

# Memoirs: 1. -- His Youth, and Preparation for the Ministry -- 1

by Robert Murray M'Cheyne

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*The sermon reflects on Robert Murray M'Cheyne's youth and preparation for ministry, highlighting the significant influences and events that shaped his spiritual journey.*

**Scripture:** Luke 1:14

**Topics:** "Divine Calling", "Spiritual Awakening"

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## Description

Robert Murray M'Cheyne reflects on his early life and preparation for the ministry, emphasizing the divine purpose behind his birth and the spiritual awakening that followed the death of his brother. He recounts his youthful pursuits, academic achievements, and the gradual realization of his calling to preach the gospel, marked by a deepening understanding of sin and grace. M'Cheyne's journey illustrates the transformative power of grief and the importance of seeking God amidst worldly distractions, ultimately leading him to a life dedicated to ministry and service.

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## Transcript

### Chapter 1

#### His Youth and Preparation for the Ministry

Many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord. Luke 1:14,15

In the midst of the restless activity of such a day as ours, we feel it would be useful for ministers of Christ to trace the steps of one who during the last years of his short life walked calmly in almost unbroken fellowship with the Father and the Son.

The date of his birth was May 21, 1813. About that time, as is now evident to us who can look back on the past, the Great Head had a purpose of blessing for the Church of Scotland. Eminent men of God appeared to plead the cause of Christ. The Cross was lifted up boldly in the midst of church courts that had long been ashamed of the gospel of Christ. More spirituality and deeper seriousness began to prevail among the youth of our divinity halls. In the midst of such events, whereby the Lord was secretly preparing a rich blessing for souls all over our land, the subject of this Memoir was born. "Many were to rejoice at his birth," for he was one of the blessings that were beginning to be dropped down upon Scotland, though

none then knew that one was born whom hundreds would look up to as their spiritual father.

The place of his birth was Edinburgh, where his parents resided. He was the youngest child of the family, and was called Robert Murray, after the name of some of his kindred.

From his infancy his sweet and affectionate temper was remarked by all who knew him. His mind was quick in its attainments; he was easily taught the common lessons of youth, and some of his individual gifts began to appear early.

At the age of four, while recovering from some illness, he selected as his recreation the study of the Greek alphabet, and was able to name all the letters, and to write them in a rude way on a slate. A year later, he made rapid progress in the English class, and at an early period became somewhat eminent among his classmates for his melodious voice and powers of recitation. There were at that time catechetical exercises held in the Ton Church, in the interval between sermons; and some friends remember the interest often excited in the hearers by his correct and sweet recitation of the Psalms and passages of Scripture. But as yet he knew not the Lord, and he lived to himself, "having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12).

In October 1821 he entered the high school, where he continued his literary studies during the usual period of six years. He maintained a high place in his classes, and in the Rector's class distinguished himself by eminence in geography and recitation. It was during the last year of his attendance at the high school that he first ventured on poetical composition, the subject being, "Greece, but living Greece no more." The lines are characterized chiefly by enthusiasm for liberty and Grecian heroism, for in those days his soul had never soared to a higher region. His companions spoke of him as one who had even then peculiarities that drew attention: of a light, tall form-full of elasticity and vigor-ambitious, yet noble in his dispositions, disdaining traits such as meanness or deceit. Some would have been tempted to regard him as exhibiting many traits of a Christian character; but his susceptible mind had not, at that time, a relish for any higher joy than the refined gaieties of society, and for such pleasures as the song and the dance could yield. He himself regarded these as days of ungodliness days in which he cherished a pure morality, but lived in heart a Pharisee. I have heard him say that there was a correctness and propriety in his demeanor at times of devotion, and in public worship, which some, who did not know his heart, were ready to put to the account of real feeling. And this experience of his own heart made him look with jealousy on the mere outward signs of devotion in dealing with souls. He had learned in his own case how much a soul, unawakened to a sense of guilt, may have satisfaction in performing, from the proud consciousness of integrity toward man, and a sentimental devotedness of mind that chastens the feelings without changing the heart.

He took great delight in rural scenery. Most of his summer vacations used to be spent in Dumfriesshire, and his friends in the parish of Ruthwell and its vicinity retain a vivid remembrance of his youthful days. His poetic temperament led him to visit whatever scenes were fitted to stir the soul. At all periods of his life, also, he had a love of enterprise. During the summer months he occasionally made excursions with his brother, or some intimate friend, to visit the lakes and hills of our highlands, cherishing thereby, unawares, a fondness for travel, that was most useful to him in later years. In one of these excursions, a somewhat romantic occurrence befell the travelers, such as we might rather have expected to meet with in the records of his Eastern journey. He and his friends had set out on foot to explore, at their leisure, Dunkeld, and the highlands in its vicinity. They spent a day at Dunkeld, and about sunset set out again with the view of crossing the hills to Strathardle. A dense mist spread over the hills soon after they began

to climb. They pressed on, but lost the trail that might have guided them safely to the glen. They did not know how to direct their steps to any dwelling. Night came on, and they had no resource but to bed down in the heath, with no other covering than the clothes they wore. They felt hungry and cold; and, awaking at midnight, the awful stillness of the lonely mountains spread a strange fear over them. But, drawing close together, they again lay down to rest, and slept soundly until the cry of some wild birds and the morning dawn aroused them.

Entering Edinburgh University in November 1827, he gained some prize in all the classes he attended. In private he studied the modern languages; and gymnastic exercises at that time gave him unbounded delight. He used his pencil with much success, and then it was that his hand was prepared for sketching the scenes of the Holy Land. He had a very considerable knowledge of music, and sang correctly and beautifully. This, too, was a gift that was used to the glory of the Lord years later, wonderfully enlivening his private devotions, and enabling him to lead the song of praise in the congregation wherever occasion required. Poetry also was a never-failing recreation; and his taste in this department drew the attention of Professor Wilson, who awarded him the prize in the moral philosophy class for a poem, "On the Covenanters. "

In the winter of 1831 he began his studies in the Divinity Hall under Dr. Chalmers, and the study of church history under Dr. Welsh. It may be naturally asked, What led him to wish to preach salvation to his fellow sinners? Could he say, like Robert Bruce, "I was first called to my grace, before I obeyed my calling to the ministry?" Few questions are more interesting than this; and our answer to it will open up some of the wonderful ways of Him "whose path is in the great waters, and whose footsteps are not known" (Ps. 77:19); for the same event that awakened his soul to a true sense of sin and misery, led him to the ministry.

During his attendance at the literary and philosophical classes he felt occasional impressions, none of them perhaps of much depth. There can be no doubt that he looked upon the death of his eldest brother, David, as the event that awoke him from the sleep of nature, and brought the first beam of divine light into his soul. By that providence the Lord was calling one soul to enjoy the treasures of grace, while He took the other into the possession of glory.

