



*Photo. Lafayette Ltd.*

*John Hunter*

# JOHN HUNTER, D.D.

A LIFE ]

BY  
LESLIE STANNARD HUNTER

HODDER AND STOUGHTON  
LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO  
MCMXXI



## PREFACE

SOME apology may reasonably be required of a son who presumes to write the biography of his father. In this case there are two reasons why a sound rule should be broken. My father was so diffident that he would have shrunk from the idea of a biography of himself. Only the knowledge that it was being written by one of his sons would at all have reconciled him to it. And, secondly, he was not a letter-writer and did not keep a diary. He did not use letters as a medium of thought. He only wrote them when he had to, and then briefly. They give news and are full of feeling, but he seldom elaborated in them the ideas with which his mind was occupied. A bundle of his letters and notes, therefore, would not give a just or adequate conception of the man and his mind to anyone who did not know him in other ways. In this respect his frequent letters to the Press are more revealing than his personal letters, and his prayers and sermons are most revealing of all.

In these circumstances it would have been unfair to task anyone else with the difficulties of preparing a biography. It has involved a careful sifting of the mass of MSS. which he left and much correspondence with those who knew him. The death of my mother fifteen months ago meant the loss of the most valuable source of information. The reconstruction of some periods of his life would have been difficult if I had not had the generous help of his friends. To those who wrote reminiscences and appreciations and sent letters—their names, I think, are all recorded in the pages that follow—I give most sincere thanks; also to the Secretaries of the four churches to which he ministered for permission to read their Minute-Books.

Special thanks are due to those who have helped with the

revision of the MS. and the proofs—the Rev. T. H. Martin of Liverpool, R. I. Gunn, Esq., of the Inner Temple, and my wife.

The life of John Hunter covers a period of religious history which will, probably, come to be reckoned of great significance—a passing from one age to another, comparable to the Reformation in the sixteenth century. But to us in 1921 it is “a time which is just far enough off and just near enough to be forgotten.” We cannot, however, afford to forget it, for a study of its successes and failures will guide us—more perhaps than we are ready to acknowledge—towards the true solution of the religious, social and ecclesiastical problems of our own time.

*October, 1921.*

# CONTENTS

DR. HUNTER IN MARCH, 1912 . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
PREFACE . . . . .	PAGE ix
CHAPTER I	
ABERDEEN, 1848-66 . . . . .	1
CHAPTER II	
COLLEGE DAYS, 1866-71 . . . . .	13
A REMINISCENCE BY A FELLOW-STUDENT (THE REV. A. J. GRIFFITH OF THE CONGREGATIONAL UNION OF AUSTRALIA) . . . . .	24
CHAPTER III	
THE NEW AND THE OLD. YORK, 1871-82 . . . . .	28
CHAPTER IV	
FRIENDSHIP, TRAVEL AND MARRIAGE . . . . .	52
CHAPTER V	
HULL, 1882-86 . . . . .	60
CHAPTER VI	
GLASGOW, 1887-1901 . . . . .	77
i. 1887-97 . . . . .	81
LETTERS . . . . .	100
ii. VISIT TO EGYPT AND THE HOLY LAND, 1897 . . . . .	105
iii. 1897-1901 . . . . .	115
CHAPTER VII	
THE WORKMAN . . . . .	139

CHAPTER VIII		PAGE
THE PREACHER . . . . .		153
I. THE MESSAGE . . . . .		153
II. THE METHOD . . . . .		171
CHAPTER IX		
A FIGHT AGAINST ODDS. LONDON, 1901-4 . . . . .		180
AN APPRECIATION BY PROFESSOR JACQUES CHEVALIER, LL.D., UNIVERSITY OF LYONS (A ROMAN CATHOLIC) . . . . .		197
CHAPTER X		
THE CHURCHMAN . . . . .		200
NOTE ON THE INDEPENDENT OR CONGREGATIONAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH . . . . .		213
CHAPTER XI		
THE PILGRIM OF AN IDEAL. GLASGOW AGAIN. VISITS TO AMERICA. 1904-11. . . . .		216
CHAPTER XII		
THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW. ILLNESS AND THE END OF HIS GLASGOW MINISTRY. 1911-13 . . . . .		240
AN APPRECIATION BY A YOUNG MEMBER OF HIS CONGREGATION . . . . .		250
CHAPTER XIII		
HOME LIFE. A PERSONAL REMINISCENCE . . . . .		252
CHAPTER XIV		
LETTERS, 1904-14 . . . . .		263
CHAPTER XV		
LAST YEARS, 1913-17 . . . . .		274
TRIBUTE BY THE REV. PRINCIPAL P. T. FORSYTH, D.D.—THE ADDRESS AT THE FUNERAL SERVICE . . . . .		289
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .		295

## CHAPTER I

### ABERDEEN, 1848-66

"That poor temple of my childhood is more sacred to me than the biggest cathedral then extant would have been; rude rustic, bare, no temple of the world was more so: but there were sacred lambencies, tongues of authentic flame which kindled what was best in me, what has not yet gone out."

*Carlyle on revisiting the Secessional Church at Ecclefechan.*

JOHN HUNTER was a native of Aberdeen. Although he left it before he was seventeen years old, it kept his affection throughout his life. "I went home to Aberdeen for two or three days," he wrote to a college friend. "Dear old Scotland! If you only knew the infinite tenderness that crept into my heart when I saw her grey, grand, venerable hills." He always enjoyed going back "for two or three days." He did so almost every year, once if not twice. On these visits he liked to linger among the haunts of his childhood—especially the banks of Don by the Brig o' Balgownie where he and his brothers used to play. Memories of those years were treasured—"a good and helpful tradition without which my life would be poor and bare." Two of the rare occasions on which he indulged in personal reminiscences from the pulpit were in Aberdeen churches associated with his boyhood. For many years a photograph of one of them stood on his study mantelshelf.

"Who can forget and remembering does not remember tenderly the church which he attended in childhood," he said in a sermon preached during the last year of his ministry in Glasgow. "I know one, at least, who, looking back on the golden Sabbaths of his youth, and they all appear golden now, spent in a certain church would like to go back for once and sit just in the same seat as before and see the same minister in the pulpit. There hands were laid upon him whose touch he still feels on his forehead, and voices—pleading voices—were heard whose echoes will linger in his ears till they are closed to every earthly sound."

And yet there is little for a biographer to tell concerning his childhood. He was not in the habit of speaking much about himself even in his own home. He was nothing of an egotist. He

kept no diary. Death, too, has carried away those who shared his memories. But the chief of these memories no man shared. He was a solitary lad, and "the great hours" of his boyhood were concerned less with external events than with inward experiences. The mists of time lift but once or twice to reveal some passing picture; the rest is only revealed in the faith and life of after years.

William Hunter, his father, unlike the proverbial Aberdonian, was not ambitious to make money. For him the real business of the day began when he returned from the day's labour of rope-making and took down his books. Self-taught, he was a great reader. The subjects that appealed most to him were natural history and the kindred sciences, literature and history, and, of course, theology. He was a keen politician (Aberdeen was a city of keen progressive politicians). He used to criticise severely the illiteracy among working-men. He was a member of the Established Kirk and a godly man. His religion was of an intellectual caste. He had the mind that is more interested in questions than in their answers. With different opportunities he might have followed with success some academic profession. Looking at his portrait one is struck by the breadth of brow and the open, frank expression. All his life he worked hard and lived poorly. He died in 1885 in his eighty-third year.

His wife, Jean Boyle Hunter, was also an Aberdonian, but came from the country. She was gentle and shy, quiet in her ways and thoughts, an Episcopalian, and the religion of the Prayer Book is softer and warmer in tone than Calvinism. Her character was written in her face, finely featured, reposeful, disciplined in hardship and piety. Her life was wholly taken up in minding a family and fighting poverty. "She has had a hard life," her son wrote a year before her death. "Hers has been a case of heroism in humble life." She, too, lived till past eighty—long enough to enjoy the fame and the care of her distinguished son. She died a year before her husband. Both were buried in old St. Peter's churchyard.

John Hunter was born on July 14, 1848.<sup>1</sup> The house in Nelson Street is now demolished. It was a small house in a poor quarter of the town. He came fourth in a family of five—a girl and four boys. His sister died at the age of nine before he was born—a

<sup>1</sup> The date given in all biographical sketches, *Who's Who*, and on his tombstone is 1849, as he was under the impression that that was the year of his birth. But 1848 is the date on his baptismal and marriage certificates.



loss in companionship he constantly regretted. The eldest son, William, was also delicate and died of consumption at the age of twenty-nine. James, the second, was four years older than John and outlived him—if two years of acute paralysis can be called life—by twenty months. This son inherited something of his father's disposition. He became an engineer, but was handicapped by deafness which became almost complete before he died. The two brothers were fast friends through life. Their correspondence, had it been preserved, would have been amusing to read. James had a gift of humour, often brilliant. It covered, as it so often does, a heart made sad by more than one man's due of sorrow and misfortune. The youngest son died in middle life out in the Transvaal.

All the children received a good elementary education. John was sent first to the John Knox Sessional School and later to Dr. Bell's School. He did not show any exceptional promise. He was sometimes dux of his class and never at the bottom. One of his class-mates who belonged to his set describes him as "full of vivacity and fun—a great leader in all kind of practical joking, but never cruel or unkind," while those <sup>1</sup> who knew him less well found him "quiet and inconspicuous." His master, Mr. James Pithie, trusted him with monitorial work—the charge and instruction of a junior class. Three years after he had left the school, Mr. Pithie writes to him in answer to a request for a testimonial: "You may at all times depend on my services in your behalf, as you deserve them. I have no fear but you will ultimately be successful, and from the tone of your letter I see you have the courage to bear up against any temporary discouragement. Set your aim before you, push on to your desire, and no fear but the result will be favourable. I have great faith in a man's own endeavours." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This correspondent naïvely writes: "I have a recollection that he stood third in a class where I was first," and concludes, "Success depends much upon the opportunity to fall into a congenial line of action."

<sup>2</sup> Dated December 22, 1864. Testimonials were less perfunctory then and this one merits quotation. "Mr. John Hunter was a pupil of mine for a number of years, and although it is three years since he was under my charge I have still a lively recollection of the progress he made. His conduct was always most exemplary; the progress he made was very rapid in all the branches, and at the annual examinations he always carried off first prizes. In fact, he was one of the best scholars in the School. He frequently acted as a Monitor, and in that capacity I found him diligent, careful, and successful in instructing those under his charge. From what I know of his talents, disposition and activity, I am sure he will prove himself to be an energetic and successful teacher."

That faith was typical of a time when the characteristic moral homily was from the text: "Wherefore should a living man complain," and when boys and young men were taught that life was a hard fight and victory went to those who had grit and self-reliance. As a theology Scottish Calvinism did not flatter God, but as a moral discipline it made men—hard perhaps, angular, unlovely, but still men. Scotsmen of last century owed their success in commerce and industry largely to this kind of "Christian Stoicism," in which they were educated.

William Hunter not only encouraged his son to work hard at his books, but also provided him with such solid reading as Barnes's *Notes*, in twenty volumes, and Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*. One of his favourite books at this time was Hugh Miller's *My Schools and Schoolmasters*.

At the age of thirteen John left school, and as his parents could not afford to continue his education and send him to the University, he was apprenticed to a draper in the city. From then until he was eighteen systematic instruction ceased, except for occasional classes. He never carried out his idea of teaching.<sup>1</sup>

If he was not a born preacher, the passion developed early. At the age of four he used to exhort a congregation of chairs and stools in his mother's kitchen, with a pair of bands round his neck which his mother had cut out of a piece of calico—and he was not a son of the manse. The bands still exist. At the age of nine he was listening to sermons so intently that he could recall the texts and outlines of some of them late in life. In those days he used to go with his mother to St. Andrew's Episcopal Church on a Sunday forenoon, and in the afternoon with his father to Greyfriars Established Church. In the evening he usually went with his mother to the Rev. David Arthur's lectures in George Street Congregational Church. "I cannot remember a time," he said, on the occasion of the semi-jubilee of his ministry, "when God and the things of God were not the supreme realities of life."

In the 'sixties of last century the religious life of Aberdeen was full and varied. The churches were many and were mostly crowded.

<sup>1</sup> A partial schooling in the university of life has been one of the assets of the Nonconformist ministries. R. W. Dale had to leave school at thirteen, and spent several years teaching before he went to a theological college. J. B. Paton, the Principal of Nottingham Institute, left school at the age of ten, worked for a year in a printer's office and then acted as an assistant teacher until he went to Spring Hill College.

The North of Scotland was still in the grip of Calvinism, although the religion of the Covenanters which had dominated Scottish life and thought for nearly two hundred years had relaxed its hold towards the end of the eighteenth century. The Scottish Church at that time became blighted by the same excessive rationalism that infected English theology and led to the spread of deism in English Presbyterianism and Independency. The temperature of religious faith became Laodicean. The dominant party in the Established Church was self-styled the party of Moderation. "There can be little doubt that its exponents fell short of what had come to be the ideal of pastoral efficiency cherished by most of their congregations. The hungry sheep looked up and were not fed." <sup>1</sup>

Consequently they began to make provision for themselves. Secession Churches sprang up. More humbly, little groups of laymen came together to form Independent Churches.

"Congregationalism started in Scotland as an evangelistic movement and did much the same kind of work, though not on such a large scale, as Methodism did in its early and heroic days in England. It carried into many a town and village a more living and spiritual Christianity, a simpler faith in the things which Christ and His Cross reveal and represent, a higher and more inspiring ideal of Christian life and duty, and it set men and women to live in the reality of that which they professed to accept as true. A venerable Free Church minister once said to me that in his early days all, or nearly all, the truly devout and godly people in his part of the country were Independents. And that is no exaggeration. In the North of Scotland, certainly, nearly all the earnest religion that existed was to be found among the Independents, who formed churches in the towns and villages which were known as 'Missionary Kirks,' and which, at least till the Disruption in the Church of Scotland, were centres of a healthy spiritual influence." <sup>2</sup>

The doctrine taught from their pulpits—often with uncouth vigour and unacademic simplicity of speech—was strictly orthodox according to the standard of the Westminster Confession. The transcendent holiness of God and the depravity of man fallen

<sup>1</sup> *Life of W. Robertson-Smith* by J. S. Black and G. W. Chrystal. A. and C. Black, 1912, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> John Hunter. From an address to the Congregational Union of England and Wales in 1896 and from a Lecture on George Macdonald. The early chapters of *Robert Falconer*—a good example of Macdonald's best work—give a vivid and not ungenerous portrait of the religious influences of his youth. Macdonald was brought up in the Independent Church at Huntly. With the development of the Free Church many of these Independent Churches disappeared. They had done their work.

from pristine innocence were its fundamental dogmas. The Bible was the infallible Word of God, and recorded the miraculous redemption of man from the wrath of God's justice through the mercy of God's grace whereby He accepted the atoning sacrifice of Christ as a substitute for the punishment of humanity. Through this atonement an elect few were predestined unto salvation. For the rest, an exceedingly fiery and unquenchable furnace.<sup>1</sup>

The Evangelical Revival which gave birth to these Independent Churches also accounted in part for the ecclesiastical movement which led in 1843 to the Disruption and the formation of the Free Church. In Aberdeen it was in full tide. In the case of Greyfriars, for example, the minister, the elders, with one exception, and the bulk of the congregation "went out." It was with difficulty that services were carried on, and it was twenty years before the congregations recovered in numbers.

The larger ecclesiastical movement arrested for a time the liberal and anti-Calvinist movement inspired by Carlyle and led by Erskine of Linlathen and Macleod Campbell.<sup>2</sup> In Biblical criticism Scotland tarried behind England. In the early 'sixties it was not yet a subject of controversy in the churches. Of its chief exponents in after years Robertson Smith was still a student at college and A. B. Bruce a country minister near Dumbarton.

The religious environment of John Hunter's boyhood then, if we except Episcopalianism which was a current separate from the main stream of Scottish religious life, was an evangelical Christianity, orthodox in its theology and strict in moral discipline. Even the Established Church became more evangelical in tone when the Disruption shook it from its placid slumber.

The minister of Greyfriars from 1857-62, the Rev. James Smith, was a vigorous evangelical and came into collision with the

<sup>1</sup> George St. Congregational Church, founded in 1797 and known as the "Look Kirk," was the first "Missionary Kirk" in Aberdeen.

<sup>2</sup> In 1846, however, there arose a controversy inside the United Secession Church over the doctrine of election. The Rev. James Morison of Kilmarnock, a man of remarkable influence and spiritual power, was deposed because he maintained that Christ died for all men and not for an elect only. Many ministers and laymen came out with him and formed the Evangelical Union Church. The first E.U. congregation in Aberdeen was formed in 1846, and its minister, an able man, was for many years boycotted by the ministers of the city, and in the streets was often insulted and greeted with the cry "New views, new lights, new gas." The new doctrine was vigorously opposed by Congregational ministers in the town, but in course of time the larger view won general acceptance, and in the second half of the century Scottish Congregationalism was distinguished by a strong anti-Calvinistic tendency. The two groups of churches were united in the Scottish Congregational Union in 1896. Hunter seconded the resolution in favour of union at the meeting of the Congregational Union.

“moderates” in his church. John Hunter was greatly influenced by him. Preaching at the first of the special services before the church was closed in 1903,<sup>1</sup> he said in the course of some personal reminiscences :

“Here I listened to the most impressive preaching I have ever heard, and here, a boy of thirteen, I sat for the first time at the Table of the Lord. I have associations with this building which I cannot have with any other, for it is associated with my first consecration to the service of God. . . . I have a most vivid remembrance of the Rev. James Smith and his ministry in this place. Though I was only eight (nine) years old I can recall as if it were yesterday the first Sunday afternoon he preached as the minister of the congregation, the appearance of the buildings, the crowded aisles, and the text of the sermon. Since those days I have heard many great preachers, but I have never heard preaching so earnest, so impressive as the preaching of Mr. Smith. The pleading tones of his voice were a sermon and a prayer. . . . It gives me joy to bear my testimony within these walls, after all these years, to the good and abiding influence upon me and my life of the ministry of Mr. Smith, who was not only an able and eloquent preacher, but a simple, sincere, earnest man without a shadow of pretence of any sort.”

In the years 1859-61 a great revival swept over the North of Scotland—“the Times of Refreshing from the Presence of the Lord.” Unlike the majority of the Established Church ministers Mr. Smith entered fully into the movement and welcomed the revivalists—mostly laymen—into his pulpit. He was censured by the General Assembly for this, but he did not alter his ways.

In Greyfriars, John Hunter heard Reginald Radcliffe, Brownlow North, Baptist Noel, Macdowall Grant of Ardently and Duncan Matheson. Already deeply religious he was greatly moved and impressed. The soul of the boy caught fire. The passion for God became the master-passion of his life. From that time with increasing enthusiasm he took to haunting churches and religious meetings of all kinds. He became absorbed in the work of the revival and in his own religious consciousness. There is a picture of him walking down the streets on some business errand oblivious of the sights and sounds of passing acquaintances, with a far-away look in his eyes, wrapped in thought. He played no games. He was solitary even in the home where he was loved. He kept

<sup>1</sup> The old church was pulled down to make place for the new Marischal College. It was the only pre-Reformation building in Aberdeen (excepting Old Machar Cathedral), and dated from about 1520.

much to himself and went his own gait. In after years if asked about his boyhood, the word "lonely" always came to his lips. He soon began to take part in prayer meetings—first among little groups of humble women round about his home and then in more public places. He and a friend two or three years older than himself, Aleck Milne, used to go down to the Old Town Links on a Sunday morning and read the Bible and pray together. Then they started a mission in "a small room in a back court situated in an obscure part of the city"—this probably under the supervision of some zealous Free Church layman. "I can still recall his appearance and attitude leading in prayer," writes one of his companions, "his firmly closed hands raised in front, his uplifted look and rapt smile." The mission was kept going for a year or two; Hunter did most of the speaking, but others helped with the visiting.

In November, 1862, Mr. Smith left Greyfriars and was succeeded by a minister of the dry unemotional type. Hunter began to go elsewhere. In particular he was attracted by the preaching of the Rev. David Arthur of George Street Congregational Church. Mr. Arthur's Sunday evening lectures were extremely popular, and as the second service in Presbyterian churches was held in the afternoon, he had a clear field. He was no mean preacher and a man of catholic mind. He used to open his pulpit to distinguished preachers of other denominations and prominent English Non-conformists. There Hunter heard Dr. Flint, Professor Milligan, Dr. Linsay Alexander and Dr. Gervase Smith of London. In 1865 the congregation moved to the present building in Belmont Street. Preaching on the Jubilee of that event in 1915—his last visit to Scotland—Hunter recalled being present on the occasion, and also a few Sundays later hearing a sermon from Dr. Donald Fraser of Inverness in which he quoted lines from Tennyson—"the first time in my knowledge that I had heard Tennyson quoted from the pulpit."

It was also during this period of promiscuous church-going that he was first led to Albion Chapel, where officiated a man to whom through life he bore a loyal and affectionate friendship, the Rev. John Duncan.

"The occasion comes back to me with clearest distinctness. It was the last Sunday of the year—a lovely moonlight night, with the snow lying heavy upon the ground. The building was crowded,

and I sat in the circle near the stairs of the pulpit. The text was—‘So teach us to remember our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.’ I can recall the preacher’s tall, stooping figure, his pale, animated countenance, his black hair and long, swinging arms. At the close of the sermon he repeated very pathetically the verse of a hymn which burned itself into my memory :

“In early years Thou wast my Guide,  
And of my youth the Friend.  
And since the days began with Thee,  
With Thee my days shall end.”

Though I only heard Dr. Duncan preach very occasionally, yet he was one of the favourite preachers of my boyhood. I liked him particularly when he raised his voice and flung about his arms. . . . While still a boy I used to meet him at various gatherings. When I was leaving for England, in my seventeenth year, a Young Men’s Society<sup>1</sup> with which I was connected presented me with some books. Dr. Duncan was present at this meeting. One sentence in his speech I never forgot : ‘You do not know whither you are going, but you know something far better—you know with Whom you are going.’ ”<sup>2</sup>

For some reason Hunter identified himself with neither of these congregations, but with Woodside Congregational Church, a struggling church in a poor neighbourhood.

During these years the boy was possessed by a crude, intense evangelical faith.<sup>3</sup> It poured out in fervid prayer and impassioned speech. He lived happily within the limitations of Calvinistic discipline, for it was wholly approved by his own conscience and conviction. It is told that he warmly rebuked a family of cousins for reading secular books on the Sabbath. He read extensively in general literature himself—not on the Sabbath. The bulk of his reading, however, was along the line of his bent. He made himself thoroughly familiar with the Bible, with the writings of the Scottish divines of earlier times and with devotional books, such as Scougal’s *Life of God in the Soul of Man*. When addressing theological students in later life he used often to say that a man should test his sense of vocation on that book. If he were able to say, Amen, to it from the heart, then he might confidently go forward to the ministry.

Until this time Hunter had made his way unsponsored, but

<sup>1</sup> The Frederick Street Young Men’s Prayer Meeting.

<sup>2</sup> From an appreciation contributed to the life of Dr. John Duncan by the Rev. J. B. Allan. Hodder and Stoughton, 1909.

<sup>3</sup> But cf. *infra*, p. 103,

now elder men began to mark his power and his youth—he always looked young for his age—and to take a very affectionate interest in his welfare. It became as plain to them as it already must have been to himself that his life-work must be the ministry. But the way was not plain. The Presbyterian ministry was barred to him by the inelasticity of its system of training. He could not afford a University course followed by three years at a Divinity Hall, even although the standard of living among students was severe and nobody in those days was ashamed to say “I cannot afford it.” His mother’s minister—Bishop Suther, a keen promoter of education among working-men—was anxious for him to enter that ministry. But the quiet decorum of Episcopalianism had no attraction for an ardent young evangelical.

He happened almost accidentally into the Congregational ministry before he had given thought to ecclesiastical principles. It was a divinely-guided accident, for in no other Church at that time would he have been able to do the work he did so freely and effectively. At that time in Scotland there was in its ministry no rigid scheme of training. It is of the genius of Independency that an individual congregation can invite any man it wishes, trained or untrained, to become its pastor. Some Independent ministers were men of academic distinction, many had received a thorough theological training, others were “local preachers” who had received none. Believing that the more gifted a man is the more he deserves all that a good education brings, John Hunter’s friends were determined to make a college training possible for him. There was a connection between the Woodside Church and Nottingham Congregational Institute, for the minister, the Rev. James Strachan, had come from the Institute, and two young men of the congregation had recently gone there. One of them, Alexander Gammie, a raw-boned Scot and an out-and-out Calvinist with a wonderfully tender heart, was one of Hunter’s special friends. After some correspondence with the Principal it was arranged that he should study there for two years.

His opportunity had come. His own people gladly made it possible for him to go. So he left home in the autumn, or at the end of 1866.

His connection with Aberdeen, however, did not immediately cease. During the five years he was at college, first at Nottingham and then at Spring Hill, he used to spend the greater part of the



summer vacations at home. On the Sundays he usually preached in the Independent churches of Aberdeen or the surrounding country-side. Even before he went to college his gifts as a preacher caused no little stir. Among the townfolk he was known as "the boy preacher." In an open place called the Broad Hill where evangelistic meetings were held he moved big crowds by his passionate eloquence. In the succeeding years, through college influence and his own hard work, his powers developed marvellously. Sir W. Robertson Nicoll, while a student in Aberdeen, lodged with one of the deacons of the Belmont Street Chapel and was first taken by him to hear him. "I remember," he writes, "bills posted up with the intimation: 'Mr. John Hunter, Student, Springhill College, will preach in Belmont Street Chapel on Thursday evening.' It was not Presbyterian preaching, but eloquence like a rushing wind which completely carried his audience. I have never heard such passion. It was amazing in one so young." Even on a week-night—and week-night services were unusual—the large building would be crowded to the doors.

Every time that Hunter went home he would preach for Mr. Arthur and Mr. Duncan. He preached for Mr. Arthur over forty times in those years; and so close was the bond between them that he was invited to become his assistant and successor. These two men also secured for him remunerative supplies in the neighbourhood. It was chiefly through their kindness that he preached at Inverness, Banff, Portsoy, Keith, Cullen, Culsalmond, Huntly, Banchory, Inverurie, and as far north as Inch. To these holiday preachings he owed his first "call" in 1869 (to Duncanstone and Inch). It was heralded by a letter from a member of the congregation, John Russell by name, which was typical of the piety and mentality of a country Independent of that time.

"I was sorry indeed to hear of you being poorly but it was not to be wondered at all that you caught cold having such a long and tedious drive at this season of the year, but now I trust that you are well and getting on with the important work of fitting the mind for the great work of being the medium through which God in his good time is to use in directing poor sinners to a once Crucified but now a risen Redeemer. . . . My prayer is, and the prayer of the Meeting was that if it was the Lord's will he might direct us to one whom he would own and could bless as a labourer in his vineyard, and *the hearts of everyone seemed to be set on you*

and I hope the Lord will make the way plain before you and so encline your heart to come and labour amongst us, and that we may all be led to say Lord not our wills but thine be done—now we see through a glass darkly but soon face to face. I will expect to hear from you soon—the Secretary, Mr. Bruce, will forward the call. My wife unites with James Ronald and wife and familys in kind love.”

In the vacation of 1870 or 1871 Hunter and Peter Forsyth, then a student at the University, now Principal of Hackney College, London, a fellow-Aberdonian, conceived the idea of resuscitating a Congregational Chapel in Dee Street which had been preached empty by its last minister and recently closed. They held afternoon services and drew large congregations. Of that time is the criticism which an old Aberdeen beadle made to his minister: “Mr. Peter Forsyth has all young Johnnie Hunter’s ability, but he lacks his grace” (grace used in the sense of piety). This brief enterprise was the beginning of a lifelong friendship.

Throughout his life there was no place outside his own Church where Hunter more enjoyed preaching than in Aberdeen, no place where he felt more at home or where he attracted larger and more appreciative congregations. The last sermon that he preached in Scotland was delivered in Aberdeen.

