

The character of the late

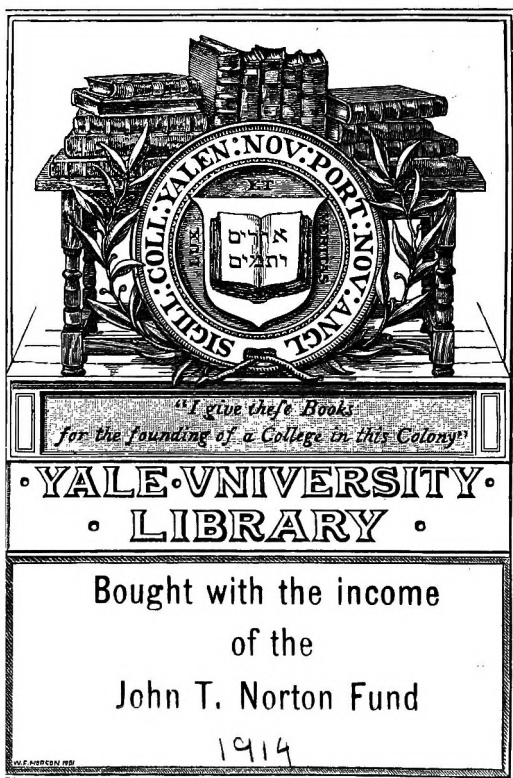
Thomas Chalmers...

Rev. Thomas Smyth.

Charleston, 1848.

Mhd5
C3531
Sm9

Digitized by Microsoft®



Digitized by Microsoft®

THE CHARACTER
OF THE LATE
THOMAS CHALMERS, D. D., LL. D.
AND THE
LESSONS OF HIS LIFE,
FROM
PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS.

BY THE
REV. THOMAS SMYTH, D. D.

CHARLESTON, S. C.

PRINTED AT THE OFFICE OF THE SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE, 100 HAYNE-ST.

1848.

Digitized by Microsoft®

N. B. THE Substance of this discourse was delivered in several places,
and the whole was prepared for the Southern Presbyterian Review,
from which it is now extracted.

Mhd5
C3531
Smg

Digitized by Microsoft®

THE LATE DR. CHALMERS.

Startling is the cry which the wailing blast bears along: "Watchman, what of the night?" And portentous must be our response, as we announce that one star after another has disappeared from the moral firmament, while thick darkness shrouds the midnight sky. Fuller and Hall, Watson, Clarke and Waugh, Foster and Gurney, Welsh and Abercrombie, Brown and Mc Cheyne—stars which burned brightly, and shed around them a transforming radiance—have, one by one, flickered and faded, and become extinct, like those constellations which have from time to time disappeared from the heavens. And now we hear that Chalmers—"the divine Chalmers—Chalmers the object of Scotland's love—Chalmers the benefactor of all nations through all time,"*—that star of the first magnitude—that centre of such powerful attractions, by which so many planetary orbs were kept in motion, and by whose diffusive light so many were illumined—has also sunk in darkness; and that the kindred spirit of the renowned Wardlaw is waxing dim, and giving token of an approaching extinction. "The greater lights" have thus, one by one, vanished, and we are left to those "lesser lights," which still skirt the horizon, or beam upon us from on high.

Thus genius fades away,
Power, talent, influence thus decay,
And leave us dark, and in dismay.

Shall we then fold our arms and go asleep? Shall we sit down and take our ease? Shall we excuse our stumbling because there is no light? "Shall the righteous perish and no man lay it to heart; and merciful men be taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come? He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in uprightness." No! rather let us cry unto God in our trouble; rather let us take unto ourselves his own words of earnest and encouraging prayer. "Help Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail among the children of men." Thus let us plead with God that he may stir up the gifts and graces of his servants still preserved to us; that he may enlighten them abundantly with all heavenly wisdom, and cause them to give light to those that are sitting in darkness; and that by his creating energy, he may bring forth other lights to "rule"

*Dr. Campbell.

Digitized by Microsoft®

and irradiate our night season. Let us, too, remember that God who is to be "blessed" for having "given these heaven-enlightened minds," is also to be blessed in their removal. God's glory is to be proclaimed by a grateful remembrance of these gifts of his hand, and an admiring contemplation of the wisdom, power and grace illustrated in their character and lives.

Dr. Chalmers was in every way a remarkable man, and will be found, like the sun, to have been greater in his setting, than in his noon-day splendor; and to have exerted a greater and wider influence by his posthumous, than even by his living influence. He was one of those stars which are visible in both hemispheres, and which set in one, only to rise upon the other with continued or increasing lustre.

A watchman on his lofty tower,
His thrilling trump still warned the church,
When fraud or danger was at hand.
By him, as by a beacon light,
Her pilots still kept course aright;
As some proud column, he alone
Had strength to prop her tottering cause.
Now is the stately column broke,
The beacon light is quenched in smoke,
The trumpet's silver sound is still,
And heard no more o'er dale or hill.

Oh, think how to this latest day,
When death, *just hovering*, claimed his prey,
With Palinure's unaltered mood,
Firm at his laboring post he stood;
Each call for needful rest repelled,
With dying hand the rudder held,
Till in his fall with fateful sway,
The steerage of the church gave way.

The public events, of Dr. Chalmers' life are few and easily told. Born at Anstruther, in Fife, March 17th, 1780, he was educated at the University of St. Andrews. At this period he was devoted, with intense ardour, to the cultivation and practical pursuit of the physical and mathematical sciences, including Botany, Conchology, Chemistry, and Astronomy, &c.,* for which, and especially for the latter, "as the queen of the sciences," he ever retained a fond partiality.

His first ministry was at Cavers, where—according to the judicious custom of the Scottish church—he labored as a helper to the aged minister of that parish. Here, like his senior, Chalmers poured forth the streams of earthly wisdom; but as neither of them knew more of the Gospel than as a system of refined morality, the stream, of necessity, could rise no higher than the fountain, nor partake of more renovating qualities. In 1803, he was removed to the country parish of Kilmany,

* After his settlement at Kilmany, he gave lectures on Chemistry, at St. Andrews.

in Fifeshire, where he continued to think, to feel, and to preach, as he had done at Cavers; and devoted himself to his favorite pursuits—"wandering all day long, hammer in hand, and botanical box on his shoulders, chipping the rocks and ransacking the glens, and cultivating a kindly acquaintance with the outlandish peasantry."

From Kilmany Dr. Chalmers was translated to the Tron Church, in Glasgow, in 1815;—from thence to the chair of Moral Philosophy, in the University of St Andrews;—and from thence to the Professorship of Theology, in the College of Edinburgh, "the top of the pyramid—the highest post which Presbyterian Scotland knew—and, like Newton to the Mathematical Chair in Cambridge, his preëminent fitness bore Chalmers into the Edinburgh Chair of Divinity." It was from this central focus, he sent forth his blazing thoughts to kindle up beacon fires on every hill and on every hearth in Scotland. From this high station, which he continued to adorn, with increasing honor, Dr. Chalmers voluntarily retired, when he abandoned the establishment of Scotland and led the van of that glorious army of evangelical ministers, who have since constituted the Free Church of Scotland. As the acknowledged head, leader, and champion of that church, he shone more and more, until "he was taken up out of their sight."

It is not our purpose to enter into a more extended biographical notice of Dr. Chalmers; or into a philosophical analysis of his character and talents. This will be done more satisfactorily by others. It will be our object to present some general considerations, suggested by his character and life, and our own partial acquaintance with him, which may afford us, at this distance from the scene of his labors, instruction and profit.

And, in the first place, may we not behold, in Dr. Chalmers, the infinite resources of Divine wisdom and power, in the formation of human minds and hearts.

In the works of nature, variety is a prominent characteristic, and one chief source of pleasure and of admiration. Not only are the species of rocks and earths, fossils and minerals, plants and trees, insects and animals, birds and fishes,—numerous and diversified: but every specimen of every species, is distinct and individual. So is it with the human race. The features and limbs, the voice, the manners, and the disposition of every individual, are unlike. So that, while the prominent features of man are few, no two men are exactly similar. This wonderful variety is manifested in the mental constitution of different men. With faculties few in their number, and substantially alike in all men, we find, in all, the same individual distinctions, and the same "uniform variety."