In his brother, who was his senior by eight or nine years, the light of divine grace shone before men with rare and solemn loveliness. His classical attainments were very high; and, after the usual preliminary studies, he had been admitted Writer to the Signet. One distinguishing quality of his character was his sensitive truthfulness. A shadow would flit across his brow if any incident were related wherein there was the slightest exaggeration; or even when nothing but truth was spoken, if the speaker only seemed to take up a false or exaggerated view. He must not merely speak the whole truth himself, but he must have the hearer also to apprehend the whole truth. He spent much of his leisure hours in attending to the younger members of the family. Tender and affectionate, his grieved look when they upset him by resisting his advice, had (it is said) something in it so persuasive that it never failed in the end to prevail on those with whom his words had not succeeded. His youngest brother, at the time when he lived according to the course of this world, was the subject of many of his fervent prayers. But a deep melancholy, in a great degree the effect of bodily ailments, settled on David's soul. Many weary months he spent in deep despair, until the trouble of his soul wasted away his body. But the light broke in before his death; joy from the face of a fully reconciled Father above lighted up his face; and the peace of his last days was the sweet consolation left to his afflicted friends, when July 8, 1831, he fell asleep in Jesus.

The death of this brother, with all its circumstances, was used by the Holy Spirit to produce a deep impression on Robert's soul. In many respects-even in the gifts of a poetic mind-there had been a congeniality between him and David. The vivacity of Robert's ever active and lively mind was the chief point of difference. This vivacity admirably fitted him for public life; it needed only to be chastened and solemnized, and the event that had now occurred wrought this effect. A few months before, the happy family circle had been broken up by the departure of the second brother for India, in the Bengal Medical Service; but when, in the course of the summer, David was removed from them forever, there were impressions left that could never be effaced, at least from the mind of Robert. Naturally of an intensely affectionate disposition, this sorrow moved his whole soul. His quiet hours seem to have often been spent in thoughts of him who was now gone to glory. Some of his written lines remain in which his poetic mind has most touchingly, and with uncommon vigor, painted him whom he had lost-lines all the more interesting because the delineation of character and form that they contain cannot fail to call up to those who knew him the image of the author himself. Some time after his brother's death he had tried to preserve the features of his well-remembered form, by attempting a portrait from memory; but throwing aside the pencil in despair, he took up the pen, and poured out the fullness of his heart.

#### ON PAINTING THE MINIATURE LIKENESS OF ONE DEPARTED

Alas! not perfect yet-another touch,

And still another, and another still,

Till those dull lips breathe life, and yonder eye

Lose its lack lustre hue, and be lit up

With the warm glance of living feeling. No-

It never can be! Ah, poor, powerless art!

Most vaunting, yet most impotent, thou seek'st

To trace the thousand, thousand shades and lights

That glowed conspicuous on the blessed face

Of him thou fain wouldst imitate-to bind

Down to the fragile canvas the wild play

Of thought and mild affection, which were wont

To dwell in the serious eye, and play around The placid mouth. Thou seek'st to give again

That which the burning soul, inhabiting

Its clay-built tenement, alone can give

To leave on cold dead matter the impress

Of living mind-to bid a line, a shade,

Speak forth, not words, but the soft intercourse  
Which the immortal spirit, while on earth  
It tabernacles, breathes from every pore  
Thoughts not converted into words, and hopes,  
And fears, and hidden joys, and griefs, unborn  
Into the world of sound, but beaming forth  
In that expression which no words, or work  
Of cunning artist, can express. In vain,  
Alas! in vain!

Come hither, Painter; come,  
Take up once more thine instruments-thy brush  
And palette-if thy haughty art be, as thou say'st,  
Omnipotent, and if thy hand can dare  
To wield creative power. Renew thy toil,  
And let my memory, vivified by love,  
Which Death's cold separation has but warmed  
And rendered sacred dictate to thy skill,  
And guide thy pencil. From the jetty hair  
Take off that gaudy lustre that but mocks  
The true original; and let the dry,  
Soft, gentle-turning locks, appear instead.  
What though to fashion's garish eye they seem  
Untutored and ungainly? still to me,  
Than folly's foppish head-gear, lovelier far  
Are they, because bespeaking mental toil,  
Labor assiduous, through the golden days  
(Golden if so improved) of guileless youth,

Unwearied mining in the precious stores  
Of classic lore-and better, nobler still,  
In God's own holy writ. And scatter here  
And there a thread of grey, to mark the grief  
That prematurely checked the bounding flow  
Of the warm current in his veins, and shed  
An early twilight o'er so bright a dawn.  
No wrinkle sits upon that brow!-and thus  
It ever was. The angry strife and cares  
Of avaricious miser did not leave  
Their base memorial on so fair a page.  
The eyebrows next draw closer down, and throw  
A softening shade o'er the mild orbs below.  
Let the full eyelid, drooping, half conceal  
The back-retiring eye; and point to earth  
The long brown lashes that bespeak a soul  
Like his who said, "I am not worthy, Lord!"  
From underneath these lowly turning lids,  
Let not shine forth the gaily sparkling light  
Which dazzles oft, and oft deceives; nor yet  
The dull unmeaning lustre that can gaze  
Alike on all the world.  
But paint an eye In those half-hidden, steady light I read  
A truth-inquiring mind; a fancy, too,  
That could array in sweet poetic garb  
The truth he found; while on his artless harp  
He touched the gentlest feelings, which the blaze

Of winter's hearth warms in the homely heart.  
And oh! recall the look of faith sincere,  
With which that eye would scrutinize the page  
That tells us of offended God appeased  
By awful sacrifice upon the cross  
Of Calvary-that bids us leave a world  
Immersed in darkness and in death, and seek  
A better country. Ah! how oft that eye  
Would turn on me, with pity's tenderest look.  
And, only half-upbraiding, bid me flee  
From the vain idols of my boyish heart!

It was about the same time, while still feeling the sadness of this bereavement that he wrote the poem entitled

THE RIGHTEOUS PERISHETH AND NO MAN LAYETH IT TO HEART.

