Concordia Theological Monthly

Volume 18 Article 36

6-1-1947

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The year 1947 marks the centennial of the death of Dr. Thomas Chalmers, perhaps the greatest man that Scotland ever produced. His life and his conflict with a corrupt State Church offer many striking parallels with that of Dr. Walther of our own Synod. Moreover, religious conditions in Scotland a little over a century ago were of such a nature that one needs only to change names and a few details in order to have a picture of religious conditions in Germany just before the Saxon emigration to America.

The story of the life of Dr. Chalmers is highly dramatic, as are the lives of so many of Scotland's great reformers. Like our own Dr. Walther, he began his career without a clear-cut knowledge of the truth. Chalmers was born in 1780 at a place called Anstruther, near the university city of St. Andrews, and he died in 1847 almost at exactly the same time that our Synod was being organized. Scotland had a system of parochial schools in those days, and the boy Thomas Chalmers was trained in one of these. It was a time when "a lesson well lairned and a book well studied brought nae a word of praise from the master of the school, but a lesson ill lairned brought a cruel kick and a sair warmin' o' the loogs (ears) o' the unhappy miscreant." Under such conditions the young lad studied, and so well did he apply himself that he made his entrance examinations at St. Andrews University at the early age of twelve years.

At the University the young boy distinguished himself in all courses, but especially in mathematics. While other lads of the University were on the playing field, Chalmers remained indoors studying mathematics. At the University the more promising boys were called upon to conduct morning devotions. So eloquent were the efforts of young Thomas Chalmers that the word reached the ears of the townspeople, and they crowded the chapel whenever it was known that he was to lead the devotions. In later life he admitted that these efforts were those of a thoroughgoing deist, who pos-

sessed not the slightest awareness of sin, nor an understanding of the grace of God in Christ Jesus the Lord.

In 1795 he enrolled as a theological student in the divinity hall of St. Andrews University. Two years later he came upon a copy of Jonathan Edward's *Freedom of the Will*. This made so deep an impression upon him that he declared later: "I spent a twelvemonth in a sort of mental elysium."[1] In 1799 he was ordained when but 19 years of age. The regulations of the Church of Scotland did not permit the ordination of a candidate until he had reached the age of 21, but an exception was made in the case of Chalmers, for, as the minutes state, "he is a lad of pregnant parts." He was made assistant professor of mathematics at St. Andrews, and later he began to teach chemistry.

In 1803 he received a call to the congregation at Kilmany, a small town in Fifeshire lying in a fertile valley just across the narrow Firth of Tay from the city of Dundee. When he began his ministry, the Kirk of Scotland was in a deplorable condition. Spiritual sloth was found on all sides, pluralism and absenteeism were not unknown, the people, and often the clergy themselves, lived worldly lives, and only here and there did the light of evangelical truth still shine. Liberalists, called in Scotland the Moderate Party,[2] ruled the General Assembly, which corresponds to our Delegate Synod. The same men had by what was called "intrusion" taken over many of the most influential pulpits of Scotland. Moderatism was Scotland's version of German Rationalism and English Deism. These Scottish clergymen did not deny Verbal Inspiration nor the deity of the Lord Jesus nor the Atonement. They merely ignored these things and made a deliberate effort to keep all evangelical truth suppressed. They declared that ethical preaching was the one thing of major importance, and their type of ethical preaching excluded entirely all mention of Law and Gospel.

Thomas Chalmers grew up under men of this kind, and it is not surprising that when he came to Kilmany, he did just as his professors of theology had taught him to do: he

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[1] Wm. Hanna, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh, 1844—52), vol. 1, p. 17.

[2] For an account of the Moderate Party see W. M. Hetherington, *History of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1842), chapters IX and X.

preached sermons on outward self-improvement and on the art of getting along well with one's fellow men. The "way of life" was more important to him at that time than the way of salvation. His sermons were eloquent, and he was looked upon by the people of Kilmany as a young man of amazing oratorical gifts, but they realized that spiritual fire was lacking.