## CHAPTER II

### COLLEGE DAYS, 1866-71

THE Nottingham Congregational Institute was founded three years before John Hunter went there, in order to train men, to whom the call to the ministry came late in life, for home mission work. Baldwin Brown used to say that he learnt two things at his theological college—patience, and how to shave with cold water. Under John Brown Paton the training at Nottingham Institute went further. He was one of the great men of last century—a rare combination of geniality and passion, of the scholar and the man of action. He was never idle, never at rest. Up till his last year he was promoting new philanthropies. Henry Drummond as he lay dying enquired merrily of a friend: “Tell me, has Dr. Paton any new scheme on hand?” Warm-hearted, catholic in his sympathies, simple in his faith, he fought the evil in the world with indomitable hope. Some months before his death, Hunter visited him and found him very feeble in body, but as vigorous as ever in mind. “He sent one away with hands and pockets stuffed full of pamphlets and circulars concerning his various schemes for which he wanted my interest and active sympathy.” Paton *was* the Nottingham Congregational Institute. All his men respected and loved him; none more so than John Hunter.

“Each successive year,” said Hunter, at the time of his death, “as it deepened our intimacy only taught me to revere and love him the more. To the end his life flowed into mine in a way which was a constant strength and enrichment. He was indeed a most magnetic personality. It was impossible to come near him without being touched and laid hold of on one’s best side. . . . He was the best man whom God in His great mercy has ever permitted me to know.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Address at the Annual Meeting of the Scottish Christian Social Union, Feb. 21, 1911, afterwards printed in the Tenth Annual Report. Paton was a native of Ayrshire, and in his boyhood came under the influence of James Morison and Norman Macleod.

Paton's relation to his men was more that of a parent than that of a principal. He cared for them with almost a woman's thoughtfulness. He was not so afraid of losing his dignity that he kept aloof from them. In the class-room he preferred the conversational or tutorial method. To his men he was a friend in whom they readily confided. Such a relationship where it exists is an immense benefit to the student. It depends for its success less on the particular way in which a college is organised—though that is important—than on the youthfulness of the staff, and unfortunately theological teachers seem to age more quickly than most men. Paton, however, was an exception. There was nothing cloistered or academic about him. He was always in touch with the currents of life in the world outside the college, and this gave power and actuality to his teaching.

The quality of the man and the value of his method were seen superlatively in the Sermon Class—a novelty in those days. "It was then," wrote one of his students, "that we were regaled, edified and inspired with those brilliant flashes of insight, of pungent wit, playful sarcasm, biting humour, or wise counsel which far more than any originality of method gave distinction to the Class."<sup>1</sup> His criticism went to the root of the matter. He wanted passion; but he wanted "solidity and depth" of passion, begotten of personal experience. A soft, mawkish discourse by a very young student one day was dismissed with "Splendid, splendid, splendid"; then, after a pause, "calf's meat."

Already, before he came to Nottingham, Hunter preached with the note of reality and with passion, but he must nevertheless have learnt much from Paton's Sermon Class, for he always worked hard to perfect his natural gift.

There are still many people in the villages and towns round about Nottingham who remember the sermons of John Hunter while he was a student at the Institute.

"I can recall him," writes a man, who was a boy at the time, "coming up the chapel, diffident and shy in manner, as though almost afraid even to face a village audience—generally dressed in grey clothes with a light coloured tie, with a complete disregard of what were then considered the 'proprieties of the pulpit.' But what eloquence!"

<sup>1</sup> *Life of John Brown Paton* by his son Lewis Paton. Hodder and Stoughton, 1914, p. 99.

One can imagine the expectant mood in which Hunter came up to college, and the special difficulties he had to face. The interval of years since he left school made the discipline of study very trying. Although the curriculum was planned so that "the task of gerund-grinding"<sup>1</sup> was reduced to a minimum, even that minimum was irksome and seemed remote from the real business of a preacher.

There was not much social life among the students, as they did not live in college; nevertheless, he was happy to find among them one who became his greatest friend. John Turner Stannard was almost five years senior to him. Born at Chelmsford, he entered a solicitor's office in that town. He was a member of the Church of England, until the reading of Spurgeon's famous sermon on "Baptismal Regeneration" awakened doubts in his mind as to the teaching of the Prayer Book. When he was twenty-one he decided to leave the Anglican Communion and become a member of the Congregational Church; a year later he entered Nottingham Institute as a student of the London Missionary Society. At Nottingham Hunter and Stannard shared the same lodgings at 8 Goldsmith Street for twelve months until they both went on to Spring Hill College. Of his friendship in those days and of his influence on the college life, Hunter wrote many years after:

"His affectionateness and five years' longer experience of the world made him to me at that time more an elder brother than friend. . . . He followed closely and, on the whole, successfully, the prescribed course of college work. He had no ambition, only a deep and serious sense of the duty of self-culture. No one claimed for him exceptional mental gifts, but everyone had for him a most affectionate regard and sought his society as one of the kindest and most companionable of men. Very beautiful was the influence he had over us in those days. He

"Ever moved  
Among us in white armour.  
Not earthly passion,  
But the sweet vision of the Holy Grail  
Drove him from all vainglorious rivalries  
And earthly heats."<sup>2</sup>

Stannard was sensitive and nervous more than most men, and the trials of ministerial life, which for him involved a painful fight for truth, stretched his fine, gentle spirit on the rack. He

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> From the biographical sketch prefixed to the memorial volume of Sermons titled, *The Divine Humanity*, by J. T. Stannard. Maclehose and Co., Glasgow, 1892.

was a man of refined taste, a discriminating student of literature, and an admirable raconteur. In company he was most entertaining, and could tell a humorous story with inimitable gravity.

As the end of his course at Nottingham drew near, Hunter seriously thought of a pastorate in preference to further study. His motive was partly financial and partly the desire to exercise his gift. But his friends and, especially, the Principal urged the desirability of a longer course of study.

So in the autumn of 1868, along with J. T. Stannard, George Sadler and one or two others, he entered Spring Hill College, Birmingham. He wrote to his mother the next day :

“I would have written you earlier if I had got the opportunity. I have arrived at Birmingham. I am to stay at any rate for some time. The college is situated about five miles from Birmingham (Moseley). It is a very large and beautiful building. It has two spires at each end and a large tower in the middle. It is comparatively new. It is handsomely fitted up inside. The library is the size of an ordinary church—it contains a fine organ. The dining-hall is a very spacious room. We have breakfast at 8, luncheon at 11, dinner at 2, tea at 5, supper at 9. The table is exceedingly well provided. My study and bedroom are two very nice rooms, but at present very bare. The students are expected to furnish their own rooms, and also to keep themselves in fire-light and likewise pay for their own washing and dressing. These things will be my only expenses. I will have no money (fees) to pay.

Could Willie manage to send me some money just now, and you and father will repay him when you are able. I had to pay my bookseller at Nottingham, and my fare to Birmingham with other incidental expenses has nearly taken all my money. I must have some money. I will require it for setting up my establishment. It will likely be the last I need. With kindest love—in great haste, I am ever your affectionate son. . . .”

The reference to the bookseller's bill was ominous of the big bills he used to pile up in after days.

The education provided at Spring Hill College<sup>1</sup> was more thorough and extensive than that at Nottingham Institute, but there was no man on the staff with Paton's inspirational power. Soon after Hunter went there, however, Dr. D. W. Simon was

<sup>1</sup> It was moved to Oxford, rebaptised Mansfield College (in 1889) after the original founders (1838). The regular course lasted five years—the first two years were given to “Arts” subjects, the remainder to theology. Many of the men took the London University degree. There was a shorter course of three years which Hunter took.

appointed principal and theological professor. Simon was a comparatively young man. He had studied at Manchester, coming under the influence there of A. J. Scott, and had spent fifteen years in Germany. He encouraged his men to think for themselves, and to be honest and fearless in the pursuit of truth. Consequently for some years there was a suspicion of "Simon's men" in the Churches and he himself was regarded as rather a dangerous teacher. Hunter expressed his indebtedness to Simon in a letter dated August 23rd, 1870.

"Your lectures on 'Revelation' have been exceedingly useful to me. Like all true teaching they are remarkably suggestive. I wish I had them complete. The fragmentary portions I have of them I have consulted several times since I left College. . . . For your kindly interest in me I cherish a deep and strong gratitude. I am sorry that I cannot express my own thoughts more fully in conversation with you. The want of conversational power is a want I bitterly feel. But I can listen."<sup>1</sup>

Hunter's experiences in the preparatory classes were not of the happiest. Classics and Mathematics he disliked. "He was a hard student along his own lines, but that lay outside the ordinary College curriculum. He read widely in general literature and philosophy and in those lines which would help him in sermon making."<sup>2</sup> He did not regret the neglect of mathematics; but he keenly regretted both his inability to go to Aberdeen University and his absorption in theology and philosophy which made him impatient with classical studies and Biblical exegesis—though the blame was partly due to the lifelessness of the teaching.<sup>3</sup>

On the whole he got less help and inspiration from his professors than from the influence of the civic life, the companionship of his fellow-students and his own reading.

In the middle of last century Birmingham was, perhaps, the most progressive and keenly alive of English cities. John Bright was its member of Parliament. The Chamberlain family were

<sup>1</sup> *Life of D. W. Simon* by F. J. Powicke. Hodder and Stoughton, 1912, p. 91. Dr. Powicke's surmise in an accompanying footnote that Hunter did not return to Spring Hill after that date is not correct. At the time he had a strong inclination to accept a unanimous invitation to become Mr. Arthur's assistant at Belmont St. Church, Aberdeen, but he decided to complete his course at college.

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. T. W. Pinn of Stockport.

<sup>3</sup> Of his ability in theological and philosophical studies there was no question. Dr. William Pulsford, who was the examiner in theology, and Dr. Bruce, the examiner in philosophy in 1871, both singled out his work in their reports for special commendation.

beginning to take a prominent part in its civic life. The Town Hall was one of the most famous platforms in the country. The town was growing rapidly in size, and a rich variety of industries and commercial enterprises were represented in its commonwealth. Several remarkable and liberal men occupied the Nonconformist pulpits of the city. R. W. Dale was preaching to vast congregations in Carr's Lane Chapel, and was an increasing influence in the social and political life of the city. Eloquent as a speaker, famous as a theologian, an ardent politician and ecclesiastic, he was one of the gifted men of the age. When Hunter came to Birmingham, Dale was beginning to take an increasing part in public life. His preaching was directed more to ethical and social topics than formerly.<sup>1</sup>

Dale, who was chairman of the governing body of Spring Hill, was not so popular with the students as the Rev. George Dawson, once minister of a Baptist church, but at this time in his new unsectarian "Church of the Saviour"—and at the height of his influence. "Dawson's wonderfully touching prayers," writes the Rev. Joseph Wood, "and his sermons so vivid, so fresh, so alive to the thought and work and life of the times, so free from the usual conventional language of the pulpit, so picturesque, made a great impression on Hunter and helped to give him a new conception of what the sermon should be. He never had Dawson's humour, but he had all Dawson's aliveness to the world in which he lived and the age to which he ministered."

Later in his college course he went frequently to hear Dr. Crosskey, the Unitarian minister of the Church of the Messiah. Crosskey was in the habit of publishing his services in pamphlet form. Hunter evidently admired his discourses sufficiently to collect a complete set of these pamphlets, and to keep a lively regard for Crosskey ever afterwards.

But the supreme advantage of Spring Hill over Nottingham Institute lay in the fact that it was a residential college. In such a college a man's teachers, in the truest and best sense, as Sir A. W. Dale says, "are the men of his own age, whose thought and life he shares."

Hunter entered happily into the life of the college and was a

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Life of R. W. Dale* by his Son. Hodder and Stoughton, 1908. Dale was the spokesman of the Nonconformist party in the education controversy in the early 'seventies, and the foremost speaker of the Liberationist Society.



great favourite. One speaker at his farewell supper remarked that "John Hunter had been like a ray of sunshine about the college."

"My recollections of Hunter are very vivid—his sturdy, square-built frame, ruddy face, bright piercing eyes, with their merry twinkle. He was fond of fun. There was always a marked individuality in his 'doings,' as one well remembers on finding one's study turned topsy-turvy and in the occasional battles of boots and pillows. What he did he did thoroughly. No one more revelled in a good joke or a racy story. Years after college he kindly came and preached for me, and the first thing upon coming into the vestry was to give me the latest quip. So it was always whenever we met. Surely no one was ever more shy. His strong, affectionate nature, while perhaps in reserve from the general public, always came out in the hearty handshake. Renown did not spoil him. His fame was in all the churches, but he was perfectly natural with those with whom he felt at home. He was known throughout the college as 'the Preacher.'"<sup>1</sup>

Stannard, in a speech at Hunter's farewell meeting, bore testimony to their friendship.

"Fellowship with one of his generous, open, highly endowed nature has proved to me one of my greatest college privileges. The thoroughness and ardour with which he has sought out, followed up and enforced questions of living interest has set one's heart aglow and inspired him to search and toil in the same direction. The play of his humour and fancy has enlivened and enlightened many an hour; the becoming self-control with which he has borne the success of his remarkable pulpit career has tended strongly to confirm our early estimate of him. I expect that I shall never meet with one who has hoarded up less his newly acquired mental treasures or who, intellectually speaking, has lived a more self-bestowed life."

The impression which Hunter left on the students who did not belong to his "year" and were not so intimate with him was like that left upon his school-acquaintance, "somewhat of a recluse—who did not enter very fully into the life of the college"—though on one occasion he surprised the college by his intervention in a college meeting, which had been continued over several days, with a most carefully written and eloquent speech.

It was the custom of the college that the students should conduct the daily "family" prayers in turn. Only too often it was a conventional, slovenly exercise. Hunter put thought and trouble

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. G. Sadler.

into it, and the men looked forward to the occasion of his taking part. "He could not read scripture or offer prayer without making us feel that he was especially near to the spiritual world."

The education at Nottingham Institute had modified but little Hunter's theological beliefs. At Spring Hill he came under new influences, though not before he was ready to receive them. Before he left Nottingham he had come across Baldwin Brown's *The Soul's Exodus and Pilgrimage*.

"I can recall," he said in his lecture on Baldwin Brown,<sup>1</sup> "the stile of the country road where I sat when I read some of its glowing passages—passages which gave a new charm to the landscape and a new tenderness to the light of that summer evening long ago. It introduced me into a new world of pulpit eloquence."

Not long after he had gone to Spring Hill College, he was introduced to the writings of F. D. Maurice. Many years after he wrote, "In my student days Maurice helped me much. To no earthly teacher would I more readily give the name 'Master' than to him."

His account of Stannard's theological pilgrimage in the sketch, to which reference has already been made, is equally true of himself, for they worked and read, and one might almost say thought, in unison.

"It was during this period he outgrew the theology in which he had been educated, and was gradually led into sympathy with those larger and more spiritual interpretations of the Christian ideas which are associated with the names of Frederick Denison Maurice, Frederick Robertson, Thomas Erskine, John Macleod Campbell and James Baldwin Brown. The fight with doubt, I need hardly say, was to his sensitive nature a painful one, but he never hesitated. He was the last man to ask the question about anything, Is it safe? instead of, Is it true? He was then and always intensely loyal to what he saw to be truth, and could not bear to use in public prayer and address words and phrases that did not honestly express his sentiments and aspirations. . . . His mind gained not only in breadth, but in depth."<sup>2</sup>

An integral part of the training of a Free Church ministerial student is the experience which he gets of Sunday preaching. Some small churches regularly depend on the students for pulpit

<sup>1</sup> Published in the *Expositor*, April, 1921.

<sup>2</sup> *The Divine Humanity*, p. 15.

supply ; others call upon them in emergencies. This part of the training is undoubtedly valuable, but at the same time it may interfere with a man's course of study and tempt him to turn it too immediately into sermon-material. It is quite apparent that with Hunter the claims of Sunday pulpit work came first. Further, in a student's last year when he is "candidating"—i.e. preaching with a view to getting a call to a pastorate—he is tempted to pay too much attention to public opinion and notice. Even Hunter could write to a fellow-student, "I have preached every Sunday, and every Sunday, with the exception of one, my services have been advertised." And "Did you see that bit of puff in the Newcastle paper about me?" In this atmosphere and in these circumstances the bumptious man inevitably becomes more bumptious, the clever, conceited man more conceited, and the man of only average talent may be led to put on meretricious graces and to cultivate what Hunter once called "the not very fine arts by which pulpit success is sometimes achieved." Infant prodigies and popular evangelists and preachers are peculiarly liable to an egotism which makes them less attractive in private life. The discipline of the theological college, apart from the earnestness and reality of its religious life, does not, perhaps, help a man to steel himself against this special temptation to which his profession is open.

Hunter was so gifted a preacher that there was no need for him "to stoop to conquer." But he was exposed to the dangers which attend amazing success and popularity at an early age. He was fully aware—he could not have been unaware—of his power in the pulpit. "I preached a splendid sermon"—"I was in my very best form morning and evening." And yet through life he was the most modest and humble of Christians. His quiet, unassuming way baffled and put to flight the lion-hunters. This humility of spirit, won and kept when circumstances were against its survival, was perhaps the most remarkable of his successes.

The circumstances certainly were against its survival. "We had, of course, a preaching list," writes Mr. Pinn, "and the students in the theological classes were sent out in turn by the Principal, but Hunter was outside all law in this matter. He was always full of engagements and seems to have been allowed to make and fulfil them as he pleased." He never once needed to receive an

appointment through the preaching list. He received "calls" from a score of churches in different parts of the country.

His popularity cannot be set down to his appearance, to a facile eloquence or sensational manner—though it is true that in moments of passionate declamation he would nearly fling himself out of the pulpit. That it was no ephemeral success is perhaps best proved by the impressions of two eye-witnesses. Sir W. Robertson Nicoll wrote after Hunter's death :

"I think that Hunter never surpassed his sermons of that period (1870-71). They were full of fire. They were written in the modern style and were largely influenced by Maurice and Kingsley. The fact that Maurice was at first the editor of a literary journal and an accomplished critic gave him a great hearing among literary men in London, and so it was to a certain extent with John Hunter in Aberdeen. We students recognised with delight that he was talking a new language, and that he had discarded time-worn phrases. He went with Maurice and Kingsley in his passionate desire for social reform, and I remember him one afternoon in Dee Street Chapel stating with tremendous vehemence that the philanthropists of the day were largely working to have Christ say to them in the Judgment: 'Inasmuch as ye have patronised the least of these My brethren, ye have patronised Me.' Other such piercing things I remember, but have not space to write down. Suffice it to say that John Hunter was a master of the art and the technique of preaching when he was in his early twenties, or hardly perhaps even twenty. He kept always with him the glow of the revival, though his theological opinions were difficult, if not impossible, to define precisely.

"I heard him later on in life, and the attraction was there still, but with a certain abatement of passion inevitable in the circumstances. He knew that preaching was the work to which he was called. This lifelong devotion to the great work of Christian prophecy made him a power in life, and also, I believe, made him very happy, though his temperament was that of a man to whom life and its experiences do not come very easily."<sup>1</sup>

The second impression is from Mrs. George Whitfield, one of the small group in Newcastle (Staffs) with whom he became very friendly, and describes his first visit to the Congregational Church there in 1870.

"It was while we were without a minister. He arrived on Saturday evening and stayed at our house, my father and mother being alive then. He was the very shyest young man we had ever

<sup>1</sup> *British Weekly*, Sept. 27th, 1917.

had as a student. My mother was a first-rate talker, but she could strike no sparks out of him! He sat in a corner during the long dusk of the evening and seemed thankful when bed-time came. After he had gone upstairs my father said, 'I fear we shall have a very poor affair to-morrow.'

"Sunday morning came, and still enveloped in shyness he went to chapel. He emerged from the vestry and dashed up the pulpit steps as if he longed to be invisible. But when he rose and prayed and gave out the hymn it was done with dignity. My father, who had been full of apprehension, looked reassured. The prayers were full of power and beauty of expression. When the sermon came we were all prepared for something, but hardly for the fine sermon that followed. I recollect it well—the text was 'The great white throne,' and the thought and force and beauty of the language seemed to pour forth in a fervent torrent. I do not think he used a note. The people were greatly impressed and predicted a future for the young man.

"He preached several times after that. I must say all shyness evaporated when we knew him better.

"Like all Scotchmen he was faithful to the memory of friendship even; and at various times has sent me kind messages, though I never saw him again."

As he went to and fro among the churches, he made several good friends, who helped him in ways that fellow-students could not. One house to which he was always welcome and to which he went gladly was that of Dr. Charles Read and his wife who were members of the Rev. Henry Simon's church in Tollington Square, N.W. "I expect to be in London on Thursday," he writes to Griffiths in 1872, "where I remain for a week at the quarters." After an earlier visit he writes to his hostess a carefully written letter:

"Perhaps you will believe me if I tell you that I am in the 'dumps' to-day. I have been trying to write a line or two of my sermon, but the fountains of thought seem to be exhausted. You must not blame me; I think that I could write something if I were at 3 Rothwell Street, N.W., but I am not the master of all circumstances. And now, dear young friend, I must express to you in plain English what I was morally unable to express when you were visible and tangible—that I was truly and deeply sorry to leave you—and to leave you all. I know that my 'fits' must have annoyed and troubled you, but still you appreciated the grain of wheat in a bushel of very disagreeable chaff. But I cannot lay the mighty burden of my feeling on the feeble shoulders of a written sentence. I must let it lie in the depths of the unspoken. There

are crises in the history of human friendship when a transfiguration takes place, when feelings and thoughts are revealed which no ordinary effort could draw up into the light. Perhaps one of these supreme moments of revelation may come some day. If not, I shall try, and make my feelings true in deeds, and if that is impossible or inadequate I must calmly wait for the language of immortality—and then the revelation will burst like a rising sun on your enraptured vision.

“. . . I ordered a *Robert Falconer* for you to-day. Give an affectionate slap to your husband, and kiss Annie and Edith for me, and with my very best love to your own dear self. . . .”

(*Banbury, Aug. 2, 1871.*)

Another family with which he became intimate were the Suttons at Newcastle (Staffs). The fact that he was a Scotsman, and from Aberdeen, together with his shyness and need of sympathy, appealed to them all, and they were well fitted to give him what he needed. “He usually announced his coming,” writes Miss Turner, “by writing to ask my grandmother if she could put him up, and used to stipulate that on these occasions he should not be asked to meet any deacons or officials. He had a horror of them, and was very emphatic about being allowed liberty of thought and speech in the pulpit.” A remarkable and a lasting friendship grew up between him and Miss E. Sutton (afterwards Mrs. Turner). He wrote very freely to her about himself and his thoughts and often sent her books and his sermons to read, and she was able to draw him out and give him the wise sympathy which only a woman can give.

Hunter’s career at college came to an end in September, 1871, when he went to Salem Chapel, York.

#### A REMINISCENCE

By the Rev. A. J. Griffith <sup>1</sup>

Our first sight of John Hunter at Spring Hill College was when he came into the dining-hall on the day of his arrival, to the usual midday dinner. Two or three other new students were with him. One was his fidus Achates, J. T. Stannard. It was evident that Hunter found himself in an unfamiliar environment. He was the youngest of the party, and looked rosy and boyish. He was shy and nervous and laced his

<sup>1</sup> Now of Woolabie, Sydney, N.S.W. After Stannard, his most intimate friend in his early ministerial days. “A good fellow—a great comfort to me,” Hunter once wrote of him.

fingers together. This feeling manifestly wore off with the first day. His general temperament in his student days was merry and often frolicsome. There was nothing of the dour Scot about him. He could see a joke quite as quickly as the rest of us. He entered with immense zest into any fun that was forward. An epithet he frequently bestowed upon his friends was "curious brick." His sayings were often original and quaint. He was strong both in his sympathies and antipathies. He was very tender-hearted, but could not tolerate anything that approached duplicity or meanness.

The rumour that he possessed gifts as a preacher of an unusual order had preceded him, and this perhaps made him more observed than the others when the new-comers appeared among us. Two or three Sundays afterwards he was planned for King's Heath for a morning service. It was a small Baptist chapel near to the college where the students often took services. One or two of them, who were not on the preaching-list that day, strolled across to hear him. The account given to the rest of us next day, especially by a personal friend of my own, James Henry Richards, was that they were simply amazed. The sermon, they said, was delivered entirely from memory. The utterance was rapid and impassioned; the language chaste, rhetorically exact, here and there perhaps a little florid. The spiritual earnestness was intense. The same felicitous diction and spiritual fervour marked the prayers he offered when his turn came to conduct the college evening family worship; and gave a distinct impetus to the measure of care and preparation the other men put into those occasional exercises. Thus early began the operation of two distinct lines of influence which Hunter's career has exerted on the pulpit methods of his generation.

He did not continue long to memorise his sermons. Each new one he made at college was most painstakingly elaborated. Of one, he told me, he rewrote the concluding portion twenty times. Such scrupulously careful work could only be presented to a congregation in all its minute exactitude and perfection of literary finish in one of two ways; either by committing every syllable to memory or by reading it from the manuscript. The former method imposed too severe a task even upon one possessed of that marvel of mental endowment, a tenacious Scotch memory. He adopted the latter course. To it he undoubtedly was partly influenced by the example of Dr. Dale, whose ministrations at Carr's Lane most of us attended when not preaching ourselves, and who always used his manuscript in the pulpit, but who was nevertheless one of the most effective pulpit orators and public leaders of his time.

When Hunter entered Spring Hill College, his mental outlook was still largely coloured by the conventional theological

ideas of the period, and that, too, of the Scottish type. The newer English thought was not familiar to him. I think I was the first to introduce him to Frederick Denison Maurice, whose *Theological Essays* he did not spend many hours in working through.<sup>1</sup> It was that book, I believe, that woke him completely from his dogmatic slumbers. It started him on a new line of investigation. He became as keen and eager in pursuing it as a young Columbus launching on a fresh voyage of discovery. It was the time when Darwin's enunciation of the principle of Evolution had risen to dominant ascendancy in the world of scientific thought. It was a period of theological unrest and religious doubt. The writers who attracted Hunter were not so much the controversialists, though he was not unacquainted with these. The seers were his masters—the men who amidst all the daring speculation of the time preserved and interpreted the vision of God and the soul's demand for spiritual life and development. Maurice, as I have said, greatly influenced him. So did Erskine of Linlathen, and George Macdonald, and James Martineau, and F. W. Robertson, and Stopford Brooke. He was partial, too, to Richard Holt Hutton, and Frances Power Cobbe. The poets I best remember him speaking about were Browning and Mrs. Browning, and Augusta Webster and Jean Ingelow.

He never turned to the Germans, whom most of us were busy reading and studying at that time, under the leadership of Dr. D. W. Simon, our theological professor, whose favourite authors were Dorner, and Tholuck, and Schörberlein. Indeed he did not evince warm sympathy with dogmatic and propositional theology. The formal and mechanical and systematic in thought seemed to repel him. His mind was subtle and intuitive rather than severely logical. He certainly was a great reader and accumulator of books. In fact, the impression of him left upon our minds was that he was a reader rather than a student, that is, in the academic sense. He never took kindly, if at all, to the minute and punctilious method of exegesis which grim old Professor Barker used to try to drill into us through the medium of Dr. C. J. Ellicott's Commentaries on some of Paul's Epistles.

It goes without saying that with his gifts he was in great demand as a preacher from his first days in college. Banbury was perhaps the first church to fall in love with him, and to invite him to settle as their minister. . . . Their overtures to him were in vain. It was looked upon as a mark of distinction among the students when a request came to him from Dr. Binney to supply the old Weigh House pulpit for one Sunday. He was highly pleased himself, though in much trepidation over the prospect.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *God and Life*, pp. 181-2.

<sup>2</sup> He used to relate how on that occasion he walked round and round a square near the chapel many times before he summoned up courage to enter.



He made a deep impression—the first he ever made on London ; he returned to college in great spirits over his visit.