A grave I know Where earthly show is not--  
a mound whose gentle round sustains the load  
of a fresh sod.  
Its shape is rude, and weeds intrude their yellow flowers--  
In gayer bowers Unknown. The grass, a tufted mass,  
Is rank and strong, unsmoothed and long.  
No rosebud there embalms the air: No lily chaste adorns the waste,  
Nor daisy's head bedecks the bed.  
No myrtles wave above that grave;  
No heather-bell is there to tell of gentle friend  
who sought to lend a sweeter sleep to him who deep  
beneath the ground repose has found.  
No stone of woe is there to show the name, or tell  
how passing well he loved his God, and how he trod

the humble road that leads through sorrow unknown in life,  
and far from strife, he lived: and though the magic flow  
of genius played around his head, and he could weave  
"The song at eve" and touch the heart, with gentlest art;  
or care beguile, and draw the smile of peace from those  
who wept their woes yet when the love of Christ ably  
to guilty men was shown him--then he left the joys of worldly noise,  
and humbly laid his drooping head upon the cross;  
And thought the loss of all that earth contained--of mirth,  
of loves and fame, and pleasures' name--no sacrifice  
to win the prize, which Christ secured, when He endured for us the load--  
The wrath of God! With many a tear, and many a fear, with many a sigh  
and heart-wrung cry to a bright morrow he sought the breath:  
But which can give the power to live--Whose word alone  
Can melt the stone, Bid tumult cease, and all be peace!  
He sought not now to wreath his brow with laurel bough.  
He sought no more to gather store of earthly lore,  
Nor vainly strove to share the love of heaven above,  
With aught below that earth can show the smile forsook  
His cheek--his look was cold and sad;  
And even the glad return of morn, when the ripe corn waves o'er  
the plains,  
And simple swains with joy prepare the toil to share of harvest, brought  
no lively thought to him.  
And spring adorns the sunny morns with opening flowers;  
O'er lawn and mead; its virgin head the snowdrop steeps in dew, and peeps  
the crocus forth,

Nor dreads the north.

But even the spring of timid faith, where intervenes no darkening cloud  
of sin to shroud the gazer's view.

Thus sadly flew the merry spring; and gaily sing the birds their loves  
in summer groves.

But not for him their notes they trim. His ear is cold--his tale is told.

Above his grave the grass may wave--

The crowd pass by without a sigh above the spot. They knew him not--  
they could not know; and even though, why should they shed above the dead  
who slumbers here a single tear? I cannot weep, thought in my sleep I  
sometimes clasp with love's fond grasp his gentle hand, and see him stand  
beside my bed, and lean his head upon my breast, and bid me rest  
nor night nor day till I can say that I have found the holy ground

In which there lies the Pearl of Price--

No smile can bring to him, whose eye sought in the sky for brighter scenes.

Till all the ties the sould that bind, and all the lies the sould that blind,

Be

Nothing could more fully prove the deep impression that the event made than these verses. But it was not a transient regret, nor was it the "sorrow of the world." Robert was in his eighteenth year when his brother died; and if this was not the year of his new birth, at least it was the year when the first streaks of dawn appeared in his soul. From that day on his friends observed a change. His poetry was pervaded with serious thought, and all his pursuits began to be followed out in another spirit. He engaged in the labors of a Sabbath school, and began to seek God to his soul, in the diligent reading of the Word, and attendance on a faithful ministry.

How important this period of his life appeared in his own view, may be gathered from his allusions to it when, a year later, he wrote in his diary: "On this morning last year came the first overwhelming blow to my worldliness; how blessed to me, Thou, O God, only knowest, who hast made it so." Every year he marked this day as one to be remembered, and occasionally its recollections seem to have come in like a flood. In a letter to a friend (July 8, 1842), upon a matter entirely local, he concludes by a postscript: "This day eleven years ago, my holy brother David entered into his rest, aged 26." And on that same day, writing a note to one of his flock in Dundee (who had asked him to furnish a preface to a work printed in 1740, Letters on Spiritual Subjects), he commends the book, and adds: "Pray for me, that I may be made holier and wiser, less like myself, and more like my heavenly Master; that I may not regard my life, if so be I may

finish my course with joy. This day eleven years ago, I lost my loved and loving brother, and began to seek a Brother who cannot die."

It was to companions who could sympathize with his feelings that he unburdened himself. At that period it was not common for inquiring souls to carry their burden to their pastor. A conventional reserve about these subjects prevailed even among active believers. It almost seemed as if they were ashamed of the Son of Man. This reserve appeared to him very sinful; and he felt it to be so great an evil that for years after that he was careful to encourage anxious souls to converse with him freely. The nature of his experience, however, we have some means of knowing. On one occasion, a few of us who had studied together were reviewing the Lord's dealings with our souls, and how He had brought us to Himself all at nearly the same time, though without any special instrumentality. He stated that there was nothing sudden in his case, and that he was led to Christ through deep and ever abiding, but not awful or distracting, convictions. In this we see the Lord's sovereignty. In bringing a soul to the Savior, the Holy Spirit invariably leads it to very deep consciousness of sin; but then He causes this consciousness of sin to be more distressing and intolerable to some than to others. But in one point does the experience of all believing sinners agree, and that was when their soul was presented as nothing but an abyss of sin, it was then that the grace of God that brings salvation appeared.

The Holy Spirit carried on His work in the subject of this Memoir, by continuing to deepen in Robert the conviction of his ungodliness, and the pollution of his whole nature. And all his life long, he viewed original sin, not as an excuse for his actual sins, but as an aggravation of them all. In this view he was of the mind of David, taught by the unerring Spirit of Truth. (See Ps. 51:4, 5.)

At first light dawned slowly; so slowly, that for a considerable time he still relished an occasional plunge into scenes of revelry. Even after entering the Divinity Hall, he could be persuaded to indulge in lighter pursuits, at least during the two first years of his attendance; but it was with growing alarm. When hurried away by such worldly joys, I find him writing thus: "Sept. 14-May there be a few such records as this in my biography." Then, "Dec. 9-A thorn in my side-much torment." As the unholiness of his pleasures became more apparent, he writes: "March 10, 1832-I hope never to play cards again." "March 25-Never visit on a Sunday evening again." "April 10-Absented myself from the dance; upbraidings ill to bear. But I must try to bear the cross." It seems to be inference to the receding tide, which thus for a season repeatedly drew him back to the world, that on July 8, 1836, he records: "This morning five years ago, my dear brother David died, and my heart for the first time knew true bereavement. Truly it was all well. Let me be dumb, for Thou didst it: and it was good for me that I was afflicted. I know not that any providence was ever more abused by man than that was by me; and yet, Lord, what mountains Thou comest over! none was ever more blessed to me." To us who can look at the results, it appears probable that the Lord permitted him thus to try many broken cisterns, and to taste the wormwood of many earthly streams, in order that later, by the side of the fountain of living waters, he might point to the world he had forever left, and testify to the surpassing preciousness of what he had now found.

Mr. Alexander Somerville (later minister of Anderston Church, Glasgow) was his familiar friend and companion in the wanton scenes of his youth. And since he, too, about this time, tasted the powers of the world to come, they united their efforts for each other's welfare. They met together for the study of the Bible, and also dug into the Septuagint Greek and the Hebrew original. But more often still they met for prayer and solemn converse; and carrying on all their studies in the same spirit, watched each other's steps in the narrow way.

He thought he profited very much during this period, by investigating the subject of election and the free grace of God. But it was the reading of The Sum of Saving Knowledge, generally appended to our Confession of Faith, that brought him to a clear understanding of the way of acceptance with God. Those who are acquainted with its admirable statements of truth, will see how well fitted it was to direct an inquiring soul. I find him some years later recording: "March 11, 1834-Read in the Sum of Saving Knowledge, the work which I think first of all wrought a saving change in me. How gladly would I renew the reading of it, if that change might be carried on to perfection!" It will be observed that he never considered his soul saved, notwithstanding all his convictions and views of sins, until he really went into the Holiest of all on the warrant of the Redeemer's work; for assuredly a sinner is still under wrath until he has actually availed himself of the way to the Father opened up by Jesus. All his knowledge of his sinfulness, and all his sad feeling of his own need and danger, cannot place him one step farther from the lake of fire. It is "he that comes to Christ" who is saved.