Three incidents in swift succession brought about a decided change in his preaching. The death of two near relatives, his own illness, and an article on Christianity which he had been asked to write for the *Edinburgh Encyclopaedia,* a forerunner of the *Britannica,* caused him to give serious thought to religion. The three things caused him to turn to Wilberforce's *Practical View of Christianity,*[3] and this book led him to an intensive study of the Word of God. Alone in his room, and with no man to guide him, he had the same experience as William Bray,[4] the famous Cornish preacher, and Jeremiah McAuley,[5] pioneer city mission worker in New York. In each case the reading of the Law brought about a realization of sin, a period of great fear and distress, and days of despair lest they be cast off eternally. In each case the men continued to read the Scriptures and found the joyous promises of salvation in the righteousness and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

From that time onward the preaching of Thomas Chalmers was of so radically different a character that it astonished his congregation. In spite of his perfervid oratory, attendance had been dwindling slowly after the initial show of interest. As soon as Chalmers began to preach Law and Gospel and to lay great stress upon evangelical truth, the people began to return to the kirk. They told their friends, and it was not long until people came to Kilmany from all the surrounding countryside. The church was filled to overflowing, and there were often occasions when it was necessary to hold the service in the churchyard.

Mr. Chalmers himself left a written account of his spiritual awakening,[6] and it is to be found in full in the splendid

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[3] Published Glasgow and Dublin, 1797.

[4] See F. W. Bourne, *The King's Son* (32d edition, Cincinnati, 1890), pp. 14—18.

[5] *Jerry McAuley, an Apostle to the Lost,* by several writers (New York, 1885).

[6] His most significant confession is given in full in W. M. Hanna, *op. cit.,* vol. 1, p. 431 ff.

four-volume biography written by his son-in-law. In brief, he declares that he had not mentioned man's sin and the Gospel's offer of salvation through Jesus Christ. Rather did he make every effort to cause his congregation to reform their lives by practicing honor, truth, and integrity; but, he says: "I never heard of any such reformations having been effected among them." [7]

The old historic Tron Church of Glasgow lost its pastor. The people had heard of the famous young preacher of Kilmany, of his fiery eloquence and his fearless preaching of sin and grace. They asked him to come to Glasgow and preach a trial sermon. Needless to say, Chalmers declined. Then the people of Tron Church sent a committee to Kilmany to hear Chalmers preach. When the committee reached Kilmany, they beheld an amazing sight. A tremendous throng of people were crowded round the church, and in one of its windows a platform had been built. A young man with a broad face that looked like the face of a yokel sat on this improvised platform. The church was filled to overflowing, and the crowds filled the churchyard and the roadway outside. Carriages, wagons, traps, and every possible type of conveyance were tied along the roadways as far as could be seen. It happened to be the funeral of a young theological student who had rescued seven men from a sinking ship and lost his life by so doing. The young man in the black robe arose and gave out the Psalm. He read the Lesson and began to preach. At once the dull look of his face vanished, and his watery blue eyes took on the look of two brilliant stars. He spoke with an uncouth Fifeshire brogue that the committee from Glasgow could hardly understand, but before he had spoken for ten minutes the Glasgow men realized that here was a preacher the like of which Scotland had not known since the days of John Knox. They went back to Glasgow, and so extravagant was their report to the congregation that the people declared it to be wildest exaggeration.

Thomas Chalmers was called to Glasgow in 1815, and in his last sermon at Kilmany he declared to his congregation that they had taught him to preach Christ crucified.[8] Tron

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[7] *Ibid.*, p. 431.

[8] The entire sermon may be found in his *Sermons and Discourses* (New York, 1846), vol. 2, pp. 194—208.

Church discovered quickly that the report of Dr. T. S. Jones and his committee had not been an overstatement. So exceptional was his career at Tron Church that a new and larger parish was created for him and the great St. John's Church was built. The parish assigned to him was made up of some 10,000 souls, many of them living in the amazing ten-story, walk-up type tenements that faced dark, narrow, evil-smelling streets in the slums. This was Chalmers's own choice, for he was not at Tron Church long until he was grieved at the shocking conditions in Glasgow's slums, which were and still are among the worst of any city in the world, and where the crying need of missionary work is as acute today as it was in 1819, when Mr. Chalmers first began to climb the long flights of rickety stairways, seeking the people in their squalid apartments. In most places he found Scotsmen and their families who had never entered a church, who had never spoken with a pastor, and who had never heard of Jesus Christ except in profanity.