He passed through severe and strenuous inward battles during his Spring Hill College days. His intimate friends, and some who believed him destined to fill an eminent place as a preacher in his day and generation, were at times anxious lest the trend of his thinking might carry him into Unitarianism. He certainly took pains to acquaint himself with the forms of worship of that body. He went a few times to Dr. Crosskey's church in Birmingham, and became personally known to Dr. Crosskey. He also liked to hear that robust, broad-minded preacher, George Dawson, who was not a Unitarian. The little book of prayers composed by the well-known Unitarian minister, John Page Hopps, took his fancy greatly. I do not think he was touched by anything deeper in Unitarianism than its culture and the æsthetic and literary qualities of its worship as he happened to observe them. His innate thirst for God necessarily compelled him to rest satisfied with no less a Deity than the very biggest he could find. And his passion for Jesus Christ carried him far beyond the limitations and restrictions of Unitarian Christology. Our theological professor, Dr. Simon, was a helpful director to him at this time, though more through his conversations and letters than through his class-room prelections. For the closely reasoned, exact theology, modern though it was, of which the doctor was a master, was not altogether to Hunter's taste. Practically his divergencies from the religious teaching in which he had been trained lay chiefly in the direction of the Fatherhood as the dominant conception of God, of Universalism as regards the hereafter destiny of the soul, and generally of a broad, human, direct treatment of religious truth under the aspects of the immediate time.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE NEW AND THE OLD. YORK, 1871-82

“The Truth though the heavens fall !”  
*Carlyle.*

THE development of Christian thought during the nineteenth century was on a broad view a process of gradual evolution. In the history of Salem Chapel, York, the change came with apocalyptic swiftness. It was dramatic enough that the pulpit of the venerable James Parsons, one of the famous preachers of his day, and his church one of the largest in the North of England, should be occupied by a boyish-looking student straight from college and only twenty-two years of age. But the contrast went deeper—Parsons was an uncompromising defender of the old evangelicalism. Hunter was equally uncompromising as an exponent of the new. Parsons was as much a man of a vanishing generation as Hunter was of the coming generation—he was in the vanguard of Christian thought to the very end of his life.

James Parsons' power and influence were at their fullest when the evangelical revival was still in flood, and he took his place alongside the famous Independent preachers of the day—Raffles of Liverpool, Angell James of Birmingham, Jay of Bath.

The Calvinistic tradition gave theological solidity to their preaching, and the Puritan tradition, which they shared with Methodism, gave sobriety to the moral discipline of their churches. Their discourses—the elaborate gathering of proof-texts, the long-drawn paragraphs, the complete aloofness from contemporary life and thought, the fearful pictures of everlasting torment—fail to move the reader now, though they were preached with intense passion and exultant faith. Rhetoric was the only ornament allowed in their chapels. James Parsons had a horror of instrumental music, and resisted the introduction of an organ into his chapel until nearly the end of his pastorate. In his disregard of civic and national politics he was the antithesis of the

political Nonconformist of a later generation. The records of his congregation reflected the character of the pastor.<sup>1</sup>

But the gospel of the old evangelicalism was ceasing to grip men who were reading Carlyle and the poets, or were following the progress of scientific discovery and thought. Its ethic, though intimate and severe, was narrow. It had no philosophy except a vague utilitarianism. It set faith over against thought, its attitude to truth was like that of a manufacturer to science; it produced no great thinkers and teachers. New tides of religious thought were rising which were to sweep over and past it.

Maurice and Robertson in England, Erskine and Macleod Campbell and Morison in Scotland were stripping the harsh accretions of later theologies from the primitive Christian conception of God. Maurice undermined the evangelical eschatology, Macleod Campbell the juristic and penal doctrine of the Atonement. Maurice made the Incarnation the centre of his theology and the key to a new philosophy of God and Life. It led him and Kingsley and Robertson to rediscover Christ's Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth. From another direction, Biblical criticism was advancing and in time was to change radically methods of interpretation and doctrines of inspiration. The physical sciences were challenging the cosmology of orthodoxy. Romanticism and the Oxford movement, in so far as it was influenced by it, were in revolt against Puritan taste and eighteenth-century rationalism, and were creating an appreciation for beauty. Among the Independent Churches, Thomas Binney sounded the new note—but with uncertain voice. In some directions Dale moved with the times; George Macdonald was rapturously preaching universalism and beauty; Baldwin Brown was the leader of the younger progressive men. And among these was John Hunter. In 1871 these new tides of thought had reached

<sup>1</sup> "The excellent caution in the admission of members, the careful scrutiny of their public behaviour, the intimate relation of the Sunday-school with the church, the frequent prayer meetings, the formal precision of the monthly proceedings, the immense and unquestioned authority of the pastor, the sharp, rigid distinction maintained, and in all their proceedings assumed, between the church and the world, the severe order and method of public worship, the long prayer with its familiar phrases, and the yet longer sermon, the afternoon communion service, with its 'spectators' in the gallery, to whom not unfrequently severe comminatory words were addressed, the village preachings, the fraternal salutations sent to, or received from, neighbouring churches on special occasions, all these things give to us a fair general picture of the inner life and procedure of Independency of our fathers and grandfathers." *Salem Chapel; Independency in York, a Retrospect* by the Rev. J. Vickery. York, 1889. p. 42.

few of the ministers and laymen of the Churches, and these few had to fight and suffer for their convictions.<sup>1</sup>

John Hunter was brought to the notice of the deacons of Salem Chapel by the distinction that he had gained through his sermons in Thomas Binney's pulpit. He first preached at Salem on March 12, 1871, and made a great impression, which was confirmed by a second visit. It became evident that with a little encouragement from him the congregation would send him a "call." But he gave no encouragement. There was nothing pushing about him. Never was a young man pushed into a big position with such manifest reluctance. His inclination at the time was to accept the pastorate of a small Church for some years, and it was approved by his professors. To a semi-official *démarche* he replied :

"I am very glad that this opportunity has been afforded me to express my mind regarding York. From the conversation I had with you when last in York I was made aware of the feeling that existed in the Church. And I have pondered the question of your letter carefully and earnestly. The decision which I have come to, and which I am clearly bound to abide by, is—that if the Church should send me an invitation I should regard it my duty to decline it. I need not trouble you with the reasons that have led to this decision. But I think that all my truest instincts, together with that knowledge of the Divine Will, which can be got by thought and prayer have induced me to take this position. At the same time I am deeply conscious of the honour that has been conferred upon me. . . ." (Spring Hill College, May 18, 1871.)

In spite of this letter and another from Principal Simon detailing the same argument, the Church decided with enthusiasm to send the invitation. A deputation of two deacons and two members was appointed to present the call officially and to discuss Hunter's objections.

Not all Hunter's more senior friends were as emphatic in their advice as Simon. Paton wrote characteristically :

(May 24, 1871.)

"I sympathise deeply with you in your perplexity.

"It is exceedingly pleasing to your friends—of whom I am one—to think that God is qualifying you for such a work as evidently

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Storr, *The Development of English Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, especially chap. III (Longmans, 1913); and R. W. Dale's address, *The Old Evangelicalism and the New*. Hodder and Stoughton, 1889.

lies before you. He—believe me—will make His way clear as day to you. No one can give you New light but Himself. But I know if you wait on Him, He will fulfil His promises to you.

“I do not feel so much as you the risk to your normal development mentally and spiritually in York. I allow that the antecedents of that church and especially the pervasive influence of one memory and one character will give a sort of conservative tone to the church. But I think that all New life to develop in harmony with the Old needs that close association and that willing submission to the Influences of the Immediate Past which you would realise at York; and I am confident that the more you feel the Baptism of James Parsons’ spirit falling on you, the more you will rejoice in it and acknowledge its healthy, though conservative influence upon the development of your own Habit of Thought and Life.

“I am concerned, however, about your health. You are a man of nervous temperament with a physique far from robust. Now the strain upon you will be enormous. The excitement will be unceasing. You will have a great Reputation to follow and to equal. Were your body strong and firmly knit I should not discourage you from even this highest effort. But I confess I fear it for you at present. My dream for you has been a quiet, thoughtful, kindly people who will not ask too much and who will yet inspire you to do well what you do—a pastorate that will have no public duty attached to it—in which you might grow peacefully without forcing until your body, mind and spirit ripened into all the matured vigour of Manhood. . . .

“. . . Your own mind weighing all that friends can say and asking His guidance with utter submission to Him—will be rightly instructed.”

The deputation met him at the Station Hotel, Derby, on June 5th and presented the call signed by six hundred members—four venerable grey-haired men gravely urging a mere youth to become their minister and teacher in spiritual things. They can hardly have been so aged as it appeared to him at the time—though the impression of age and white hair stayed with him through life. Their arguments shook his resolution, and drew from him the promise that he would consider the invitation anew.

He wrote to the senior deacon, who was Lord Mayor of the City, a Liberal M.P. :

“. . . The whole matter as you know has caused me intense anxiety. I dare say natural timidity has had much to do with my shrinking from it—for looked at in any way it is a very great undertaking from which older men might justly draw back. But

I have resolved to put aside all prejudices, all personal feeling and to seek only to know the deepest will of God, and knowing it, to do it without questioning and without fear." (June 8, 1871.)

And five days later to Mr. Wilkinson, the Secretary :

"I write simply to say that I shall forward you my answer to the invitation of the Church by Thursday morning. The answer will be as favourable as you could desire. I feel that I am shut up to accepting the call. . . ."

The emotional strain that he was undergoing is reflected in a copy he made of another letter :

"To shrink from it now would be shirking. To accept it is my only duty. I do it against all my own feelings. I have not sought it, I have strongly opposed it, but to resist longer would be to fight against God."

In his letter of acceptance, after a graceful reference to the "one great memory and reputation" associated with the Church, and a statement of his own preference for a less conspicuous sphere of work, he expressed his consciousness "of the increased responsibility this critical period of our nation's religious history gives to the work of the Christian ministry. But I believe with all my soul that in Christianity we have the only perfect solution of all the perplexing problems of modern thought. . . ." "These words," writes the historian of Salem, "defined at once, to those who had the proper interpretative perception, the new attitude to modern life and thought which the ministry of Salem Chapel was about to assume."<sup>1</sup>

Hunter seems to have spent the rest of the summer preaching in various parts of the country and in Aberdeen. He spent a fortnight at Forres as the guest of Mr. George Ewan of Dundee. He commenced his ministry on Sunday, October 1st.

At a social meeting held the previous Thursday he stated with characteristic honesty his attitude to the new movements of the time. The candour and chivalry of his nature were further illustrated by an incident which he describes in a letter to his friend Griffith :

"I horrified some of my deacons last night by telling them that I must refuse to recognise the doctrinal authority of the Trust Deed—there are thirty-three articles of faith and order."

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 45.

His purpose in taking this action at that moment was to make perfectly clear his own independent position and at the same time to give the officials and members an opportunity to review their relations with himself before he was ordained to the pastorate. It was a bold action, especially in those days and in such a conservative fellowship. And it says much for the magnanimity of the deacons and their confidence in him that they accepted the statement.

His letters—or rather notes—to A. J. Griffith during these weeks show that he was anxious and over-tired.

“I’ve been very poorly this week. . . . If Dr. Simon is not present I shall expect you to deliver the charge, and if J.P. (James Parsons) after hearing my statement refuses to pray I’ll expect you ‘to cleave.’” “All power of thought seems to have left me this week. ‘Lying among the pots.’ I have not written a line of my statement. Write and suggest an order to follow. Four new deacons elected on Thursday night—you should have heard my charge.” “I have three times to-morrow and at Howden on Monday night. I say, the Ordination takes place on Wednesday. Be there on Tuesday. There will be Tom, Tinkler, Richard, ‘Major Charlie.’<sup>1</sup> I am worn out.”

The Ordination Service (on the morning of Wednesday, November 22nd), however, passed off smoothly; it followed the order customary among the Independent Churches. The Rev. James Ward of Cambridge gave a remarkable address on the nature and constitution of a Christian Church—which in its liberality had much in common with modern discussions on Christian unity, and consequently at the time provoked opposition; the Senior Deacon gave an account of the circumstances which led the congregation to invite Hunter. And after him Hunter made a statement of his religious principles and belief, declaring that Christ Himself was the centre of his theology, and to preach the facts of His Incarnation and Atonement, and not human theories about them, he regarded as his supreme duty and inestimable privilege. Then followed the ordination prayer, after which Mr. Parsons (with one or two other ministers) laid hands on the head of the new pastor, and declared that he separated him for the work of the ministry, thereby ratifying the decision of the congregation. Finally, Dr. Simon preached.

The ordination past, Hunter quickly settled down to a strenuous

<sup>1</sup> Stannard was known among them as “Major Charlie Square Toes.”

ministry. He set himself a most exacting standard, and his letters to college friends lose some of their jocularity under the strain.

*To the Rev. A. J. Griffith.*

(Undated. End of 1871.)

“ . . . Why don't you write ? I am anxious to hear from you. Have you accepted Newcastle ? My host (at Newcastle) told me that your ideas and mine were marvellously alike and that he was glad that they should have a liberal man like you. I told him that we had often talked over these subjects together. . . .

“ I think I am living a deeper life in the Truth, but I can't turn out more than one really good sermon a week. It is hard work—4 o'clock when I went to bed this morning.

“ You would have liked my last Sunday sermon on the Incarnation ; it was a great help to myself. Write, you dear old buffer—send a word of sympathy. God guide and bless you.”

(Undated. Shortly after Easter, 1872.)

“ If the weather had permitted I should have written, but between sheer exhaustion and a famine of postage stamps and envelopes I have been providentially prevented. But the truth is that I have lost your address and was rather afraid that simple 'Newcastle' would not find you yet. When is the Ordination ?

“ I have Forsyth here just now on his way to Göttingen. I preach E. Simon's <sup>1</sup> anniversary sermons on Sunday—he preaches here. Baldwin Brown has asked me to preach for him one Sunday during his holiday.

“ My beloved teacher Maurice has seen St. John and Jesus and the Father as He is.

“ Parsons preaches in Lendal to-night. I intend to spend the evening at home. Treacle and brimstone are very good in their place, but not now. God be with you in your work. Your true friend.”

(Undated. Summer, 1872.)

“ I suppose you know that I have taken a house ; I enter it when I return. Come and stay a night with me on your way back and consecrate it.

“ The Lord is adding to the Church. I received eleven on Monday night. The cause is prospering ; my first year will soon be over and then I must raise an Ebenezer.

“ The new Baptist minister (the Rev. F. B. Meyer) is a nice chap—goody but still good.

“ Ward preaches on Sunday week. The Lord be with you and bless you. . . .”

“ Ward <sup>2</sup> preaches on Sunday week.” The event kindled a smouldering fire.

<sup>1</sup> The father of Sir John Simon—the Liberal statesman.

<sup>2</sup> James Ward, Professor of Mental Philosophy at Cambridge ; author of *Naturalism and Agnosticism*. He had been Senior Student at Spring Hill when Hunter was there and was at this time Congregational Minister at Cambridge.



It was inevitable that the new utterances of religious thought from the pulpit of James Parsons should provoke a conflict. There was no ambiguity about Hunter's message—no careful trimming in his handling of cherished ideas. For a moment the immense impetus of his preaching, his firm grasp and brilliant handling of the great themes of religion, his simple modesty and charm won admiration from people of the older school even while they dissented from his teaching. But in time discontent began to find voice. One Sunday morning, after the service, as Hunter was passing through the deacon's vestry on his way home, one of the deacons who had been counting the collection lifted one of the money-bags and shook it in his face with the words, "You won't see much of that for long, unless you change your ways."

Shortly after, on the Sunday that Ward preached, a small scene was enacted in the chapel, which is best described in the professor's own words.

"On the Sunday morning in question, no sooner had I announced my text and made some opening remark, meant to awaken attention,<sup>1</sup> than the wife of the senior deacon—Leeman, I think was his name—bustled out of the pew, and rustling her silks down the aisle disappeared as noisily as she could. In the vestry afterwards, her husband, Mayor of York at the time, and I think M.P. as well, told me the shocking sermon I had delivered ought to have been given 'over the way'—that is, in the Unitarian chapel! 'Very good,' I quietly replied; 'then presumably you will arrange for the service to-night—that is all I have to say.' But his courage was not equal to that. They were a narrow lot, I fear, and Hunter was far too good for them."

The bravado of the senior deacon's wife led her husband, the Lord Mayor and M.P., and one or two others, to try to bully the young minister into less outspoken ways. The trust-deed was evoked; a lack of integrity hinted—a clever line of attack which succeeded in greatly troubling Hunter without turning him from his course. Then, as always, he was unduly worried by personal difficulties of this type and never at ease in the handling of them. Ward, having been the immediate cause of the disturbance, kept in close touch with Hunter during the controversy, and more than

<sup>1</sup> "Jesus Christ—a perfect gentleman" was the phrase that started the lady to her feet.

once supplied mature advice. He wrote from Cambridge on January 29th, 1873 :

“ I have been waiting anxiously to get a letter from you, though I did not expect to hear before to-day. It is perhaps as well that Leeman showed his temper and then retreated so that, as you say, nothing is done. He will be off to London I suppose soon and then, whatever his determination may be, it will hardly be in his power to stir up strife. Sensible people, who see his temper and spirit, are not likely to be led away by him. The more unlike him you and those who act with you can be, the more every reflecting man will be persuaded that reason is on your side. Do not let yourself be led into a party squabble. Do not have a party at all. Be as far as you can minister to all and don't let even the warmth of admiring friends detach you from those, who not sympathising so fully with your teaching, admire you less enthusiastically. Your character I am sure as it is known will win the esteem of all and the affection of the best. You know how the odium theologicum blinds even good men. Let Parsons and Leeman see it has not blinded you, and shame them by Christlikeness. Your strength is gone if you look at this matter even as Chapman does—or did. For the rest, don't be fearful and then you are less likely to be vindictive. Passion, rage, intrigue, are the sure signs of impotence and a poor cause ; and if you are calm and self-possessed, it cannot be long before the truth appears. You are now called upon to teach by your actions ; try to act according to the highest ideal you have preached and this tempest past, you will be stronger and your position securer than ever.

“ As to the trust-deed, of course I can say nothing. If it contains a schedule of doctrine and the question is really raised how far your preaching conforms to that, why only the Church and the deed itself can determine what is to be done. . . . The probability is the doctrines are such as you accept in spirit—in fact, if you have the people with you still and are what you were when they invited you, I cannot see that you are under any moral obligation to concern yourself with the trust. It is to the living and not to the dead that you are to be faithful. As to Leeman, if the people are with you, there is no fear of him seeking to enforce the trust-deed. It is a thing one man cannot do in such a case. You say, How am I to act ? Don't act at all. Let him act first. Pardon the urgent strain in which I write. You owe me no apology. Let me hear once more how things go on.”

A week or two later, a fatuous and mischief-making letter in the *Leeds Evening Express* produced a flood of letters arguing the case for and against Hunter and his teaching. The correspondence began with erroneous gossip, and personal attacks ; but these

were soon answered when it was stated that he had not been asked to subscribe to the doctrinal clauses of the trust-deed either by the trustees or the Church, that he did not become aware of their existence until after he had begun his ministry and that when he did discover he acted as has already been narrated. The controversy then became more theological. It was led in this direction partly by an able letter from Ward, under the pseudonym, *Fides*.

“There are two positions which all charitable and thoughtful men will grant, the consequences of which are worth considering : 1. The Rev. James Parsons preached the whole counsel of God as he believed it ; and Mr. Hunter is doubtless doing the same. 2. No man has ever comprehended the whole length and depth and height and breadth of God’s purposes, even as far as they have been revealed—therefore the truth will be presented under different aspects by different men. . . . But besides this partiality of view in individuals we have to note the continuous growth of truth as a whole.”

And he proceeded to prove his argument from history. He concluded by quoting the words of Pastor Robinson to the Pilgrim Fathers, “The Lord hath more light and truth yet to break forth out of His Holy Word.”

The correspondence excited intense interest ; it spread to other Yorkshire papers, the *Yorkshire Weekly Chronicle* and the *Leeds Daily Post* ; it occasioned leading articles, sermons by the score, and pamphlets. On successive Saturdays the *Leeds Express* published a supplementary broad-sheet containing the week’s letters for the Sunday reading of the Christian people of York. In spite of the pressing invitations of his critics, Hunter refused to be drawn in : he made no public allusion to the controversy.

A monthly Church meeting was due to be held while the correspondence was in full spate. Hunter went to it prepared for a battle and in great trepidation. Both Hunter and his thirty or forty opponents were completely taken aback by the warmth and loyalty of his reception. The hall was packed : literally his congregation had gathered round him ; not a word of criticism was spoken. It was a signal personal triumph. For one cannot suppose that the whole congregation agreed with his teaching, though no doubt the mean anonymity of the attack—the correspondence was anonymous from start to finish—and the weight of argument in his defence brought many completely to his side.

The Church, of course, was not unaffected by the controversy. A number of the congregation went over to Lendal Chapel, from which some of the ammunition used in the conflict had come. One deacon resigned—not the Lord Mayor. For a time the organisations of the Church suffered and the congregations were reduced—but only for a time. During the remainder of his ministry in York, Hunter had the complete confidence and support of his congregation. His controversies were further afield.

Not until six months after the controversy had closed did he discuss it in public. At the annual meeting of the Church the following autumn, he passionately protested his freedom and loyalty to the truth, his thankfulness to those who had stood by him, his joy in rendering some help through his teaching, and his sense of short-coming.

“ I have not privately thought one thing and preached another ; I have not been one man in the study and another in the pulpit ; I have not talked heterodoxy to a select circle of friends and preached orthodoxy in the great congregation. . . . I am not responsible to you or to anybody ; I am responsible only to God. I am the servant of the truth : I have surrendered myself to be moved and led by it alone. You may leave me, other Churches may look shy at me, my brethren in the ministry may avoid me—they may close their pulpits against me, they may preach against me, they may pray for me, but I shall accept my isolation as a proof that whether my convictions be proved true or not true, I have at any rate been enabled to be faithful to them. . . .

“ Again, I am thankful to God for the kind hearts and true I have found among you. You have heard me misrepresented and reviled, you have been told that I was a heretic, an infidel, a blasphemer, in league with Beelzebub and God knows what else, you have been told that I was leading you down to the bottomless pit, wherever that is, and still you have not forsaken me. The sympathy some of you showed to me during weeks of anxiety and trial—a sympathy which reached me in so many ways, has gone deeper than I care to tell you.

“ Lastly, in many respects I am thankful for the troubles we have had during the year—trial is necessary for the education and perfection of Churches as well as of individuals. This is the first time I have publicly referred to the opposition so active against me during the early months of this year. I dare not trust myself to say all I think about it. I should like to have believed that it was a good and honest spirit that inspired the movement, I should have respected it then even though I may not have liked it. . . . But Truth cannot be served by passions and ways that are untrue

and unlovely. What was intended for evil has done us good, not evil. It has done more to spread the view of truth than six years' ordinary preaching could have done. . . . Christianity would not have spread so rapidly in the early centuries if it had not been so well persecuted. Our little struggle is but a fragment of a larger struggle that must come sooner or later in all the Churches, a day of trial that will shake our made things and try and test all human institutions. . . . I believe in a free and unfettered ministry and I will work and suffer for it. I tell you frankly that it is as difficult, if not more difficult, to be honest in the ministry nowadays than it is to be honest in trade, and the temptations are more subtle. If every minister in York were to speak out all that he really thinks, the pulpit of Salem Chapel would not be the only pulpit branded for heresy. . . ."

Hunter owed his freedom to his own passionate assertion of it and the ability with which he preached the Christian gospel, rather than to the discipline of Congregationalism. Many of his contemporaries at college who shared his creed but lacked his gifts had great difficulty in finding congenial pastorates; some never did. Those who had the fighting spirit persevered and won: others quietly lost. One of them writes that he felt the "only hope of delivering my message in freedom was to follow Maurice into the Anglican Church." Even Dale, cautious though he was, was charged with heresy in his early days as assistant at Carr's Lane, and came through successfully largely owing to the autocratic backing of Angell James, whose selection he had been rather than that of the congregation. The saddest case of all, and one in which Hunter was closely concerned, was that of Stannard.

Stannard went out from college to be assistant minister of Ramsden Street Chapel, Huddersfield, and two years later he became co-pastor. Already the majority of the trustees felt that his preaching was not in harmony with the doctrinal clauses of the trust-deed. In 1877, when the senior pastor resigned, Stannard was retained to act as pastor, although he was not actually elected to the pastorate. In January, 1880, some of the difficulties were removed and he was elected by a large majority of the congregation. The majority of the trustees, however, instituted legal proceedings to eject him from the use of the building. The case came before Vice-Chancellor Hall in the Court of Chancery in February, 1881; after a hearing which lasted seven days, judgment was entered against Stannard. He resigned his position

without waiting for the inhibition to take effect. But the majority of the congregation rallied round him and built a fine new church for him—the Milton Church—which was opened in 1885.

The case has both an ecclesiastical and a human interest, and it had an influence on Hunter's mind which affected his conduct in more than one important event in future years.

The judgment was legally indisputable. The Church had been founded in 1846 by a group of men zealous to preserve Yorkshire Independency from the invasion of Morisonian teaching from Scotland. They inserted in their trust-deed definitions of Calvinistic theology unusually rigorous for that time. Legally they had a perfect right to state on what conditions and for what purposes a building erected with their money should be used. But the living also have rights. The Law is concerned to uphold the sanctities of property rather than the sanctities of truth, and it would argue that on a long view the well-being of the living is best served by the strict preservation of those rights. It assumes that human society is static, or at least it tries to make it as nearly static as may be—happily God has another ideal. In Stannard's case, his counsel tried to interest the judge in religious doctrines and the principles of the Kingdom of Heaven, but, with perfect propriety *qua* judge in a Court of Chancery, he refused to be interested. It was his function to see that the trust-deed was upheld, not to state what doctrines might lawfully be taught in an Independent chapel.<sup>1</sup>

Stannard's legal defeat was a moral and spiritual victory. The fine sense of honour that he showed, his unruffled courtesy and entire absence of bitterness—even to his friends he never spoke bitterly or harshly of his adversaries—won the homage of his friends and all his reasonable opponents. In public and in private his conduct was an embodiment of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. He suffered acutely; the anxiety, the opposition often vulgarly abusive, the trial were torture to his sensitive nature. Always a high-strung, delicate man, he was ever after fighting with his nerves for the mastery; he frequently broke down badly in health. But undoubtedly his "failure" as much as Hunter's success hastened the day when their views gained a firm footing in the Independent Churches—and, in a word, became reputable.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *infra*, note to chap. x., p. 213.

In 1883, the *Christian World*, in reference to a portrait of Hunter that had appeared in the *Congregationalist*, said, "The religious opinions of even the most orthodox sections of Congregationalism are clearly advancing. When Mr. Hunter became the successor of James Parsons, we doubt if his portrait would have been acceptable to any organ of the Congregational Union. It is quite possible that Mr. Hunter may himself have become less impatient of old methods of speech and more conservative; but certainly the greatest amount of change is on the other side."<sup>1</sup>

Four years before Stannard's eviction, Hunter had been concerned in another conflict which greatly excited the Congregational Churches. At the time of the Autumn Meetings of the Congregational Union at Leicester in 1877, a small group of the younger Liberal men announced a public Conference on one of the evenings, "open to all who value spiritual religion, and who are in sympathy with the principle that agreement in theological opinion can no longer be held to be essential to religious communion." Hunter, who had been giving an address at one of the official meetings on "The Age in which we live and its claims upon young men," took the devotional sessions. Two papers were read, the most important by J. Allanson Picton<sup>2</sup> on "Some Relations of Theology to Religion." The discussion which followed would have become disorderly but for the intervention of Dr. Simon. He rebuked those who like himself disagreed with the platform, and told them that the question was one they had to face not with "hullabaloo," but with calm thought. The report of the Conference shows that there was much ambiguity and misunderstanding about the proceedings. The statement of the meeting's object was so vague that it was interpreted according to the views of the speakers, and unfortunately the group put forward two of its most extreme men. The group held a second conference during the next meetings of the Union at which the Rev. P. T. Forsyth<sup>3</sup> read a paper; and eventually they formed themselves into an

<sup>1</sup> "At a time when I was involved in a controversy with the principalities and powers of Yorkshire Congregational orthodoxy," wrote Hunter, "the editor of *The Christian World* (the late James Clark) was the first outsider who raised his voice on my behalf. And what he was to me he was to many more in ecclesiastical and theological strifes which now lie dim in the years behind."

