the materialism of heaven—"There may be palms of triumph, I do not know—there may be floods and melody,' etc., and then he proceeded to show that heaven was more a state than a place."

Browsing recently through the pages of the *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* I came upon that passage in which De Quincey describes the preacher of his school days at Manchester as a man who was "sincere but not earnest." The distinction struck me at first as very odd. How could a preacher be sincere and yet not be earnest? De Quincey explains this by saying that this minister in his preaching, rarely rose in his topics above the level of prudential ethics:

"He made a high valuation of the pulpit as an organ of civilization for cooperating with books; but it was impossible for any man starting from the low ground of themes so unimpassioned and so desultory as the benefits of industry, the danger of bad companions, the importance of setting a good example, or the value of perseverance, to pump up any persistent stream of earnestness either in himself or in his auditors." Then he goes on to tell about Richard Baxter and the famous couplet in which he describes his own preaching,—

"I preached as never sure to preach again,
And as a dying man to dying men."

After the change that came over his preaching at the time of his serious illness at Kilmany, when he learned to cast his anchor in the atonement, the sermons of Chalmers were marked by deep earnestness. His eloquence had the foundation of great convictions. "His absorbed and absorbing earnestness" is the thing about him that impressed one of his hearers. He was in earnest because he took the Christian revelation seriously. The "lost chord" in much of the preaching of the present day, and Chalmers' day too, for that matter, is the chord of earnestness. Whether because of our frequent addressing ourselves to them, or because of the deep interrogation raised by science concerning the whole spiritual conception of the world, the tremendous facts of the Christian revelation, while not intellectually dismissed, are not always felt. From all accounts Chalmers was able to continue to feel the overwhelming significance of those facts, and to make his congregations feel them too.

Our Saviour declared that unbelief and disobedience to the Gospel were the great tragedy. The rains descended and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon that house and it fell, and great was the fall thereof. The soul of Chalmers was thrilled with the exceeding greatness of Christianity, the interests which it involved, the sorrow and tragedy of unbelief, and the joy in heaven over one sinner

that repents. His discourse had therefore all those elements of pathos and sorrow, tragedy and victory, which are the ground of human eloquence. You might as well take death and hate and love and shame and sin out of Hamlet and Macbeth and King Lear and expect to have anything that was moving, powerful, eloquent, left in those tragedies, as to take sin and retribution, and death and judgment, and heaven and hell out of Christian theology and still expect the preacher of Christianity to say anything that would stir you or move you.

Times and manners change as the centuries slip by. The mind of man turns from those great subjects and a recreant church neglects them for the expediencies of time, and it may seem that they have lost their power and meaning. Then God kindles the ancient fire in the soul of His messenger, and as he goes forth to speak, men see the greatness of that which they had been tempted to despise; they learn anew the difference between time and eternity, and see how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation: that saith unto Zion, "Thy God reigneth!"

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secondo l'ultimo censimento; Mancanze di garanzie pel nuovo Codice di Diritto canonico; CARLA CADORNA, I ritrovi spirituali di Viterbo nel 1541; MARIO FALCHI, Una visita all'Ingegnere Kha; EMMANUEL, L'etere e il suo possibile valore psichico. *The Same*, Aprile: GIOVANNI MARCHI, Il "confiteor" dei giovani; GIOVANNI E. MEILLE, Psicologia di combattenti cristiani; PAOLO TUCCI, Uno scritto di M. Lutero: "Se la gente di guerra possa, anche essa, essere in istato beato"; EMMANUEL, La religione di un letterato. *The Same*, Maggio: MARIO FALCHI, Le condizioni religiose della Società dell'è Nazione"; PAOLO E. PAVOLINI, Poesi religiose polacca; Mancanze di garanzie nello schema e nel nuovo Codice di Diritto Canonico.

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