His first step was to establish two strong parochial schools. Possessed of a persuasive type of eloquence that none could resist, he went before the presbytery (local conference) and before the sessions (vestries) of the older congregations and secured not only adequate financial support for the new venture, but the willing help of a corps of forty-two volunteer workers, whom he trained himself and sent out every night, two by two. That was only the start. So great was the response of the neglected people that he divided the parish into twenty-five districts, with a captain in charge of each of them, and a corps of personally and thoroughly trained workers in each. It was not long until he had many of the seasoned churchgoers of Glasgow fired with zeal for this type of work. Fifty branch Sunday schools were started, and gradually more day schools were opened, with a total of 793 children enrolled. Every detail of this intricate organization was supervised by Chalmers himself. There were nights for training. Mere social calls were forbidden, but in each home a selection from the Scriptures, chosen by Mr. Chalmers himself, was to be read. Exposition and admonition were to follow, and Mr. Chalmers drilled his workers methodically in these things. Free prayer was to be offered, and Chalmers drilled his workers in the making of free prayers.

These efforts met with success beyond all expectation, and soon the great new St. John's Church was crowded with people from the tenements, and it was a common sight to see tears of joy rolling down their faces. Of course, St. John's had a nucleus of lifelong church people who had followed their pastor from Tron Church and had come from a number of other Glasgow congregations. However, St. John's was largely a church of the slums, and no less a man than Dr. W. M. Taylor of New York declares that St. John's was "perhaps the greatest and most effective parochial organization which the Christian Church has ever seen in operation." [9]

Even the great new church became far too small, and Thomas Chalmers was compelled to start weekday evening preaching services. Next he started services on Thursday, just after the noon hour, for the merchants of Glasgow, and these men came an hour ahead of time and went without their noonday luncheons, standing for over an hour in a packed church to hear what John Foster calls "the brilliant glow of a blazing eloquence." It was to these men that he delivered his famous Astronomical Discourses. Scientists had begun to question the teachings of the Bible, and Chalmers replied to their claims.

The city mission work that Thomas Chalmers carried on in Glasgow was continued by such remarkable men as Dugald Maccoll, Robert Howie, William Tasker, and others.[10] For any reader who is interested in stories of missionary success that almost challenge one's credulity, the account of these men will furnish the material. The methods of Thomas Chalmers became the standard for Scotland and were employed in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Perth, Aberdeen, and elsewhere for many years and with exceptional results, and only the deadening influence of the church union controversy of the late nineteenth and the opening years of the twentieth century caused missionary interest to die — this and the fact that Scotland in later years became completely undermined by destructive Biblical criticism. The method of Chalmers is the method to be used today, should at any time we ever attempt large-scale mission work overseas. It is the correct method because the people there understand it.

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[9] W. M. Taylor, *The Scottish Pulpit* (New York, 1887), p. 210.

[10] See Thos. Brown, *Annals of the Disruption* (Edinburgh, 1893), pp. 735—745, also Dugald Maccoll, *Work in the Wynds.*

Chalmers was too important a man even for Glasgow, Scotland's largest metropolis. In 1824 he was called to the chair of moral philosophy at his alma mater. He was very reluctant to leave the work in Glasgow, which had met with such conspicuous success, but after a decade in Glasgow, even his robust health was hardly equal to the demands that he had made upon it, day and night. He went to St. Andrews University chiefly for a short period of rest. There once more he so distinguished himself that he was called to the chair of theology at Edinburgh University, at that time one of the most coveted positions in the field of higher education.

The limits of this paper will not permit an extended account of his splendid work at Edinburgh University. For those who would know more of it, his biographer Dr. Hanna or the writers of several shorter biographies will furnish much interesting material.

Dr. Chalmers did not confine himself to the lecture room, for he was a great preacher first of all and a man of tireless missionary zeal. Using part of his salary, he rented a tanner's loft in the reeking slums of the West Port, and there he opened another mission among the neglected, as he had done in Glasgow. At this time a storm broke over Scotland that made such heavy demands upon the energies of Dr. Chalmers that a vigorous missionary program in the West Port had to be deferred for a few years.[11] For over a century the liberalistic Moderate Party had controlled the General Assembly. When they first came into power, they passed a resolution which not only permitted wealthy landowners to act as patrons of congregations, but to choose the pastor as well. This abuse was not a new one in Scotland, for it had been practiced before the days of the Moderates. More than that, should the patron fail at any time to name a candidate for a vacant congregation, the officials of the presbytery, or local conference, could name the candidate. If the congregation protested against this ruthless violation of their sovereign rights, as usually they did, then the civil authorities were given the right to induct the new pastor by force. This abuse became known as "intrusion."[12]

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[11] See Hugh Watt, *Thomas Chalmers and the Disruption* (Edinburgh and New York, 1943).