Dr. Chalmers was not only an illustration of this characteristic peculiarity of mind,—he was an eminent exemplification of the in-

Digitized by Microsoft®

finite resources of Divine power and wisdom. He was a genius—a genius of a high order. But there have been many men equally great, and no doubt superior, as it regards any one endowment. He was remarkable in possessing, in an equally powerful development, faculties which have been hitherto deemed antagonistic. The head and the heart have seldom been proportionally endowed. Judgment and fancy; reason and imagination; abstraction and feeling; analysis and illustration; science and poetry; the severity of demonstration, and the nice discrimination of probabilities; subtle distinctions made plain by profuse and simple illustrations; vehemence of zeal, and generosity of feeling; lofty ambition, and unimpeachable candour; invincible love of truth, and the most perfect charity for error; greatness and goodness; sublimity and simplicity; angelic reach of thought, and childlike humility; visions and fancies beyond the reach of other men, and a spirit exuberant with companionable emotions; love of family, brotherhood, and denominational distinctions, and the most illimitable benevolence and complacent delight in good men of all denominations; a tenacious grasp of all the elements of Calvinistic theology, and a heartfelt embrace of all who held to the practical and fundamental verities of the evangelical system; a capacity to rise to regions of the loftiest speculation, and an activity that was ever ready to exert itself in the execution of its schemes, and the practice of its benevolent designs; fitness to become a venerated leader, and a hearty co-worker: to guide and to follow; to be every thing, and to be nothing; to speak, and to be silent; to feel at home with intellectual giants, and with prattling children and fireside chat;—these are qualities which past experience has regarded as incompatible and inharmonious, but which were all found combined in apparently easy and most happy adjustment, in the wonderful mental and moral constitution of Dr. Chalmers. He was great scientifically, great morally, great practically, great socially—

With genius high and lore profound,
And wit that loved to play, not wound;
And all the reasoning powers divine,
To penetrate, resolve, combine,
And feelings keen, and fancy's glow,—
All sleep with him who sleeps below:
Genius, and taste, and talent gone,
Forever tombed beneath the stone.*

*Speaking of Pascal, M. Villemain in his Eloge says, "Thus the advance of human knowledge produced a divorce between science and literature; and the enlargement of our understanding led to a separation in its pursuits; as an empire growing too extensive falls necessarily into independent provinces.

If we look at the individuals who have, at any time, endeavored to challenge an exemption from this common law of human weakness and limitation, we find our observation more confirmed. Where they have succeeded in achieving some exceptions, they have never brought them to bear upon the same points. Perfection in the one object has ever been gained at the expense of another, and the same mind has alternately exhibited mediocrity and greatness."

Digitized by Microsoft®

Dr. Chalmers impressed alike his readers, his hearers, his visitors, his companions, and his intimate friends, with a sense of his vast superiority. He inspired them all with a conviction at once of his greatness and of his goodness; and he sent every one away with ardent love and affection for his kindness, urbanity and condescension, and with admiration and awe for his preëminent genius. There was, too, in him, a wonderful adaptation of the outward and the inward—the body and the mind. The power and the purpose were of equal strength; and hence, more than almost any other man, he lived to see accomplished nearly all he had designed, to build all he had planned, and to complete all he had undertaken.

This remarkable comprehensiveness of Dr. Chalmers, may be illustrated in his character as a preacher, as a writer, and a prac-

Let us view him as a PREACHER. When fully entered upon the subject he had chosen, his genius kindled with the thoughts, until he swept along like the impetuous torrent, bearing everything before it and scattering its foam in all directions. The spray (at least in his earlier years,) *literally* issued from his mouth, too full of words, and too big with vehement utterance to allow the natural functions of the throat to be fully sustained. Like the breathless war-horse—fired with his rider's ardour, and dashing forward in pursuit of the retreating foe, as the trumpet sounds the loud notes of victory, his sides covered with foam, and his nostrils breathing forth fiery vapour,—so did this mighty champion of the cross rush upon his subject, and bear down his hearers with irresistible power. At the end of every paragraph, he stood breathless and exhausted, wiped from his brow the heavy sweat, adjusted his gown, changed the hand which he always kept upon his paper, while the other was clenched and elevated, and then, with an inflated chest, a fresh inspiration of zeal, and burning haste, bending forward over the pulpit, he plied his freed arm like some Cyclopean Vulcan, blew up the fire of his consuming thoughts into a torrid blaze, and then seizing upon the one idea which he wished to mould and fashion to his taste, he placed it upon his anvil, and while his hearers stood amazed at the Herculean strokes with which he battered it into shape, and the wondrous skill with which these accomplished the intended effect, they perceived the complete idea assuming shape and form before them, until it became radiant with sunbeams, and glistening with reflected light.

His eloquence a stream of living thought,
Gushing from out the fountain of the heart—
Now 'mong green pastures, making minstrelsy,
Sweet to the ear of cottage patriarch—
Now fearless, rushing from the dizzy brink,
Like mountain cataract, with thundering voice,
Bearing the breathless hearers midst the foam;
Then lulling into calm, midst rainbow hues,
As gently flowed from his persuasive tongue,
The promises of pleasantness and peace.

Digitized by Microsoft®

He was indeed a giant in force and power, physically as well as mentally. He stormed the citadel of the most impregnable and prejudiced heart, and forced a lodgment for the most unwelcome thoughts. He took his hearers captive, and led them at his will. The power of free thought, of voluntary intellection, and of inferential reasoning, seemed, for the time being, to be lost, as the wrapt listener sat in silent awe, fastened by the spell of the great enchanter. He was, indeed, a magician, and wondrous were his feats. When he propounded some startling utterance which it was his object to illustrate, although at first it seemed dark as Erebus, as his genius lighted up the illustration, you felt as if gazing at some pyrotechnic exhibition; which, as the fire extended, revealed more and more of the hidden design, until the letters, form, and figure came forth in characters of flame.*

As a speaker, Dr. Chalmers was anything but graceful, and as a composer he was often anything but chaste and finished, according to the rules of rhetoric and style. In any ordinary man, his

*Our description may appear exaggerated, to those who have not heard him. But it will be found confirmed in the representation of the writer in *Frazer's Magazine*, who was evidently a familiar: "We seem to see, and hear him still, bending forward, with his left hand on his manuscript, and his right clenched and elevated in energetic action, while the wildest expression of the eye mingles strangely with the solemn and almost austere determination of that large firm upper lip, and broad knotty forehead; and what lies written before him is enunciated in a voice husky, indeed, and tuneless, but very distinct and in the highest degree earnest and vehement, so as to make you almost feel the words literally smiting your ear, and fixing themselves in your flesh as if with fangs. There was something in 'Chalmers' more impassioned delivery that always reminded us of the whizzing of steel upon a rapidly revolving grindstone, with the sparks of fire flying off in showers. At all times there was a breadth and depth of cordiality in his utterance, which sent it to the hearts of his hearers at once. The gusto that he put into it was immense. The sound is still in our ear, of the hurricane of denunciatory fervor with which extending his arms aloft, and with his eyes shooting their fiercest gleams, he spoke that day, of the Lord sweeping the earth with the besom of destruction. We remember little besides of the sermon, except that the text was—'The kingdom of God cometh not with observation.' Probably the words, as was his custom, were again and again repeated, in the progress of the discourse. We recollect too how, when soon after he had commenced, a slight disturbance arose among some portion of the closely-packed and struggling people, he repressed it at once by a "*Hush!*" uttered quickly as he went on, and without raising his eye from the manuscript lying before him, in which his whole soul seemed to be absorbed—its commanding solemnity, nevertheless, nothing could surpass. And it seems as if we had listened to him but yesterday, as, after the sermon, while he panted with exhaustion, he read these verses from the noble old Scotch metrical version of the Psalms:—

'The floods, O Lord, have lifted,
They lifted up their voice;
The floods have lifted up their waves;
And made a mighty noise.
'But yet the Lord that is on high,
Is more of might by far
Than noise of many waters is,
Or great sea billows are.'"

manner would be grotesque, as of some rude ploughman in the character of a senatorial orator; and in any ordinary man, his style would be condemned and scouted as bombastic and uncouth. But he was all his own. There were none like him—none to be compared with him. His physical and mental powers were mutually adapted to each other—the sword was fitted to the sheath, and both fitted to the giant hand of this spiritual Guy of Warwick. In his style and thoughts, other men seemed like David in Goliath's armour.