<sup>2</sup> Author of several historical and philosophical works. In later life he used to describe himself as "a Christian Pantheist."

<sup>3</sup> Now Principal of Hackney College, London.

“Association for promoting Religious Communion,” of which the Rev. Joseph Wood <sup>1</sup> was the secretary.

The intention of the group was to encourage a wider bond of fellowship than conventional orthodoxy. The country Congregational Associations of the time were inclined to boycott the more liberal men. The orthodox identified faith too exclusively with theology and in consequence they were living not in the present, but in the past. The younger “heretics” were perhaps equating religion too exclusively with conduct. They desired to have fellowship with all men, irrespective of their theology, who had “the life of goodness in them, who manifest a Christlike life and spirit.” They had in mind particularly men like Martineau and J. J. Tayler—the modern Christian wing of Unitarianism. “We have been delivered by the grace of God and Luther from the Church. May it not be the work of this second, and more silent, Reformation, to deliver us from the weight of a too speculative and over-defined Christianity? We have been thrown back on Paul. We have yet, as a Church, to learn to lean simply on Christ. . . . The power of His name has been more than the power of His creed. The creed of Christ will develop out of the spirit of Christ. That is my contention. Call all who worship the goodness of Christ members of Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

The real question at issue was, What is essential Christianity? and it hardly came to light.

The Conference provoked controversy out of proportion to its modest size. The *Congregationalist* sounded the alarm, and the defenders of the faith once and for all time delivered rushed to put out the fire. It seemed likely that in their panic they would subvert the principles of Independency. An orthodox Declaration of faith was passed at the next meeting of the Union and in spite of the protests of Baldwin Brown, who by cruel irony was chairman that year. He told the Conference bluntly that “as to the question of whether Independents are an evangelical body, it seems to me there is but one mode of solving it—by being Evangelical.” Declarations would not do it.

The controversy undoubtedly made life more difficult for some of the younger men, and led to the ostracism of Picton and one or

<sup>1</sup> At that time a Congregational Minister in Leicester, afterwards of the Old Meeting House, Birmingham.

<sup>2</sup> P. T. Forsyth. Letter to the *English Independent*. Nov. 8, 1877.



two others. Hunter took his part in the controversy and was warm in his defence of the minority. Salem Church and the home of its minister were an "Interpreter's House" where the pilgrims of the new evangelicalism might rest and then go on their way rejoicing. The pulpit of Salem Chapel was open to them. Picton, while the controversy was in full swing, preached on the occasion of the Anniversary Services. Hunter's own preaching was beginning powerfully to influence the Congregational Churches in the North.

During the nine years that followed the attack on his position in the spring of 1873, Hunter devoted himself to solid pulpit work. His ministry was pre-eminently one of incessant pulpit activity. Though he had the deep affection of his people, and though he was both willing and able to help those in trouble, his work was not primarily what is called "pastoral."<sup>1</sup> That was not the ideal he set before himself. Appealing to the word of the Apostle and to the tradition of Independency, he used to say that the Independent ministry was not priestly or pastoral, but primarily one of teaching.

"In our Churches the pulpit is the main factor in power and usefulness. If it is weak the Churches are weak and religion is crippled in every phase of its manifestation. And the strength of the pulpit is exactly measured by the mental and spiritual condition of the man who fills it. Now above all other public speakers the preacher must think earnestly, deeply and steadily. Other things being equal, the man who studies most preaches best. And a sermon full of true earnest thought is not constructed in a day. A man who besides attempting social, pastoral and public duties has to write three sermons a week must have on his work many marks of haste, weakness and exhaustion. . . . Without saying more, I wish you to bear in mind that the distinctive work of the Christian minister is teaching."<sup>2</sup>

This was spoken out of his own experience. At first, in order to keep pace with his plans, he had to begin his preparation on Tuesday morning and continue until Sunday. The output of new material during his ministry in York must have been almost, if not quite, unique in the history of the Christian pulpit.

<sup>1</sup> "He had no small talk, and without a fair supply of it ministerial visitation is liable to failure." The Rev. J. Vickery.

<sup>2</sup> Sermon on the Function of the Ministry at beginning of his fourth year. Oct., 1875.

It has frequently been said that his preaching was more heterodox and destructive than in his later years. That is only a partial truth. His preaching was always remarkably mature. If his youthfulness showed itself at all it was no doubt in the destructive passages more than in the constructive. He was more vigorously protestant in those days; his sympathies were less fully developed; the style of youth is inevitably cruder and more flamboyant than that of maturity. On the other hand, a measure of destruction is necessary before a building can be rebuilt. The present confusion in lay religious thinking is largely due to teaching which has tried to teach new views without first clearing the old out of the way. Hunter was too clear-sighted and thorough to make this mistake.

His destructive teaching, moreover, was never destructive for destruction's sake. Its motive was not hypercritical, its temper was not merely intellectual. It was not lack of faith, but largeness of faith which made him impatient of old forms. His denials were the prelude to larger affirmations. He pulled down that he might rebuild on a deeper foundation and in a larger, ampler, truer style. If the introductory paragraphs of his sermon were destructive the main body of it was reconstructive and the exordium passionately affirmative. He knew that he could give the thoughtful men and women of his age, who were dissatisfied with conventional preaching, a living Gospel which would stand foursquare to all the winds of criticism—and he gave it to them without stint. There are many elderly men to-day who could say as one head-master said of his ministry in York: "John Hunter moulded all my religious and theological thinking; he placed me upon a rock," or with another excellent man: "Had Mr. Hunter done nothing else for me, I should for ever be grateful to him for the sunshine of faith that he had brought into my life."

It was his custom frequently to give courses of sermons on Sunday evenings. He used to give a special monthly sermon to young men and women—an idea which he probably got from R. W. Dale—usually on some aspect of the Christian Life. In November and December of 1873, he gave a course on Christianity and Present-Day Questions, touching on the relation of Christianity to Culture, Science, Politics, Trade, the Organisation of Society and the Theatre. The sermons, which were fully reported in the local Press, develop a line of thought familiar now, but rare then,

and probably new to a York congregation. They derived much from Carlyle, Ruskin, Maurice and Kingsley, but the lucidity was native.

“Christianity elevates the natural into the spiritual, or more correctly it reveals the spirituality of all natural relations, the sacredness of so-called secular things. . . . Christianity has quite as much to do with day books and ledgers as it has to do with prayer books and hymn books, with counting houses and workshops as much as with churches and pews. . . .” “The revival we most want is the revival of the spirit of Christianity that the Apostle Paul preached, which renewed all the relations, interests and actions of the ordinary life of men. . . .” “Everything which has to do with moral principle, with righteousness, truth, justice, goodwill among men, has to do with the kingdom of Christ. The affairs of the city have as much to do with His kingdom as church and chapel matters—there will never be a true public spirit till we remember that. A man cannot neglect his duties as a citizen without incurring guilt in the sight of Christ.”

The following spring he gave a course on the Great Ecclesiastical Questions, touching somewhat violently on Ritualism, the Confessional, Protestantism and Catholicism. Another course was on Social Relationships—Parents and Children, Husbands and Wives, Masters and Servants, Business Relationships, Neighbours, Citizenship, the Church. Yet another course was on the Creation Stories and the Old Testament. He was continually preaching on the great themes of religion and the great doctrines of the faith. His theological teaching was in its main positions very much that of his later years, though he was more under the influence of Maurice then. This may be illustrated from his first published sermon on the Mission of Pain,<sup>1</sup> in which he argues the educational value of suffering and its eternal significance—the after life being a continuation of the educational discipline begun in this.

“After the Cross has been silently teaching the world for eighteen hundred years, it is saddening to hear many Christian men and women talk of suffering and pain in the way they do, as though

<sup>1</sup> *Christian World Pulpit*, March 6, 1872. He refers to the occasion of the sermon in a letter to Griffith. “I did wretchedly this morning at Bishopsgate Chapel. I never felt so uncomfortable when preaching. A reporter . . . was there. He asked for the MS. which I refused to give him. I asked him to wait till I got a little older and then steal one of my sermons. I suppose there is no hope. If the sermon is printed it will damn me in the eyes of the denomination. I preached on ‘Pain,’ I could have given them a better, but all my ‘John’ sermons are strung together.” Feb. 29, 1872. In his reaction he comes verbally, at least, into line with the neopatristians of the present day.

they were things infinitely strange, the darkest and most bewildering problems of life. We take up the Bible, and we see that God's own life is one of sacrifice; that He does not live outside the race, but in the race, toiling, labouring, suffering, redeeming, feeling, and bearing as only the infinite God can feel and bear the burden of our passion and pain and sin, troubled and aggrieved when men sin, afflicted when they are afflicted. Look at Christ's life, and in the action and suffering and death of Jesus see the eternal passion of God revealed. The tears of Christ are God's pity and sympathy translated into the language of human feeling and emotion. The hunger and thirst, the fainting and sorrow that Christ endured, reveal what Isaiah told men nearly a thousand years before,—'in all our afflictions He is afflicted.' The agony and bloody sweat reveal the deepest heart, the sacredest, the eternal life of God. Oh, brethren! those three-and-thirty years of humiliation, toil and suffering reveal not so much an isolated fact in the history of the universe; they illustrate and declare the life God lives in the silent and solemn eternities, the life He has always lived and lives now in the human race, the eternal life of love and self-sacrifice. A universe without a Cross would be a dark and terrible vision, for it means no mercy, no love anywhere; the skies, silent and pitiless; God afar off wrapped up in cold, lonely, deepest glory, unmoved by the cries of human agony; human life despair, darkness, outer darkness. But the Lamb slain is the foundation of the world—of our human order, and of the Divine order. The Cross is the ultimate and eternal fact, the symbol of God's deepest life, the most glorious throne of the eternal Father. . . . The Man of Sorrows holds in His hand the key to all the secrets of our human education and history. . . . The life of the perfect Christ is an apocalypse of the perfect life of heaven."

In his last years at York he gave a résumé of his theological teaching in a course on "The great Christian Doctrines—Old Truths Restated." These sermons were reproduced week by week in the *Christian World*. They were also the subject of a series of critical articles in the *Inquirer*, the organ of Unitarianism, entitled "Dissolving Views of Orthodoxy," which provoked a severe and lengthy reply from Hunter—which incidentally showed intimate knowledge of modern Unitarian thought. He defended the reasonableness of his Trinitarian position, and repudiated the suggestion that he was "quietly dropping what have hitherto been some of the most prominent doctrines of popular theology." He concluded:

"You wonder how much of the old faith will remain after the modifying process has done its work. None of it, of course, if the

old faith has no solid and immovable basis of fact on which it rests. But I believe it has such a basis. The modifying process ends for me at certain facts which I cannot dissolve away even if I wanted, at which, therefore, I must stop; and reaching which I cannot but feel that I have reached a foundation on which I do and must stand, and standing on which I feel secure. These facts are:

(i) The consciousness of sin.

(ii) The Bible as a record of human experiences, inexplicable save from the point of view of the belief in Divine revelations to human souls.

(iii) Jesus Christ as an historical personage, and as a real and living presence known by a communion the most immediate and sacred.

(iv) Personal spiritual experience.

What the *Inquirer* calls 'the modifying process' is in my view a getting back to the pure constituents of Christianity as laid down in the Bible and proved and illustrated by the spiritual experience of Christian men. . . ." (March 7, 1881.)

The introductory sermon of the course on the text, "Not to destroy, but to fulfil," expresses the aim of his own preaching.

"It is a frightfully serious thing to destroy without fulfilling. To take away the imperfect and not to put in its place something more perfect, is to make the last state of the emancipated mind worse than the first. . . . Better leave a man kneeling before his old idols if you cannot change the idols into ideals. . . . All progress encounters hindrances which must be removed. 'Destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will raise up a sanctuary of the Spirit.' But the right to destroy presupposes the power to build."

One of the deacons in York used to say that no one knew the spiritual splendour and richness of Hunter's preaching who had not heard him Sunday by Sunday in his own church when the sermons were still hot from the furnace. He might with truth have gone further and said "on Sunday mornings in his own church," for his morning discourses were directed to those who had already made some progress along the Christian way. They were concerned with the intimate experiences of the soul and with the life and teaching of Jesus as they spoke to those experiences; his texts were drawn from the Psalms, the self-revealing passages in the prophets, parables, sayings and incidents in the life of the Master and His Apostles—the kind of sermons which came from the heart of his own spiritual life. His addresses at week-evening

services were of a similar character—possibly even more distinctly devotional.

There are some great preachers with whom the sermon is the only thing that matters in a service. Not so with Hunter. He took infinite pains in the order and conduct of worship. He introduced more colour and variety into the services—the Psalms were chanted. Service and sermon were one—impregnated with the worshipful spirit. His father-in-law used to say that “Hunter’s prayers often did him more good than any sermons.” They were carefully prepared: often written out beforehand, though not actually read. A volume of them is still extant. They voice nearly all the deeper experiences of the soul. The language is more florid, the passion less restrained than in the prayers that he published twenty years later. Towards the end of his time at York he introduced a Liturgical form of worship and prepared a little book of Litanies of Intercession, Confession and Thanksgiving, together with a version of the Commandments and the Beatitudes with responses for the use of the congregation. These few leaves were the nucleus of the “Devotional Services” which have contributed so richly to the public worship of the Free Churches. In 1876 he began to have services on Good Friday.

During all those years the capacious chapel was crowded every Sunday; at the evening service particularly its large galleries were filled with young people.

In addition to two sermons in his own church, he frequently preached to a vast congregation of working-class men and women which assembled on Sunday afternoons in a circus building<sup>1</sup>—“Adam’s Circus” in St. George’s Field. On one occasion a disaster nearly overtook the assembly. During a violent thunder-storm the building was struck—the lightning seemed to strike earth in the middle of the congregation. A panic was apparent, and a general rush was about to be made for the door. But the preacher was able to restore quiet, and after a hymn had been sung he continued his sermon.

Outside York Hunter preached in all parts of the country, but particularly, of course, in Yorkshire, where he did what he could to help struggling causes.

During the ’seventies, in the wake of the Moody and Sankey

<sup>1</sup> It held about 3000. He seems to have initiated these services.

Mission,<sup>1</sup> there was a wave of revivalism in the country. To Hunter it seemed an attempt to vitalise an anæmic body by pouring in alcohol when its real need was for iron and fresh blood. "It is not enough to say they promote religion, we are bound to enquire into the kind of religion they promote." It was an ethical, not a sentimental revival for which he cared and worked.

"To condemn revivals indiscriminately would be to condemn the Reformation, the fervent endeavour of the Puritans and the movement led by Whitfield and Wesley which lifted thousands out of animalism and indifference to a better and more earnest life. But the revivals of our day are too artificial."

"During the last few days," he wrote to the *York Herald* in 1879, "our city has been covered with huge placards announcing that 'Clark and Smith are coming,' not to the Theatre or Skating Rink, but to a place of worship to preach and sing and play the Gospel. This is the worst and most offensive bit of religious sensationalism that I ever remember to have seen in York. At one time the Church led the world, but now it seems the world leads the Church."

He also lectured on religious and literary subjects, both in his own church and elsewhere. At that time his "stock" lecture was on Carlyle. He used to tell of one chairman in a small Yorkshire town who prepared his way with, "I have never been there, but I have always heard that it is an interesting old place. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

He rarely ornamented public platforms or attended meetings unless he had some part to play. But he followed civic and national affairs with keen interest. In 1873 he moved the resolution at a Women Suffrage meeting representative of the county at which the leading Suffrage advocates of the day spoke. Under the influence of Lydia Becker, one of the earliest advocates of "Woman Suffrage," he took an active interest in politics, and particularly in the Woman's Movement. He was a convinced Liberal and at election times allowed his position to be known.

<sup>1</sup> By curious chance Moody preached his first sermon in England in Salem Chapel in 1873. The secretary of the Y.M.C.A. had asked Hunter at short notice to let Mr. Moody, newly arrived from Chicago, preach. Sankey sat in the choir. It was a simple talk on "To every man his work." Hunter liked the man, but was not greatly impressed by his preaching.

<sup>2</sup> Other subjects were the English Novelists, George Eliot, Shakespeare, the Autobiography of J. S. Mill, Conditions of Right-Thinking, Why there are Unitarians and Trinitarians, The Value of the Theatre, Is life worth living?

He preached and afterwards spoke on a Liberal platform on the Bulgarian atrocities in 1878, defending his apparent departure from the practice of not touching on controversial politics in the pulpit on the ground that this was primarily and essentially a moral issue.

After ten years he was beginning to feel the need of the relaxation and renewal which a change brings. In 1880 he was off work for several weeks with eye trouble. He was laid up in a darkened room for a month in the house and under the care of his friend, Dr. Read of London. The following year the trouble returned and forced him to give up several engagements, but it was less acute and prolonged.

At the end of 1880, he received a call to the pastorate of Ewing Place Congregational Church, Glasgow—the first Glasgow church in which he preached. This he declined. The following year he declined four other “calls.” In February, 1882, he accepted a unanimous invitation to the pastorate of Wycliffe Church, Hull. It promised the kind of relief and change he wished for. Hull was a busy, industrial, commercial town; York was, as he said, “usually so quiet and wearisomely slow, slumbering under the shadow of its Minster.”

The conclusion of his ministry at York brought many generous tributes, both private and public. His congregation took a most affectionate leave of him and made him a handsome presentation. He was also honoured by a complimentary dinner in recognition of his public services to the city, at which the aldermen and city councillors, the two Members of Parliament and many leading citizens were present. He preached his last sermon as minister of Salem Chapel on Sunday, August 28th, 1882.

It was a remarkable ministry, as remarkable as the Glasgow ministry of the “'nineties,” and by reason of his youth—he was just thirty-four when he left—almost sensational. When he came the Church had been declining in numbers for some years. Its prosperity quickly revived. Except for one early controversy, it was a united congregation. He had lived down to a large extent early suspicion and antagonism. He inspired a deep affection in those who knew him. Discriminating men were beginning to see that in spite of the destructive element in his teaching it was more truly conservative than they had thought. “It is plain enough now,” wrote his successor, “that it was not the teaching of a



changed faith. It was only a changed tone, a re-interpretation. No one at heart was less of an iconoclast than Hunter."

It was not only in the city of York, but in the county, and in the denomination generally that his name was honoured and his influence felt. He had published nothing, but he always drew big crowds in London and other cities. It was not only in the pulpits of recognised Liberals that he preached, but in those of distinguished men of the centre like Dale and Henry Allon.

In 1876 there appeared in the *English Independent* a series of sketches of the celebrated preachers of the day, Conformist and Nonconformist, written by an Anglican layman. They were superior journalism, and were afterwards republished in book form.<sup>1</sup> Although he was not yet twenty-eight, Hunter was included in the series. It is discriminating portraiture, and with some quotations from it this chapter may be concluded.

“ . . . Mr. Hunter is as destitute of conceit as he is conspicuous for erudition. It is not wonderful that Salem Chapel should be more crowded than ever; without the least intention of being invidious, it may fairly be said that the new minister is a greater preacher than the old one. . . . Mr. Hunter does not owe his popularity to exterior circumstances—he has a weak if pleasant voice; and his manner is rather diffident than self-possessed,—there are some who would be disgusted at first sight because he wears a slack scarf and an unclerical coat. . . . He has the art, rare in these days, as ever, of carrying the feelings of his audience with him—he reads every word from a manuscript, but at some points of his sermon you might literally hear a pin drop. His satire is not robbed of its force, his eloquence is not deprived of its charm, his illustrations of their appropriateness, his appeals of their efficacy, because he has written down what he has to say. . . . Hunter may justly be called the Frederick Robertson of the Dissenters. Could a higher tribute be paid to a man who has some distance to travel before he reaches his prime? ”

<sup>1</sup> *Pulpit and Pew*. Sketches of Popular Preachers of the Period. W. Tegg and Co. 1877.

## CHAPTER IV

### FRIENDSHIP, TRAVEL AND MARRIAGE

ALL his York days Hunter was a bachelor. He lived in a terrace some distance from the centre of the town on a hill called The Mount. There he kept open house to his ministerial friends. They did not need to wait for an invitation. P. T. Forsyth, in his student days and afterwards when he was in a pastorate, used to enjoy his hospitality for a week or more. J. Vickery, A. J. Griffith, W. Dorling, B. J. Snell, Stannard and many another used to come and go. The Leicester Conference brought them into touch with other Liberal men. For these "Independent Liberals" of the 'seventies his house was indeed "a cave of Adullam." In the company of friends his shyness left him.<sup>1</sup> He had not the conversational gifts of some of them—Stannard, for instance—but he was thoroughly jolly and enjoyed a good story and could tell one—though sometimes he would be overcome with laughter before he got to the end of it. He had a whole-hearted laugh. It was liable to break out at times and on occasions when it was embarrassing to those who happened to be with him. Mr. Vickery suffered from it several times—at a revival meeting where they were both known when some remark touched his tickle; at a badly done performance of *Twelfth Night* in Edinburgh, at which Hunter laughed so immoderately that the audience which was being appreciative got annoyed. He had a mischievous humour. Stannard he used to tease unmercifully. Together they developed the wildest spirits, and would enter with boyish amusement the "penny shows" of a passing fair. Their friendship was close and intimate in these years. They both gave to one another what independently they lacked. Hunter came to rely on Stannard to break his reserve in society.

<sup>1</sup> "I remember once I had the pleasure of his company to dinner with Stannard, and my wife noticed how quiet he was. But as soon as she had left the room it rang with the old merriment to which we had been accustomed at our suppers in college." The Rev. W. T. Moreton.

With a friend or a group of friends Hunter would sit up talking until three or four in the morning. Deep argument was not the staple of their talk, for they were mostly of one mind on theological issues. It was rather by way of personal opinions on men and books and current events; news of mutual acquaintances and of events in the Churches interspersed with a great deal of hilarity. He was given on a long walk to talking about texts and sermons, asking his companion if he had dealt with this one and that one and what he had made of it. He had a nice taste in texts. "That's a fine text," he said to a friend whom he had heard; "where did you get it? But the sermon hadn't anything to do with the text!" Afterwards he made a fine sermon *on* the text. He never smoked, and disliked the habit, but he enjoyed a good dinner and a glass of wine. Neither by disposition nor on principle was he an ascetic. But his sense of vocation and duty was always absolute master of his life and gave to it more than a touch of austerity, of hardness and simplicity.

When the British Association met at York, in 1881, he had a houseful of friends—Stannard, Bynner, Snell, Dorling. They used to make an uproarious party. He writes to the lady that he afterwards married :

"Forgive me. I have had no spare time and have been quite distracted by my visitors. I had great difficulty in getting my sermon ready for yesterday morning. It was written in my unfurnished attic. I did very well and had a select audience. Dr. Fairbairn spoke of my sermon in highest terms."

And again :

"I have got rid now of all my visitors. . . . The meetings have been a great success—the *soirée* brilliant. . . . The Lord Mayor has been exceedingly kind to my friends. I wish you had been at the meetings. You have lost a great deal. . . . I feel very tired and weary after all the excitement. It was rather a strain having three fellows in the house. I treated them like lords."

"What I have I spend" was his practice in those days. His stipend was ample for a young man, even after he had sent a considerable portion of it home. It never occurred to him to insure his life or even to open a banking account. He kept his entire earnings in a drawer, and by the time the next quarter's salary was due the drawer was nearly or quite empty. "Once when we were walking in the Highlands, Hunter would insist on

bathing in an extremely cold loch. I remember before he started to undress he flung a bundle of bank-notes on the ground—his last quarter's salary."<sup>1</sup>

He had two extravagances and an indulgence—books, holidays and Turkish baths.<sup>2</sup> By the time he had left York he had bought some thousands of books—many second-hand, of course.

The books that he bought and read were chiefly on English literature and literary criticism, history and political philosophy, sociology, religion and theology. He was attracted, perhaps by his appreciation of Channing, Bushnell, Emerson and Ward Beecher, to American publications. He read the *Andover Review* regularly for years. Both he and Stannard were great readers of weekly papers, etc., and amassed valuable collections of Press cuttings. As long as R. H. Hutton was the editor he read regularly the *Spectator*.

Hunter used to take his holidays with one or other of his friends, usually Stannard, until they got married; then he had to go alone. His taste was almost exclusively for hill-country. Like the prophets of Israel he found the Divine Presence among the hills. "How much," said Dr. Forsyth, at his funeral service, "was meant for that side of him by his long walks of twenty miles a day and more on Swiss and Scottish hills accompanied only by the Book of Psalms." "We once ascended Lochnagar together," writes Mr. Vickery, "where, to my amusement, on the summit he would persist in singing the Scottish metrical version of the 121st Psalm—though, as you know, he really could not sing." In his holidays he was always drawn to the mountains—they refreshed him physically and spiritually as did nothing else.

In the middle of the 'seventies he began to go to Switzerland, and from then till the end of his life he went back to the Alps as faithfully as any ancient Hebrew went up to meet Jahweh at the high places of Judah and Ephraim. He preferred walking-tours in those days. Economy and declining vigour dictated differently in later years. In 1879 he had to go alone for the first time, and alone he was even more energetic than with Stannard—too strenuous, as he was occasionally forced to realise. He usually had, however, two or three quiet days before starting

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. J. Vickery.

<sup>2</sup> He sampled most of the Turkish Bath establishments in the country. He took them more often than was wise—e.g. on a four-day visit to London in 1882, he writes, "I have had three T.B.'s."

homewards, and he always observed the Day of Rest. It is clear from his letters that the main interest in travel to him was, apart from the sheer joy of it, fine scenery and the associations of religious history. He was not a linguist. His letters on travel are bare itineraries with an occasional phrase like, "Lake Como is the loveliest place in the world," and then at the point where they are about to become self-revealing, "My impressions will keep till I see you," or some such phrase. A few extracts will, therefore, suffice. They are all written to his future wife.

"HEIDELBERG, *June 20, 1879.*

" . . . I send you a view of Heidelberg. Frederick Robertson preached here once for two months. This is a charming place, and I have had some splendid walks. There is a magnificent ruin of a castle which I have explored thoroughly. The whole place is very rich in historical associations. On the door of St. Peter's Church one of the pre-Reformation reformers, Jerome of Prague, nailed his protest against the errors of Rome. I have not felt very lonely yet—though very much may be said in favour of sympathetic companionship on a journey. One who can read and think and feel need never be very lonely. I have managed so far very well. With a view to being economical I carry my own portmanteau, but my economy is bringing my trouser buttons off and I have no needle and thread. That is a true word of the Psalmist's, 'If the buttons disappear, what will the righteous do. . . .'"

"MEIRINGEN, *Saturday, June 29th.*

"I have had a glorious week. The weather has been splendid. The mountains are standing out quite clear against the sky. Yesterday I saw a sky perfectly cloudless from a height over 8000 feet. I do not remember ever seeing such a thing—not the faintest streak of cloud—nothing but blue. I left Disentis on Thursday morning at six—drove as far up the Oberalp pass as I could, and then walked to Andermatt, about 10 miles. Two of these miles I was wading knee-deep in snow. On Friday morning I started with a guide for the Furka-Grimsel. The pass was blocked with snow for about five miles. I could not have 'done it' without a guide. As it was it was sufficiently dangerous to be exciting. I could not have believed this time last week I could have done what I have done this week. Fancy traversing a pathless waste of snow. I left Andermatt at 5.30 in the morning and got to the Grimsel Hotel 5.20 in the afternoon. I was walking the whole of that time with the exception perhaps of an hour and a half. . . . I think I have witnessed finer and wilder Alpine scenery this week than ever before. I have been really up among the mountains."

In 1881, he visited Central Italy for the first time.

“ROME, *Sunday, April 10.*”

“I am enjoying myself in a quiet way. I have not yet met a known face, but one can almost afford to dispense with company amid scenes so rich in historical associations, and so stirring and inspiring. I have twice wandered amongst the ruins of the Colosseum by moonlight. It is a fine sight. To-day I have been tracing the footsteps of St. Paul in Rome. I had a long three-mile walk on the Via Appia, referred to in the last chapter of Acts, by which Paul entered Rome.