[12] For details see Hetherington, *op. cit.*, and Hugh Watt.

Dr. Chalmers was one of several influential leaders of the General Assembly who had continued to protest against these abuses, and against liberalism in general. In 1833 Dr. Chalmers offered a resolution, "That no minister be intruded into any pastoral charge contrary to the will of the congregation, and that the dissent of a majority of the male heads of families resident within the parish ought to be of conclusive effect in setting aside the nominee of the patron." This resolution was defeated by but 12 votes.

Several flagrant cases of intrusion followed, and Chalmers became the leader of the evangelical group which protested in emphatic terms against such outrages. Even the vehement oratory of Chalmers and Guthrie failed to remedy the many abuses within the Kirk, and it became evident that the liberal party and the evangelicals could never be reconciled. A new synod seemed the only method that would solve the grievous ills of Scotland. Since Dr. Chalmers had long been the leader of the conservatives, it fell to him to direct the evangelical party in their preparations for the split which all men saw could not be avoided.

Under the direction of Dr. Chalmers plans were laid swiftly and with an efficiency that would make even our own day look on in wonder.[13] Scotland was divided into districts, and an elaborate organization was formed that reached into every congregation, every mission, and every remote preaching station. Local committees reported regularly on given evenings to regional boards, and these, in turn, to higher boards. At the head were Thomas Chalmers and a few trusted associates, directing the task and causing every worker to do his full share. Speakers were sent to every hamlet in Scotland, and these men were picked with care. A speaker with a heavy west-coast brogue was never sent to an east-coast town. Only the fiery Celts were sent among the "hieland host" of the northern counties, where Gaelic is the spoken language. The Saxon Scots, or lowlanders, were sent to congregations of their own kind. Literally tons of literature were sent out, one issue after another in English and in Gaelic, in swift succession.

The liberal party was not idle. They sent out their

[13] A full account may be found in Thos. Brown, *Annals*, chapters V—VIII.

speakers and their pamphlets, reminding pastors and lay people that a disruption would mean, under the Scottish law, the loss of all property rights. Congregations would lose their churches and their schools. Pastors would lose their congregations, their salaries, and their manses. Every pastor who seceded would be without a call, and would be recorded in the black book as a man who resigned without a call. All universities, colleges, parochial schools, divinity halls, orphanages, and mission posts would be forfeited. All these things were admitted freely by the conservatives, and long before the fateful day arrived, Dr. Chalmers had drawn up an admirable scheme of rehabilitation, and a large organization was already at work preparing to build new churches, schools, colleges, divinity halls, manses, and other such things, and to devise ways and means for raising the largest sum of money ever attempted in Scotland.

It was on May 18, 1843, and at St. Andrew's Church in Edinburgh, that the event took place which was to shake the entire religious world. It is a lengthy story,[14] but we shall tell it in merest outline. When the General Assembly, which we would call the Delegate Synod, was called to order, Dr. Welsh, the moderator, arose, and in firm tones he declared that he could not properly proceed with the convention while grave abuses were permitted to go unremedied after years of fruitless protest. Then he read a carefully worded declaration, signed by 474 pastors and many lay people. Bowing to the King's commissioner, he laid this declaration on the desk.

It was a tense moment. The liberals had boasted loudly that a scant dozen men would have the courage to give up congregations, salaries, and homes and withdraw from the Established Church. The test had come. Dr. Welsh, in the court dress worn by the moderator, stepped slowly from the chancel and moved toward the door. Dr. Chalmers, who had stood at his side, fell into step with him and started to leave the church. Then Dr. Robert Candlish and Dr. Thomas Guthrie, two powerful leaders, arose and followed. Dr. Macdonald of Ferintosh, Dr. Gordon, and scores of others began to arise all over the great church and form an orderly procession. In all, 474 pastors and many lay members left the church that

[14] See Hanna, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, pp. 319—343.

day. The liberals were too astonished to say a word, for the exodus from the church had left them but a small handful of leaders. Norman Macleod, after much reluctance, kept his seat, and so did a very few others of equal stature; but for the most part, the men who remained in the church were not men of notable ability.