We first heard Dr. Chalmers when he came some eighteen or twenty years ago, to open the new and elegant Presbyterian Church in Fisherwick place, Belfast, Ireland. The audience were admitted by tickets. That Sabbath was a proud day for Belfast. The streets leading to the Church, from his temporary residence, were lined with spectators eager to see—though they could not hear—the greatest living preacher. We were seated among the dense throng in the gallery near the pulpit. At the proper hour the speaker entered the Church, amid the suppressed whispers and eager looks of the vast multitude. He was medium in height; thick in proportion; with large head, broad features, wrinkled brow, grey eyes, large and half closed eyelids, thin, scattered and white hair, and wore the Genevan gown and bands. His utterance was thick and not very distinct—his tongue seeming to be of undue size, and this with his broad Scottish accent, and the simplicity of his words, gave to his reading of the Psalm and the Scriptures, and to the prayers, no promise of his coming eloquence. We were prepared in College fashion (which was then our *norma vivendi*) with our note book and pencil to make ourselves master of the sermon, and we did commence with his commencement. But before he had proceeded far, we found ourselves spell-bound—the pencil dropt from our hands—and the note book from its hold—our eyes were rivetted upon the speaker—our feelings were roused with his into tumult of emotion—and we found ourselves as when we have stood upon the margin of Niagra's boiling rapids, impelled as by an irresistible power to throw ourselves headlong—so mastered were we by the magic of his eloquence. During the delivery of a paragraph the congregation seemed not even to breathe, and when finished there was a universal murmur as every hearer prepared himself for another effort of attention. The late Dr. Young, Professor of Moral Philosophy, and who was remarkable for his strict decorum and his attention to rule and etiquette, was among the hearers, and at the end of each paragraph he turned round to a friend behind him, and with irresistible ardour exclaimed, "did you ever hear the like of that." As we left the church we felt exhausted and depressed as when "the voice of one that playeth well upon an instrument" is hushed, and we wandered home in silence and in sadness.

We have heard an anecdote of a celebrated Scottish divine who had not heard Dr. Chalmers. Learning that he was to preach a public discourse some miles distant on a Sabbath evening, he repaired there after his own labours, and pressed his way into the crowded church. When he saw the preacher enter and ascend the pulpit, and heard him, as he proceeded with the service—judging from what we have mentioned and particularly from the heavy, glazed eye, only brilliant when lighted up by the fire of his genius—he felt assuredly disappointed, and being confident that he was some substitute, would have been glad to have escaped. But when the preacher made some progress in his discourse all doubts vanished, and he felt that it was indeed the man. When Dr. Chalmers closed, as he thought, with unwonted brevity, (although the discourse had occupied above an hour,) he found himself unable to erect his frame, and then discovered, for the first time, that he had been unconsciously leaning forward upon the opposite seat on his *elbow*, while a brawny Scotchman had been resting his elbow in the hollow of his back.

Such was the eloquence which forced even from Francis Jeffrey, after hearing one of his speeches in the General Assembly, the enthusiastic declaration that he would walk twenty miles any day for such another feast of eloquence. “His mind,” says Mr. Turnbull, “was on fire with his subject, and transferred itself all glowing to the minds of his hearers. For the time being, all were fused into one great whole by the resistless might of his burning eloquence. In this respect Chalmers has been thought to approach nearer than any other man of modern times, the style and tone of Demosthenes. His manner had a torrent vehemence, a sea-like swell and sweep, a bannered tramp as of armies rushing to deadly conflict. He thundered out his gigantic periods, as if winged with volleyed lightning. The hearers were astonished, awed, carried away, lifted up as if on the wings of the wind, and borne withersoever the master listeth.”

The last time we heard Dr. Chalmers was in Edinburgh, in July, 1846, when we learned that he was to hold forth to his new Missionary congregation at the West Port. This is the name of one of the most destitute and outcast parts of Edinburgh, where a considerable portion of the 50,000 inhabitants, who are said never to attend public worship, reside. Here Dr. Chalmers made the last application of his “territorial principle.” He limited himself to this single district which he split up into sub-districts, having each a Christian agent attached to it, so that not a lane or family might be left without frequent and habitual visitation. By this “busy internal Missionary process” he had succeeded in collecting into a day school about 300 children under male and female teachers,—in forming a Sabbath congregation with nearly 100 members having the usual apparatus of Sabbath Schools and prayer meetings. And for the erection of an elegant building, including church and

school rooms, he had succeeded in securing ample subscriptions.

In the mean time, however, he occupied a part of the very building in which the infamous murderer Burke had carried on his infernal operations. It was with great difficulty we found our way through narrow and most filthy passages to an upper room, with low ceilings and dingy walls, filled with a most attentive auditory gathered from the humblest classes of society. Never did the preacher seem more wonderful than as he stood before that assembly, and with all his powerful eloquence dealt out to them, in such a form of statement and illustration as made them perfectly intelligible and deeply interesting, the great fundamental truths of the gospel. And never was the mighty efficacy of his genius and piety more clearly manifested than in the silent, subdued, earnest and intelligent appearance of his delighted congregation. The minister whom he had associated with him in this labor of love was present, and united with Dr. Chalmers in insisting upon one of the two divines from these Southern States, who were present, occupying the pulpit in the evening, which was readily done by the Rev. Dr. Scott of New Orleans.

As a WRITER, Dr. Chalmers was equally remarkable. He is like no other writer. His style, his manner, his words, his plan are his own. He had, unquestionably, many defects, and cannot be selected as a perfect model. His ideas absorb and fill his soul, and the only end aimed at in his language, is the communication of these ideas to other minds, in a manner so clear and effective, as not only to secure their lodgment, but to impart to them an assimilating and creating power. This, to our minds, is the chief characteristic of Chalmers as a writer. Whatever may be his views, he is sure to make them plain and impressive to his reader, who is like a besieged castle surrounded by enemies and incessantly battered with the missiles of the assailants. The readers of Dr. Chalmers cannot escape from his fire—they must front his onset until compelled to yield a glad and willing surrender to his overpowering argument and his irresistible illustrations. If one attack fails to unman or subdue, another is forthwith made from some new and unlooked for quarter. If one demonstration is insufficient to produce conviction, another follows it. And if the wind and tempest of his long-sounding arguments, do not uncover the prejudiced and cloaked reader, the sunshine of his radiant illustrations, will gradually melt him down. To most readers there is in the style of Dr. Chalmers, especially in his more energetic passages, a redundancy of words, of illustrations, and of argument, but all receive the full, clear, and perfect comprehension of some new, or forgotten, or misjudged truth. Other writers of genius seem like pearl-divers, as in the depth of ocean-thought they obscurely and with panting breath, seek their gems and present them still covered with hard and slimy incrustations. Chalmers, whoever, gives the gem

Digitized by Microsoft®

itself, separated and polished, and appropriately set in some suitable adornment. Other writers of genius appear like cloud-capt mountains wrapt in fog, and sublime in their dim and half-discerned obscurity ; but Chalmers claims our admiration and our awe by the simple majesty of his Alpine heights. The strength of genius is best displayed in its *suggestive* power over other minds ; and for ourselves, we must confess that no other writer—prose or poetical—has had the same power as Chalmers, to stir up the waters of our soul and cause them to flow out in full and easy streams. From no other writer have we risen so disencumbered of the style and manner of his thoughts ;—so prepared according to our ability to enter upon a work of intellectual effort. The want of such a stimulant to awaken the sensibilities of a dormant or fatigued spirit every one must have felt, and to those who have not made the experiment, we would recommend a preparatory reading, (and if aloud, the better,) of some pregnant and glowing page of Dr. Chalmers' works.