“I have been twice to the Scotch church. Strange—a Dr. Milne from Fyvie, Aberdeenshire, officiated—sermon not of the best—but I like the simplicity of the Presbyterian worship. I simply cannot stand the English church—the priestly pretensions of the business irritate me. Just fancy singing the Scotch Psalms and paraphrases here in Rome. That was the part of the service I enjoyed most. I have been through the Catacombs. I enjoyed it. You know their history? . . . I am reading Bulwer Lytton’s novels. . . .”

“FLORENCE, *April 21.*”

“. . . The first thing I did after I arrived on Tuesday night was to find my way to the monastery of San Marco of which Savonarola was an inmate, and after that I went to the Square where he was burnt. On Wednesday morning I went to the Duomo and strained myself a little perhaps by going to the top of its ‘steeple’—some 580 steps. . . . The view was magnificent and the surroundings of Florence are lovely. Then I went to the Uffizi and Pitti galleries. . . . Before dinner I made a pilgrimage of my own to the Protestant cemetery where sleep Mrs. Browning, A. H. Clough, and Theodore Parker.”

“VENICE, *April 26.*”

“. . . The first sight of Venice produces a peculiar impression; it is so different from all other places. Apart from sea and sky there is not much to see unless one goes in for architecture. . . . To-day I crossed to a little island called the Lido and bathed in the Adriatic. I forgot to tell you I bathed in the Mediterranean when I was at Naples. . . .”

His first travels abroad undoubtedly awakened new interests and larger. In his young days he was little of a sacramentalist. The fine arts, music and architecture did not bring him to God. But now the æsthetic side of life began to appeal, and quite simply he set himself to educate his taste.

Hunter was beloved by his congregation at York though he did not visit systematically or often. He enjoyed the company of

simple folk, even if he could not be very intimate with them. The bulk of his congregation were business people—merchants and tradesmen, small and great. He kept in touch with them afterwards, dropped into their shops and houses if he were passing through York, sent them his Church calendars, and so forth.

The most distinguished of his deacons was William Moore—the eldest of five artist-brothers, of whom the best known were Henry Moore, R.A., the seascape painter, and Albert Moore, R.A., the painter of “April Blossoms,” “Summer Hours” and similar works. Their parents died when they were young, and William had to go without the full training that the others had in order to keep the home going. He sketched well, but his finest achievement was his own character. Another life-long friendship that he formed in York was with Mr. William Whitwell, an Inland Revenue official and a botanist of some note. Both Mr. Whitwell and his brother and father joined Salem. He was an affectionate and helpful friend—a kindred mind and spirit. The prefaces of all the books that Hunter published contain acknowledgments of Mr. Whitwell’s services as a careful proof-reader. J. Seebohm Rowntree, the Quaker, was perhaps the most distinguished citizen of York in the ’seventies. He and Hunter were fellow-workers in many enterprises and warm in mutual regard. Another deacon who stood out from the rest was Daniel Martin. He and his wife were both of Scottish birth. She, in particular, had a fine, strong personality and the typical Scottish reserve. When Hunter came to York they were staunch Calvinists—Martin in his youth had worked in Drummond’s Tract dépôt—he also had led the singing in Dunblane Cathedral. Although they were both well advanced in middle life, Hunter swung them round to his own point of view. His influence over them was extraordinary. They would both do anything for him; as soon as he crossed their threshold his smallest desire was the law of their home. Theirs was an unusual, almost pathetic devotion. It was altogether fitting, therefore, that he should marry their eldest daughter.

The courtship also had its peculiarities. Marion Martin was just a child when Hunter came to York. While she was still going to a school opposite his own house he was attracted by her. She had distinct intellectual gifts; a natural student handicapped by a delicate constitution. He was greatly interested in her education, so that her mind was moulded by his. As she grew from the

schoolgirl into a young woman his feelings toward her altered correspondingly.

It is difficult to say at what precise moment they became "engaged." It was always kept strictly private. Hunter had a horror of gossip that was quite out of proportion to the offence. One of the reasons that decided him to leave York was that it would be easier for them both to start married life in another environment. But even after he went to Hull, the secrecy was kept up. And although the rumour went abroad, the event remained unannounced until it was an accomplished fact. They were married at the Scottish National Church, Covent Garden, London, on Tuesday, September 4, 1883, early in the morning, so as to allow them to catch the continental boat train.<sup>1</sup> Stannard officiated, and Mr. and Mrs. Martin and another daughter were the only witnesses.

His letters to her before they were married were not "love-letters" in the accepted sense. He wrote so much of necessity that he hated writing letters. Moreover, temperamentally he never could write or speak freely of his deepest thoughts and feelings. One feels the depth of feeling underlying the more superficial comment of his letters—sometimes it comes to surface in a vivid confession of inadequacy and unworthiness. Otherwise his letters only give briefly the news of his doings, or discuss common concerns. They rarely lack a touch of humour or some banter.

The manner of their courtship is explained by their environment. They were in revolt—in self-conscious and deliberate revolt—against the ideas of the relations between men and women, and of man and wife, which were accepted by the society around them. Hunter had an exceptionally high and pure ideal of womanhood. Dante's love of Beatrice and the married life of the Brownings were for him the models of what love and marriage should be. He had also been influenced by the pioneers of the Woman's Movement, and by individual women like Mrs. Turner, who had been an intimate friend all these years.

Marion Martin came to share his views before she had had any real experience of life. She set herself to be an intellectual woman of the new age; intellect and emotion were set in opposition. Deliberately, almost ostentatiously, they avoided the common

<sup>1</sup> They spent four weeks mostly in Italy.



path of sentimental courtship, although neither of them was cold or unemotional by nature.

They were well and happily married. Naturally they had many tastes and interests in common. While she had not his humour and imagination she had other qualities in which he was deficient. He was trustful and impulsive ; she was more cautious—though like him sensitive and high-strung. He was not practical in the smaller business of life, less because he was without business capacity than because he did not trouble ; she had decided capacity and liking for business and organisation. He came to rely on her advice in such matters and in others he rarely acted without taking counsel with her. And in nine cases out of ten her judgment was sound ; in the tenth it might be warped by over-jealous zeal on his behalf or by temperament or ill-health.

She had a strong and independent personality, but she was wholeheartedly with him in his work. She was always at his right hand, making sacrifices unasked that he might do his work more easily. The house was ordered so that he might in no way be disturbed. Whenever they moved to a new house the first question was that of the most suitable room for a study. She managed all the household business and finance. A holiday abroad did him more good than a holiday anywhere else ; and she would send him alone if the budget did not allow of the family going—although she enjoyed travel and was a good linguist. She would perhaps have been wiser if she had been more selfish, and instead of allowing him to concentrate so intently on his work had encouraged him to mingle more with men and women. But at least it is certain that he would not have been able to get through the amount he did get through if it had not been for her unobtrusive care and thoughtfulness. And he appreciated it.

## CHAPTER V

HULL, 1882-86

Four questions by which to test the true "success" of a Christian Church :

1. What is our Church contributing to devout, reverent, sincere, intelligent worship ?

2. What is our Church contributing to right thinking concerning the fundamental verities of religion and life ? Is it helping those who come under its influence to speak, act and live the truth as becometh disciples of Him who came into the world to bear witness unto the truth ?

3. What is the quality of our Church's contribution to character ?

4. What is the quality of our Church's contribution to social service ?

*Church Manual, 1909.*

HUNTER began his ministry in Hull a fortnight after his farewell at York. He had taken a house in the Boulevard, off Anlaby Road, where the church was situated. There his elder son, John Maurice, was born on April 17, 1885. Shortly afterwards they moved into another house.

Wycliffe Church is a building in pseudo-Gothic style with less accommodation than Salem, but more difficult to speak in. When he went it had been pastorless for eighteen months, and at his Recognition Meeting he remarked that "the strongest inducement that this place offered to me was the hard work that I saw required to be done in restoring a Church which had grown comparatively feeble."

Previous to his coming he had obtained the committee's approval of the Liturgy which he had prepared in his last years in York. This was used on his first Sunday, and afterwards printed for distribution to the congregation. Recognition Services and a "Breakfast" were held during the week. Drs. Simons and Fairbairn were the principal figures. Stannard and Griffith were also there. It was the last time Hunter saw Griffith. On account of his wife's health, Griffith had taken a small charge in the Isle of Wight, and subsequently for the same reason went to Australia.

The start was auspicious. Hunter writes of it to his future wife :

(After his first Sunday.)

“My first Sunday in Hull has passed into yesterday. I got on very well—morning a little nervous, but in the evening everyone said ‘I surpassed myself.’ Stannard was ‘immensely’ delighted. Congregations were very large.”

(After his first week.)

“The excitement of the week is over and I feel quite worn out. Everything passed off very successfully. It could not have been better. . . .”

His letters at this time are nearly as much concerned with the welfare of his successor at York as with his own. He had a special interest in him, for he was his friend, Joseph Vickery.

“I wish your mother would write to Mr. Vickery and ask him to come first to your house and have something to eat, or to let her know when they arrive that she might get fires lit and have something ready for them in their own house. . . . I do earnestly hope he may have a good and hopeful start in York, that the people will rouse themselves to their duty in the matter. . . .”

And again :

“. . . I should like your mother to go up to-morrow morning and ask Mr. V., Mrs. V. and her sister to dinner or supper on Sunday, or to both. I should like them to spend their first Sunday in York at your house. Do this to please me and let me know if they are coming, and I shall think about you in my loneliness on Sunday here. . . .”

On another occasion he writes :

“Saw Canon H.’s death. He has lived quite long enough. He will require a few years of Purgatorial discipline to burn the conventionality and Toryism out of him. Picton has published a splendid book on ‘Oliver Cromwell.’ . . . I had a long letter from Mr. Vickery asking my advice about Church-work. I hope he will get them to work and then he will be more successful than I was. They should start a mission-room of their own in a low part of the city. . . .”

His letters, especially those written on Sunday nights and Monday, reveal the severe reaction of his preaching on himself.

“I am feeling dreadfully out of sorts to-day—horrible headache, low spirits, etc. I have not been able to do anything. I have made up my mind not to go to Bristol. I don’t feel equal to the strain. . . . I am awfully down. I am sure the depression is physical—change of air, diet, etc., and all the excitement of leaving and settling must tell on one. . . . Pray for the lonely. I am really miserable. Think about me.”

“I had a splendid day yesterday, ‘Lor’ bless me, I never saw such a congregation in Wycliffe and never heard such preaching,’ was the excited exclamation of one of my old deacons. It was a really fine congregation, fully one half *young* men, and the great majority men—numbers turned away. . . . I feel utterly worn out to-day. When I preach at my best it takes a lot out of me. Lecture to-night on Nonconformity.”

A fortnight later he again complains of being “out of sorts” and unable to sleep. He puts it down to overwork—“the brain needing rest.” However, he writes the following Sunday :

“I have had another good day.—Feel very excited after preaching three times. In the afternoon preached at the Sailors’ Institute in a low part of the town. To-night I had a very large congregation—preached my York farewell sermon on the Benediction. I put an immense amount of energy into it. Of course, I put a new conclusion to it. . . .”

His preaching had abated little from its first passion. “I used to sit in the gallery close to the pulpit,” writes Mr. Mortimer Petty of the Hull Lay Preachers’ Association, “and sometimes feared lest the vehemence of his declamation might injure him physically. On one occasion, towards the close, he gave up all restraint. His hand went up to the back of his head and remained there until he sat down, and I noticed that it was all he could do to get through the Benediction.”

Like most men in his circumstances, he felt lonely. He had insisted that he should finish his first year in Hull before they were married, and in spite of loneliness and pressure from the lady he kept to his intention.

“What do you think? I have bought a beautiful little American harmonium and intend learning to play it. It is a very pretty little thing. I have bought it off one of my deacons. I feel rather lonely at nights and have been thinking I could relieve my loneliness by learning to strum ‘French’ and the ‘Old Hundredth.’ I have got a book for beginners.”

But he did not persevere, and the harmonium, when he was married, gave place to a piano, which his wife played.

About this time (Nov., 1882) *Devotional Services for Use in Nonconformist Chapels* was printed and published by Archibald and Stoodle of Hull. It included the Commandments, Beatitudes, Prayers of Intercession, with responses to be said or sung by the

congregation, and a short selection of collects—twenty-eight pages.<sup>1</sup> It was too slight to attract much notice—though the fact that it included a petition for the editors of newspapers gave the *Pall Mall Gazette* the material for a leading article.

Hunter plunged into a tremendous programme of work, two sermons—sometimes three—every Sunday for eleven months, usually a week-night address in his own church and outside engagements as well. However, he had a good supply of material to fall back on, and although he rarely preached an old sermon without rewriting and altering it, the foundation-work had been done. This enabled him to plan out his pulpit work more systematically and on a larger scale. In the autumn he mapped out the broad lines of the year's programme. He gave two courses every winter—one starting in the autumn and the other at the New Year. He did not announce his morning sermons as courses, though they often were linked together. Thus during the winter, 1884-85, he announced that he would preach on selected psalms and parables and the theology of St. Paul as set forth in Galatians and Romans. His week-night addresses also were systematic. At them he gave courses on such themes as the Lord's Prayer, the Sermon on the Mount, the Acts of the Apostles. He also republished the series of Mission Tracts that he issued in 1872, with further additions—Why Observe Sunday? Our Daily Bread, A Simple Gospel.

In the early months of 1883 he redelivered his course on "Old Truths Restated," announcing that its aim was "to restate and reaffirm, in the light of modern religious and scientific knowledge, the radical, essential, vital truth of the Evangelical Doctrine. The school of Christian thought to which the preacher belongs does not reject the truths commonly known as 'Evangelical'; it only rejects the narrowness of certain modes of stating them; it seeks to expand them from half-truths and broken lights into whole truths and full lights." He also gave a course of monthly lectures—on Mondays of all days—on Nonconformity in English History. During the holiday months he gave a more popular course on New Readings of Old Stories: The Tower of Babel, The Sacrifice of Isaac, etc. The following winter he preached one course on the fundamental truths of Religion and Christianity,

<sup>1</sup> Except for the two pages containing a selection of ancient collects, the book did not differ from the one prepared "for use in Salem Chapel, York."

and another on Christianity and Social Questions. The third winter his courses were on Christianity as Christ Taught It, and Problems of Life in the Light of Christian Thought.

The introductory sermon <sup>1</sup> to the course on "Christianity as Christ Taught It" was a bold utterance. Beginning with the statement that the present upheaval of belief was a sign of religion rather than of irreligion, he said that most of the modern substitutes for Christ shone with His light and commanded influence by exalting hitherto neglected phases of the Christian ideal. Within the Church the modern movement in theology was to make Christianity more Christian, to separate "the truth as it is in Jesus" from the accretions that had gathered round it in its passage through the ages. We were witnessing a new and more immaculate birth of His religion. The principle "Christianity as Christ taught it," he went on to argue, meant (i) that they were not to identify it with the theological interpretations of later ages; (ii) that they were to go behind priest and traditions, "Listening to the voice of the Church was not always listening to Christ. Let them go back to Christ"; (iii) that they were not to identify it with Old Testament morality and theology; (iv) nor even were they to identify it with the Apostolic Epistles, which to some extent were coloured by current philosophical and theological speculation; "The mind of Christ was the true principle and standard of Biblical interpretation."

Two years before he had developed a parallel argument in a sermon on the Coming Form of Religion.<sup>2</sup> Starting from the same point that the modern interest in science, etc., was mainly religious, he forecasted that the Christianity of the future would be (i) less ecclesiastical and authoritative, more personal and free; (ii) more reasonable, enlarging the mind and not cramping it. The Churches had feared error more than they had loved and sought truth. If the thoughtful young men and women were to be kept loyal to Christ, new and better forms of thought were necessary; (iii) less ceremonial and dogmatic (in the bad sense) and more spiritual, and its ministry would belong to the prophetic and not the priestly order of things; less sectarian and more catholic and "the unholy spirit of antagonism would be superseded by the holy spirit of co-operation and brotherhood"; (iv) it would be a greater moral

<sup>1</sup> From the text John. vi. 58. Jan. 18, 1885.

<sup>2</sup> Revelation iii. 21. Aug. 5, 1883.

and social power, making more of the social aspects of the Gospel, identifying faith more with what is Christlike in character, regarding religion as right-living in its highest form and bringing Christian principles to bear on the whole life, on literature and art, on trade and politics, on education and the uplifting of the degraded, and on public affairs.

After he had completed his first year, Hunter began to initiate reforms in the life and organisation of the church. He first attacked the monthly church meeting. It was the governing body of the church, but as usually the only business was the admission of new members, only a small proportion of the members went. Hunter reduced the number of meetings and tried to arouse wider interest in the others by having addresses followed by discussions on important questions of church life—such as Co-operation of Minister and People, Responsibility of Parents, the duty of church members as regards non-church-goers. Usually, but not always, he read the paper himself. He also took a Bible class or a theological class, and once or twice a year a preparatory class for Communicants. In his last year the congregation was feeling its way towards starting mission-work.

Hunter's relations with his deacons and committee men were easy and affectionate.

“I had a meeting of deacons and committee last Monday,” he wrote in February, 1883. “It was a pleasant meeting—very—never had such a meeting at York. They all asked me publicly and privately whether I was satisfied—was there anything they could do to help me that they were not doing? They all seemed so anxious to do their best, and I believe they all are doing their best—not only talking like the York old boys, but working with a purpose.”

He might have written that any time during his years in Hull. They were generous to him and zealous to help him in building up a strong church. As the income of the church increased they treated him so handsomely in the matter of stipend that he was unwilling to accept an increase they offered in 1885 until they assured him by resolution that the funds of the church could easily meet it. They relieved him entirely of the business side of the church, and seem also to have taken their share of pastoral work.

When he came the church was too weak to support at all liberally outside organisations, and was saddled with a debt on

the building of £2400. After he had been there four years the debt was less than a thousand, and the church was a generous supporter of missionary and philanthropic enterprises. As the letter already quoted indicates, the fortunes of the church went forward with a leap and empty pews were soon filled. Within five months of his coming, 260 new sittings were "taken."

Among other things, Hunter was anxious to get men and women of the working-classes to come to the church. His sympathy with all over-worked and down-trodden people was intense. They were specially invited to the regular services, and when they did not come in large numbers he decided to start special Sunday afternoon services for them. These became very popular, but he had not the strength to keep them up all the year round.

In 1885 he set on foot two literary societies, one for men and one for women. He secured for them first-class lectures—he gave many himself. He felt that in a city like Hull, where there was no university or college, a church should be an educational centre. He felt it was part of his work as a minister to lecture on the ethical aspects of literary and social and political subjects. He did so with great acceptance. Though he was in demand and drew large audiences he was not what is called a "popular lecturer."

In those days he was anti-clerical, both in his sympathies and in his dress. He generally went about wearing a silk hat, black necktie, light kid gloves and a black frock-coat and waistcoat that showed a large expanse of spotless white shirt with gold studs. No one meeting him would have guessed him to be a parson, and he told some friends with great glee one day that at a hairdresser's he had just been asked if he were one of a theatrical company then visiting the city. It is extraordinary how in almost every reminiscence of that period, and of his first years in Glasgow before he began to wear gown and bands and cassock, the gold studs flashing on a white shirt-front form part of the vivid impression that he left on those who heard him.

In Hull, as in York, he identified himself with Liberalism in politics. In those days he regarded Liberalism as "the political side of Christianity." He had a generous admiration for the political idealism and moral character of Mr. Gladstone. At the 1884 election he spoke on behalf of all the Liberal candidates in Hull. His speeches were hardly the type that makes good election-



eering. Though forceful, they were read from manuscript, polished, lofty in their idealism. For his support of the Liberal candidates he was criticised by the local leader of the Radical wing of the party and replied :

“ . . . I am not intimately acquainted with the past political history of Hull, but I have carefully read Mr. Norwood's speeches and declarations, and feel quite certain that he will be loyal to Mr. Gladstone. I always mean what I say, and I take it for granted that other men also mean what they say. If Radicals like Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. John Morley are satisfied with candidates who promise to support Mr. Gladstone's moderate programme, surely the Radicals of Hull have no occasion to be more exacting. It is better to secure some good, even if we cannot get, at this political crisis, all the good we desire. The Nonconformists of England, who are the backbone of the Liberal party, have refrained from making the ecclesiastical question a test question at the present election. I wish some of the Radicals of Hull would follow their example of self-suppression for the common good, and be content to wait till their ideas have more fully penetrated the mind of England. The Liberal party is working out a piece of history which must not and cannot be hurried.” (November 24, 1885.)

He was careful to keep party politics out of his sermons, though he preached boldly on political duty. The Sunday before the election he ended a sermon on Religion and Politics with the following :

“ During the week on which we have entered, the whole country will be shaken to its centre in the election of parliamentary representatives who shall legislate for it for some years to come. Everywhere we hear the noise of battle and voices of them that shout for mastery. I wish you to cherish and cultivate the feeling that all that is going on around you has to do with right and wrong, with God and His kingdom, and that there is not an act which you can perform which will not affect the well-being of your country and for which you will not be held responsible. Your political life is a sacred and not a merely secular matter. Your vote next Wednesday has as much to do with the kingdom of Christ as the prayer you offer in this church to-day. It is not my business here to urge you to vote for this or that party, but it is my business to urge you to vote intelligently, honestly, conscientiously, remembering your responsibility to man and God. Let no local interests, no trade interests, no professional interests, no sectarian interests, no family interests, no friendly interests, no personal or selfish interests of any kind come between you and

the doing of what you know and feel to be true and right. You will forget your true life as men if you allow your individual judgment and action to be swayed by huge clamours, and loud shouts and one-sided slanderous reports, and vile appeals to selfish interest. If you imagine that public life is poor and mean, that it is best managed by ignoble desires, that ignoble appeals to petty interests will carry on its business sufficiently well, that you may put great moral and religious principles on one side as too good for common use, then your influence, great or small, will be debasing, and you yourselves unworthy, miserable triflers. There is a law, I entreat you to remember, outside of and above yourselves. There is an eternal righteousness to which all our acts ought to be conformed, and by which they shall be judged. God's government over the ancient Hebrews was not more of a reality than His government over us. Let us, therefore, connect the sanctities of our Christian faith with the discharge of our public duties, and into all our social and political relations carry the dignity and courage of Christian principles."

His interest in Liberalism waned after Gladstone withdrew from political life—though he voted "Liberal" at elections.

His ministry at Hull was disturbed by no controversy such as marked his early years at York. He had fought his battle then, and won it. But naturally his outspokenness on many subjects—and he received a great deal of notice in the local Press—provoked opposition in a town which was a stronghold of Methodism and ultra-evangelicalism. A sermon on the Bible at the time when the Revised Version was published, in which he announced his intention to use the new version in his church, made a local clergyman write a furious letter to the Press defending the equal authority (i.e. infallibility) of every part of the Bible, and declaring that Leviticus was merely a symbolical setting forth of the Sermon on the Mount.

Another sermon that caused a stir was one on Temperance. He summarised his views in a letter :

"I do not want to be led into a controversy on the temperance question. Controversy as it is ordinarily conducted, very rarely settles any question. 'It equalises fools and wise men in the same way,' says Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, 'and the fools know it.' But I crave leave for the benefit of my many critics to restate the points of the sermon which has given such offence to the total abstinence section of the community. I do not, and never did, expect them to agree with me ; but on a question of such vital importance, both to individual and social well-being, it is wise to

make impossible (if one can) any excuse for wilful misunderstanding and misrepresentation.

“1. I maintained that temperance, not abstinence, was the Christian ideal, and that temperance, not abstinence, was the nobler example. Of course, I meant by temperance something more and other than the free-and-easy moderation with which it is often confounded; I meant, and mean, the strictly moral and religious use of the elements of the lower life in the service of the higher life. The desire for something in the shape of a stimulant may be regarded as natural and universal; but the only real justification for the most moderate use of an alcoholic or any other stimulant is, that it will make the body the more effective servant and companion of the higher life. The physiological aspect of the question I touched only lightly in my sermon. Eminent authorities can be quoted both on the temperance and abstinence side. Probably the time has not yet come for the final word to be spoken. Every man must decide for himself, and, like men, take all the responsibility. I favour the strictly moderate use of wine or beer for those who require a stimulant. The duty of thorough and constant self-control I believe to be higher and harder than entire abstinence. Nearly all the best men I know—men of large intelligence, lofty principle, and Christian character—are men whose lives are shaped and guided by the temperance, and not the abstinence, ideal.

“2. I maintained in my discourse that abstinence was a form of asceticism, and that all history was against asceticism as a universal and permanent law of life. It is not favourable to human progress in the long run and on a large scale that our personal habits should be determined by the infirmities, follies, and vices of others. However honourable the motives which prompt such self-repression, it is certainly not healthy in its influence if it practically hands over to the weak and the vicious the government of human life.

“3. At the same time I urged that it is the duty of everyone to whom drink is in any way a temptation to abstain entirely from touching it. For such a one temperance is not possible—only abstinence.

“4. I also admitted that there may be exceptional circumstances and occasions when abstinence on the part of those who do not require to adopt it in self-protection can be reasonably justified and enforced as the clear demand and duty of the hour.

“5. Legislation, I showed, could accomplish much on the side of temperance reform, and that much ought to be done. While not believing in prohibition as a principle, I expressed myself in favour of the earlier closing of public-houses, Sunday Closing, the reducing of the number of public-houses, and the stopping of ‘the sale of liquor to be drunk on the premises.’ Whatever men

think about abstinence or temperance, all serious men agree in reprobating the habit of what is called 'perpendicular drinking.' Men and women rarely become drunkards by what they drink at home.

"6. In closing my discourse, I urged that more attention should be given to the deeper causes of drunkenness—causes which lie in that evil condition of humanity which can only be gradually overcome or outgrown. Whatever tends to strengthen in men the power of resistance and self-control, to beget self-respect, courage, and confidence, to develop and elevate the mind, and to purify and uplift the desires of the soul, tends most effectually to promote temperance. 'To conquer,' said Napoleon, 'we must replace.' To conquer gross tastes and morbid cravings, we must train and strengthen finer tastes and healthier cravings.

"With this restatement of my position, I beg leave to withdraw from the controversy. I am quite sure that your intelligent and fair-minded readers will not condemn the views I have expressed as 'calculated to do harm to the cause of temperance.' It is surely time we all recognised that a problem so vast and complicated as that of intemperance may be regarded in different lights by equally honest and earnest minds. The redemption of England from the curse of drunkenness calls for the service of the ablest, most sober-minded and serious men everywhere. Temperance reform has been too long left to men whose zeal has not been according to knowledge."

(October 23rd, 1886.)

He did not take "a moderate line" on the question because he lacked first-hand experience of the "curse of drink." His youngest brother was a painful object-lesson of the "disease" of alcoholism. Hunter, however, maintained the position that he took up in this letter all his life. His innate dislike of extremists and a vein of sociability which underlay his shyness made him turn away from total prohibition alike in theory and practice.

Hunter believed strongly in the educational value of newspaper discussion, and even controversy, if it were fair and courteous. He wrote sometimes under his own name, sometimes under a *nom-de-plume*, maintaining that "when private character is not assailed and the end sought is a free discussion of ideas anonymity is not only perfectly justifiable, but preferable."

While he was in Hull he often felt called to defend Nonconformist principles. In reply to a public attack on Dissent by a local clergyman, he gave a public lecture on Nonconformity. He initiated a discussion on the Establishment, in the Hull Press, and over a *nom-de-plume* contributed three long letters in which

he attacked the Anglican system with uncompromising vigour. He did not even spare the Broad Churchmen.