For two days throngs of people had been pouring into Edinburgh, and when the slow procession emerged from the doors of St. Andrew's Church, there was a wild shout, and the crowds parted to allow the men, in their tall silk hats, to move slowly down the street. Rooftops were crowded, and heads were thrust from every window. The Scots, trained from earliest childhood to conceal their emotions, gave way to their feelings that day. As the procession moved down the hill toward the Old Town, cheers broke out now and then, but more often than not there was audible weeping. A young girl, recognizing her father in the procession, screamed wildly and rushed up to him, realizing that this meant leaving the only home she had ever known and going she knew not where and with no apparent means of support. "Quiet, lassie, quiet!" her father said. "For all these years the Lord has been a guid Friend to us, and He will nae forget us in this hour of trial." Families of the pastors had come from all over Scotland, and many of them stood weeping, knowing that this meant the breaking up of their homes and parting, perhaps, with their congregations. Even men of powerful physique, wearing the great beards that were the fashion in 1843, wept unashamed. There was something in the sight of this long procession that caused even rough carters to brush a tear from their grimy cheeks. All realized that these determined men had sacrificed congregations in a land where a lifelong pastorate is not exceptional. They had given up their comfortable homes, their entire incomes, lifelong associations, and familiar scenes and were embarking upon a journey to a destination that not one of them knew. Families were rent asunder that day, old friendships broken and classmates parted without time for even a word of farewell. There was an undercurrent of admiration, which caused more than one person to wave gaily to the solemn men, for everybody in Edinburgh that day realized that these men had made that stupendous sacrifice *for the sake of their convictions.* They

were assured that the State Church was thoroughly corrupt, and the only remedy was to "come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing" — a verse that Chalmers had lately quoted in a pamphlet.

The grave procession reached Tanfield Hall, which had been rushed to completion for the occasion. It was but natural that Thomas Chalmers was elected moderator. Preparations had been made with thoroughness, and the assembly proceeded to organize the Free Church of Scotland. One of their first acts was to sign a paper waiving all rights to any and all property or claims upon the Established Church, which held claims on all church property in the land.

It would take many a page to tell the story of the rebuilding to take the place of what had been given up, but many books exist on this subject and may be found in most public libraries.[15] Fortunately the task was not difficult. The Lord gave the Scots a beautiful summer and a long, mild autumn. Over 500 congregations had withdrawn from the State Church, and nearly all of these worshiped in the open air that summer and autumn. The plans prepared in advance by Dr. Chalmers and his associates called for the building of 500 new churches, parochial schools, and manses during the first year. The work was divided, one group of men seeking funds for church buildings, another for parochial schools, another for support of these schools. The burden of the manse building fund fell upon the willing shoulders of Dr. Thomas Guthrie. That exceptional man, who had begun life as a liberal himself (as some of his many books will prove)[16] and ended as an emphatic evangelical, went from town to town, and his flowery eloquence which had so often electrified the General Assembly was employed to raise funds. He succeeded beyond expectation, but the strain of his efforts shattered his health.

New College, with its divinity hall, was established, and it was not long until its imposing buildings were erected on the Mound, where they stand to this day. Dr. Chalmers was

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[15] A full but somewhat biased account may be found in J. R. Fleming's, *A History of the Church in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1927), vol. 1, pp. 19—98.

[16] For example, his Gospelless *Gospel in Ezekiel*, one of his first works.

elected principal of the college and professor primarius of theology in the theological school. Eccentric old John Duncan, whom the college boys called "Rabbi" Duncan because of his flowing academic robe and his patriarchal beard, was called hastily from Perth to become a professor. He brought with him a convert from Judaism, none other than Alfred Edersheim. Every foreign missionary of the State Church "went out with the Free."

Never has Scotland seen such a financial campaign, and never before or since were so many churches, colleges, parochial schools, manses, orphanages, and other institutions built in such record time.[17] A visitor to Edinburgh, Glasgow, Perth, Dundee, Aberdeen, or Inverness is astonished at the great size and solidity of many of these buildings. All this was done at a time when the vast majority of Scottish people lived in the poor man's "but-an-ben," that is, a low, one-roomed, thatched cottage with a lean-to kitchen. However, several people of great wealth contributed generously, especially in building the colleges and theological schools at Edinburgh, Glasgow, and elsewhere. All this was but the outward equipment of the Free Church. A wave of evangelical fervor swept Scotland, and in all these new churches the old truths of sin and grace were proclaimed to congregations that crowded the buildings. It was sin and grace with a Calvinistic accent, but the harsher and uglier teachings of that theological system had long been on the decline, and the Free Church did not, as a rule, revive them.