Nor is Dr. Chalmers less wonderful when regarded as a PRACTITIONER. He was not only a great commander, but also a great warrior. He was not only a statesman, but also a most energetic functionary. He was not only a noble Captain, but himself able on occasion, to take the helm or stand by the ropes, or even mount the topmost heights amid the fiercest sweep of the hurricane. The moral influence of Dr. Chalmers, can never be measured by the scan of human observation. To appreciate it, we should first have a clear perception of the condition of the established church in Scotland when he entered it and when he left it ;—the tone and spirit he imparted to the pulpit in every part of the United Kingdom ; and the onward swell of a pure, a simple, a living and a warm-hearted ministry to which he gave the impulse ;* the shame, compunction, and repentance enkindled by his appeals in the hearts of many a worldly patron ; the gradual increase of an evangelical minority which he found small, faint, and buffeted, until it became the overwhelming majority in every

* See an article in the London Evangelical Magazine on "The Chalmersian Era in Theology." "It is unquestionable that in the end he gave to a large portion of the rising talent of his native country a Theological direction." *Frazer's Magazine*. His entrance among the cold formalism of moderate Theology in the University of St. Andrews, when appointed professor, is thus described by the same writer. The right of appointment was with the remaining professors of the United College, eight in number ; and their election of Chalmers, was certainly the most dashing and eccentric movement that had been ventured upon by the Senatus Academicus since it has had an existence. We believe that people, when they heard of it, were generally inclined to conjecture that the thing must have been gone into when the learned body were hardly in their sober senses ; but too much learning, perhaps, must have driven them suddenly all mad. It was as if a fleet of merchantmen, with highly combustible cargoes, seeing a fire-ship drifting about, instead of keeping as far out of its way as they could, had deliberately set about towing it 'into the midst of them.

Presbytery and Synod, and in the General Assembly itself; the zeal for home and foreign Missionary labor, he set agoing and fanned into an undying and ever brightening flame; the two hundred additional churches for the poor and neglected, which, by dint of personal journeys and laborious toil, preaching and begging, he himself erected; the glorious struggle maintained under his guidance by the unprotected church, against principalities and powers in high places, and against a hireling minority, within the church itself; and the still more glorious triumph of a free and disfranchised church, when in the face of all apparent inconsistency and of all earthly endurance, combining in his person the separate characters of Moses and of Joshua, he led forth 500 ministers with their elders and people from an Egyptian bondage and planted them in their own free and fruitful Canaan.* And when we shall have traced out all the way by which that church has been led from step to step, in its onward march until we now see it with its 725 churches either built or in progress,† its hundreds of manse and school-houses and teachers; its splendid College buildings, apparatus and Library; its sustentation fund supplying a moderate income and support to every pastor;‡ its extensive missions; its churches which, in the midst of every other burden, failed *not one of them* during the past year, to contribute to the missionary enterprises; when we have fully appreciated these moral miracles which he achieved—then may we estimate the Herculean powers by which all this was achieved, and by which unity, energy, and vitality were communicated to every partner in the mighty undertaking, so that, guided by his wisdom, and impelled by his energy, they have “performed both moral and monetary wonders to which modern history supplies no parallel.”

Such was Dr. Chalmers. His breadth of mind was commensurate to his unequal breadth of forehead. He was, in the original and literal sense of the word, MAGNANIMOUS. GREATNESS OF SOUL was perhaps more truly than any other trait, the distinguishing characteristic of this prince of divines.

Of this characteristic we cannot forbear alluding to one or two exemplifications; and the first is his universal charity and good will. “He was the most loveable of all living men,” because he was the most loving. He was what Carlyle calls “a true man”

* “Wherever Dr. Chalmers is, there,” said Sir George Sinclair, “is the Church of Scotland.”

† See Minutes of Evidence before Parliament, p. 136.

‡ The Sustentation Fund was established and presided over at first by Dr. Chalmers, with what success every one knows. And we have no doubt but that through the divine blessing, it will fully realize his expectations, and be the means of maintaining and spreading a preached gospel in the land. The Sustentation Fund is one of Dr. Chalmers' great legacies to his country, and it behooves us, as we would fulfil our duty as a Church, and do honor to his memory, vigorously to support and cherish it.—See *Monthly Statement for July, 1847*.

—"a man of great soul as well as of great mind." "Wondrous goodness has therefore been termed the prime feature of his picture," and it was in "his mighty heart he most surpassed all his fellows." Good will to man was the inscription on his serene and benignant countenance. "Like him who best knew what was in man, but was so bent on making him better, that the kindness of his errand counteracted the keenness of his intuition, and filled his mouth with gracious words---there was so much inherent warmth in his temperament, and so much of heaven-imparted kindness in his Christianity, that love to man was his vital air, and good offices to man his daily bread." "With magnetic alertness all that was Christian in himself darted forth to all that was Christian in another." He had reduced the gospel to its system, and that system to its elements, and where he could find these he was at once prepared to recognize the valid title to the Christian character and to the Christian's love. He had accurately distinguished the fundamentals of Theology as a SYSTEM OF GRACE and as an everlasting covenant, and the fundamentals of that scheme as A PLAN OF "PRACTICAL AND PERSONAL SALVATION." He had walked about Zion, and marked well those "bulwarks" which guard the outposts of organized Christianity, and the principles which constitute true church-manship, as well as those which enter into the essence of a living, active and devoted piety. Without limiting, or in any degree curtailing, the platform of sound and orthodox Calvinism, he had extended to its utmost limits the platform of Christian evangelism and of Christian brotherhood. Tenacious of all truth, he was equally tenacious of all peace. The champion of controverted and condemned dogmas, he was also the mightiest defender of evangelical union, intercommunion and co-operation. Love to Christians of every evangelical denomination was with him as much a passion as a principle. It was the easy, natural, and invariable outgoing of his soul. It was developed in kind actions as well as in kind words. What in other Christians is the dictate of conviction and the result of a deep sense of obligation, was in him the instinct of his spiritual nature; what others feel that they *ought* to do and must do in consistency with the principles they confess, he cherished from the intuitive impulse of a Catholic spirit. And he has left behind him living monuments of this true philanthropic spirit, in the enlarged liberality of the free church of Scotland; in the North British Review *quorum magna pars fuit* and which is based upon the platform of evangelic Christian literature; and in the very last paper he drew up containing a plan for national education which might harmonize all religious parties.

But to our minds a more striking exemplification of Dr. Chalmers's breadth of soul and comprehensiveness of spirit is given in his noble vindication of this country, and especially of its Southern States, against the furious fanaticism of popular and

ecclesiastical abolition outcry. In its investigation of truth, the human mind is easily warped by self interest and prejudice, and by a superficial, and partial exhibition of the real facts in the case. This is, in an especial manner, true where the subject of investigation is one remote from the immediate interest of the inquirer; still more where it is associated with a people towards whom there may exist feelings of national jealousy;—and still more when one view of the subject has, for these and other reasons, become the watch-word of popular excitement. Now just such to a British mind is the subject of American Slavery. It is enveloped in the mists of ignorant prejudice and national pride. It is confounded with British Colonial Slavery, from which, however, in all its essential relations, it is entirely and manifestly different. Its real character is unknown. No distinction is made between the civil condition of slavery in itself considered, and every existing law, custom and habit which may have grown up under it, and every case of cruelty and hardship which may occur in connection with it. To have a legal right to the life-services of men—who are of course to be used and employed as men,—is confounded with an absolute right claimed and enforced to the body, soul, and spirit of every slave, to have and to use them for the mere convenience and interest of the owner. And the guilt which ought, properly to attach to an unchristian abuse of this right of service is most wrongfully and sinfully attributed to the legal claim and to the social condition by which such service is held.