“ . . . Dean Stanley, Kingsley and Maurice I held and hold in high esteem, and I am in full sympathy with their general theological position, but it is precisely their attitude in regard to the doctrinal beliefs and liturgical forms by which they were bound as servants of the State which makes me wholly sceptical as to the healthy liberalising influence in the long run of their Church. Their efforts to reconcile modern thought with formularies of belief and worship belonging to a condition of mind and feeling which were quite alien to these times were a melancholy waste of power. None who knew the men would question their personal sincerity, but at the same time I believe that the subtle casuistry, the consideration of ecclesiastical expediency, etc., which reconciled them to their position in a Church, whose newest word in prayer and creed is two or three centuries old, have not been favourable to intellectual and spiritual veracity, which is a far more vital matter to the nation than the maintenance of the Anglican Establishment or the extension of liberal religious ideas. There are abundant signs that men holding broad and liberal views are getting weary with the fruitless effort to force new conviction into the moulds of ancient thought. Since the death of Maurice, the Broad Church party in the Establishment has been visibly dwindling. When Mr. Stopford Brooke seceded from the Church of England, he not only acted the part of an honest man, but revealed in a most public manner the position of the party which he left behind him still clinging to the temporalities of the Establishment. Probably Christendom has never seen such an example of verbal legerdemain as that which is presented in the teaching of the new school of Broad Church clergy, considered as subscribers to the Anglican formularies. Church comprehension may be good, but simple truth and honesty are better. It is also a sign of the times that laymen whose interest in religion is something more than an æsthetic taste, or a conciliation of social interests, are getting heartily tired of strained interpretations and make-believes, and are not only requiring perfect intellectual sincerity as a prime qualification of their religious teachers, but are refusing to recite formularies in public worship which they believe to be inconsistent with modern thought and knowledge.” (January 28th, 1885.)

He also took a keen interest in the affairs of his own denomination. A letter to the *Christian World* on the chairmanship of the Union brings out more than one characteristic trait :

“ As nominations for the Chair of the Congregational Union for 1886 are already being discussed, I should like to take an early

opportunity of urging the claims of Dr. Paton of Nottingham to this honourable position. By his long and noble services to Congregationalism in the Midland Counties, no less than by his rare intellectual ability and the breadth and fullness of his scholarship, his activity in various departments of public work and many fine personal qualities, he is richly entitled at the hands of his brethren to this mark of their confidence and esteem. I would not willingly utter a word that should seem to depreciate the merits of any of the gentlemen who have recently occupied the Chair of the Union, but I must say that Dr. Paton's claim to this honour ought to have been recognised years ago. A man of more cultivated mind, or of wider and warmer sympathies with modern questions, does not exist amongst us; whilst his twenty-five years' self-denying labours on behalf of the college he loves so well amply indicate the spirit in which he would doubtless serve the highest objects of the Union.

"As I have no intention of troubling you with a letter on this matter of the Chairmanship every year, will you allow me in a closing sentence to appeal to brethren of my own age and standing in the ministry to do full justice to the claims of such men as Drs. Paton, Falding, Bruce, Professors Scott, Redford and Mr. Edward White, before they think of electing to the Chair of the Union men belonging to a younger generation? The able and esteemed gentlemen whose names have already been mentioned—Alexander Mackennal, Morlais Jones, Samuel Pearson, George Barrett—can afford to wait, and will, no doubt, be only too glad to wait. The younger men do not require any special representation. We are represented sufficiently by older men who remain 'always young for liberty.' We also ought to be the more anxious and willing to recognise and honour excellence the less it conforms to the conditions of our own thought. Let us not be guilty in another way of the same unfairness or intolerance from which we ourselves may have suffered."

"HULL, April 11, 1885."

In 1883, when Fairbairn was elected Chairman of the Union, Hunter preached in the City Temple while the May Meetings were being held in London. It was his first experience of the City Temple and he writes of it: "The evening at the City Temple was most trying. What a sight that congregation is from the pulpit! They were seated in the aisles. I got breathless attention. Stephenson (of the *Christian World*) and others said the sermon 'had produced a profound impression.' I was horribly done up after. It took three bottles of soda water to quench my thirst!"

He held a sort of watching brief for theological liberalism. In 1885 a friend of his was refused admission to the Devonshire

Congregational Association as a result of a heresy-hunt, and in consequence had to resign his charge. Hunter opened the attack with a carefully reasoned defence of Mr. Panks. It concluded with these prophetic words :

“ Great complaints are heard in all religious bodies as to the scarcity of desirable candidates for the Christian ministry. How is it to be expected that young men of culture and vigorous mind and deep conviction should care to devote themselves to this sacred calling if they are to be denied the large and reasonable freedom which is the vital condition of an independent ministry ? Why put premiums on ignorance and insincerity ? Why surrender our pulpits to plausible talkers who respect the stupidity and flatter the prejudices of their hearers ? Mental movement is essential to healthy religious progress. External activities of a ritualistic, evangelistic and philanthropic kind will not compensate for the loss of power occasioned by the decline of intellectual activity and prophetic force. There is no real need for creating antagonism between the new theology and the old. What is called heresy often proves to be nothing more than the needful resistance to conventional definitions and phrases which have lost all living significance. The inevitable changes in theological thought need not, if we are wise, come by the way of conflict and catastrophe, but by the Diviner way of growth and evolution.” (Hull, September 14, 1885.)

In 1886, when the famous American Congregationalist preacher, Henry Ward Beecher, was spending some months preaching in England,<sup>1</sup> the Committee of the Congregational Union declined to ask him to speak at the Autumn Meetings and only invited him to attend. Their action was interpreted as a deliberate slight due at bottom to theological prejudice. It was commonly reported that the Chairman brought undue influence on the committee by declining to undertake the office of welcoming Beecher. When the fact became known Hunter wrote to the denominational Press protesting against the official attitude as “ unwise, ungenerous and unjust.” The outcry was widespread. Under pressure of opinion the Reference Committee of the Union hastily drew up a rather colourless resolution, which Hunter was asked to move during the meetings, regretting that Beecher had not been able to accept the invitation. The resolution was drafted so that it would command unanimous assent. As Hunter said, it represented

<sup>1</sup> He lectured in Hull to an immense audience at Hunter's instigation.

an almost perfect self-suppression on the part of those who sympathised with his views. He also remarked that it was the first time he had moved a resolution from the platform of the Union and probably would be the last, as unlike most Scotchmen he was about to return to his native land. As one who felt himself to be true and loyal to the great aims of Congregationalism he thought that the resolution should be passed as an act of justice to the Union and to save misunderstanding. The discussion continued in the same chastened key until the tactless intervention of the Chairman produced a scene; however, the resolution was duly carried. The pent-up feelings of the admirers of Beecher were liberated afterwards in the columns of the *Christian World*.

During the four years he spent in Hull, Hunter received calls to Broughton Park Church in Manchester and to a new church in West Kensington. The latter he considered seriously, but in view of the dismayed appeals from his congregation decided that he could not fairly leave them then.

In 1884, Baldwin Brown died—and it was generally expected that Hunter would be asked to succeed him as pastor of Brixton Independent Church. On the last occasion that Hunter preached there, shortly before Baldwin Brown's death, the old man in the vestry after the service laid his hand upon the young man's shoulder and said to those who were in the room, "This, this is my beloved disciple." The attachment was mutual; it was a kind of gospel, Hunter once said, only to see Baldwin Brown's face. It is a suggestive coincidence that an address he gave in later life on the Ideal of the Christian Ministry has sentences and whole paragraphs in common with his lecture on Baldwin Brown.<sup>1</sup> Both disciple and master preferred to style themselves by the historic word—Independents. At the first meeting of the church and congregation after Baldwin Brown's death, Hunter was named by almost everyone as the obvious successor, but the deacons, who seem to have been out of sympathy with Brown in his declining years, thought otherwise and declared they wanted a different type of preaching—a "sound" theology and a "simple" gospel. They managed to postpone a decision at the first meeting, and in the meantime canvassed so actively that the church became hopelessly divided. The deacons happily did not get their own way altogether; they were successful in their veto of Hunter,

<sup>1</sup> Published in the *Expositor*. April, 1921.



but to avoid dissension they had to accept the nominee of one of their opponents.

In 1886 Hunter received a call to the church of another distinguished and liberal-minded man, the church of Dr. William Pulsford in Glasgow—surely as tersely expressed as a “call” could be. “I beg to send you,” wrote Mr. Skinner, the secretary, “an extract from minutes of Church Meeting held last night and have to ask your best consideration of the same. Hoping to have the pleasure of a favourable reply.

“Extract.—We the members of Trinity Congregational Church assembled to-night, having been called by special circular in reference to a successor to the late Dr. Pulsford, unanimously and heartily resolve to invite the Rev. John Hunter of Hull to become our pastor—and that we offer him a stipend of £800 per annum.”

Hunter would have preferred to stay a few more years in Hull in order to consolidate his work; the congregation which he had attracted—drawn from all parts of the town—had still to be welded into a church. But no man knows or is able to choose the time when the call of a lifetime shall come to him. Hunter instinctively felt that this was such a call. However, he did not act precipitately. He sought advice and all the advice, sought and unsought, was in favour of acceptance—he was approved by Dr. John Pulsford as a successor to his brother. He also asked to be assured that he would have full liberty in the pulpit and that they would agree to the use of a liturgy in a modified shape. When these were promised he accepted the invitation.

It is interesting to speculate on what would have been the reach of his influence if he had remained in the South. It would undoubtedly have been more intensive within his denomination. Already, when he went to Glasgow, he was regarded as the spokesman of the younger progressive men, and would no doubt have filled Baldwin Brown's position in the life of the churches. He was aware of this himself: “I may be throwing away some fair and reasonable prospects of a more prominent and representative position in England, but as a Scotchman, feeling a decided preference for Scotland, I have deemed it wise to entertain this invitation because never again is it likely I shall be called to a church in the North more to my mind. . . .” On the other hand, there was no position to which he was likely to be invited, where his influence would have been so extensive in the Church at large and

in the civic life of the nation as it was through his long ministry in Glasgow.

The announcement of his departure to the North was received with dismay not only by his congregation and his party, but among a great multitude in the North of England. The Leader's Meeting of the Methodist New Church in Nottingham sent him a resolution of congratulation, but at the same time regretting that "the distance almost precludes the hope of again hearing you," and assuring him that his services at the opening of the church would ever be gratefully remembered and that the constant use of the *Book of Devotional Services* compiled by him was most highly appreciated.

A Trade Unionist wrote in one of the Hull newspapers :

"Those who heard Mr. Hunter's sermon on 'Master and Servant' <sup>1</sup> must have been inspired with the thought that in Mr. Hunter we have a worthy disciple of that school of Christian Socialists of which Canon Kingsley and John Ruskin are conspicuous examples. . . . There was one sentence in the sermon which was a golden one—'To get the most service for the least money was not the most honourable thing to do, and it was a pity and a shame that there were so many employers willing to take advantage of those who would give their services for a lower wage than was just.' After listening to such a sentence from the pulpit, it is easy to understand the regret that is felt by Trade Unionists and workmen generally in the town that Mr. Hunter is leaving us. We sadly need such men. . . ."

"We shall ever be most grateful," wrote one of the many he had attracted to Wycliffe, <sup>2</sup> "for the good which has come to ourselves through the help of your ministry, and especially for the great stimulus given to our brothers. Nothing will lessen our great debt to yourself. It will deaden half our life to lose you, but there are others who need your help quite as much. You will not mind our speaking thus, for if every word were not so intensely felt it should not come to you."

He carried away from Hull several lasting friendships. When he broke down in health in 1911, one of his Hull deacons, Mr. Archibald, an old man by then, made a special trip to Bad-Nauheim in Germany to see him.

<sup>1</sup> At his last Sunday afternoon service for working-men. "One can never forget the wrath," writes Miss Shaw, "with which he exclaimed 'People expect to get an angel in the house for £14 a year.'"

<sup>2</sup> Miss A. Todd.

## CHAPTER VI

### A GREAT MINISTRY. GLASGOW, 1887-1901

“ Sunday after Sunday I look into the faces of my congregation and say to myself, the best thing I can do for this people is, not merely to interest them, I must interest them, not simply to teach them, I must teach them, but to kindle and nourish in their hearts the flame of devotion, to inspire reverence, courage, faith, hope, love.”

*From a sermon in 1912.*

GLASGOW is the second city of the Empire and is proud of the title. It is a city where men and women work. It has no leisured class to speak of, and it is not an ecclesiastical metropolis. When the time for retirement comes its professional class gravitate towards Edinburgh, and the bourgeois build themselves stately mansions down the Clyde and elsewhere in the beautiful country around. In the city itself the atmosphere is thick with the smoke of countless factories and works, and the clangour of the shipbuilding yards disturbs the silence of its quiet places. A little withdrawn on Gilmorehill stands its ancient and large University. Industry, Commerce, Shipping, Learning combine to create a democratic spirit and to keep the vast population of the city and its adjacent boroughs keenly alive to new movements in the thought and life of the world. Pre-eminently Glasgow is a city in which a man with human sympathies and a Gospel for modern men and women would find an audience—and an audience through whom his influence would carry into the far parts of the world.

The religious and ecclesiastical atmosphere of Scotland is different from that of England. The church and chapel business which has been the curse of English religious life does not exist. Presbyterianism may be a little superior, but ecclesiastically it is not exclusive. It harbours the excluding spirit only towards wayward theologians.

In 1887 the Scottish Churches were conservative both in politics and in theology. Carlyle, Ruskin, Kingsley were being read in Scotland, but not in the Scottish presbyteries. Radicalism and

Social Democracy were spreading through the people, but not inside the churches. The Gospel of Scottish Evangelicalism was not a social Gospel; and the Established Church was Tory throughout.

By weighty argument—the Scotsman is born a theologian—and by heresy trials and ejections—the Scottish churchman seems born a disputant—Presbyterianism guarded jealously its orthodox confession. The prophets of new light and new truth were without honour in their own generation. Their new theology was not received until it was no longer new. Macleod Campbell, who was turned out of the Established Church in 1831, was made a Doctor of Divinity of his old University thirty-seven years later.

After 1870, under the influence of the idealistic tradition in philosophy, the liberal movement gathered momentum. In the Established Church, Principal Tulloch of St. Andrews and Principal John Caird of Glasgow gave it impetus. In the Free Church, the critical historical study of the Bible continued, in spite of the ejection of William Robertson Smith. Professor A. B. Bruce was originating the movement “back to Christ,” through his learned and deeply religious studies in the New Testament. Both Bruce and Caird gave Hunter a substantial backing by their public work and private friendship—help of which he was deeply sensible.

Hunter, indeed, was happy in the time of his coming to Glasgow. Bruce had come there twelve years before. The Cairds—John and Edward—were at the height of their influence at the University and were moulding the youth of that generation in the liberal “Hegelian” forms of thought. While Edward Caird gave himself to philosophy, John Caird, Professor of Divinity before he was Principal and one of the most eloquent of Scottish preachers, was recasting Calvinistic theology in terms of the same idealistic philosophy. Less conspicuously, Dr. John Service, Dr. William Pulsford and his brother John Pulsford in Edinburgh, were doing similar work. But in the majority of the churches, especially the Free Churches, ministers were still preaching on the lines of the old orthodoxy in philosophy and theology—and were making slower and slower headway against the currents of modern scientific and philosophical thought. To them the new teaching was abhorrent and seemed to alienate the younger, thoughtful men from the churches, as indeed under the circumstances it did.

Within Trinity Church<sup>1</sup> itself Hunter's way was prepared by William Pulsford, who had been its minister for twenty-two years—the only minister that the church had had. He had built up a compact, well-organised congregation, which only began to decline with his declining years.

“Dr. William Pulsford,” said Hunter, “made his ministry in this city a noble and distinct power by the strength of his Christian conviction, by his rare gifts of teaching, by the breadth of his outlook, and the catholicity of his sympathy. However far I may be behind him in personal character and attainment, there is little fear, I make bold to say, that I shall cease to sustain the liberal tradition of his ministry.”

John Hunter was in his fortieth year when he came to Glasgow. He had served a strenuous apprenticeship, and was now master of his thought, clear in purpose, vigorous, mature.

It was a twofold purpose that drove him forward—to do the work of a prophet-evangelist of a new order and to build up a living church “according to the pattern that he had seen upon the Mount.” At his “recognition meeting” he spoke at some length of the ideal that was before him. It is proof of his tenacity of purpose and his power that the words he used then were prophetic of the accomplished fact. For he achieved his ideal—so it seemed to others—as nearly as a man is likely to achieve in this world.

“While faithfulness to the conditions of intellectual and spiritual veracity makes, and will keep me the minister of an Independent Church . . . the influence I may be able to win and exert in this city will be given, not to the weakening of any church, but to the strengthening of the truth and good which may be found, I believe, in all churches. Very few of the things which divide the Churches represent realities, but simply angles of vision, and with truer spiritual discernment will come a truer spiritual unity. . . . But even by means of our honest divisions we may come to a higher truth, a larger faith, a wider, nobler brotherhood. It is the unity of the spirit that is the bond of peace.”

He then spoke of his own teaching and work :

“While I have some individual peculiarities of an affirmative kind, and also hold my judgment in suspense concerning some grave questions to which very definite answers have often been given, I can frankly make the avowal that it is the great positive

<sup>1</sup> The church stood beside one of the main thoroughfares of the city, a mile from its centre; it is almost a “down-town” church to-day. It was a Gothic building consisting of a nave and wide transepts. The interior lines are harmonious and dignified.

and vital truths of the historic and catholic faith which command my convictions and inspire my preaching. My general religious position is neither conservative nor destructive, but liberal, and my liberalism is Christian. . . . To translate the ancient message into living thought and speech, to affirm and apply the vital ideas and principles which our theological systems have embodied and preserved, to produce higher forms from lower by gradual improvement, and to lift the evangelical truths which are bound up with the deepest spiritual experiences of Christian men into their largest meaning—to do this, it seems to me, is to be doing the most enduring and fruitful kind of work which a religious teacher can do in this age of transition—a work that will take no mean place in the building of the eternal city of God.”

He went on to say that his vocation was to preach—that he would concentrate on it and only give the residue of his time to other things—warning them that it would be a small residue. From the subject of preaching he passed to the cultivation of the religious spirit and the importance of worship. The last theme he touched on was the mission of the Church.

“The ministry of the Church to the world is a sadly forgotten truth. The end of the ministry of worship and teaching is to stimulate and strengthen the people ministered to, in their ministry to the community around them. . . . I hope as your minister to take some active share in the public life of this great city, and will regard such service not only in bearing with my duties as a minister, but as part of those duties themselves. . . . Let us—minister and people—expect the highest and best things of each other.”

Principal Fairbairn introduced him the following Sunday, and towards the end of his discourse, reviewing the preachers of Glasgow who had been famous, he gracefully set Hunter in the line of succession. His ministry justified the Principal’s daring. His best work was done—his ripest years were spent—as minister of Trinity Church and citizen of Glasgow.<sup>1</sup>

The contact of his personality with the thoughtful young men and women of Glasgow lit a flame. Although he was not a solitary pioneer, his work was distinctive. “There was nothing in the antecedent religious life of Glasgow, nor yet in the teaching of his liberal-minded contemporaries that can explain the kind of

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Macmillan, in a tribute when Hunter retired in 1913, said: “Dr. Hunter, to my mind, is in the direct line of succession to Dr. John Service and Principal Caird. These three stand by themselves. We have had during their time many distinguished preachers in Glasgow, but none, however eminent, who could be classed with them.”

religious reformation, for it was nothing less, that took place under his leadership."<sup>1</sup>

"The biography of a preacher," Hunter once said, "should be short," and he commended Edward Caird's memoir of his brother. It is an interesting comment on his remark that there is hardly any intimate biographical material of his Glasgow ministry. Its record is not in letters or diaries, but in the lives of men and in the movements that he inspired or encouraged. His personality was always veiled in the mystery of the inarticulate. The friend to whom he might have corresponded freely if he had been a correspondent died in 1890—a loss that was never made up. Moreover, Hunter revealed his thoughts and feelings indirectly rather than directly—by a look, or an expression, or a thought casually dropped that only the discerning would stoop to pick up. His inmost thoughts and feelings found expression in the pulpit and in his prayers. His life was his work and his work was his life. "This one thing I do"—the words have occurred to many of his friends as they have reflected on his life and work. "My study windows," writes one of them,<sup>2</sup> "looked into, and over, the Kelvin-grove Park. I could see him most Sunday mornings on his way to church. What energy he threw into the simple exercise of walking! His movement was so purposeful; it was a moral tonic to behold him! In his very walk there was a revelation of the man, the suggestion and embodiment and accentuation of the text—'One thing I do.'"

"I do not claim to be faultless or infallible," Hunter once said to his people, "but I do claim to know what my work is. Even my side-studies and recreations have been chosen on the ground of their more or less direct relation to the great end of my life."

### i. 1887-97.

On the evening of his fourth Sunday in Glasgow, when he began a series of sermons—the third revision—on "Christianity as Christ taught it"—the church was crowded and many were turned away. The crowds continued with him during all the subsequent years. If he preached in other churches or in the University chapel they followed him there. The Bute Hall, which

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. J. M. Connell of Lewes.

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. Robert Hislop, Minister of the E.U. Church, Thornhill, Dumfriesshire, until his death in 1920.

serves as a University chapel on Sundays and for various purposes during the week, accommodates about 2,500 persons. It is a gloomy Gothic building, unsuitable for most of the purposes to which it is put. In those days it was said that only two preachers could fill it, John Caird and John Hunter—and Hunter's achievement was the more remarkable, for Caird preached seldom and Hunter twice a Sunday three-quarters of a mile away.

By the end of 1889 the membership of Trinity Church had risen from 400 to 700—eventually it exceeded 900—and every seat was let, and thereafter the demand was always in excess of the supply.<sup>1</sup> But he had no touch of megalomania.

“The influence of a ministry that aims chiefly at the culture of Christian thought and character must necessarily be cumulative and largely imperceptible; but I have thought that evidences were to be seen in our midst of a growing earnestness in the worship of God and the service of man, and if these signs are not misleading, then are we prospering in the best sense, even supposing the figures of our various reports were not quite so favourable as they actually are.”<sup>2</sup>

It became the custom on Sunday evenings that all seats were free when the bells stopped ringing, ten minutes before the service commenced. For half an hour or more before that time there would be a crowd of some hundred men and women waiting. Many of them would come Sunday by Sunday. They came from all parts of the city—on foot—for it was before the days of Sunday tram-cars. Miss Allan, the present Principal of Homerton College, Cambridge, recalls tramping with her brothers across Glasgow to “Trinity” on Sunday evenings, and the conversations on the way home that were provoked by the preacher's words. Writes another who became a strenuous social worker in Glasgow: <sup>3</sup>

“Trinity Church was the meeting-place of many earnest and enthusiastic young men and women. The Sunday services were a source of inspiration and a wonderful mental and spiritual tonic to hundreds—many of whom tramped for miles and thought nothing of standing for an hour in the rain and mud,<sup>4</sup> feeling that

<sup>1</sup> For seat-letting purposes the church was reckoned to accommodate 950. By packing the pews, placing chairs in the narrow aisles and allowing people to sit on the steps of the pulpit platform and to stand about the doors it was possible to accommodate another two hundred. There is an interesting statistic of the composition of the congregation in 1893 made by Mr. John Fairlie, one of the most faithful of church workers. Out of 950 members and seatholders, 434 were independent young men and young women.

<sup>2</sup> Annual address to the congregation, 1890.

<sup>3</sup> Miss M. Hunter.

<sup>4</sup> The church had an inconveniently small vestibule then.



physical fatigue and discomfort counted as nothing compared with the heartening effect of the preacher's message and the helpful and quietening influence of the beautiful services."

The first visit to "Trinity" was an hour of revelation to many young men and women.

"The service had begun by the time we reached Claremont Street, every seat was occupied, and we, with other late-comers, were accommodated with chairs which were placed in the aisles. I can never forget the atmosphere of the church that night. Here one felt at once was no ordinary congregation assembled from habit. There was no suggestion of dull formality or customary routine. The air was tense with interest and expectancy. It was not an audience but a worshipping congregation, and the impression on a shy and curious stranger was 'these people mean what they are saying and singing.' The characteristic of the service throughout was that of intense reality. If there was none of the formality of an ordinary service, equally there was none of the noisy excitement of an evangelical meeting. The feeling was one of quiet, subdued concentration in which the silent deeps of men's souls were stirred. This was a new experience for me. Preachers had moved me often; but the act of public devotion had never so laid hold of me before.

"The sermon was one of a series on 'Christianity as Christ taught it.' If the service was arresting so also was the preacher. . . . The ideas were new to me and somewhat startling, but I could not resist them. With their utterance came also the conviction of their truth. I may have been, indeed I was, very uncritical in those days: necessarily so: but under the sway of that single sermon it was borne in on me that to turn away from its pleading was to 'quench the spirit.' The sermon lasted an entire hour, but it seemed no longer than fifteen minutes. Its influence, however, did not end with the hour of its delivery. All through the week the insistency of the preacher's message dwelt with me. One had to be obedient to it, or stand a coward in one's own esteem. It was as though curtains had been drawn back, a window thrown open and a new world revealed. I can never recall that hour without profoundest gratitude. I returned to Trinity again and again and finally became a member of the congregation."<sup>1</sup>

It was a unique congregation that Hunter was gathering, young and old, orthodox and unorthodox, conservative and radical, educated and uneducated, emotional and intellectual. There were some who had been members before he came; and others of the type that are attracted by a "successful" church; but

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. Matthew R. Scott of Sale.

those who were attracted by Hunter's personality were men and women, whatever their rank and age, with growing minds. The atmosphere of "Trinity" in those days was too invigorating to allow spiritual slumber and moral apathy. Many elderly people came who had been "shepherdless" since the death of Dr. John Service in 1884. There were professors and prominent public men, lawyers and doctors, artists, teachers and journalists, but chiefly young men and women—students, artisans, men starting in the professions and in business—who were being drawn out of the orthodox churches by their own unanswered questions and ideals, and but for Hunter would probably have drifted from a Christian allegiance altogether. They were men and women who had been reading the great writers of the century, its philosophers, economists, prophets and poets, and were seeking for truth and were earnest to serve their fellow-men and help to build a better world. He held them, though he was not always able to make them believers in a positive Christianity like his own.

"In that crowd were all sorts and conditions of minds—in the main a company open-eyed and critical, out of step with church conventions—many of them it might be with a mental twist or morbid distemper—men with unhappy early experiences—out of touch with wholesome human life, having broken away from the spiritual moorings that made for fellowship. This valuable, vigorous material, which in the hands of the ordinary preacher would have been a sheer inert, distressful mass, found in him a seer who could read the human heart like a book. Surely rescue work of this rare order was an Alpine reach in Christian ministry."<sup>1</sup>

The following extracts from the letters of one man illustrate better than a wide selection the character and intellectual outlook of the men who were attracted by Hunter and the way in which he was able to help them.

*From Mr. Robert L. Bremner.<sup>2</sup>*

*"January 20, 1894.*

" . . . Your teaching has over and over again been most helpful to me. I cannot exactly define or describe the usefulness of it—

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. Dr. David Dickie of St. Luke's Parish Church, Glasgow—in a memorial sermon.

<sup>2</sup> The late Mr. R. L. Bremner, B.L., a well-known and greatly respected Glasgow citizen, writer, Norse-scholar, social worker, and author of *The Modern Pilgrimage from Theology to Religion* (Constable, 1904). Its dedication reads, "To the Rev. John Hunter, D.D., conspicuous among modern preachers in spirituals, in veracity, in catholicity, these pagan essays in reverie and reasoning are with gratitude and admiration inscribed." His father was a Free Church minister, and the son had intended to follow in his steps till theological difficulties hindered.

many of the highest things defy definition. Chiefly, you have made God more real to me. And while I am as far as ever from believing the doctrines of the Atonement, Incarnation and Resurrection of Jesus, and many other things which you teach (though in a more liberal way than most), I know that you have *often* quickened my aspiration for a better, purer and more useful life."

" December 30, 1894.

"It is no extravagance to say that the 'Trinity' service on Sunday has been for the last three years *the* event of the week to which I look forward with most pleasure, and I have seldom left the church without having a stronger sense of duty and higher aspirations after goodness stirred in my heart. One thing more I may tell you which I know you will care to hear: For about five years I had almost never prayed. It was not that God was entirely unreal, but only so abstract and far off and the answering of prayer in a universe of fixed law so impossible. The main influence of your sermons and services on me has been to discover to me that, notwithstanding these intellectual obstacles, there is possible a true communion with God for a rational man. And since I have had a little place of my own, each morning before I open my letters I spend a minute or two in God's presence—not exactly *praying* in the usual sense, but laying quietly before God my highest aspirations for the day's work—and am sure it is the best way to begin the day. . . ."

" April 1, 1895.