Hardly was the excitement of the Disruption over when we find Dr. Chalmers once more in his mission hall over the old tannery. He filled his position as principal of New College and as professor of theology in the seminary connected with it, and he devoted many long hours to directing the activities of the Free Church. In some manner he found time to devote to his mission in the slums of the West Port. Invitations poured in urging him to preach on important occasions in Scotland, England, America, and even on the Continent. Most of these he refused, so as to give as much time as possible to his mission in the slums. The man whose extraordinary oratorical gifts had thrilled congregations of 10,000 people, was not too proud to preach to a group of ragged people, some

[17] Wm. Hanna, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, pp. 344—376.

of whom could hardly write their own names. Some of the incidents there are amusing. An old washerwoman was heard to say to a neighbor: "No, no, I nae go to St. Gile's Kirk. I go to yon tanner's loft ower, where ane Tammie Chalmers preaches. We all should encourage the puir auld body." She was not aware that "auld Tammie" had been persuaded to make one of his rare visits to London. When he was taken to the church where he was to preach, the streets were choked with people for blocks. All efforts to get through the dense crowd were in vain. Finally the local committee managed to get Dr. Chalmers into one of a row of houses directly back of the church. A plank was thrown from the garden wall of this house to the sacristy window, and over this Chalmers was led into the church where he was to preach.

The great dream of Dr. Chalmers was to build a fine church and school in the West Port. This was realized in 1847. The fine new church for the people of the slums was dedicated, and Chalmers officiated at the Communion service, which was held in connection with the dedication. This was one of his last acts. On the morning of May 30, 1847, he was found dead in his bed, having died in his sleep.

Not only was Dr. Thomas Chalmers a great leader, but he was one of the most famous preachers of any age. He had few of the external gifts of a prince of the pulpit. His broad face was that of a rustic, and when in repose, his pale blue eyes were watery and entirely lacking in expression. His gestures were awkward, and he spoke with a rough, Fifeshire brogue. During the first five or ten minutes he stammered, and his voice seemed weak. Then he began to take fire. The dull face became animated, and the watery eyes shone with uncanny luster. His voice became clear, and his words rang through the largest church in a manner that astonished those who had never heard him.

On one occasion he preached for the famous Rowland Hill in London. It was a great convention of a missionary society. His opening sentences were uttered in his stammering, incoherent, rustic brogue. Rowland Hill, who was standing below the pulpit with cold sweat on his brow, whispered to a friend that the day would be ruined. Just then Chalmers burst out with a blaze of eloquence such as London had not heard in many a year. Rowland Hill's tense face relaxed,

then a look of admiration came over him. He stood without taking his eye from Chalmers for over an hour. During the last fifteen minutes the great congregation began to rise to their feet, one by one, until the whole assembly was standing, the same look of incredulous admiration on every face. All the while sentence followed sentence in a torrent of vehement eloquence — some of the sentences 400 words in length. When he closed, a great sigh was heard from the congregation, and they resumed their seats. Rowland Hill, beside himself with excitement, exclaimed: "Well done, Thomas Chalmers!"

Even in his early days at Tron Church his eloquence was of a kind that few could resist. On one occasion there was a dense crowd outside the church, hammering on its thick doors, half an hour before the time of service. Vestrymen bolted the doors and warned the crowd to be quiet. Suddenly the doors gave way, one of them torn from its heavy hinges. The crowd poured in, scrambling over the backs of the seats until they had filled every square foot of the church, which seats 1,400, and even the sacristy and the chancel steps.

John Brown, M. D., of Edinburgh, who wrote that admirable book so well known to school children for a century, namely, *Rab and His Friends,* tells in one of his essays of a sermon that Dr. Chalmers preached. No one has given a finer description of the pulpit power of that great Scotsman. Dr. Brown says:

"We remember well our first hearing Dr. Chalmers. We were in a moorland district in Tweeddale, rejoicing in the country after nine months of the high school. We heard that the famous preacher was to be at a neighboring parish church, and off we set, a cartful of irresponsible youngsters. . . . The moor was stretching away in the pale sunlight — vast, dim, melancholy, like a sea; everywhere were to be seen the gathering people, 'sprinklings of blythe company'; the countryside seemed moved to one center.