Before this period he had felt a tendency toward the ministry from his brother David, who used to speak of the ministry as the most blessed work on earth, and often expressed the greatest delight in the hope that his younger brother might one day become a minister of Christ. And now, with altered views-with an eye that could gaze on heaven and hell, and a heart that felt the love of a reconciled God-he sought to become a herald of salvation.

He had begun to keep a record of his studies, and the manner in which his time slipped away, some months before his brother's death. For a considerable time this record contained almost nothing but the bare incidents of the diary, and on Sabbaths the texts of the sermons he had heard. There is one gleam of serious thought-but it is the only one-during that period. On the occasion of Dr. Andrew Thomson's funeral, he recorded the deep and universal grief that pervaded the town, and then subjoins: "Pleasing to see so much public feeling excited on the decease of so worthy a man. How much are the times changed within these eighteen centuries, since the time when Joseph besought the body in secret, and when he and Nicodemus were the only ones found to bear the body to the tomb!"

It is in the end of the year that evidences of a change appear. From that period and ever onward his dry register of everyday incidents is varied with such passages as the following:"Nov. 12-Reading H. Martyn's Memoirs. Would I could imitate him, giving up father, mother, country, house, health, life, all-for Christ. And yet, what hinders? Lord, purify me, and give me strength to dedicate myself, my all, to Thee!"Dec. 4-Reading Legh Richmond's Life. 'Poenitentia profunda, non sine lacrymis. Nunquam me ipsum, tam vilem, tam inutilem, tam pauperim, et praecipue tam ingratum, adhuc, vidi. Sint lacrymae dedicationis meae pignora!' " ["Deep penitence, not unmixed with tears. I never before saw myself so vile, so useless, so poor, and, above all, so ungrateful. May these tears be the pledges of my self-dedication!"] There was frequently during this period of his life a sentence in Latin occurring like the above in the midst of other matter, apparently with the view of giving freer expression to his feelings regarding himself.

"Dec. 9-Heard a street-preacher: foreign voice. Seems really in earnest. He quoted the striking passage, 'The Spirit and the bride say, Come, and let him that heareth say, Come!' From this he seems to derive his authority. Let me learn from this man to be in earnest for the truth, and to despise the scoffing of the world."

Dec. 18-After spending an evening too lightly, he writes: "My heart must break off from all these things. What right have I to steal and abuse my Master's time? 'Redeem it,' He is crying to me."

"Dec. 25-My mind not yet calmly fixed on the Rock of Ages."

"Jan. 12, 1832-Cor non pacem habet. Quare? Peccatum apud fores manet. ["My heart has not peace. Why? Sin lieth at my door."]

"Jan. 25-A lovely day. Eighty-four cases of cholera at Musselburgh, How it creeps nearer and nearer like a snake! Who will be the first victim here? Let Thine everlasting arms be around us, and we shall be safe."

"Jan. 29, Sabbath-Afternoon heard Mr. Bruce (then minister of the New North Church, Edinburgh) on Malachi 1:1-6. It constitutes the very gravamen of the charge against the unrenewed man, that he has affection for his earthly parent, and reverence for his earthly master, but none for God! Most noble discourse."

"Feb. 2-Not a trait worth remembering! And yet these fourand-twenty hours must be accounted for."

"Feb. 5, Sabbath-In the afternoon, having heard the late Mr. Martin of St. George's,<sup>1</sup> he writes, on returning home:

(1) He says of him on another occasion, June 8, 1834: "A man greatly beloved of whom the world was not worthy." "An apostolic man." His own calm deep holiness, resembled in many respects Mr. Martin's daily walk.

"O quam humilem, sed quam diligentissimum; quam dejectum, sed quam vigilem, quam die noctuque precantem, decet me esse quum tales viros aspicio. Juva, Pater, Fili, et Spiritus!" ["Oh! how humble, yet how diligent, how lowly, yet how watchful, how prayerful night and day it becomes me to be, when I see such men. Help, Father, Son, and Spirit!"]

From this date he seems to have sat, along with his friend Mr. Somerville, almost entirely under Mr. Bruce's ministry. He took copious notes of his lectures and sermons, which still remain among his papers.

"Feb. 28-Sober conversation. Fain would I turn to the most interesting of all subjects. Cowardly backwardness: 'For whosoever is ashamed of me and my words,' etc."

At this time, hearing, concerning a friend of the family, that she had said, "That she was determined to keep by the world," he penned the following lines on her melancholy decision:

She has chosen the world,

And its paltry crowd;

She has chosen the world,

And an endless shroud!

She has chosen the world

With its misnamed pleasures;

She has chosen the world,

Before heaven's own treasures.

She hath launched her boat  
On life's giddy sea,  
And her all is afloat  
For eternity.  
But Bethlehem's star Is not in her view; And her aim is far  
From the harbor true.  
When the storm descends  
From an angry sky,  
Ah! where from the winds  
Shall the vessel fly?  
Away, then-oh, fly  
From the joys of earth!  
Her smile is a lie--  
There's a sting in her mirth.  
When stars are concealed,  
And rudder gone, And heaven is sealed  
To the wandering one  
The whirlpool opes  
For the gallant prize;  
And, with all her hopes,  
To the deep she hies!  
But who may tell  
Of the place of woe,  
Where the wicked dwell,  
Where the worldlings go?  
For the human heart  
Can ne'er conceive

What joys are the part  
Of them who believe;  
Nor can justly think  
Of the cup of death,  
Which all must drink  
Who despise the faith.  
Come, leave the dream  
Of this transient night,  
And bask in the beams  
Of an endless light.

"March 6-Wild wind and rain all day long. Hebrew class Psalms. New beauty in the original every time I read Dr. Welsh-lecture on Pliny's letter about the Christians of Bithynia. Professor Jameson on quartz. Dr. Chalmers grappling with Hume's arguments. Evening-Notes, and little else. Mind and body dull." This is a specimen of his record of daily study.

March 20-After a few sentences in Latin, concluding with "In meam animam veni, Domine Deus omnipotens," he writes, "Leaning on a staff of my own devising, it betrayed me, and broke under me. It was not Thy staff. Resolving to be a god, Thou showedst me that I was but a man. But my own staff being broken, why may I not lay hold of Thine?-Read part of the Life of Jonathan Edwards. How feeble does my spark of Christianity appear beside such a sun! But even his was a borrowed light, and the same source is still open to enlighten me."

"April 8-Have found much rest in Him who bore all our burdens for us."