The difficulties, therefore, in the way of a British mind in forming a correct judgment on the subject of American Slavery are almost *insurmountable*. And hence we find that the most pure and lofty spirits are found incapable of resisting the pressure of opinion, and are willing to sustain their influence at home by joining in the outcry against their brethren abroad. In their position nothing is easier than with the help of false maxims and one-sided representations, and a reference to their own civil polity, to frame an argument against their American brethren apparently irresistible, and thus to give conscience the opportunity of throwing its sacred influence around the otherwise unpardonable and rude severity of their hard and ungodly speeches; and to be able to make any allowances for this state of things, and to regard with any charity the opinions entertained and expressed, concerning Christian men and Christian churches in America, by the generality even of British Christians, one must have been himself immersed in the same mist of prejudice.

It was, however, through all this fog and smoke the lofty mind of Chalmers was enabled to send its penetrating glance, and to form, to a great extent, a correct Christian and philosophical estimate of this grave question.

With all his economic objections to slavery, as a system of

state policy, and social life ; with his deep convictions that it exposed its subjects to greater evils than other systems ; and with his most sanguine expectations of its ultimate annihilation ;—while we say—as was to be expected from his position—Dr. Chalmers cherished these views—he, nevertheless, saw clearly the fundamental errors on which abolitionism is based. That slavery *in itself considered, is a necessary and heinous sin*—that it ought therefore, to exclude those who live under its system, and sustain the relation of master, from the communion of other churches, and from all claim to the character of Christians and Christian churches themselves ; and that this system, being essentially sinful, ought *at once, and at all hazards*, to be done away ; these positions, which are the axiomatic data of the abolitionists,—were the subjects of most unqualified condemnation by Dr. Chalmers. With the holders of them—as he energetically assured us—he had no sympathy, and in their proceedings he had no confidence. Their principles he regarded as fanatical and visionary, and their conduct as foolish, suicidal, and disastrous. Sin was contracted, in his opinion, not by holding the civil relation of a slave-holder, but by abusing that relation to the commission of sin or the omission of duty. And “the business of Christianity,” he regarded as having to do, not with civil or political institutions, (as slavery unquestionably is,) but with persons and with ecclesiastical institutions, and that the object of these last is to operate directly and proximately with the most wholesome effect upon the consciences and character of PERSONS. At our own request, he put these sentiments in writing, and sent them to us, to be made use of as we desired, in the following letter, which we give entire ;

“EDIN, 25th Sept., 1844.

“MY DEAR SIR—I do not need to assure you how little I sympathize with those who—because slavery happens to prevail in the Southern States of America—would unchristianize that whole region ; and who even carry their extravagance so far as to affirm that, so long as it subsists, no fellowship or interchange of good offices should take place with its churches, or its ministers.

“As a friend to the universal virtue and liberty of mankind, I rejoice in the prospect of those days when slavery shall be banished from the face of the earth ; but most assuredly the wholesale style of excommunication, contended for by some, is not the way to hasten forward this blissful consummation.

“Few things would afford me greater satisfaction than to hear of a commencement in your country, of that process by which the labor of freemen might be substituted for that of slaves. As I mentioned to you, I was exceedingly struck, so far back as twenty-five years ago, by the description of such a process in Humbolt's Travels through Spanish South America. This was long anterior to the abolition of slavery in the British Colonies ;

Digitized by Microsoft®

and such was the confidence I then felt in its efficacy, that I ventured to draw out a sketch of the Spanish plan which, if adopted at the time, might have ensured a far safer and even earlier emancipation than took place afterwards. You will find my account of it in the twelfth volume of my works, from page 395 and onwards.

"I have not been able to engage in any sort of public business since I had the pleasure of meeting with you, but I observe that in our Assembly's Commission, a few weeks back, the subject of American slavery was entertained. I do hope that the Resolutions which they have adopted will prove satisfactory.

"I felt it a great acquisition that I have made your acquaintance. We owe you much, and I trust the ministers of the Free Church of Scotland will ever entertain a grateful sense of your able and disinterested services.

"Do believe me, my dear sir,

"Yours most respectfully and truly,

"THOMAS CHALMERS.

"To Rev. _____

"N. B.—I shall be happy at all times to hear from you."

The publication of this letter led to a demand made upon Dr. Chalmers by the Anti-Slavery Society of Edinburgh, for a disclaimer of the letter or a fuller expression of opinion. This he gave in a letter on American slave-holding, of which a copy lies before us issued by the Belfast Anti-Slavery Committee, with their violent comments upon it. From this correspondence also arose that fierce onset made upon the Free Church by the combined abolition fanaticism of Scotland; and against which Dr. Cunningham has so nobly presented the irresistible shield of christian truth and charity.

In this second letter Dr. Chalmers, repeating the sentiments already quoted, says, "Our understanding of Christianity is, that it deals not with civil or political institutions, but that it deals with persons and with ecclesiastical institutions, and that the object of these last is to operate directly and proximately with the most wholesome effect on the consciences and the character of persons. In conformity with this view, a purely and rightly administered church will exclude from the ordinances NOT ANY MAN, AS A SLAVE-HOLDER, but every man, whether slave-holder or not, as licentious, as intemperate, as dishonest. Slavery, like war, is a great evil—but as it does not follow that a soldier cannot be a Christian, neither does it follow that there may not be a Christian slave-holder." * * * "It holds experimentally true that within its limits." * * * "THE MOST EXALTED SPECIMENS OF PIETY AND WORTH ARE TO BE FOUND." * * * "Neither war nor slavery is incompatible with the personal Christianity of those who have actually and personally to do with them. Distinction ought to be made between the character of a system and the character of the persons whom circumstances have implicated therewith. We hope

that our free church will never deviate to the right or the left from the path of undoubted principles. But we hope, on the other hand, that she will not be frightened from her propriety, or forced by clamor of any sort to outrun her own conviction, so as to adopt, at the bidding of other parties, A NEW AND FACTITIOUS PRINCIPLE of administration, for which she can see no authority in Scripture, and of which she can gather no trace in the history or practice of the churches in Apostolic times. But I must repeat my conviction, that slavery will be not at all shaken,—IT WILL BE STRENGTHENED AND STAND ITS GROUND, if assailed through the medium of that most questionable and ambiguous principle which the abolitionists are now laboring to force upon our acceptance, even that slave-holding is in itself a ground of exclusion from the Christian Sacraments. . . . Not only is there A WRONG PRINCIPLE involved in the demands which these abolitionists now make on the Free Church of Scotland, it is HURTFUL IN EFFECT. Should we concede to their demands, then, speaking in the terms of our opinion, we incur the discredit (and in proportion to that discredit we damage our usefulness as a church,) of having given in,—and at the bidding of another party—to A FACTITIOUS AND NEW PRINCIPLE, WHICH NOT ONLY WANTS, BUT WHICH CONTRAVENES THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE AND OF APOSTOLIC EXAMPLE, AND INDEED HAS ONLY BEEN HEARD OF IN CHRISTENDOM WITHIN THESE FEW YEARS, AS IF GOTTEN UP FOR AN OCCASION, INSTEAD OF BEING DRAWN FROM THE REPOSITORIES OF THAT TRUTH WHICH IS IMMUTABLE AND ETERNAL—EVEN THE PRINCIPLE THAT NO SLAVE-HOLDER SHOULD BE ADMITTED TO A PARTICIPATION IN THE CHRISTIAN SACRAMENTS.”