"As we entered the kirk, we saw a notorious character, a drover, who had the brutal look of what he worked in, with the knowing eye of a man of the city. . . . He was our terror, and we not only wondered but were afraid when we saw *him* going in. The kirk was as full as it could hold.

. . . The minister comes in, homely in his dress and gait, but having a great look about him, 'like a mountain among hills.' He looks vaguely 'round upon his audience, as if he saw *one great object, not many.*. We shall never forget his smile — its general benignity; how he lets the light of his countenance fall on us! He read a few verses quietly, then prayed briefly, solemnly, with his eyes wide open all the time, but not seeing. Then he gave out his text; we forget it, but its subject was, 'Death reigns.'

"He started slowly, calmly, the simple meaning of the words: what death was, and why it reigned; then suddenly he started and looked like a man who had seen some great sight, and was breathless to declare it. He told us that death reigned — everywhere, at all times, in all places; how we all knew it, how we would yet know more of it. The drover, who had sat down in the table seat opposite, was gazing up in a state of stupid excitement; he seemed restless, but never kept his eye from the speaker. The tide set in; everything added to its power; deep called to deep, imagery and illustration poured in, and every now and then the theme — the simple, terrible statement — was repeated in some lucid interval.

"After overwhelming us with the proofs of the reign of death and transferring to us his intense urgency and emotion, and after shrieking, as if in despair, these words: *'Death is a tremendous necessity!'* he suddenly looked beyond, as if into some distant region, and cried out: 'Behold! a Mightier! Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.'

"Then in a few plain sentences he stated the truth as to sin entering, and death from sin, and death passing upon all. Then he took fire once more, and enforced with redoubled energy the richness, the freeness, the simplicity, the security, the sufficiency of the great method of justification. How astonished and impressed we all were! He was at the full thunder of his power; the whole man was in an agony of earnestness. The drover was weeping like a child, the tears running down his ruddy cheeks, his face opened out and and smoothed like an infant's, his whole body stirred with

emotion. We had all been drawn insensibly out of our seats, and were converging toward the wonderful speaker; when he sat down, after warning each one of us to remember who it was and what it was that followed Death on the pale horse and how alone we could escape, we all sunk back into our seats. How beautiful to our eyes did the thunderer look! — how exhausted, but sweet and pure. How he poured out his soul before his God in giving thanks for sending the Abolisher of Death! Then a short Psalm, and all was ended.

"We went home quieter than we came. We did not recount the foals, with their long legs and roguish eyes and their sedate mothers; we did not speculate upon whose dog that was, and whether that was a crow or a man in the dim moor. We thought of other things — that voice, that face, those great, simple, living thoughts, those floods of resistless eloquence, that piercing, shattering voice, that 'tremendous necessity.'" [18]

Many of the sermons of Dr. Thomas Chalmers have a structural peculiarity. Where most men construct a sermon in the form of a straight line, moving forward from one thought to the next one, Chalmers built his sermons in the form of a circle. His preaching revolved around and around one simple thought. In the hands of a man like Chalmers, the effect was tremendous. The late Pastor G. Schuessler compared this method to the tracery bars of a great rose window, each one of which swings around in an ellipse and always returns to the center, one after another. The printed sermons of Dr. Chalmers, of which several books exist, are somewhat disappointing. Like so many of the world's most famous preachers, his spoken sermons were much more excellent than his writings. This is surprising in view of the fact that Chalmers always read his sermons, although, as an old lady who knew him well said of him, "but it was fell reading." The thing that disappoints one most of all is the fact that they are not as full of sin and grace as one would suppose. It is there, but not to the extent that one might desire. His Calvinism is not usually evident, either, and this is gratifying.

One may see readily enough the likeness that exists

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[18] John Brown, M.D., *Spare Hours* (Boston, 1884), vol. I, pp. 379—382.

between Dr. Walther and Dr. Chalmers — and the difference. Each grew up in a rationalistic atmosphere; each had his early spiritual struggle and found eventual peace and enlightenment in God's Word; each one saw in his early ministry the evils of a State-controlled religion, and each protested fearlessly against it. Each one of them cast his lot with a group of men who withdrew from the State Church and left all things behind for the sake of their convictions; and to each was given the task of leadership in the formative years of a new and reformed religious body. Both of them were thorough theologians, having found a conservative foundation in a day when liberalism was quite the fashion; both of them became presidents of theological schools and professors of theology. Both were exceptional preachers and served important congregations in addition to their other duties; both were ardent champions of the Christian day school; both were men of untiring missionary zeal, and both wrote a number of important books.