"April 26-To-night I ventured to break the ice of unchristian silence. Why should not selfishness be buried beneath the Atlantic in matters so sacred?"

May 6, Saturday evening-This was the evening previous to the Communion; and in prospect of again declaring himself the Lord's at His table, he enters into a brief review of his state. He had partaken of the ordinance in May of the year before for the first time; but he was then living at ease, and did not see the solemn nature of the step he took. He now sits down and reviews the past:

"What a mass of corruption have I been! How great a portion of my life have I spent wholly without God in the world, given up to sense and the perishing things around me! Naturally of a feeling and sentimental disposition, how much of my religion has been, and to this day is, tinged with these colors of

earth! Restrained from open vice by educational views and the fear of man, how much ungodliness has reigned within me! How often has it broken through all restraints, and come out in the shape of lust and anger, mad ambitions, and unhallowed words! Though my vice was always refined, yet how subtle and how awfully prevalent it was! How complete a test was the Sabbath-spent in weariness, as much of it as was given to God's service! How I polluted it by my hypocrisies, my self-conceits, my worldly thoughts,

and worldly friends! How formally and unheedingly the Bible was read-how little was read-so little that even now I have not read it all! How unboundedly was the wild impulse of the heart obeyed! How much more was the creature loved than the Creator!-O great God, that didst suffer me to live whilst I so dishonored Thee, Thou knowest the whole; and it was thy hand alone that could awaken me from the death in which I was, and was contented to be. Gladly would I have escaped from the Shepherd that sought me as I strayed; but He took me up in his arms and carried me back; and yet He took me not for anything that was in me. I was no more fit for his service than the Australian, and no more worthy to be called and chosen. Yet why should I doubt? not that God is unwilling, not that He is unable-of both I am assured. But perhaps my old sins are too fearful, and my unbelief too glaring? Nay; I come to Christ, not although I am a sinner, but just because I am a sinner, even the chief." He then adds, "And though sentiment and constitutional enthusiasm may have a great effect on me, still I believe that my soul is in sincerity desirous and earnest about having all its concerns at rest with God and Christ that his kingdom occupies the most part of all my thoughts, and even of my long-polluted affections. Not unto me, not unto me, be the shadow of praise or of merit ascribed, but let all glory be given to thy most holy name! As surely as Thou didst make the mouth with which I pray, so surely dost Thou prompt every prayer of faith which I utter. Thou has made me all that I am, and given me all that I have."

Next day, after communicating, he writes: "I well remember when I was an enemy, and especially abhorred this ordinance as binding me down; but if I be bound to Christ in heart, I shall not dread any bands that can draw me close to Him." Evening-"Much peace. Look back, my soul, and view the mind that belonged to thee but twelve months ago. My soul, thy place is in the dust!"

"May 19-Thought with more comfort than usual of being a witness for Jesus in a foreign land."

"June 4-Walking with A. Somerville by Craigleith. Conversing on missions. If I am to go to the heathen to speak of the unsearchable riches of Christ, this one thing must be given me, to be out of the reach of the baneful influence of esteem or contempt. If worldly motives go with me, I shall never convert a soul, and shall lose my own in the labor."

"June 22-Variety of studies. Septuagint translation of Exodus and Vulgate. Bought Edwards' works. Drawing-Truly there was nothing in me that should have induced Him to choose me. I was but as the other brands upon whom the fire is already kindled, which shall burn for evermore! And as soon could the billet leap from the hearth and become a green tree, as my soul could have sprung to newness of life."

June 25-In reference to the office of the holy ministry; "How apt are we to lose our hours in the vainest babblings, as do the world! How can this be with those chosen for the mighty office? fellow-workers with God? heralds of His Son? evangelists? men set apart to the work, chosen out of the chosen, as it were the very pick of the flocks, who are to shine as the stars forever and ever? Alas, alas! my soul, where shalt thou appear? O Lord God, I am a little child! But Thou wilt send an angel with a live coal from off the altar, and touch my unclean lips, and put a tongue within my dry mouth, so that I shall say with Isaiah, 'Here am I, send me.' " Then, after reading a little of Edwards' works: "Oh that heart and understanding may grow together, like brother and sister, leaning on one another!"

"June 27-Life of David Brainerd. Most wonderful man! What conflicts, what depressions, desertions, strength, advancement, victories, within thy torn bosom! I cannot express what I think when I think of thee. To-night, more set upon missionary enterprise than ever."

"June 28-Oh for Brainerd's humility and sin-loathing dispositions!"

"June 30-Much carelessness, sin, and sorrow. 'Oh wretched man than I am, who shall deliver me from this body

of sin and death?' Enter thou, my soul, into the rock, and hide thee in the dust for fear of the Lord and the glory of his

majesty." And then he writes a few verses, of which the following are some stanzas:

I will arise and seek my God,

And, bowed down beneath my load,

Lay all my sins before Him;

Then He will wash my soul from sin,

And put a new heart me within,

And teach me to adore Him.

O ye that fain would find the joy

The only one that wants alloy

Which never is deceiving;

Come to the Well of Life with me,

And drink, as it is proffered, free,

The gospel draught receiving.

I come to Christ, because I know

The very worst are called to go;

And when in faith I find Him,

I'll walk in Him, and lean on Him,

Because I cannot move a limb

Until He say, "Unbind him."

"July 3-This last bitter root of worldliness that has so often betrayed me has this night so grossly, that I cannot but regard it as God's chosen way to make me loathe and forsake it forever. I would vow; but it is much more like a weakly worm to pray. Sit in the dust, O my soul!" I believe he was enabled to keep his resolution. Only once, in the end of this

year, was he again led back to revelry; but it was the last time.

"July 7, Saturday-After finishing my usual studies, tried to fast a little, with much prayer and earnest seeking of God's face, remembering what occurred this night last year." (Alluding to his brother's death.)

"July 22-Had this evening a more complete understanding of that self-emptying and abasement with which it is necessary to come to Christ-a denying of self, trampling it under foot-a recognizing of the complete righteousness and justice of God, that could do nothing else with us but condemn us utterly, and thrust us down to lowest hell-a feeling that, even in hell, we should rejoice in his sovereignty, and say that all was rightly done."

"Aug. 15-Little done, and as little suffered. Awfully important question, Am I redeeming the time?"

"Aug. 18-Heard of the death of James Somerville by fever, induced by cholera. O God, Thy ways and thoughts are not as ours! He had preached his first sermon. I saw him last on Friday, 27th July, at the College gate; shook hands, and little thought I was to see him no more on earth."

"Sept. 2, Sabbath evening-Reading. Too much engrossed, and too little devotional. Preparation for a fall. Warning. We may be too engrossed with the shell even of heavenly things."

"Sept. 9-Oh for true, unfeigned humility! I know I have cause to be humble; and yet I do not know one-half of that cause. I know I am proud; and yet I do not know the half of that pride."