And in concluding this letter, Dr. Chalmers says,*—“We admire the practical wisdom of the American Board in the deliverance which they have come to, and in which they state, ‘that the Board was established and incorporated for the express purpose of propagating the gospel in heathen lands, by supporting missionaries and diffusing the knowledge of the scriptures;—that the Board had confined themselves to this one great object;—and that a regard to our sacred trust requires us to pursue this object with undiminished zeal, and not to turn aside from it or mix any other concerns with it. And we still think that the Lord of missions and the Saviour of the world will approve of this deliberate purpose of ours and this course of action, and would frown upon us if we depart from it.’ ”

Such were the views of Dr. Chalmers on this most delicate and difficult question; and greatly do we rejoice that the man who was regarded by the united voice of the Free Church as most competent to fill the Chair of Dr. Chalmers and to wield its mighty influence, has adopted both the principles and the spirit of his great predecessor on this subject, and that with his mantle of

*See similar language in his pamphlet on the Evangelical Alliance.

honor, Dr. Cunningham has received from above many of his gifts and graces. We rejoice that there is a CUNNINGHAM ready to stand in the place and maintain the principles of the illustrious Chalmers, and to confront *eloquence*, ribaldry, and popularity, in sustaining *right* against *might*, mercy against acrimony, truth against misrepresentation, and the cause of the stranger and defenceless against their slanderous and unjust judges. Sure we are that in the plaudits of an approving conscience, the admiration of the candid and impartial, and the love and gratitude of the whole American Zion, he will be amply remunerated for the loss of that flattery which might have echoed round him, as it does round others, had he sacrificed to the interests of party what he owed to the interests of mankind and to the glory of God.

But we proceed to remark, that in Dr. Chalmers we have AN ILLUSTRIOUS EXEMPLIFICATION OF THE SOVEREIGNTY AND TRANSFORMING EFFICACY OF DIVINE GRACE, and a triumphant demonstration of the truth that the Gospel is the power of God.

Just think of a planetary orb rushing forward in its course at the rate of thousands of miles per second, and at the same time while propelled by the irresistible law of motion, held fast in its course by the equal powers of centrifugal and centripetal attraction—suppose, we say, this immense body all at once, and without any convulsive movement, turned round in its orbit, and wheeling with even accelerated speed in a directly opposite direction. When you have conceived this, then you will be prepared to appreciate the nature and extent of that change which took place in Dr. Chalmers, when, by the grace of God, silently but irresistibly working in his heart, he was brought to a pause in the race of ambition and self-indulgent speculation, and led to consecrate to the service and glory of that divine Redeemer of whom he had previously such lifeless and inadequate conceptions, his body, soul, and spirit as a living, a reasonable, and a most willing sacrifice.

His path was as a comet in the heavens ;
He through the fields of science swept along,
His orbit all his own, till far beyond
The gaze of common men led by the power
Of Heaven's attractiveness, his smitten heart—
Smitten with dying love—received new stores
Of truth and joy, and holiness and peace,

We cannot realise the change in Dr. Chalmers, better than by perusing the following extract from his first publication,—long since out of print—in which he repelled the opinion of Professor Playfair, that clergymen had not time to become adepts in science.* It is plain from the whole tone and bearing of this

*For this information see Fraser's Magazine. The same facts are attributed to the Rev. J. McKenzie, in the Visitor or Monthly Instructor, published by the London Tract Society, for October, 1847, p. 364-5. Mr. McKenzie says that on

first pamphlet, that when it was written and published Dr. Chalmers had no notion that any distinction he might attain to in the world would ever be derived from, or connected with his clerical character. He insists, almost in so many words, upon his profession being considered as a mere accident, or at any rate as a circumstance of no more importance than the colour of his coat. "Clergymen," he goes on to contend, "are not accountable for being clergymen: the choice of their profession often depends on the most accidental circumstances, a whim of infancy or the most capricious destination of parents." He therefore speaks of his being a clergyman as misfortune, indignantly deprecating and protesting against the cruelty of people looking down upon him for what he cannot help. His estimate of the work and duty of the ministry at that period will be evident from the following quotation:

"The author of this pamphlet,'—Dr. Chalmers here writes with the honesty and intrepidity which were part of his being, —'the author of this pamphlet can assert from what to him is the highest of all authority, the authority of his own experience, that, after the satisfactory discharge of his parish duties, a minister may enjoy five days in the week of uninterrupted leisure, for the prosecution of any science in which his taste may dispose him to engage. In as far, then, as the command of time is concerned, it will be difficult to find a situation in the country more favorable to the free and uninterrupted exercises of the understanding. Mr. Playfair may smile contempt when I say that a clergyman is more favorably situated for the successful prosecution of the mathematics than a mathematical professor. For one half of the year the professor has three different classes to attend to, and we apprehend that the fatigues and the preparations of teaching will be found to leave little time and less energy for those higher exercises of his mind which are to add to the stock of his information, and to raise him above the level of his present acquirements. A minister has five days in the week for his own free and independent exertions.'

"And then he expatiates for a couple of pages more upon the 'almost no consumption of intellectual effort' which there is in the peculiar employments of a parish minister."

Subsequently to this period Dr. Chalmers was so far smitten with the warlike spirit that prevailed as to enrol in a volunteer corps, and a very curious anecdote is told of the astonishment created on one occasion, by his rapid transition from his clerical to his military character on a Sabbath day.

Such was Dr. Chalmers in his spiritual character at the age of twenty five, and as the minister of Kilmany.

the above occasion Dr. Chalmers was himself the candidate for the Chair of Mathematics in the University of Edinburgh, and that it was in reference to him Playfair made his representations to the Lord Provost of Edinburgh.

Twenty years after this, when at the height of his influence as an evangelical leader, he was twitted in the General Assembly with a reference to his former views and habits. "It was," says Mr. Mackenzie, "in a debate on the question of pluralities, or unions of a pastoral charge with an academical chair, in the General Assembly of May 1825, in which Dr. Chalmers warmly espoused the negative side, that a clergyman of the opposite party, in order to convict him of inconsistency, charged him with the authorship of this pamphlet, and quoted the above, along with other sentences from it. Every eye in the crowded house and overflowing gallery was fixed upon Dr. Chalmers, who sat unmoved till his assailant had concluded his harangue. As soon as he had ended, he arose and for a few moments the silence of intense expectation suspended the gazing audience. In his reply, which was instant and overwhelming, Dr. Chalmers acknowledged that it was his own production; and after explaining the circumstances which had called it forth, he said in reference to the sentiment therein expressed, "Alas! sir, so I thought in my ignorance and pride. I have now no reserve in declaring that the sentiment was wrong, and that in giving utterance to it I penned what was most outrageously wrong. Strangely blinded that I was! What sir is the object of mathematical science? Magnitude, and the proportions of magnitude. But, then, sir, I had forgotten two magnitudes. I thought not of the littleness of time, I recklessly thought not of the greatness of eternity!"

"It was," says the writer in Fraser's Magazine, "humbly yet proudly spoken, for the speaker felt, while the words fell from his lips that he was acquitting himself nobly, and lifting himself to an immeasurable height, even while thus assuming the tone and attitude of sorrow and self-condemnation, above his humiliated assailant. We never witnessed any effect of eloquence like that produced by those few solemn sentences, thus firmly and dignifiedly pronounced, in circumstances that would have covered most men with abashment and confusion. They were followed by an universal storm of applause, in the midst of which the ashamed and mortified blunderer, whose vulgar abuse had been so manfully encountered and so splendidly repelled, endeavored in vain to make himself heard even in apology for his luckless onset. His voice, repeatedly raised, was as often drowned in an outcry of aversion and disgust."

Surely therefore when we "look on this picture and on that,"—when we contemplate Dr. Chalmers as he was and as he became—we are not extravagant in saying that it is only in the Apostle Paul we find a case perfectly analogous. Both in their unconverted state were exemplary in their personal morality—in their attention to all the outward services of religion—and in their laborious and zealous discharge of the duties of the ministry,

so far as it bears upon the moralities of life—and both were, by an act of free, sovereign, and omnipotent grace, led to the spiritual comprehension of saving truth and to the adoring worship of “the Lord their Righteousness.”*

The circumstances connected with his conversion are thus given by Mr. Mackenzie; “About the year 1809 he was engaged in writing the article, ‘Christianity,’ for Brewster’s ‘Edinburgh Encyclopædia,’ and it was in the course of his studies connected with that work, his perusal of the lives of the primitive Christians, but more especially of Wilberforce’s ‘Practical view,’ that he began to perceive that the religion of Christ was something very different from what he had hitherto imagined. When in this transition state, he fell into a severe illness which, under God, was the means, along with the counsels of a pious dissenting minister who visited him on his sick-bed, of consummating the blessed change; and great was the surprise and joy of many, when on re-appearing in his pulpit, he boldly avowed his previous ignorance, and preached the doctrine he had once despised.”