" . . . It is yesterday morning's splendid sermon that has made me resolve to write. As I walked home I wondered whether any man in this city had so grand a work as you—to wit, to utter those truths and to press them home, to which the better part of all men eagerly responds. It is surely the noblest of functions, and you do fulfil it nobly."

While many came to the church on account of Hunter's teaching, only a few withdrew. It included one well-known tradesman-merchant in the city. To an acquaintance who asked in the street why this gentleman had left Hunter laughingly replied: "I expect it was because I dispensed with the devil, and he felt it as a personal loss."

Outside his congregation good people spoke of him with genuine alarm and horror. In the case of young people, who had been brought up in orthodox congregations, the first visit to his church gave a sense of guilty daring that is more often produced by the first visit to a music-hall or some such place. The attitude of Dr. Andrew Bonar, one of the famous brothers and perhaps the

leading Evangelical minister in Glasgow then—a saintly man—was typical of many.

“When I had become convinced,” writes one of Dr. Bonar’s flock who had fallen away under Hunter’s influence,<sup>1</sup> “that I could no longer remain a member of the Free Church, having ceased to believe in its Calvinistic doctrines, I went to inform Dr. Bonar. . . . He was indeed deeply grieved by what he considered my lapse into heresy. After he had argued that just as there are fallen angels suffering the torments of Hell, so it should not be difficult to believe that there are men also there doomed to an eternity of punishment for their sins, we knelt down, and he prayed that I might be led in the right way. Mr. Hunter’s name had not been mentioned in our conversation, but just as I was going out of the door, Dr. Bonar laid his hand on my shoulder and asked: ‘Have you been attending Mr. Hunter’s church?’ ‘Yes,’ I replied. ‘Mr. Hunter,’ he said, ‘is leading people down to hell,’ and as he spoke these words his voice trembled with sorrow and indignation.”

Perhaps it was soon after that interview that Hunter found himself travelling to London in the same compartment as Dr. Bonar and his daughter. They knew one another, of course, and the daughter politely exchanged civilities—but the old man never a word or look.

Hunter was frequently attacked. But he gave as good as he got—his teaching seemed at this time aggressively anti-Calvinistic. His ecclesiastical position was strategic. Presbyteries might growl, ministers might warn their flocks to keep away from him, evangelists might denounce him as “a bloodless moralist,” but touch him they could not, silence him they could not. He was free and independent in the confidence of his congregation. His opponents had to meet him in open argument. For fifteen years he made the most of his position and exercised a stirring influence on Scottish religious life.

“I regard myself not as a minister of a particular body, but simply as a minister of Christ; and it is the large and lofty ends of the Holy Catholic Church of Christ which I seek to promote. . . . Our independency may have its disadvantages, but rightly conceived and used it affords, in the present distress and transition, a great opportunity for truly catholic worship, catholic teaching, catholic work. I hope to see before I die a Church of Scotland thoroughly comprehensive and catholic; but until the day of

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. J. M. Connell of Lewes. The quotation is from a memorial sermon.

such a Church dawns we must continue to stand where we can honestly and without compromise."<sup>1</sup>

In his Glasgow pulpit Hunter followed and developed the lines of work he had tried out in York and Hull. The same titles and courses reappear—though the sermons were nearly always written afresh. His monthly Sunday evening sermons to young men and women became famous throughout the West of Scotland; and his frequent addresses on the religious teaching of the great poets and writers attracted both by their novelty and intrinsic worth. Through his sermons he guided the reading of many, not only on religious subjects, but in the wider fields of literature, and helped them to appreciate the poetry of Browning and Tennyson, Goethe, Shakespeare and Dante, and the works of Carlyle and Ruskin, Kingsley and Emerson, and his own religious teachers. This influence was carried further in Bible and other classes that he held, and was reflected in the church's Literary Institute, which had a vigorous life for many years. Hunter valued it and encouraged it.

"Anything that raises the tone of thought of our young people and inspires them with a liking for serious reading and thinking and wider culture, will be felt for good in the entire life of the Church. Religion ought to cover and consecrate the whole of life. So long as the greatest things are kept first, in our regard and effort, we may advantageously cultivate intellectual and social interests. A true Church will be an educator and helper of the whole man and the whole life."

For its public lectures Hunter secured the services of distinguished acquaintances and friends like Max Müller, Stopford Brooke, George Macdonald, who lectured once or twice annually for several years, the Cairds, A. C. Bradley, and three professors who belonged to the congregation, Henry Jones, Smart, Young, and other members of the University. He lectured frequently himself. Looking through old programmes, the eye is constantly being attracted by the names of Ruskin, Emerson, Browning, Ibsen, and Industrial and Social topics as the subjects of papers and discussions.

Hunter's social teaching was equally a novelty and a power, that echoed even in the council and committee chambers of the

<sup>1</sup> February, 1893; cf. Dr. Macmillan in 1913. "His brotherly spirit and breadth of mind, which enabled him to bridge all ecclesiastical differences, made him a favourite among his fellow-ministers of all denominations."

municipality—though he never sat either on councils or committees. Party politics he never touched. At first, however, his influence was confined to his own congregation. Since 1875 the church had supported a “Home Mission” in Partick, which used to be worked on old-fashioned and narrow lines. In 1889 it was reformed at his suggestion on the Toynbee model—and a new missionary appointed. It attracted many of the men and women who had come to the church, and became an effective institution and a pioneer of the type of social and religious institute that is common to-day.

Hunter was not a “social worker”—he did not pretend to be. And he was not afraid to ask and encourage others to do a difficult work that he did not attempt to do himself. One of them writes:—

“I feel sure that many of the hardest social workers in our great city owe much indebtedness to Dr. Hunter for such strength and courage as they have been able to put into their difficult work. . . . Although he never posed as a social worker himself, he inspired many men and women to offer themselves, and all over the country one comes across those who gladly own that it was the Sunday evening services in Trinity which in their student days influenced them to take up this work.”

He held strong views on civic affairs and on the duties of citizens. They were subjects on which he frequently spoke and preached. He thought, too, that churches ought to work not chiefly for their own small circle, but for the community at large. At the beginning of 1890 he advanced the proposal that the church should equip and support a Convalescent Home for children in the country, in connection with the Glasgow Hospital for Sick Children. Through the generosity of the congregation, a sale of work and the energy of his wife, who acted as secretary for the first few years, the plan quickly took shape. A house was rented at Eaglesham which would accommodate about ten children and the necessary staff. The authorities of the Sick Children’s Hospital had medical control, and a management committee of ladies and gentlemen appointed by the church had the entire management of the domestic arrangements. The patients were admitted from, or at least through, the Hospital, a prior claim being given to children connected with the church’s mission in Partick. Children were not sent for any fixed period, but were kept until they had really benefited. The income was provided by annual subscriptions,

and in course of years, out of the annual balance, a substantial reserve was accumulated. The house at Eaglesham proved inconvenient, and, in 1898, with the proceeds of another bazaar, a cottage-house was bought at Ravenscraig, on the line from Glasgow to Wemyss Bay. Here twelve children or more could be accommodated. The following year the Committee of the "Lewis Carroll" Memorial Fund in Glasgow, of which Hunter was the Chairman, offered the Home the surplus of their funds on condition that a cot should be named the "Alice-in-Wonderland Cot." "The Home" was an interest very dear to him. For that reason, and for its own fresh appeal, it has never wanted the generous support of the congregation.

Hunter was fond of children, though too shy ever to be at his ease with a crowd of them—to be "a children's man." He was concerned for their welfare in the church. For many years he took a monthly children's service himself, and always the annual Flower service and a "Toy" service on the Sunday after Christmas.

"Do you remember how he used to look at the children at those Toy services and pat their faces and heads? I think it was Mrs. Woolnoth who said, 'I go to the services just to watch the doctor's face as he takes their little gifts; it is better than many sermons.' And yet I do not think he was at home with a lot of children. His love for them was mingled with a kind of awe and reverence. Something of the same kind was his care for animals. I remember him telling me once that he had done a thing that he had never done before—killed wasps because his children were afraid of them; and another time he spoke of a rabbit that they had had and now had died—such a little thing most people would have thought, and yet it seemed to have grieved and hurt him."

He had not the gift of addressing children, so assiduously cultivated by ministers nowadays, though his addresses to them were beautiful and simple—they were directed to the older children. Two addresses, one on "No," the other on "Beauty," were published for the Stockport Sunday School Association in 1896. He never gave special talks to the children at the regular services, though he urged parents to bring their children to them;—"It is good for them to be brought up in the atmosphere of a worshipful church." He also urged parents, with constant reiteration, to take seriously the religious training of their children, and to preserve the religion of the home. He gave them all the help he

could, and was frequently recommending books. He abhorred catechisms and any attempt to teach children dogmatically. His instincts were in the direction of the modern graded methods. When boys and girls reached sixteen or so, he was insistent that they should attend his young communicants' class, preparatory to joining the church. He held the classes twice yearly and gave much thought to them; usually concluding the series with a solemn little service beside the Communion rails in the church. Unfortunately he lost, in 1909, the small volume of notes that he had gradually compiled.

In addition to preaching, his chief preoccupation was public worship. "All my heart," he said, in 1891, "goes in the direction of vivifying and enriching the service, and of making it more attractive and helpful in all sincere and simple ways. The supreme object of religion as an institution is to develop religion as a life."

In 1889 he prepared a Hymn-book for his congregation, and in 1895 he published a new edition of it, which was a careful revision, arranged on the basis of the Christian Year and greatly enlarged.

"In preparing this book I have carefully tried to avoid hymns written to express scholastic and sectarian interpretations of the Christian facts and truths. The hymns most suitable for common worship are those which give expression to the fundamental experiences and persuasions of the soul, and to the largest and simplest aspects of Christian faith and life; whose statements are so undogmatic and comprehensive that they are not restricted by private interpretation, but may be sung by the devout and thoughtful without any strain to the mind and conscience. I have also sought to avoid hymns unreal, exaggerated, and sensuous in their sentiment and language.

"... The Christian conception of the Kingdom of God, as existing now and here, and of the essential divineness of the present life, has determined the selection of many hymns."<sup>1</sup>

Its adequacy to its purpose provoked violent criticism. Hunter was a lover of tradition, but not its slave. He preferred old forms and words, but only if they were true and therefore fitted to the needs of the present generation.

"Everything in a hymn-book has to be made subservient to its congregational use. A hymn, as it appears in a church hymnal,

<sup>1</sup> Preface to First Edition.



is not a poem to be privately read, but an utterance put on the lips of a general congregation as an expression of devout thought and feeling, in direct address to God. Is it reasonable that the worship of the Church of Christ should be deprived of the use of a good hymn because of a line or two that might be altered without detriment? Indeed, the best form of many popular hymns is not their original form. Against useless and foolish alterations we cannot too strongly protest, but fanatical purism is not the true alternative to wanton emendation. Each case ought to be judged on its merits. . . .”

He edited more freely than was justifiable according to literary canons. When the second edition was in the press his publishers urged him to include a list of all alterations and omissions. He refused, as he thought it would distract people in the devotional use of the book.

The collection introduced to more orthodox circles the work of a group of American hymn-writers who wrote some of the best hymns of last century—F. L. Hosmer, Samuel Longfellow, W. C. Gannett, and the Quaker poet, Whittier. It drew largely from the lesser poets of the nineteenth century—Jean Ingelow, George Macdonald, Stopford Brooke. It also contained several anonymous hymns and canticles by himself. Compared with existing hymn-books it was rich in hymns on the social aspects of religion. He was the first to sponsor not a few hymns which have since become popular, e.g. J. A. Symonds' lines beginning, “These things shall be! A loftier race.” It also contained a selection of metrical canticles from modern sources, and the Psalter and other Biblical lyrics, arranged according to the days of the month, selected and expurgated.

In 1886 he prepared a third edition of his service-book—*Devotional Services for Public Worship*. It was considerably larger than the first slim volume. During the next fifteen years he prepared several further editions, each one nearly double the size of the previous edition. Finally, in 1901, he entirely recast the book and revised it. The edition of 1882 contained 28 pages; the edition of 1901, which represents the final form, contained 327 pages, similar in size. When the first edition appeared there was nothing like it of its quality. It was a forerunner, an experiment. The subsequent revisions were the results of his own experience in his church and were made partly in order to improve its worship. The unflinching pursuit of an ideal that

characterised all his work, made him dissatisfied with each edition—until perhaps the last.

“I wish you and your sisters,” he writes to a friend in 1893, “to accept one of the books for whose publication I am personally responsible. I send you the *new* edition of my ‘Devotional Services’—a book which I love very much, and in the preparation of which I have spent many sacred hours. It is not quite perfect yet, but I hope some day it will be as perfect as a work of that kind can be.”

These books were part of a larger propaganda that he was carrying on vigorously to raise the standard of public worship in all the churches. It was not merely in favour of a liturgy that he pleaded, but, more broadly, that greater care and thought should be given to the culture of the devout life, and to the conduct of public worship, and that more value should be set on a reverent and devotional atmosphere in churches. In 1893, at the instance of some fellow-ministers, he promoted a Congregational Church Service Society, of which the objects were to be “to promote the regular and systematic culture of the devout life, the revival of worship and reverent observance of Christian ordinances in families and congregations of Christ’s Church.” For some years he acted as secretary. At meetings of ministers and other conferences, public worship became almost exclusively the topic of his addresses. When he was elected Chairman of the Scottish Congregational Union, in 1895, he made it the subject of his address.

His campaign naturally aroused opposition in various quarters, and the first edition of *Hymns of Faith and Life*, in particular, provoked attacks in the denominational Press. When he was visiting Mansfield College, in 1893, he preached on the subject at an informal evening service for the students, and his friend, Fairbairn, rounded on him in the vestry at its close—a hasty criticism so out of place that he felt that he had chosen his subject wisely.

But his most effective propaganda was the atmosphere of his own church and the way in which he conducted its worship.<sup>1</sup> With the change from England to Scotland, Hunter seems to have missed the background of catholic and liturgical devotion.

<sup>1</sup> In 1892 he gained a sympathetic collaborator when Mr. Ben Sykes became organist and choirmaster. Mr. Sykes previously had been organist in Mr. Stannard’s church at Huddersfield. He continued as organist throughout Hunter’s ministry.

Very shortly after he went North he began to observe in his church the festivals of the Christian Year and the seasons of Advent and Lent. In 1890 he held daily services in Holy Week. These were practices unknown in Scotland, outside the episcopal churches. He continued them throughout his ministry. In his first year in Glasgow, Trinity Church was one of the few, if not the only non-episcopal church, where Christmas Day and Good Friday and All Saints' Day were observed; when he retired, twenty-five years later, Christmas Day was observed in many of the churches.<sup>1</sup>

He had also been cherishing the idea of a daily Service of Worship, but did not see his way to carry it out until 1895, when his deacons gave him permission to appoint an assistant.<sup>2</sup>

"I have advocated for many years the opening of at least one church in every neighbourhood for daily worship. We live in these days anxious and busy lives, and, therefore, even more than our fathers, do we need quiet resting-places and quiet moments of thought and prayer in the midst of the care and strife. Private prayer and family prayer ought not to be neglected, but they cannot be a substitute for the public worship of the Church of Christ, and its witness for the invisible and eternal realities of life. The daily service was a universal custom of the Christian Church for centuries, and it was honoured and observed, more or less, by the Reformed Church of Scotland for wellnigh one hundred years. The old paths, in this matter at least, are good paths, and the paths in which the best progress can be made."

The Service was continued for two years. But when he was again without an assistant he found that it was too constant a tie; moreover the results were not very encouraging.

In 1893 the interior of the church was greatly improved. The central pulpit was removed, and in its place was substituted the present arrangement of prayer-desk and lectern and side-pulpit and wooden screen—in the centre of the screen was a large, simple cross in gold embroidery.

The following year he started a *Monthly Calendar*, which his friends will always associate with his ministry, for into its four octavo pages he put much of his personality. Unlike the typical

<sup>1</sup> "The tendency in Scotland until recently was to exalt the sermon unduly, to forget that preaching is not worship. For the strength of the reaction Dr. Hunter deserves much of the credit. More than any of his brethren he has been known these fifteen years as the minister's minister, and his example has influenced many a service remote from Glasgow."—A writer in a Glasgow paper in 1901,

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. David S. Hird, B.A., a student of Mansfield College, Oxford: now in New Zealand.

church calendar or magazine it was printed in good style on art paper, with an illuminated head-piece. The front page contained a list of the services with—usually—the subjects of his sermons; the inside pages, the minister's letter or intimations and notices of the several departments of church work; and the last page a selection of "thoughts for quiet moments," which were a truly catholic excerpt from the wisdom of humanity. He chose them carefully and with reference to the subjects on the first page or the season of the year. His monthly letter was more often than not concerned with public worship, and the whole was intended to help in the culture of the devotional life. The *Calendar* was a means whereby he kept in touch with old friends, and he used to post a small pile every month. Like everything he did, it was done thoroughly. Sometimes he grudged the time that it took and the extra strain involved in announcing the subjects of his sermons in advance, but he received plenty of evidence that it was appreciated—at least by those to whom he sent it personally.<sup>1</sup>

He concentrated on his church and his preaching. His influence on civic life was primarily through his pulpit. He preached and lectured in the city and country—more often perhaps in England than Scotland. His raids on England were *tours-de-force*—five, eight, ten days of incessant speaking and travelling. A preacher needs the occasional stimulus of a fresh audience, but Hunter was not able to be away often on a Sunday, for if he were the church was empty.

He had a large following among the students. They appreciated his manliness and freedom from cant as well as his message. He always had a great ovation from them at University ceremonies. In 1893, the Senate, at the suggestion of Principal Caird, conferred on him the degree of D.D. "Although not an alumnus of this University, he has by his work in its vicinity, his eminence as a preacher, and his special services from time to time for the students in this Bute Hall, acquired a just title to be associated with its honours."<sup>2</sup> He was, after John Caird, "the students' preacher," as Principal Story once said at a dinner. In 1894 he was elected President of the Theological Society of the University, the first minister who was not a member of the Church of Scotland to be so elected. The subject of his presidential address was "A Plea for a

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes from unexpected sources. Cf. *infra*, chap. ix., p. 188.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Dickson, at the ceremony.

Comprehensive Church." When he left Glasgow in 1901, Dr. Hastie, who was then Professor of Divinity, wrote to him :

"From the first you inspired me with the most kindly confidence and regard, and I shall miss your kind face and ever cordial greeting as I ramble around the University. And the whole University will miss you. You created a special relation of your own to our Academic life and work. The students, I know, have testified to it very warmly. You did for them what none of us *now* do, or can do : you really taught them the highest things from your own pulpit, and occasionally in the Bute Hall, where you were always most appreciatively listened to. Our Divinity Students got more than teaching ; you taught many of them how to teach others as you taught them. This, and much more, you did for us, and surely, it becomes us to be grateful for it, and to wish that we had made even better use of it. Surely the good of it will remain among us when you are away."

He was not regarded quite so favourably by the authorities of the Free Church College ; some of its professors at one time used to warn their students against the baleful influences of the church in the street below. They went, nevertheless. One of the more distinguished of them wrote to him in 1901: <sup>1</sup>

"I am a Free Churchman, but I spent many profitable Sunday evenings in Trinity Congregational Church when I was a student in the Free Church College. Often I was much impressed and helped there, and those evenings have been to me a gracious and helpful memory. . . ."

Through successive generations of theological students his influence on the Scottish Churches was pervasive, and of a kind that cannot be measured.

As a pastor he was unconventional. The characteristic vocative in his sermons, "men and women," in place of the conventional "dear brethren," was symbolic of all his relations with his people. He did not visit systematically—even if he had wished to do so it would hardly have been possible, for his congregation came from all parts of the city. But he was punctilious, whenever he was informed, to visit those who were in any kind of trouble. He also was at pains—and it came hardly to a shy man without any small talk—to get to know his people.

"I was pleased to meet with so many at our first 'At Home.' I hope that we all, young and old, will do what we can to make

<sup>1</sup> Professor J. E. McFadyen, now Professor of Hebrew at the College ; then on the staff of Knox College, Toronto.

these gatherings successful in the best sense. They who worship God together and gather from time to time round the Communion Table, ought to feel that they are brethren all. The affection and sympathies which Christ inspires ought to be strong enough to break down the barriers of worldly reserve and pride."

One winter he held monthly "At Homes" in the Hall of the church, to which the congregation was invited in sections, and another winter in his own house. "I can see him standing by a pillar looking very embarrassed, darting forward to speak to someone that he knew, and then back to the pillar when the conversation lapsed."

He gave a great deal of time, often at the end of a Sunday when he was dead-tired, to people who came to talk to him. He never hurried them away—he could not. He did not say very much, but he listened patiently and sympathetically.

"I remember how nice—I cannot get a better word—he was when I, a frightened and very young person, came to him about joining the church. He made me feel as if my views and opinions might be quite as important as his own. One felt as if one could say anything. I am sure that his kindness must often have been taken advantage of by people with all sorts of doubts and worries. Indeed, I know one or two who, from what they have said, must have had hours and hours of his time—that was one of the big sides of his pastoral work, and of a kind of which one almost never hears."

When he did "visit," he rarely took the initiative in conversation, and so had to listen patiently to unending tales of minor domestic worries and such-like.<sup>1</sup> But he appreciated kindness, even when draped so tediously.

"Miss A—— told me that when he first came to see her he had to be 'received' in the kitchen, and she and her sister were very much perturbed. But he was not two minutes in the house before they had forgotten it was the kitchen and that he was the great Dr. Hunter, and they were telling him all their troubles. I think most poor people felt the same. He was not critical of people or their surroundings in the ordinary way."

He had an overflowing sympathy—it was one of the secrets of his power as a preacher. His humour and strong moral sense never allowed it to become weak or maudlin.

<sup>1</sup> He suffered from the same disability that Scott Holland confessed to—"Nothing will enable me to 'lead a conversation' naturally in any fixed direction . . . if nobody is inclined to 'talk big,' I cannot, however much I wish, bring it on."  
*Henry Scott Holland: A Memoir by Stephen Paget, 1921, p. 71.*

“ I have heard more than one say, ‘ You need to be in trouble before you really know Dr. Hunter.’ It is strange how little there is to record of his pastoral work. Probably because he went when and where he was needed, and people do not say much of these times. And even then he said little—he did not need to. As one old lady who had lost her only son said, ‘ Just the grip of his hand and the look in his eyes was enough.’ My friend, Miss Allan of Cambridge, once remarked, ‘ Did you ever notice Dr. Hunter’s eyes ? They are the kindest I have ever seen.’ ”<sup>1</sup>

So it was through life—what he could not express in words, he expressed by look and touch. He was conscious, at times painfully conscious, of how little he could do as a pastor, and how much he had to leave undone. Yet he did more than he knew. No pastor can have been more loved.

Deep in the general heart of man  
His power survives.

The ten years from 1887-97 were very happy. He enjoyed good health, except for a severe attack of typhoid fever, the autumn after he came to Glasgow, which kept him from his work for five months.<sup>2</sup> He worked tremendously hard, but he liked work ; and it was labour well rewarded.

“ Even when all the relationships and surroundings are of the most pleasant character, the life of one who seeks to be ‘ a good minister of Jesus Christ ’ is far from being an easy one. Its difficulties are peculiar, and the constant strain of it falls upon that part of a man’s nature which is most keenly sensitive, involving at times extreme mental and spiritual fatigue and exhaustion. And although the work in which I am engaged carries with it an exceeding great reward, it is, nevertheless, a rich and unfailing source of inspiration and comfort to have those around one who recognise and appreciate his aspirations and strivings, and who will not allow these to be obscured by any real or imaginary defect or fault. . . . It is a joy beyond all price to be told that my teaching is helpful, and stands the test of hours of critical strain and trial ; that the Sunday services impart an inspiration which abides through the busy and troubled week, and that they are treasured as dear and sacred memories by those who leave us for other parts of the country and far-away lands. To do work for God and my fellows which shall be real and enduring is the one supreme desire of my heart.”

<sup>1</sup> These and some of the previous quotations are from notes by Miss M. Macleod now Warden of the Diocesan Hostel for Women, Charlton, Manchester.

<sup>2</sup> He aggravated his condition by preaching three times on the Sunday when the fever was on him. A doctor in his evening congregation, seeing he was unwell, went down to the vestry afterwards and found that his temperature was over 103°.

He was happy, too, in his home and his friendships. He lived in University Gardens, which is, as the name suggests, under the shadow of the University. When he had to leave this house, in 1895, he moved into a new house opposite, built by Mr. J. J. Burnet. Here he had a delightful study. From its windows, on a clear day, he looked across the University playing fields to the Renfrewshire Hills on the horizon.

He made many good friends outside and inside his congregation. The friendship of Principal Caird he acknowledged in his lecture on him.

“It was my privilege for fifteen years to live in the intellectual and moral atmosphere which was created for a community by the presence and influence of Dr. Caird. He was Glasgow’s greatest citizen. We felt it to be an honour and a joy to live in the same city with him, to see him in the street, to be familiar with his figure and the cadences of his voice, to speak to him and to hear him speak. To many he was identified with their best hours. He was an element in their personal life and an influence in their moral and religious development. They felt it good to listen to him. The triviality and the pettiness, the narrowness and meanness of life vanished and were forgotten as they sat under the spell of his wonderful preaching. He was the friend and helper of their highest life. And because of this neighbourhood and relationship to him some of us still feel that any merely critical analysis of his mind and work would be like botanising on a mother’s grave. Personally I owe him a debt of gratitude, which I must always gratefully acknowledge. My intercourse with him I regard as one of the happiest fortunes of my life. He was ready to preach for me whenever I asked him, and the last public service which he rendered outside the University, of which he was the distinguished Principal, was a week-day lecture to the young men and women of my congregation.”

After the Principal’s death he kept in touch with Mrs. Caird, sending her any reports or references he had made to her husband.

Professor A. B. Bruce, of the Free Church College, was another for whose work he had a great regard and with whom he was very friendly. Professor Bruce introduced himself to Hunter in 1889 by sending him a copy of *The Life of William Denny*, and a letter in which he said: “My esteem for you as an earnest preacher of the Christianity of Christ prompts me to ask your kind acceptance of a copy of *The Life of William Denny of Dumbarton*—a like-minded man. . . . I know you will say Amen to many of



his most characteristic utterances." Hunter saw much of Bruce in his last years. At the time of Bruce's death in 1899 he wrote :

"Naturally I am perhaps more reserved than most men, yet there never was a man among the great men of the Church whom I could so easily approach and converse with so freely ; and I never met any distinguished divine who was more fearlessly frank in saying what he thought, even on the most difficult and delicate problems. His published utterances do not mislead on the ground of ambiguity, and his statements in private conversation were still less open to doubtful meaning."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Adamson, the professor of logic, was another acquaintance. It was a family friendship. He was an agnostic, but he showed his breadth of mind and his regard for Hunter's intellectual sincerity by sending his family to Trinity Church.<sup>2</sup>

Sir James Marwick, the Town Clerk, was perhaps the man in whom Hunter confided most. Sir James presided at his recognition meeting and at his farewell. He was a faithful and wise supporter, and when in difficulty Hunter always turned to him for advice—and valued his poise of mind and cautious wisdom. Sir James was a Tory—the finest type of a school that is dying out. He was scrupulously upright, moved to wrath at any touch of duplicity, acutely sensible to the responsibilities of office. The friendship was indeed remarkable, for temperamentally they were very different—its bond was sincerity. More than once strained by differences of opinion in public matters, it stayed true and strong until Sir James' death in 1907.

But no friendship gained ever made up to Hunter the loss of Stannard. His sudden death in 1890—he was found drowned on the shore at Blackpool—just when Hunter was hoping to receive a visit from him, was a heart-break. "The only time I ever saw

<sup>1</sup> Hunter warmly rebutted the insinuation that Bruce wrote the article "Jesus" in the *Encyclopædia Biblica* in one of the times when he suffered "from a temporary eclipse." "The truth is that in the closing years of his life Bruce was more and more inclined to leave the whole miraculous question in the Gospel an open question, maintaining that matters disputed by specialists could not be an essential part of the Gospel of Christ and ought not to be identified with the essence of His religion."