"Sept. 30-Somewhat straitened by loose Sabbath observance. Best way is to be explicit and manly."

"Nov. 1-More abundant longings for the work of the ministry. Oh that Christ would but count me faithful, that a dispensation of the gospel might be committed to me!" And then he adds, "Much peace. Peaceful, because believing."

Dec. 2-Before, he used to spend much of the Sabbath evening in extending his notes of Mr. Bruce's sermons, but now, "Determined to be brief with these, for the sake of a more practical, meditative, resting, sabbatical evening."

"Dec. 11-Mind quite unfitted for devotion. Prayerless prayer."

"Dec. 31-God has in this past year introduced me to the preparation of the ministry-I bless Him for that. He has helped me to give up much of my shame to name His name, and be on His side, especially before particular friends-I bless Him for that. He has taken conclusively away friends that might have been a snare-must have been a stumbling block I bless Him for that. He has introduced me to one Christian friend, and sealed more and more my amity with another-I bless Him for that."

Jan. 27, 1833-On this day it had been the custom of his brother David to write a "Carmen Natale" on their father's birthday. Robert took up the domestic song this year; and in doing so, makes some beautiful and tender allusions.

Ah! where is the harp that was strung to thy praise,

So oft and so sweetly in happier days?

When the tears that we shed were the tears of our joy,

And the pleasures of home were unmixed with alloy?

The harp is now mute-its last breathings are spoken

And the cord, though 'twas threefold, is now, alas, broken!

Yet why should we murmur, short-sighted and vain,  
Since death to that loved one was undying gain?  
Ah, fools! shall we grieve that he left this poor scene,  
To dwell in the realms that are ever serene?  
Through he sparkled the gem in our circle of love,  
He is even more prized in the circles above.  
And though sweetly he sung of his father on earth,  
When this day would inspire him with tenderest mirth,  
Yet a holier tone to his harp is now given,  
As he sings to his unborn Father in heaven.

Feb. 3-Writing to a medical friend of his brother William's, he says "I remember long ago a remark you once made to William, which has somehow or other stuck in my head, viz. that medical men ought to make a distinct study of the Bible, purely for the sake of administering conviction and consolation to their patients. I think you also said that you had actually begun with that view. Such a determination, though formed in youth, is one which I trust riper years will not make you blush to own."

"Feb. 11-Somewhat overcome. Let me see: there is a creeping defect here. Humble purpose-like reading of the word omitted. What plant can be unwatered and not wither?"

"Feb. 16-Walk to Corstorphine Hill. Exquisite clear view blue water, and brown fields, and green firs. Many thoughts on the follies of my youth. How many, O Lord, may they be? Summed up in one-ungodliness!"

"Feb. 21-Am I as willing as ever to preach to the lost heathen?"

"March 8-Biblical criticism. This must not supersede heartwork. How apt it is!"

"March 12-Oh for activity, activity, activity!"

"March 29-Today my second session (at the Divinity Hall) ends. I am now in the middle of my career. God hold me on with a steady pace!"

"March 31-The bull tosses in the net! How should the Christian imitate the anxieties of the worldling!"

April 17-He heard of the death of one whom many friends had esteemed much and lamented deeply. This led him to touch the strings of his harp again, in a measure somewhat irregular, yet sad and sweet.

WE ALL Do FADE AS A LEAF

SHE LIVED---

So dying-like and frail,

That every bitter gale Of winter seemed to blow

Only to lay her low!

She lived to show how He,

Who stills the stormy sea,

Can overrule the winter's power,

And keep alive the tiniest flower--

Can bear the young lamb in His arms

And shelter it from death's alarms.

SHE DIED---

When spring, with brightest flowers,

Was freshening all the bowers.

The linnets sung her choicest lay,

When her sweet voice was hushed for aye

The snowdrop rose above the ground

When she beneath her pillow found,

Both cold, and white, and fair,---

She, fairest of the fair,

She died to teach us all

The loveliest must fall.

A curse is written on the brow

Of beauty; and the lover's vow

Cannot retain the flitting breath,

Nor save from all-devouring death.

SHE LIVES---

The spirit left the earth;

And he who gave her birth

Has called her to his dread abode,

To meet her Saviour and her God.

She lives, to tell how blest  
Is the everlasting rest  
Of those who, in the Lamb's blood laved,  
Are chosen, sanctified, and saved!  
How fearful is their doom  
Who drop into the tomb  
Without a covert from the ire  
Of Him who is consuming fire!  
SHE SHALL LIVE---

The grave shall yield his prize,  
When, from the rending skies,  
Christ shall with shouting angels come  
To wake the slumberers of the tomb.  
And many more shall rise  
Before our longing eyes.  
Oh! may we all together meet,  
Embracing the Redeemer's feet!

"May 20-General Assembly. The motion regarding Chapels of Ease lost by 106 to 103. Every shock of the ram is heavier and stronger, till all shall give way."

"June 4-Evening almost lost. Music will not sanctify, though it make feminine the heart."

"June 22-Omissions make way for commissions. Could I but take effective warning! A world's wealth would not makeup for that saying, 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father.' But how shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?"

"June 30-Self-examination. Why is a missionary life so often an object of my thoughts? Is it simply for the love I bear to souls? Then, why do I not show it more where I am? Souls

are as precious here as in Burma. Does the romance of the business not weigh anything with me?-the interest and esteem I would carry with me?-the nice journals and letters I should write and receive? Why would I so much rather go to the East than to the West Indies? Am I wholly deceiving my own heart? and have I not a spark of true missionary zeal? Lord, give me to understand and imitate the spirit of those unearthly words of Thy dear Son: 'It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord.' 'He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me.' Gloria in excelsis Deo!"

"Aug. 13-Clear conviction of sin is the only true origin of dependence on another's righteousness, and therefore (strange to say!) of the Christian's peace of mind and cheerfulness.

"Sept. 8-Reading Adams' Private Thoughts. Oh for his heart-searching humility! Ah me! on what mountains of pride must I be wandering, when all I do is tinctured with the very sins this man so deplures; yet where are my wailings, where my tears, over my love of praise?"

"Nov. 14-Composition-a pleasant kind of labor. I fear the love of applause or effect goes a great way. May God keep me from preaching myself instead of Christ crucified."

"Jan. 15, 1834-Heard of the death of J. S., off the Cape of Good Hope. O God! how Thou breakest into families! Must not the disease be dangerous, when a tender-hearted surgeon cuts deep into the flesh? How much more when God is the operator, 'who afflicteth not from his heart [Inn], nor grieveth the children of men!' Lam. 3:33."

"Feb. 23, Sabbath-Rose early to seek God, and found Him whom my soul loveth. Who would not rise early to meet such company? The rains are over and gone. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."