There the parallel ends, for Walther was a preacher and a teacher of sound doctrine, resting solely upon the Bible, while Chalmers was never able to free himself entirely from Calvinism.[19] What is Calvinism? Old "Rabbi" Duncan gave one of the finest definitions of it when he said: "Calvinism?

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[19] Chalmers departed from the traditional Calvinistic method of teaching theology, which begins with God, His nature, His sovereignty, His attributes. This method, Chalmers believed, was an excellent one, but it tends to reduce theology to an abstract science. Chalmers began with fallen man and his wretched condition, and then proceeded to set forth the provisions that God had made for the redemption of man through Jesus Christ. In content, however, Dr. Chalmers' Calvinism does not differ radically from that of his predecessors, though neither in his theological lectures nor in his preaching does he seem to give prominence to the specifically Calvinistic tenets. He accepted the teaching that those who are elected before all time are saved; yet he does not seem to lay particular stress upon a limited Atonement. He stressed the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled the whole Law in man's stead, doing everything demanded by the Law of man, and taking upon Himself the punishment due to mankind for the failure to keep the Law. He believed that God justifies man by granting him a gracious remission of sins, as well as an imputation of the perfect righteousness of Christ, but Chalmers does not seem to see clearly the truth of objective justification. Like Calvinists in general, he has an imperfect understanding of the means of grace. One of his contemporaries summarizes Chalmer's theology as follows: "Sin and salvation — the disease of nature and its divine remedy — the ruin of the world by the fall, and its redemption by the Savior, its regeneration by the Spirit — these constituted the substance and staple of his preaching." James Buchanan, *A Tribute to the Memory of Thos. Chalmers*, Edinburgh, 1848, p. 7.

There is no such thing as Calvinism. The teachings of Augustine, Remigius, Anselm, and Luther were just pieced together by one remarkable man, and the result baptized with his name. Augustine taught and developed the doctrine of Salvation by grace and the divine election; Remigius, particular redemption; Anselm, the doctrine of the vicarious Atonement; and Luther that of Justification by faith."[20] Again he said: "Calvinism is all house and no door: Arminianism is all door and no house."[21]

What of the Free Church that Dr. Chalmers founded? Its story is a sad one. For a time it flourished marvelously; and evangelical Christianity, but with a certain amount of Calvinistic bias, was proclaimed throughout Scotland. The Free Church grew to be numerically powerful. Then it was that the devil built his church beside the chapel which Thomas Chalmers had set up. This was destructive Bible criticism. The theological graduates, not only of the State Church, but of the Free Church as well, began to flock to Germany, to Halle, Leipzig, Heidelberg, and Göttingen. They came back to Scotland bringing with them the contamination of the negative higher criticism. Militant conservatives, such as James Gibson, James Begg, and the more quiet Bonar brothers, cried out in protest, warning a Free Church which laughed at their fears. The younger men said: "We shall hold fast to the deity of the Lord Jesus and to the three R's — Ruin, Redemption, and Regeneration — even though the German higher critics prove every book of the Bible unreliable." These men left no second generation, for toward the end of the century the State Church and the Free Church as well became honeycombed with destructive Bible criticism. There were a number of sensational heresy trials, eminent men were excommunicated, but the day soon came when doctrinal discipline broke down, under the pretext of toleration and charity. Indifferentism was the result. The next step was church union with the United Presbyterians. Not satisfied, the unionistic leaders began a scheming campaign to lead the body now known as the United Free Church back into the rationalistic old State Church. Dr. Gibson and Dr. Begg protested vehemently until they died, but in 1929 the

[20] Wm. Knight, *Colloquia Peripatetica* (Edinburgh, 1907), p. 9.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 156.

reunion with the State Church was accomplished by the indifferentists. About the year 1920 the argument began to be heard: "It is only by closing our ranks and presenting a united front that the distressing problems of the postwar era can be solved." Thus did their leaders seek to find in an outward, man-devised organization a solution of their problems — forgetting that such a solution can be found alone in the Word of God. In 1929 the United Free Church returned to the old State Church from which Thomas Chalmers had led them just 86 years before.

Scotland, with its small population, has produced an imposing list of religious leaders of world-wide fame, but if one would know the effects of the dissolution of the Free Church on Scottish religious thought of today, let the liberalistic writings of her leaders of today be the answer.

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