

A TRIBUTE
TO
THE MEMORY OF
DR CHALMERS.

BY A FORMER PUPIL.

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THOMAS CHALMERS was born at Anstruther, in Fifeshire, on the 17th March 1780. He was educated at the University of St Andrews, where he distinguished himself by the ardour and ability with which he prosecuted science in all its various branches. In session 1802-3 he taught the mathematical classes in that University. He was ordained to the ministry in Kilmany in May 1803. His state in reference to religion at that time is thus stated in his own language: "St Andrews was overrun with Moderatism, under the chilling influences of which we all inhaled not a distaste only, but a positive contempt, for all that is properly and peculiarly gospel.*" It was some time after entering the ministry that he was brought to a saving belief of the truth as it is in Jesus; and this was brought about, it is believed, partly through means of a treatise on the evidences of Christianity which he had occasion to write. Henceforth there was a manifest change in his preaching, and in his ministry generally, and in his whole character and demeanour.—In 1815 he was translated to the Tron Church, Glasgow, where a wider field of usefulness opened to him. His preaching, so original and so eloquent, and yet so thoroughly imbued with Evangelical truth, produced a deep sensation; and the publication of his Astronomical, and Commercial, and other Discourses carried his fame all over the country and into other lands. It was in Glasgow that he commenced his extensive labours for the good of large towns and the outcast population of our country. In 1824 he was appointed Professor of Moral Philosophy in St Andrews, and in 1828 Professor of Divinity in Edinburgh; and in both chairs he exercised a mighty influence over the educated youth, and particularly over the rising ministry of our land. About 1833 he resumed more assiduously than ever his labours in behalf of Church Extension, and was engaged in this work till his dying day. Thwarted in his attempts to render the Church of Scotland what it ought to be, he laboured long to persuade the Government to concede to it its rightful claims; and when this work became hopeless, he guided the Church into its present position. Since 1843 his active mind has been employed, besides the work of his class, in preparing his writings for the press and in building up the Free Church of Scotland. A few weeks before his death he was summoned to London to give evidence before a Committee of the House of Commons, and when in London he preached before the Prime Minister and a number of the members of the Cabinet. He returned to his own house on Friday May 28, apparently in good health. Arrangements were made for his addressing the Free Assembly on the Monday following. It was on the morning of that day (31st May) that, on entering his bedroom, it was found that his Master had called him away to his rest and reward.

* See his Introduction to the third edition of Mr Ount's Sermons, just published. This, I believe, is the last paper by Dr Chalmers which has issued from the press.

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"THERE is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel." The world has had its great men whom it has praised and admired, and their works have gone down to future generations; but, however long they may endure, their labours and their name shall all perish with the world, which is doomed to destruction,—just as the renown and the mighty undertakings of the giants who lived in the days before the flood were swept away by the waters of the deluge. The great man who has lately fallen had within him all the elements of worldly greatness—a noble intellect to conceive, an unwearied energy to execute, and an ardent eloquence fitted to secure the co-operation of others in his lofty aims. But all these would not have made him truly a great man. If he had not been called out of the world into the kingdom of God's dear Son, his great gifts might have been wasted in unprofitable channels, and his influence exerted to further vain or even baleful purposes. Without the direction of Heaven, his metaphysical acuteness might have been spent in idle speculation, his imagination would have been exerted in adorning mere worldly excellence, and his activity been lavished on works that were useless or worse than useless. It pleased the Lord, some time after he had entered the ministry, to visit him by the enlightening and regenerating operations of his Spirit; and his aims were henceforth elevated, his activity flowed in proper channels, and his high faculties and commanding eloquence were now employed in defending and recommending the truths of God's Word and in proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ. Through the power and grace of Him who provides for his Church the blessings which it needs, he became a great man in Israel, and hath left behind him works which will last as long as the world lasts, and works, performed in faith, which will follow him whither he is now gone. "He rests from his labours, and his works do follow him."

* The event is too recent to allow of our contemplating it afloat. The loss is too great and overwhelming to permit us calmly to estimate it. We must take advantage, however, of the feelings which nature prompts, and of which

grace does not disapprove, to improve the dispensation with which God has seen fit to visit us.

Some of us cannot but reckon it as one of the greatest privileges of our lives that we were enabled to sit at his feet for years and gather wisdom from his lips. His writings and his lectures were peculiarly adapted to recommend religion to the age in which his lot was cast. It was an age that boasted of its science, and it was needful that the person who should influence and guide it be possessed of scientific knowledge and a philosophic spirit. He who in ancient times guided the Church out of Egypt was possessed of all the learning of the Egyptians, and the Apostle of the Gentile Churches was acquainted with the literature of the countries in which he travelled; and it was the will of God that he who in these times was the most powerful defender of the faith should be possessed of the science of which the times boast. The man of science was constrained to behold in him a man of profoundest science striving after something which he regarded as infinitely higher, and reckoning all his attainments but loss that he might win Christ.

It was in combining and harmonizing philosophy and revelation that his genius as a deep and original thinker was chiefly shown. He brought logic and ethics, and mental and physical science, to illustrate and adorn that revelation which God has been pleased to give of himself in his Word.