Feb. 24-He writes a letter to one who, he feared, was only sentimental, and not really under a sense of sin. "Is it possible, think you, for a person to be conceited of his miseries? May there not be a deep leaven of pride in telling how desolate and how unfeeling we are?-in brooding over our unearthly pains?-in our being excluded from the unsympathetic world?-in our being the invalids of Christ's hospital?" He had himself been taught by the Spirit that it is more humbling for us to take what grace offers, than to bewail our wants and worthlessness.

Two days later, he records, with thankful astonishment, that for the first time in his life he had been blessed to awaken a soul. All who find Christ for themselves are impelled, by the holy necessity of constraining love, to seek the salvation of others. Andrew found his brother Peter, and Philip found his friend Nathanael. So it was in the case before us. Robert no sooner knew Christ's righteousness as his own covering, than he longed to see others clothed in the same spotless robe. And it is peculiarly interesting to read the feelings of one who was yet to be blessed in plucking so many brands from the fire, when, for the first time, he saw the Lord graciously employing him in this more than angelic work. We have his own testimony. "Feb. 26-After sermon. The precious tidings that a soul has been melted down by the grace of the Saviour. How blessed an answer to prayer, if it be really so! 'Can these dry bones live? Lord, Thou knowest.' What a blessed thing it is to see the first grievings of the awakened spirit, when it cries, 'I cannot see myself a sinner; I cannot pray, for my vile heart wanders!' It has refreshed me more than a thousand sermons. I know not how to thank and admire God sufficiently for this incipient work. Lord, perfect that which Thou hast begun!" A few days after: "Lord, I thank Thee that Thou hast shown me this marvellous working, though I was but an adoring spectator rather than an instrument."

It is scarcely less interesting, in the case of one so gifted for the work of visiting the needy, and so singularly skilled in ministering the word by the bedside of the dying, to find a record of the occasion when the Lord led him forth to take his first survey of this field of labor. There existed at that time, among some of the students attending the Divinity Hall, a society, the sole object of which was to stir each other up to set apart an hour or two every week for visiting the needy in the most neglected portions of the town. Our rule was, not to subtract anything from our times of study, but to devote to this work an occasional hour in the intervals between different classes, or an hour that might otherwise have been given to recreation. All of us felt the work to be trying to the flesh at the outset; but none ever regretted persevering in it. One

Saturday forenoon, at the close of the usual prayer meeting, which met in Dr. Chalmers' vestry, we went up together to a district in the Castle Hill. It was Robert's first near view of the heathenism of his native city, and the effect was enduring.

"March 3-Accompanied A. B. in one of his rounds through some of the most miserable habitations I ever beheld. Such scenes I never before dreamed of. Ah! why am I such a stranger to the poor of my native town? I have passed their doors thousands of times; I have admired the huge black piles of building, with their lofty chimneys breaking the sun's rays-why have I never ventured within? How dwelleth the love of God in me? How cordial is the welcome even of the poorest and most loathsome to the voice of Christian sympathy! What imbedded masses of human beings are huddled together, unvisited by friend or minister! 'No man careth for our souls' is written over every forehead. Awake, my soul! Why should I give hours and days any longer to the vain world, when there is such a world of misery at my very door? Lord, put thine own strength in me; confirm every good resolution; forgive my past long life of uselessness and folly."

He then became one of the society's most steady members, cultivating a district in the Canongate, teaching a Sabbath school, and distributing the Monthly Visitor, along with Mr. Somerville. His experience there was to give him insight into the sinner's depravity in all its forms. His first visit in his district is thus noticed: "March 24-Visited two families with tolerable success. God grant a blessing may go with us! Began in fear and weakness, and in much trembling. May the power be of God." Soon after, he narrates the following scene: "Entered the house of---. Heard her swearing as I came up the stair. Found her storming at three little grandchildren, whom her daughter had left with her. She is a seared, hardhearted wretch. Read Ezekiel 33. Interrupted by the entrance of her second daughter, furiously demanding her marriage lines. Became more discreet. Promised to come back-never came. Her father-in-law entered, a hideous spectacle of an

aged drunkard, demanding money. Left the house with warnings. " Another case he particularly mentions of a sick woman, who, though careless before, suddenly seemed to float into a sea of joy, without being able to give any scriptural account of the change. She continued, I believe, to her death in this state; but he feared it was a subtle delusion of Satan as an angel of light. One soul, however, was, to all appearance, brought truly to the Rock of Ages during his and his friend's prayerful visitations. These were first-fruits.

He continues his diary, though often considerable intervals occur in the register of his spiritual state.

"May 9-How kindly has God thwarted me in every instance where I sought to enslave myself! I will learn at least to glory in disappointments."

"May 10-At the Communion. Felt less use for the minister than ever. Let the Master of the feast alone speak to my heart." He felt at such times, as many of the Lord's people have always done, that it is not the addresses of the ministers in serving the table, but the Supper itself, that ought to "sate their souls with fatness."

May 21-It is affecting to us to read the following entry: "This day I attained my twenty-first year. Oh! how long and how worthlessly I have lived, Thou only knowest. Neff died in his thirty-first year; when shall I?"

May 29-He this day wrote very faithfully, yet very kindly, to one who seemed to him not a believer, and who nevertheless appropriated to herself the promises of God. "If you are wholly unassured of your being a believer, is it not a contradiction in terms to say, that you are sure the believers' promises belong to you?"

Are you an assured believer? If so, rejoice in your heirship; and yet rejoice with trembling; for that is the very character of God's heirs. But are you unassured nay, wholly unassured? then what mad presumption to say to your soul, that these promises, being in the Bible, must belong indiscriminately to all! It is too gross a contradiction for you to compass, except in word." He then shows that Christ's free offer must be accepted by the sinner, and so the promises become his. "This sinner complies with the call or offer, 'Come unto me;' and thereafter, but not before, can claim the annexed promise as his: 'I will give thee rest.'"

"Aug. 14-Partial fast, and seeking God's face by prayer. This day thirty years, my late dear brother was born. Oh for more love, and then will come more peace!" That same evening he wrote the hymn, The Barren Fig-tree.

"Oct. 17-Private meditation exchanged for conversation. Here is the root of the evil-forsake God, and He forsakes us."

One evening this month he had been reading Baxter's Call to the Unconverted. Deeply impressed with the affectionate and awfully solemn urgency of the man of God, he wrote;

Though Baxter's lips have long in silence hung,  
And death long hushed that sinner-wakening tongue,  
Yet still, though dead, he speaks aloud to all,  
And from the grave still issues forth his "Call:"  
Like some loud angel-voice from Zion hill,  
The mighty echo rolls and rumbles still.  
Oh grant that we, when sleeping in the dust,  
May thus speak forth the wisdom of the just!

Mr. McCheyne was peculiarly subject to attacks of fever, and by one of these was he laid down on a sick bed on November 15. However, this attack was of short duration. On the 21st he writes: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. Learned more and more of the value of Jehovah Tzidkenu. " He had, three days before, written his well-known hymn, I once was a stranger, etc., entitled Jehovah Tzidkenu, the Watchword of the Reformers. It was the fruit of a slight illness which had tried his soul, by setting it more immediately in view of the judgment seat of Christ; and the hymn which he so sweetly sung reveals the sure and solid confidence of his soul. In reference to that same illness, he seems to have penned the following lines. November 24th:

He tenderly binds up the broken in heart,  
The soul bowed down He will raise:  
For mourning, the ointment of joy will impart:  
For heaviness, garments of praise.