When thus experimentally acquainted with this “great salvation” it became to him, what it did to the Apostle Paul, his theme, his triumph, and his joy. His previous glory he counted but shame, his attainments dross, and his knowledge vanity. He now knew “nothing among men but Jesus Christ and him crucified.” He “gloried only in the cross,” and “this one thing he did”—“he lived not unto himself but unto Him who died for him,” and who had “called him by his grace.”

The transformation thus effected was as conspicuous to others, as it was clear and undoubted to himself. He became a new creature, and both in his doctrine, conversation, and conduct gave manifest proof to all around him that he testified to the things which he had both seen and felt. His own reference to this change is one of the most striking passages of his works, eminently illustrative of his bold and fearless spirit, and a noble testimony to the efficacy of the gospel as the only efficient moral regenerator of society. This will be found in his “Farewell Address to the inhabitants of Kilmany,” which contains a beautiful summary of his future pulpit ministrations. “And here, says he, I cannot but record the effect of an actual though undesigned experiment, which I prosecuted upwards of twelve years amongst you. For the greater part of that time, I could expatiate on the meanness of dishonesty, on the villainy of falsehood, on the despicable arts of calumny—in a word, on all those deformities of character, which awaken the natural indignation of the human

* This analogy has, I since find, presented itself to the Rev. Mr. Lothian, of St. Andrews, in his sketch of Dr. Chalmers’ life. See the Christian Witness, London, August 1847. “There was,” says he, and he speaks from much personal knowledge, “a striking similarity between the characters of the Apostle Paul and the late Dr. Chalmers.”

heart against the pests and disturbers of society. Now could I, upon the strength of these warm expostulations, have got the thief to give up his stealing, and the evil speaker his censoriousness, and the liar his deviations from truth, I should have felt all the repose of one who had gotten his ultimate object.

“It never occurred to me that all this might have been done, and yet every soul of every hearer have remained in full alienation from God ; and that even could I have established in the bosom of one who stole such a principle of abhorrence at the meanness of dishonesty that he was prevailed upon to steal no more, he might still have retained a heart as completely unturned to God, and as totally unpossessed of a principle of love to Him as before. In a word, though I might have made him a more upright and honorable man, I might have left him as destitute of the essence of religious principle as ever. 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 of God, while I was inattentive to the way in which this enmity is dissolved even by the free offer on the one hand, and the believing acceptance on the other, of the gospel salvation ; while Christ, through whose blood the sinner, who by nature stands afar off, is brought near to the Heavenly Lawgiver whom he has offended, was scarcely ever spoken of, or spoken of in such a way as stripped him of all the importance of his character and offices, even at this time I certainly did press the reformations of honour, and truth, and integrity, among my people ; but I never even heard of any such reformations being effected amongst them. If there was anything at all brought about in this way, it was more than I ever got any account of. 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 habits of my parishioners. And it was not till I got impressed with the utter alienation of the heart in 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 I took the scriptural way of laying the method of reconciliation before them ; 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 mediatorship to all who ask him, was set before them as the unceasing object of their dependence and their prayers ; it was not, in one word, till the contemplations of my people were turned to those great and essential elements in the business of a soul providing for its interest with God, and the concerns of its eternity, that I ever heard of any of those subordinate reformations which I aforetime made the earnest and the zealous, but I am afraid, at the same time, ultimate object of my early ministrations.”

“You,” he adds, “have at least taught me that to preach

Digitized by Microsoft®

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 I may be enabled to carry into a wider theatre, and to bring with all the powers of its subduing efficacy upon the vices of a more crowded population.”† In Dr. Chalmers, then we see the wonder-working influence of that divine grace which can “subdue all things unto itself,” make even the most towering and lofty intellects to “become as little children” and to “bring all their gifts” to the humble shrine of the despised and rejected Saviour. And in him we see also that the hearts which are thus given to God to be transformed “by the renewing of the Holy Ghost.” He gives back again to their possessors enlarged, elevated and enabled.

Upon the hill of Zion strong he stood,
And like the eagle conscious of his strength
Soared into realms unknown, and soaring, breathed
A heavenly atmosphere, where keen his eye
Beheld a purer light than ere was seen
By proud astronomer, in plenitude
Of power, with ready aid of skilful lens,
Or help of new constructed telescope.
On earth a citizen of heaven, he looked
Down from the battlements of lofty thought
Upon imprisoned minds encamped below;
Nor looked he heedlessly. Ah, no!—he felt
The weight of other souls upon his own.
Dark lanes and wretched dwellings of the poor
Scaped not his keen and territorial search.
To those who came he gave, and unto them
Who would not come he went, e’en like to Him
Whose words the common people gladly heard.
He shone, a light amidst terrestrial gloom,
Bright and more bright, unto the perfect day.

Time will only permit us further to contemplate in Dr. Chalmers THE SUPERIORITY OF MORAL, OVER INTELLECTUAL, POLITICAL, OR MILITARY GREATNESS, and to learn

That not in *mental*, but in *moral* truth
God excellence placed, and only to the good,
To virtue, granted happiness alone.

It was the saying of the sage and “*naturally*” wise Cicero, that, “the heart is the source of moral greatness,” and that, “no man

† See also his *Essays on the Efficacy of Missions* in *Wks.*, vol. 12, p. 251. In the preface to that volume published within a few years, he says, speaking of the moral elevation of the people, “For it is unnecessary to state it as our conviction, that, to carry this cheering anticipation into effect, the education, as comprehensive of what is taught both in churches and in schools, must necessarily be a Christian education. The present unholy attempts to dis sever the scholarship from the religion of our people, if not counteracted by the friends of Christianity, will land only in the derangement of all our existing social relations, and utter discomfort of the people themselves.”

was ever great without a certain divine influence.”* The efficient cause of true greatness, he places in this divinely implanted principle by which men are elevated above the world and its mean, selfish, and dishonorable motives, and enabled to resist temptation, encounter and overcome difficulties, and perform actions for the good of others not only of great magnitude but of extreme difficulty.† How bright the anticipation of that perfect gospel which teaches that truth is in order to goodness;—that goodness is greatness;—that resemblance to the moral image and character of God is the foundation of goodness;—and that “peace on earth and good will to men” are the fruits and evidences of goodness. Compared with this *moral* greatness what is “all Greek, all Roman fame,” and how peerlessly do its ancient representatives, Plato and Socrates, outshine the glittering show, and all the pomp and circumstance of an Alexander, a Hannibal, or even the fame of an Aristotle? And when the vain pageantry of earth shall vanish before the splendour of eternal day, how will the torch-light of all human fame be lost amid the unfading and ever-brightening glory of true moral greatness.

And if, as Cicero also teaches, the highest and perfect glory of a man consists of these three things; “when the multitude love him, when they have confidence in him, and when they deem him worthy of special honour and admiration,”‡ how far even in this life, does true moral greatness draw after it the heart-homage, love and admiration of every right minded man, beyond either intellectual or military greatness. Well may the tribute paid to the great Athenian sage and Father of Philosophy, be ascribed to Chalmers.

“He in every street
Dealt priceless treasure. Goodness his delight,
Wisdom his wealth, and glory his reward,
Deep through the human heart, with playful art
His simple doctrine stole, as into truth
And serious deeds he smiled the laughing race
Taught moral happy life, what'er can bless,
Or grace mankind; and WHAT HE TAUGHT HE WAS.”