It is at all times perilous on the part of the votaries whether of science or religion to set the branches of knowledge which they severally prosecute against each other. On the one hand, science cannot possibly accomplish any beneficent ends if it make an idol of the works of God, and, Parsee-like, worship the sun and moon and elements of nature; and religion, on the other hand, is unnecessarily raising prejudices against itself, and is truly dishonouring God while it may profess to honour him, when it would discourage inquiry into those works of God which he has spread around us, and which are manifestly inviting us to look at and admire them, and rewarding us by a thousand discoveries when we investigate them with patience and with reverence. We live at a time when all our educated youth are instructed in the elements of natural science, as well as in the more sacred doctrines of Theology. We fear that there are many who know not how to reconcile the two faiths in which they have been educated. Meanwhile studious attempts were being made to show that Christianity could not stand the light of the age in which we live. The heart of many a youth of promise has in consequence been wrung till feelings more bitter than tears have burst from it, as he stood by the chasm over which no bridge seemed to be thrown. A dark cloud of doubt arising from that gulf has brooded and settled on many a mind, damping by its moist and heavy influence all generous confidence and zeal and enthusiasm. It was the "set office" of the philosophic mind with which God so long favoured his Church to recon-

cile heavenly and human science; and that not by making revelation bend itself to human reason and thus depriving our faith of all its heavenly power, but by demonstrating to the satisfaction of reason that the Bible is a revelation from God and then calling on reason to listen to it with docility and adoring reverence. No man ever pointed out more clearly or satisfactorily the separate provinces of reason and of faith; or proved more forcibly, by evidence internal and external, that the Word is a message from God, and proclaiming truths many of which are beyond the vision of reason, but to which reason should give its assent when it is shown that it is the God of Truth who speaks. Let not science and religion any longer be regarded as opposing citadels frowning defiance upon each other, and their defenders brandishing their armour in hostile attitude. Science has a foundation, and so has religion: let them unite their foundations, and the basis will be broader, and they will be two compartments of one great fabric reared to the glory of God. Let the one be the sanctuary where human learning may present its richest incense as an offering to God, and the other as the holiest of all separated from it by a veil now rent in twain, and in which on a blood-sprinkled mercy-seat we give the love of a reconciled heart and hear the oracles of the living God. Dr Chalmers, in harmonizing religion and science, has influenced the thinking mind of the age in which he lived; and future generations will dig treasures out of the mines which he hath opened, and wonder at the multiplied applications of which the principles which he developed admit.

But, great as were his intellectual endowments, they were surpassed by the largeness of a heart sanctified by the Spirit of God; and herein is he distinguished from our mere literary men and philosophers. His enlarged benevolence—his unbounded sympathy—his universal charity—his power "against hope of believing in hope" when his cause was good—his fixed determination of purpose, which caused him to return anew and anew, and after partial failure and defeat, to the execution of his schemes—these are qualities on which our hearts dwell more fondly than even on his deep philosophy and glowing eloquence; and we can never forget that he who excelled other men in the loftiness of his gifts surpassed them also in modesty and humility, and was the meekest and gentlest of them all, walking humbly before his God and before all his fellow-men. These qualities enabled him to stand a test which others reputed great cannot always stand. Others may appear great when viewed from a distance, but as we draw near we discover blots, and imperfections, and weaknesses, which detract from and mar their excellence. Those who were privileged to live nearest to him whom God hath now taken to the glorious company of angels and saints were the persons who admired and loved him most.

It was in this beautiful combination of the intellectual and the moral in-

his sanctified nature that those schemes originated with which his name must be for ever associated. Hence, too, the union which they displayed of lofty enterprise with practical wisdom. All the plans which he propounded were founded on deep and everlasting principles, to be found in human nature or in the Word of God. We needed such a man in this our day. The world was moving along with railway velocity, and its head was dizzy and distracted in looking at numberless trifling objects lying near, and each engaging attention for an instant in its turn; and it was needful that some man should arise to give the public eye enlargement and steadfastness, by directing it to somewhat more distant, but greater and eternal principles.

He has given an Evangelical fervour to a cold and secular age. He has laid our Church and country under obligations which they cannot estimate. He is peculiarly identified with the cause of Church Extension; and hundreds of places of worship and schools throughout our land owe their existence to the spirit which he kindled. The multiplication and increased efficiency of Sabbath classes—the greater attention paid to pastoral visitation—the care bestowed upon the poor and the outcast—all these proceeded from the impulse which he gave. Nor let it be forgotten that he has been the means of calling forth a spirit of liberality unknown in our Church before, and of calling forth a willing agency, male and female, to spread the influence of Divine truth throughout all the borders of our beloved country. He hath left a memorial of himself in every district of our land; and in whatever part of it we stand—whether in the lanes of our crowded cities or in the sequestered glens of our mountain regions—we may say, “If you require his monument, look around you.”