Ah, come, then, and sing to the praise of our God,  
Who giveth and taketh away;  
Who first by his kindness, and then by his rod,  
Would teach us, poor sinners, to pray.  
For in the assembly of Jesus' first-born,  
Who anthems of gratitude raise,  
Each heart has by great tribulation been torn,  
Each voice turned from wailing to praise.

"Nov. 9-Heard of Edward Irving's death. I look back upon him with awe, as on the saints and martyrs of old. A holy man in spite of all his delusions and errors. He is now with his God and Saviour, whom he wronged so much, yet, I am persuaded, loved so sincerely. How should we lean for wisdom, not on ourselves, but on the God of all grace!"

"Nov. 21-If nothing else will do to sever me from my sins, Lord send me such sore and trying calamities as shall awake me from earthly slumbers. It must always be best to be alive to Thee, whatever be the quickening instrument. I tremble as I write, for oh! on every hand do I see too likely occasions for sore afflictions."

"Feb. 15, 1835-To-morrow I undergo my trials before the Presbytery. May God give me courage in the hour of need. What should I fear? If God see meet to put me into the ministry, who shall keep me back? If I be not meet, why should I be thrust forward? To Thy service I desire to dedicate myself over and over again."

"March 1-Bodily service. What change is there in the heart! Wild, earthly affections there are here; strong, coarse passions; bands both of iron and silk. But I thank Thee, O my God, that they make me cry. 'Oh wretched man!' Bodily weakness, too, depresses me."

"March 29-College finished on Friday last. My last appearance there. Life itself is vanishing fast. Make haste for eternity. "

In such records as these, we read God's dealings with his soul up to the time when he was licensed to preach the gospel. His preparatory discipline, both of heart and of intellect, had been directed by the great Head of the church in a way that remarkably qualified him for the work he was to perform in the vineyard.

His soul was prepared for the awesome work of the ministry by much prayer, and much study of the Word of God; by affliction in his person; by inward trials and sore temptations; by experience of the depth of corruption in his own heart, and by discoveries of the Savior's fullness of grace. He learned experimentally to ask, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (I John 5:5). During the four years that followed his awakening, he was often under the many waters, but was always raised again by the same divine hand that had drawn him out at the beginning; until at last, though still often violently tossed, the vessel was able steadily to keep the summit of the wave. It appears that he learned the way of salvation experimentally, before he knew it accurately by theory and system; and thus

no doubt it was that his whole ministry was little more than a giving out of his own inward life.

The Visiting Society noticed above was much blessed to the culture of his soul, and not less so the Missionary Association and the Prayer Meeting connected with it. None were more regular at the hour of prayer than he, and none more frequently led up our praises to the throne. He was for some time Secretary to the Association, and interested himself deeply in details of missionary labors. Indeed, to the last day of his life, his thoughts often turned to foreign lands; and one of the last notes he wrote was to the Secretary of the Association in Edinburgh, expressing his unabated interest in their success.

During the first years of his college course, his studies did not absorb his whole attention; but no sooner was the change on his soul begun, than his studies shared in the results. A deeper sense of responsibility led him to occupy his talents for the service of Him who bestowed them. There have been few who, along with a devotedness of spirit that sought to be always directly engaged in the Lord's work, have nevertheless

retained such continued and undecaying esteem for the advantages of study. While attending the usual literary and philosophical classes, he found time to turn his attention to geology and natural history. And often in his days of most successful preaching, when, next to his own soul, his parish and his flock were his only care, he has been known to express a regret that he had not laid up in former days more stores of all useful knowledge; for he found himself able to use the jewels of the Egyptians in the service of Christ. His previous studies would sometimes flash into his mind some happy illustration of divine truth, at the very moment when he was most solemnly applying the glorious gospel to the most ignorant and vile.

His own words will best show his estimate of study, and at the same time the prayerful manner in which he felt it should be carried on. "Do get on with your studies," he wrote to a young student in 1840. "Remember you are now forming the character of your future ministry in great measure, if God spare you. If you acquire slovenly or sleepy habits of study now, you will never get the better of it. Do everything in its own time. Do everything in earnest; if it is worth doing, then do it with all your might. Above all, keep much in the presence of God. Never see the face of man till you have seen his face who is our life, our all. Pray for others; pray for your teachers, fellow-students," etc. To another he wrote: "Beware of the atmosphere of the classics. It is pernicious indeed; and you need much of the south wind breathing over the Scriptures to counteract it. True, we ought to know them; but only as chemists handle poisons-to discover their qualities, not to infect their blood with them." And again: "Pray that the Holy Spirit would not only make you a believing and holy lad, but make you wise in your studies also. A ray of divine light in the soul sometimes clears up a mathematical problem wonderfully. The smile of God calms the spirit, and the left hand of Jesus holds up the fainting head, and His Holy Spirit quickens the affection, so that even natural studies go on a million times more easily and comfortably."

Before entering the Divinity Hall, he had attended a private class for the study of Hebrew; and having afterward attended the two sessions of Dr. Brunton's college class, he made much progress in that language. He could consult the Hebrew original of the Old Testament with as much ease as most of our ministers are able to consult the Greek of the New.

It was about the time of his first year's attendance at the Hall that I began to know him as an intimate friend. During the summer vacations-that we might redeem the time-some of us who remained in town, when most of our fellow students were gone to the country, used to meet once every week in the forenoon, for the purpose of investigating some point of systematic divinity, and stating to each other the

amount and result of our private reading. At another time we met in a similar way, until we had overtaken the chief points of the popish controversy. Advancement in our acquaintance with the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures also brought us together; and one summer the study of unfulfilled prophecy assembled a few of us once a week, at an early morning hour, when, though our views differed much on particular points, we never failed to get food to our souls in the Scriptures we explored. But no society of this kind was more useful and pleasant to us than one which, from its object, received the name of exegetical. It met during the session of the theological classes every Saturday morning at half-past six. The study of biblical criticism, and whatever might cast light on the Word of God, was our aim; and these meetings were kept up regularly during four sessions. Mr. McCheyne spoke of himself as indebted to this society for much of that discipline of mind on Jewish literature and Scripture geography which was found to be so useful in the Mission of Inquiry to the Jews in later days.

But these helps in study were all the while no more than supplementary. The regular systematic studies of the Hall furnished the main provision for his mental culture. Under Dr. Chalmers for Divinity, and under Dr. Welsh for Church History, a course of four years afforded no ordinary

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/robert-murray-m'cheyne/memoirs-1this-youth-and-preparation-for-the-ministry-1/>

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