“No man, in our day, was ever followed by such crowds of admirers, or was exposed to a more severe ordeal of adulation; all ranks and denominations vied with each other in doing homage to his genius, and the highest nobles of the land paid court, both in public and in private, to the humble presbyter of the Scottish church.” We see him invited to London by members of the established church as the champion of their endangered Zion

* *Nemo vir magnus sine aliqui divino unquam fuit.*

† *De officiis lib. I, cap. 20.*

‡ *Summa igitur et perfecta gloria constat ex tribus his:—Si diligit multitudo—si fidem habet—si cum admiratione quadam honore dignos putat.—De officiis, lib. II, cap. 9.*

Digitized by Microsoft®

against the levelling principles of a reckless and unbelieving parliament, and listened to for days by the highest dignitaries and nobles of the realm. We see him chosen by that same church as one of the honoured few to whom were given the emolument and the fame of the Earl of Bridgewater's treatises. We see him enrolled as an honorary member of the Royal Institute of France—and his character and opinions deferred to by the mighty minds of all countries, as one of "the purest, greatest and most self-sacrificing patriots of the 19th century."

Dr. Chalmers has "rested from his labours, but his works follow him." They abide forever. In his writings—which have become the classic eloquence of every religious denomination in every land; in his posthumous works, which have commanded a greater price than those of any other author, in ancient or modern times, and which constitute a rich legacy to his family and to the world;—in the stupendous monument of a Free Church destined, we trust, to be the model church of Europe, and of which he was the architect, and to no small extent the builder; in the spontaneous outburst of national respect which was exhibited in a funeral procession embracing one hundred thousand persons,* of whom, besides the members of the Free Church Assembly, then in session, from eight to nine hundred were ministers and elders

*"The estimates taken of the numbers joining in the funeral procession must fall very short of the truth—the line having been very much compressed whilst at Morningside. The *Witness* says there could not be fewer than 100,000. It is difficult to state the number of persons in the procession, especially as considerable numbers fell into it by the way, and a large body were drawn up on the road leading up to the cemetery. We understand that there were from 800 to 900 ministers and elders in St. George's Free Church alone, in addition to the members of the Assembly. It would be still more difficult to compute the number of spectators who, without formally joining in the procession, were there, nevertheless, from respect and regard to the memory of the dead. On all such occasions there are numbers of mere sight-seers; but on this we were struck with the solemn feeling that seemed to pervade the great multitudes that lined the streets or covered the parks, from which the procession could be seen—and there were many evidences of the deepest concern for the loss that had been sustained, and seemed to be that day ratified and sealed.

The number of gentlemen in the procession at the cemetery must have greatly exceeded 2,000, and it was remarkable for several reasons. It embraced the most distinguished professional men in the Scottish metropolis, who were there to evince their regard for a giant in intellect, in literature, and in moral worth, whose words and writings were never again to be embodied in their discussion.

It consisted of ministers from all evangelical communions, who, laying aside over the tomb all their causes of difference, met there to express their sense of a great apparent calamity, and carry to his grave the chief man amongst Scottish theologians.

It was thoroughly representative. Those ministers were gathered from all the districts of the land—from lonely parishes in distant counties—from the islands of the sea—from lowland straths and vales—from busy villages—from crowded towns, and cities densely pressed with human beings—and yet they were all thoroughly representative. They knew that through all their congregations, however differently situated, there was but one feeling of grief and of sincere mourning.

Digitized by Microsoft®

of the Establishment whose Assembly was also in session, and of other religious bodies, besides the most distinguished professional men in the Scotch metropolis, including the Royal Commissioner to the Assembly of the Established Church, the Moderator or President of that Assembly, several Judges of the Court of Session, and the City Magistrates, in their robes of office, while tears were seen flowing down the cheeks of men who were "all unused to the melting mood;"—and in the unity of that grief which was felt from one end of Scotland to the other, and from one end of Christendom to the other, when they heard that

"—————his large deep heart,
Where world-wide love bore undivided part,
The master spirit of his native land—
The famed—the loved—of many a distant strand,
Had ceased to beat;"—

in the grateful tribute of the Queen as an estimate of *his* peerless worth, who nevertheless had mustered triumphant opposition and defeat against the most firm and united counsels of the British parliament, and whose last work on earth was the noble testimony he bore against the policy of some noble Dukes;—in the unbounded eulogiums which are everywhere echoing to his praise;*—and in the anxious desire with which the relics of his greatness and his goodness,—his unpublished writings—are anticipated;—in all this we see the evidences of that glory which has been achieved by the moral greatness of the departed, and which tarnishes the lustre of the most august of princes,—the most renowned of warriors,—and the most exalted of intellectual giants.

The last end of Dr. Chalmers was appropriate:

"On him benignant Heaven bestows,
For honored life, an honored close,"—

It was in unison with his path of life, which had shone more and more brightly until it was lost in the splendours of his perfect day. "He rested in his bed" from the labors of his toilsome life. "He entered into peace." "He fell asleep in Jesus," and awoke in bliss.

"The voice at midnight came,
He started up to hear;
A mortal arrow pierced his frame:
He fell—but felt no fear.

"His spirit with a bound
Left its encumbering clay;
His tent at sunrise on the ground
A darkened ruin lay."

And now "he walks in his brightness."

*"It may be doubted," says Dr. Campbell, whether half so many funeral tributes, throughout the pulpits of all communities, save and except the Church of England, were ever paid to any other individual."

"I have only farther to add," to use the language of his friend Mr. Bruce, "the following short but most descriptive narrative of his last hours, supplied to me by his family :—'On the evening of last Sabbath he went out into the garden behind the house, and sauntered round it, and there he was overheard by one of the family, near to whom he passed, in low but very earnest accents, saying—'Oh, Father, my heavenly Father.' It was a season of close and endeared communion with his God. He then supped with his family ; and, as if he had kept the brightest and most beaming of that day's smiles for the close, and the fondest of his utterances for his own, that supper, to himself and all around, was the happiest season of a very bright and happy day. After family prayer he retired to rest ; and it could not have been very long afterwards, (not more, perhaps, than an hour,) when the summons came. In a season of perfect quiet and repose, he had laid himself gently back upon the pillows, which were so placed as to elevate him nearly to a sitting posture ; just then his heavenly Master came, and called, and he departed. It must have been wholly without a struggle. The expression of the face, as seen in the morning—that of a calm and dignified placidity—the position of the body, so easy that the slightest ruffle of a conflict would have disturbed it—the very lie of the fingers and the hands, known to each familiar eye of those around him as being that into which they naturally fell in the moments of entire repose—all showed that, undisturbed by even the slightest strife with the last enemy, his spirit had moved away, and ascended to its own place of blessedness and glory in the heavens.' "

Oh ! lovely goeth down the sun at eve,
 When crimson clouds their glorious garlands weave,
 When golden streamlets shed their parting light,
 Till the bright morrow of a summer night.
 Thus set *thy* sun ;—no tempest's power
 Darkened the brightness of thy setting hour,—
 No pang, no struggle crossed thy mighty frame :
 Swiftly the chariot for the prophet came,
 And from thy finished work—thy goal-won race—
 Bore thee to fill thy blissful blood-bought place !

And oh, our God ? although we mourn that thou
 Hast torn our father from his children now,
 Yet for his joy we thank thee ! And for all
 His glorious years of combat on the wall
 Of warring Zion—champion of the breach,—
 Where thou thy bucklered arm to him didst reach,
 And for his work in every land enshrined,—
 The living labours of a deathless mind,—
 We thank thee, Lord !

It was with painful interest we perused, in the volume prefixed to our article, the evidence given by Dr. Chalmers before the

Parliamentary Committee.* This was his last public labour, and the mental excitement to which it *must* have subjected him, (and which may have operated as an accelerating cause to his disease,) will be evident to every reader. He was like astag at bay, surrounded by the hunters and assailed by furious blood-hounds, for it was manifestly the design of Sir James Graham to involve him, if possible, in contradiction or inconsistency. Foiled, however, in all his efforts, he was glad to leave the noble foe at rest. Yes, released from the pursuit, after having given noble evidence of his valour and the righteousness of his cause, he retired to his own favoured home, where he found that "rest which remaineth for the people of God."

* Third Report of the Select Committee on Sites for Churches, (Scotland) together with the Minutes of Evidence, Appendix, and Index, ordered by the House of Commons to be printed, 5th July, 1847, Fol. p. p. 201, including the evidence of Dr. Chalmers, p. 121-124.

YALE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY



3 9002 03464 8619

Digitized by Microsoft®

Digitized by Microsoft®