He is no less closely connected with the cause of the Church's freedom and the Church's purity. No man knew better than he that no good could arise from the extension of an enslaved and a corrupt Church. Throughout all his writings he has taken pains to show that the Church of Christ is a spiritual body, with spiritual power and spiritual privileges, and that these impart to it all its efficiency for good. It was not from a Church subordinate in spiritual matters to the State that he anticipated the mighty effects upon the moral and physical well-being of the community which he looked for from the agency of the Church of Christ. It may be safely asserted that it was very much through his frequent exposition of the principles of the Church's spiritual independence that the minds of our people were prepared for the noble stand which they made. He was only following out the principles which he had ever avowed and ever been promulgating when, no longer able to find freedom in the Church as in connection with the State, he guided that Church into its present position, in which, holding by its great Head, it may fulfil the ends contemplated in the institution of the Church of Christ. We feel it to be an honour to be able

to claim him, always under Christ, as our leader in that great movement, and feel as if we could never adequately repay what we owe to the wisdom of his counsels and the energy of his spirit.

But while we can claim him as belonging peculiarly to our Church, we acknowledge that he belonged all along to a larger Church. His catholic spirit connected him with the whole catholic Church, which now throughout all its sections unites with us in mourning over his death. He hath now joined a better Church, and hath gone to “mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant.”

We mourn because a great man hath fallen in Israel. Yet we have many sources of consolation. We do not mourn with an idle or a hopeless melancholy. We could have wished him to remain longer among us; yet we are grateful, I trust, to God for sparing him for such a length of time. We do not mourn as we would have mourned had a “standard-bearer fainted.” In him there was no fainting and no faltering: “Retract! no, not by one hair's breadth.” He has died in armour, as the warrior dies when slain in the field of battle. Like him who guided the people through the desert, he departed when “his eye was not dim nor his natural strength abated.” He hath “fulfilled his course.” It was the will of God that he should preach the gospel of Christ before some of the highest senators of our land, and give his testimony once more for our principles and in behalf of our suffering people before a body of the representatives of our nation, and then that he should return to his own land and beloved family, and die as he had lived in the midst of his own people. We could have wished to hear his living voice once more in the highest court of our Church, and were waiting for this purpose with eager expectation; but there came to us a more powerful voice than even his, and we heard the voice of God himself saying, “Be ye also ready, for the Son of man cometh in an hour when ye think not of.” Friends could have wished to watch around his dying bed and catch his last accents, but it was the will of Heaven that in him we should see none of the weaknesses of nature. Of his faith and love he hath left far more satisfactory memorials than could have been furnished by a few words spoken on a deathbed. We are all apt to trust too much to some change which we expect to come over us at a dying hour. Hence it is, possibly, that we have the record of comparatively few deathbeds in the Word of God. The lives of the saints are fully revealed to our view, that we may copy the example which they set; but their deaths are concealed, lest, as in the case of the children of Israel when Moses departed, we should be in danger of making an improper use of it. It was the good pleasure of God that, like the servant of Heaven just referred to, no human eye should

witness his departure, and that we should, in meditating on his death, meditate on what he hath done in a lengthened life of deepest thought and active philanthropy.

We mourn—we cannot but mourn—when God hath taken away one whom posterity, I believe, will rank next among all our countrymen to our great reformer. Yet we have much that is pleasant to think of. Though he is not with us in the body, his name will long linger among us to rebuke all that is unwise, and selfish, and sectarian, and uncharitable, and unholy; and to prompt to all that is great, and enlarged, and benevolent. Deep, deep will be the guilt lying upon us if, having been favoured with such a leader, we should now turn aside from the path on which he has set us!

We mourn—we cannot but mourn—when the loss is so great, and “no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but rather grievous.” Yet we do not despond, and much less do we despair. “The Lord reigneth:” this is our comfort and confidence. We revere the memory of the dead who lived and died in the Lord, but we do not worship them. We give the glory of all his excellencies to Him who furnished our departed father with all his great and good qualities. And we believe that he who raised up such an agent for good, to show that he has not forgotten or abandoned his Church, can raise up other instruments to carry on his work. Our trust is in him; and they that trust in him shall never be ashamed.

His body now mingles with its kindred dust, but his spirit mingles with its kindred spirits in heaven. He has for years, to use language which I have heard him employ, felt “himself skirting along the shores of eternity:” he was longing for rest, and he hath now entered into his rest. To use another favourite expression of his own, he laboured in time that he might rest in eternity. Yet we cannot allow ourselves to think that his soul is inactive. Has not God, besides using him for a great work on earth, been also training him for great work in heaven? In the resurrection the saints, we are told (Matt. xxii. 30), are as the angels of God in heaven; and angels we know are active in the service of God. It is conceivable that the gifted mind which when on earth speculated on such exalted themes and planned such noble undertakings is now, in a clearer light, meditating on still more exalted truths, and is to be engaged throughout eternity in still grander enterprizes,—and all to the praise of Him who “redeemed him to God by his precious blood.”

Let us follow them that followed Christ. We may gaze on the departed as Elisha gazed on his ascending master, that a portion of his spirit may rest upon us, and that in this spirit we may “go and do likewise.”

J. M'C.