<sup>2</sup> Professor Adamson wrote to him in Dec., 1900, after he had decided to stay on in Glasgow : "I am not going to re-echo the expressions of satisfaction you must be hearing from all who are concerned in the welfare of our city, tho' I am in fullest accord with them. But I must express my strong personal sense of relief from so serious a loss as your departure would have meant. I was particularly gratified by your reference to the students' petition to you. It may be natural prejudice on my part, but I think that of all the important lines of your work, none has more far-reaching consequences than the exercise of intellectual and moral influence on the younger minds of the coming generation. I know how deep and widespread is the feeling regarding you among our students, and on that account I should have deemed your departure an irreparable loss."

Hunter white and at all distressed was at Stannard's funeral; but he never lost command of himself and took it finely. He always had a wonderful hold of himself—and it showed whenever he had to preach an In Memoriam sermon."<sup>1</sup> Hunter prepared a memorial volume of his friend's sermons, together with a number of appreciations.<sup>2</sup> It is prefaced by a memoir which is a model of its kind.

The friendships of later life never have quite the intimacy of college friendships. And Stannard was more than a college friend. He was the one man with whom Hunter, breaking through his reserve, was able to share his inmost thoughts. They were absolutely at one. His death was a tragedy, leaving a wound that never was healed. Hunter was too absorbed by his work ever to develop a later acquaintanceship into friendship of the same quality. He depended so much on the help of Stannard to draw him out, that when Stannard died it was as though part of his own personality had been lost with him. Consequently shyness and reserve grew upon him, and although he felt the want of such a friendship, he never was able to satisfy it. Naturally sociable and intensely human and real, he remained lonely.

In 1897 Hunter attained the semi-jubilee of his ministry. To mark the occasion his congregation presented him with an address and a purse of sovereigns, and granted him three months' leave of absence in order to visit the Holy Land—a long-cherished desire. In his reply he said that he was feeling deeply the need of such a break and pause in his work. Ever since he had commenced his ministry he had been working at full pressure; Glasgow, especially, had been inexorable in its demands upon him. The statement was the bare truth. He had been working furiously. Only the quiet of his home and his long summer holidays—usually spent in Switzerland—enabled him to carry on.

#### LETTERS, 1887-1897

*To Miss M. Macleod.*

“GRAND HOTEL DES ALPS, MURREN,  
“June 26, 1893.

“I send you a few Alpine flowers I gathered to-day at a height nearly 7000 feet above sea-level. It is surprising to find such a

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. J. Vickery.

<sup>2</sup> *The Divine Humanity and other Sermons of J. T. Stannard.* Maclehoose, 1892.

rich profusion of flowers in these uplands. But nearly all our common wild flowers may be found here, daisies, violets, buttercups, bluebells and forget-me-nots. I have found forget-me-nots even above the snow-line. The Alpine rose, which is only found high up among the mountains, I have enclosed in paper. They will, of course, all be withered before they reach you, but, perhaps, not beyond being recognised.

"I have been here a week to-morrow evening. This is my fifth visit to Murren. It is one of the places I like to revisit. The hotel itself is 5400 feet above the sea, and around it are all the great peaks of the Bernese Oberland—the Eiger, the Monch, the Wetterhorn, the Jungfrau, etc. The grandeur and loveliness are beyond description. I have had some glorious rambles. I am, perhaps, just a little too fond of solitude—but it is there I have ever found the deepest thoughts which are always tranquillising.

"On my way to Switzerland I travelled a day and a night with Mr. Barnett, vicar of St. Jude's, Whitechapel, and the founder of the Toynbee movement. I had some very interesting conversations with him. For an Anglican clergyman he is a very large-hearted and broad-minded man. He expects to be in Glasgow in November on a visit to Professor Edward Caird.

"I leave here on Thursday for Lucerne where I lecture on Friday and preach on Sunday evening. I am not sure of my movements after I leave Lucerne. I am thinking, as I told you, of having a look at a few of the Luther towns, Wittenberg, Eisenach, etc., also Dresden, Leipsic and Weimar—I may also have a few days' walking in the Hartz Mountains.

"How many of my books have you read? Tell me what you think of them! Read my little sketch of Mr. Stannard—the best friend ever a man had. I miss him everywhere. He and I have walked together among these mountains. They abide, but we change and vanish. The awful brevity of life oppresses me more and more. It is inexplicable if things begin and end here.

"I have had some thoughts of making the religion and theology of Robert Browning's poems the subject of study for my winter class. What do you think of it? Do you think I could interest a goodly number in it? Some of the poems—the poems I would take up—bring one face to face with the deepest questions of life and religion.

"Let me help you, if I can, in any and every way; and believe me ever to be your friend. . . ."

*To his Wife.*

"HOTEL CLERC, MARTIGNY,

"Monday night, *July 13, 1896.*

"I am staying at this hotel where we stayed so many years ago. I left Chamonix this morning at 8.15—and arrived here at 6.

I walked all the way. It was a lovely day, but very hot. At Argentière as I passed there was a funeral service in the church. I waited till it was over. The women were dressed in white veils. It was picturesque and pathetic.

"This is the eve of my birthday. How times goes! It will soon be all over for me. I could wish it back to live it better. I see many mistakes I have made. But things do not come twice.

"This place swarms with flies—and in the evening a black gnat peculiar to the Rhone Valley makes its appearance. They have been stinging me dreadfully since I sat down to write. They made two Americans swear at dinner.

"I went into the church here. I remember an afternoon service on the Sunday we returned from St. Bernard. The priests were singing a Gregorian Chant. . . ."

"SAAS-GRUND, *July 19.*

". . . I have been to church this morning and remained to the Communion. A good old man preached and said some very good things in a simple way. At the Communion I prayed for you and the children. I hope I may be a better husband and father in the days to come. . . . Even when I don't say much about it I get more easily depressed than formerly, and need blame less and encouragement more.

"I answered S——'s letter, and I think in a way you would have liked. I wrote it out twice. I simply said, I could not bring either the worship or the teaching down to the level of the general conception and taste; that a minister lived to serve the highest needs of the people, but not their private wishes and fancies; that it would be good for them if they allowed their minds to dwell on what helped and satisfied them in a service and not on mere details. I hinted at the end what you suggested—rather than have disputes I would prefer to make a fresh beginning, and also said that we must not stand still, that not to go backward we must go forward.

"I don't like Congregationalism—like it less and less. If it were not for you and the children I would enter the Church of England—even in middle life. Take it all in all it is the Church that satisfies me most. Congregationalism might do if one had large-minded, large-hearted people to deal with. . . .

"I shall never do anything rash; I pray every day to be guided and led, and that attitude of mind is at least the right one to cultivate. . . ."

"GLION, Sunday (Postmark 26.7.96).

"It was a wise Providence that directed me here for my last Sunday. . . . Last night was simply a perfect evening. The sunset was fine and the light lingered long on the water and on the

mountains. What a marvel of ideal colour the lake of Geneva is! I could hardly leave off looking at it to go to bed.

"This is also a perfect Sunday. Rose at 7 and went to Communion in the little English church here at 8. After breakfast went up (1¼ hour) to Les Avants, and attended service in the English church there. A clergyman from Bristol—a young man just recovering from rheumatic fever—officiated. He had to take a gentleman's arm to and from the vestry. It is a lovely spot. I hope we will come here soon. There must be water to get a view that really delights.

"I am going down to attend the afternoon service at Clarens and visit the cemetery<sup>1</sup> where we were together. At Vevey I remembered Stannard. We walked one night up and down the promenade on the shore. O Life! O death! . . ."<sup>2</sup>

*To the Editor of the "Independent"*<sup>3</sup>

*"November 7th, 1892.*

"I have only just seen the criticism of 'Cross-Bencher' on my modest contribution to the Conference at Bradford, on 'The Indwelling Spirit and the Living Christ.' It seems to me to be entirely wanting in true Christian courtesy to dismiss in the way he does the questions I ventured to put, as semi-Arian or Unitarian. That kind of labelling comes very near to libelling, and can only please an extreme section of your readers. It would also have been well if your contributor had done me the simple justice of stating to your readers what I did say before putting into circulation such a sweeping criticism. The advocates of 'higher life' ought not to be found tripping on the lower ground of the minor moralities.

"I was much interested in Mr. Peake's address, more especially in the experience of which it was the somewhat confused and confusing expression. At the close I asked in the interests of the Conference (as there is such a non-natural use of words in these days) if by communion with the living Christ the speaker meant the Christ who lived in the first century; and if that was to him a distinct and separate experience, I further wanted to know how he distinguished, say in prayer, communion with the living Christ from communion with Christ's God and Father. I soon discovered from the confusion of speech which followed that communion with the living Christ meant for those who could freely use the phrase a wide and conflicting variety of things. The explanation of one speaker took for granted a very tritheistic conception of the Trinity; a second said that to him God was Christ and Christ was

<sup>1</sup> He was fond of visiting this cemetery. It contains the graves of A. J. Scott, F. H. Amiel and Alexander Vinet.

<sup>2</sup> cp. Letter on p. 268.

<sup>3</sup> This letter, and a second one amplifying some of its points, brought him letters from ministers as far distant as New Zealand, thanking him for saying so candidly what they felt but had not dared to say.

God; a third understood by the living Christ the abstraction which he called the Christ-consciousness as distinct from the God-consciousness, and another spoke about the Divine Humanity that is in all men. One could wish that in such conferences words were used with some common understanding, and only words which express in the simplest, most natural, and direct way our beliefs and experiences. Some of us are terribly afraid of being understood. Obscurantism is in the air. It is words, not things, I have been long convinced, that are most often the cause of difference and division. The phrase 'communion with the living Christ' is getting to be the symbol of a party, and it is well, therefore, that it should have a clear and distinct interpretation. At the Bradford Conference Mr. Herbert Stead was the only speaker who met my questions frankly and naturally and in the way I wanted them answered—by a statement, simple and most impressive, of his own experience. The personal and special manifestation which Christ gave of Himself to Mr. Stead represents, I have no doubt, some real and profound experience in his private history, but it is an experience—at least, in the way he expressed it—of which I know absolutely nothing. On this subject, of course, I do not wish to dogmatise, only to testify. Ever since I can remember, God has been to me the one great reality of life. Too early, perhaps, for my own comfort and natural development, I came under the 'powers of the world to come.' When I was a lad of ten I was deeply moved by the religious revival that swept over the north of Scotland and Ireland in 1859 and 1860. I still have in me, I think, the best spiritual results of those early experiences, and of still later 'evangelical' experiences; but not at any time of my life have I been conscious of holding any communion with the living Christ as an experience separate and distinct from communion with the living God. In my most 'evangelical' days I never could pray to Christ, only to the Father in the name of Christ, as I do to-day. It also seems to me that the consciousness of Sonship to God—the filial consciousness—and not the 'direct communication of the soul with the Saviour' is the distinctive note of the Christian experience. Only I must add that more and more I believe the ways of the one Spirit to be manifold and often unsearchable."

#### ON "POLITICAL MEDDLESOMENESS" IN THE CHURCHES.<sup>1</sup>

*To the Editor of the "Independent"*

*"February, 1, 1892.*

"I hope I am as sound and earnest a believer in the Kingdom ruling over all, and in religion as the law and order of public as of

<sup>1</sup> This letter is the earliest statement of a critical attitude towards the Congregational Union which became increasingly strong as the years passed (cf. chaps. x. and xi.).

private life, as either you or Dr. Mackennal, but I differ from you both in some of your ways of working for the recognition and triumph of the Kingdom. Political partisanship in our denominational journals and Union meetings has done much to vulgarise our Congregationalism, to rob it of its religious influence, and to alienate from it many thoughtful and devout men. I fully appreciate the feeling which suggests such action as that to which you lend your support, but I most strongly deprecate certain of the forms which the feeling takes. In Yorkshire, I remember, before I left it, even a district meeting could hardly be allowed to pass without some one proposing a political resolution. I had occasion more than once to speak against the custom. I can also recall serious addresses whose political allusions evoked an enthusiasm which the wisest suggestions and proposals for the revival of religion failed to elicit. We have had, I am sure, by far too much of this political 'meddlesomeness.' Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule measure has had one beneficent result—by dividing our men of light and leading, it has made the platform of the Congregational Union much less political than it was some years ago. But the new socialism has also its temptations and snares. Ministers are just a little too eager to be social reformers, and to be known as such. We are in danger of developing the social and practical side of things to a mischievous extreme. And it will profit a Church or denomination just as little as it does a man, to gain the whole world and lose its own soul."

## ii. VISIT TO EGYPT AND THE HOLY LAND, 1897.

Hunter went on this journey in the spirit of the authentic pilgrim. It was—he made it—a great spiritual experience. He gathered what was most precious in every scene. His wife went with him, and two members of his congregation: Miss Louisa Maclehose, the sister of his friend, Mr. Robert Maclehose, the publisher, and Miss Scott. They left London on the 2nd of February, took ship at Marseilles for Alexandria, spent a month in Egypt, at Cairo and in sailing up the Nile as far as Assuân and the first cataract and back. They then crossed to Jaffa and spent ten days at Jerusalem, and then three weeks on horseback and in tents going through Galilee and Hermon to Damascus, from Damascus across the Lebanons to the coast at Beirut.

It is the one occasion on which Hunter kept even the semblance of diary. It is only a series of notes; but at times its brevity is revealing. He also kept a notebook, and shortly after he returned embodied his impressions in a couple of lectures.

"*Sunday, February 7.*—Sunday on the blue waters of the Mediterranean. A lovely day. A brief religious service on deck about 11 a.m. Hymns sung, 'Our God, our help in ages past,' and 'God moves in a mysterious way.' Prayer before dinner in cabin. Passed the island of Crete after dark, saw the lights some miles away. A quiet, enjoyable Sunday. Moonlight on the sea."

"All my life I had dreamed of Egypt, the oldest of historic lands, the creation of a mystical river flowing from the unknown, but I never fully believed in its existence on this planet till I saw the city which Alexander built rising out of the waves. And even now that I have seen it—I only half believe that it is real.

"Nothing like that first experience was to be expected later; yet Alexandria is not an Oriental city, but a kind of mongrel town. . . . But at first you do not discriminate nicely. It is the East you are seeing, it is the East which surrounds and pervades you and leads your senses captive. The world seems suddenly filled with a flood of colour. Everything is new and strange and fascinating. That first drive was an epoch in one's life—one of those experiences that come but once—that cannot be repeated."

"Of all the cities which I saw in the East, Cairo—the older part of the city—most perfectly fulfilled the dreams with which the *Arabian Nights* filled my imagination when I was a child. The whole of existence seems carried on in the street—all but the strictly domestic side where the visible melts behind latticed windows into vague shades of mystery and silence."

"*Wednesday, February 10.*—Spent to-day at the Pyramids of Gizeh. Climbed one of them. Saw the Sphinx. The whole like the realisation of a dream. The Sphinx staring right on with calm, eternal eyes. The Pyramids not interesting at close quarters on account of the bustle and noise of donkey and camel drivers and guides."

"One lesson for us from our contact with a land like Egypt is the lesson of reverence. At the Pyramids I caught sight of two or three Englishmen getting their photographs taken with the Sphinx for a background. Fancy putting one's petty personality up against that majestic monument. I thought I saw on the placid yet fascinating face of the Sphinx a shade of still more mysterious and sublime contempt as she saw at her venerable feet egotistical, self-asserting members of the youngest civilisation, and overheard the utterances of their supreme anxiety to carry away from that scene only the likeness of themselves. If mere antiquity can ever be venerable it is surely in Egypt. The monuments, whether from their age or their size, warn off the thoughtless touch. They symbolise a culture that may well make us modest with all our nineteenth-century achievement."

"It is an impressive sight when we first pass beyond the bounds of Christendom and see men worshipping God under a wholly



different name. We feel the real brotherhood which underlies our differences all the more strongly because forms have changed and nothing remains but the substance of religion, the simple relation of creature and creator."

He was impressed by the devotional side of Mohammedanism.

"The Mohammedan is his own priest. He finds his God everywhere, and he has only to turn towards Mecca and bow in prayer, and his field, his boat, the desert is as good an altar as the mosque. It is truly affecting to see the fidelity of the people to their faith—all through Egypt and Palestine—the apparent heedlessness of observation—the absorption in the prayers—the careful remembrance of their daily hours of devotion. Intelligent Mohammedans speak reverently of Christ—but they have seen or heard little of any Christianity which is much above their own faith.

"In a thoughtful conversation with a very intelligent, bright young Mohammedan—who held some office in one of the Cairo mosques—he said: 'We no idolaters as Christians are. We no worship Mohammed. We say Jesus, Moses, Abraham, Mohammed all good men sent from God, all prophets to tell us His will. God is Spirit—God cannot be seen, God cannot be an infant—God cannot hang on a Cross. We believe in one only God—you Christians ask us to believe in three Gods and a devil. We cannot do it.' To you and to me, of course, that is a caricature of Christianity—yet not a caricature of the kind of thing which is presented to Mohammedans as Christianity—by Greek, Latin, Coptic, Armenian, and many English Christians."

"*Saturday, February 13.*—The charm of Cairo is the combination of oriental life, unaltered in its essentials for two thousand years, with the civilised gaiety of Paris, and with the feeling of comfort and stability which cannot be had apart from a settled government.

"Started at 9 a.m. for journey up the Nile to first cataract. A glorious day. One feels like sailing not only into a country, but into the past of the world. 'Time, like an ever-rolling stream.'"

"*Sunday, February 14.*—Sunday on the Nile. A perfect morning. Conducted a simple service in the cabin with passengers. Enjoying the sail much. Thinking over my past days—of my mother and father and my brother Willie, and the friends of my youth and later years. God has been good to me. God bless and keep Maurice and Leslie. A lovely night. The moon and stars shining clear, and the yellow sands of the desert all around—like the land of mystery it is."

"There are certain sensations which we are accustomed to call elemental—so massive are they, overwhelming, never to be defined or analysed. One gets this unutterable feeling awakened by the ocean, by the Alps, by the greatest of Greek and Shake-

spearean tragedies—by certain majestic paintings and music, and one gets it also among the vast ruins of the temples of the Egypt of the far past. What a tiny ant crawling along the foot of a mountain a man feels himself, physically at least, as he enters the temple at Luxor (Thebes).”

“*Sunday, February 28.*—Luxor. Attended early communion at the English Church. Visited afterward the Coptic and Roman Catholic Church. Went to morning service at English Church. Walked two or three times round the ruins of the Luxor Temple. Left with steamer for Cairo about 6.”

He was greatly impressed by the island and ruins of Philæ, its beauty and its rich associations. “From Assuân we visited the beautiful island of Philæ—the Holy Island of the ancients. The donkey ride, by way of the desert, was fascinating. You come in time to love these brown old hills, as you do not love verdant places. The air is fresh, dry and pure—lighter than sea-air and more exhilarating. Suddenly from out the uniform yellows and browns—you come upon the green island of Philæ. No buildings out of Thebes give such a favourable impression of Egyptian art as the ruins of Philæ.”

“It is almost impossible to describe the fascination of a voyage of 1200 miles up and down the Nile—to Philæ and back to Cairo—but it lies in the experience, I think, that every day is an alternation between the enjoyment as one moves along of the exquisite effects of light and colour on the valley and hills and surrounding desert—with excursions to great objects of interest—the study of which bears witness to the universality of the religious instincts and sentiments, and shows that our Christian civilisation has its source not only in Palestine, and not only in Rome and Greece, but away far back in ancient Egypt.”

They went from Cairo to Port Said—through the “land of Goshen”—and from there took ship to Jaffa.

“*Friday, March 5.*—Arrived at Jaffa about seven this morning. The first view of the Holy Land and then the treading it for the first time—gave one unspeakable feelings. The impression it has made on me cannot be put in words. Went by coach to Jerusalem, instead of rail, and enjoyed it much. A lovely day. Passed Ramleh, Valley of Ajalon, Sharon, Mizpeh. Walked much. Then came to Jerusalem. Saw the Mount of Olives from roof of hotel.”

“I felt it to be a great moment of my life when my feet stood on the shores of the Holy Land. Holy Land indeed—for what soil is there that is hallowed by so many sacred associations as is Palestine? The dream of years had come true. The stillness and mystery, both of memory and expectation, come over one’s mind like a spell. To say all that one felt then and afterwards—at

Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives, at the Jordan, at Nazareth, and by the Sea of Galilee—is impossible. It would be like praying at street corners.

“After breakfast we set out for Jerusalem—not by rail, but by the old road—a distance of thirty-five miles. It was a lovely morning, which made everything look lovely. After passing through groves of oranges and olives and almonds we came out into a wide, open, fertile plain, the plain of Sharon, stretching away to the hills of Ephraim. It was, in that early spring-time, green with beautiful slopes, covered with barley and wheat and sprinkled with wild flowers—anemones of lovely crimson, scarlet and blue pimpernels, and many flowers new to me. The fertility and even the cultivation of this district surprised me. . . .

“I was quite unprepared for the wild and beautiful scenery between Ramleh and Jerusalem. After entering the mountain range of Judah the views are full of picturesque groupings. We had our afternoon tea, or rather coffee, near Kulonieh, which is thought by some to be the true Emmaus. . . . The route from here to Jerusalem lay directly and steadily up—over bare uplands and across stretches of moor with grey rock everywhere, so that the green seems nowhere. This latter part of the journey I was glad to be able to perform on foot—and in silence. Everywhere the associations keep the eye and mind stretched to the utmost.”

“Never shall I forget a quiet hour or more spent that evening on the flat roof of our hotel, which was just within the Jaffa Gate, near the citadel of David. It was a clear, calm, beautiful night—the sky full of stars and the moon touching with soft light tower and battlement. Over across the Valley of Hinnom, in distinct outline against the sky, stood the Mount of Olives, crowned by the high spire of the Greek Church—at the foot of it there I knew was the Kedron, the Valley of Gethsemane, the road to Bethany. All was peace; everything resolved into simple poetic suggestions, real at once and yet ideal. I felt for the hour all the passionate thanksgiving of the pilgrim of the far-back time of St. Jerome when first his feet stood on the soil of the Holy City . . . and could enter into the dream of the Crusaders.”

“Jerusalem is an old and a new city—an actual and an ideal city—a temporal and an eternal city. . . . It is pre-eminently the city of the heart—the city of deathless memories—the city of our sacred affections and prayers. It has been wept over with the tears of wondering love. The Crusaders, beholding it, fell upon the earth and sobbed. To-day Russian and other pilgrims, as they approach it, exclaim each in his own tongue, ‘The Holy City—the Holy City,’ and fall on their knees and pray. Our little theologies and systems have their day—and men’s thoughts of what happened long ago are changed and widened by the process

of the sun, but the heart of the best part of the world is still in Jerusalem."

"I know not of what creed could be the man whose eyes could rest with indifference on the Mosque of Omar (on the site of the ancient Temple), where for nearly forty centuries the prayers of men have ascended to the One God alone. . . . On visiting the Church of the Holy Sepulchre there is but one course for a man to take who has neither the wit of Mark Twain nor the superstitious reverence of a Russian peasant. He is there neither to praise nor to blame, but to understand. On starting out, therefore, for the Church of the Holy Sepulchre—which is believed to cover with its roof the centre of the earth—the grave of Adam—Calvary and the cave in which rested the body of Christ till the angel of the Resurrection rent the rock in sunder—I was determined to leave all my critical knowledge behind me—and to try to enter into the thoughts and feelings of the poor pilgrims that crowded the church, and through that exercise of the imaginative sympathy to learn what the ancient church had been to millions before them and to the myriads of Crusaders who consecrated their last drop of blood to the rescuing of these sacred places from the hand of the infidel."

Hunter accepted the Skull Hill outside the walls as the probable scene of the Crucifixion, and contrasts the way in which the traditional site was discovered by dreams and alleged miracles in the fourth century—and the discovery of the new site as the result of "thorough, patient, scholarly investigation, established by a clear chain of argument familiar to all students of archæology."

"*Sunday, March 7.*—Sunday in Jerusalem. Rose early and went to Holy Communion. After breakfast spent a quiet hour on Calvary—read the story of the Gospels and felt it all with new power. After lunch rode to Bethany. Walked most of the way. Crossed Olivet going and returning. The view in the distance of the Dead Sea and the Mountains of Moab very grand. Much impressed by this walk. A never-to-be-forgotten day."

"No place in Palestine, with the exception of Nazareth and the Lake of Galilee, attracted me more than Bethany. Twice I went over the hill to it—once climbing by the path on which David fled from Absalom, and returning by the road Christ followed on the first Palm Sunday. Bethany is now a poor little village clinging to the rocky hillside, with only one redeeming feature about it—the fine and far prospect. No place in all its natural features could be better fitted to receive and shelter the weary Christ, after His day's toil in excited and crowded Jerusalem, and to be the scene of the tenderest and the most purely human incidents in His life.

"From Bethany we returned on our first visit by the road

which Jesus took on the day when, beholding the city, He wept over it, trying to identify as we went the points of that memorable journey up to the crest where Jerusalem and the Temple broke upon the sight of the Lord, and whence the procession, coming round the curve of the hill, would have the full view of the city. He who rides or walks that way to-day has a grand prospect. One finds Jerusalem most poetic when seen from Olivet, and Olivet most lovely when seen from the distance of the city walls, or from the roof of our hotel on Mount Zion—where I saw it several times bathed in the light of the setting sun.”

“*Wednesday, March 10.*—On way back to Jerusalem visited the site of old Jericho and Elisha’s fountain. Much impressed by the thought that I was going over the ground of our Lord’s last journey from Jericho to Jerusalem. Spent part of the evening walking about Jerusalem.”

“We set out with our luncheon tent for a visit to the Dead Sea and the Jordan. During this ride one truly felt the presence of ages of history. Behind us were the ruins of old Jericho, and on our left was Gilgal, marked by a few trees. In sight, above the level line of the fascinating Moab Mountains, rose Mount Nebo and its grand solitary peak of Pisgah. I had read much about the gloom and desolation of the Dead Sea—my own impression was different. The water, deep blue in the sun, is as clear as any I have ever seen, and being open on three sides the bright surface is constantly ruffled by a breeze. In contradiction of its name, it will ever be a green, living memory in my mind. It is said no fish can survive in it, but there is no place like it for a swim. How it bore one up in its arms and annihilated the dignity of the law of gravitation! The more you weigh, the less you weigh. An elephant in the Dead Sea would feel himself a gazelle.”

“*Sunday, March 14.*—After breakfast had a four hours’ solitary stroll over Mount of Olives to Bethany. Lingered long on the way. Visited Gethsemane and the Skull Hill. A blessed time. In the afternoon revisited Mount of Olives with Marion. A beautiful view of the Dead Sea and the Mountains of Moab. Sorry to leave Jerusalem.”

“The certainty that somewhere near here Christ struggled with and conquered His own trembling, shrinking heart makes the whole mountain-side holy, and thus hallows the place which tradition has chosen for the garden of sorrow. I visited the place several times—and for a whole hour one Sunday morning had it all to myself. Here again I read the Gospel story of the Agony and the hymns on Gethsemane in our own book, and also some of the prayers for Passion Week.”

“Little that is very old remains (in Jerusalem)—except out of sight. The more indeed one looks into local traditions the more he distrusts them. And yet Jerusalem moved me infinitely more

than I expected it would. To tell the truth I had cared much less about seeing Jerusalem than about seeing the Mount of Olives, Bethany, Bethlehem, Nazareth and the Sea of Galilee. Jerusalem, I knew, had been destroyed several times since Christ's day, and in parts the ancient city lies seventy or eighty feet below the modern one. But looking at it from Olivet, from the Skull Hill, from the Bethlehem road, and from Scopus, one forgot everything except that this was the capital of David, the city in which the Temple stood, the city in which Christ Himself had kept the Hebrew festivals, in whose streets He had preached, where He had observed the Last Supper with His disciples, where He had been judged and condemned to die, the city just outside of which the Cross had been raised, and on whose walls and surrounding hills and vales His dying eyes gazed and closed.

"Mount Olivet remains essentially what it always was, and one can look down from it upon Jerusalem with an assured conviction that he stands upon ground which has felt the Master's own feet, and that his eye rests on general features which Jesus Himself often contemplated. One longs to get rid of the large churches and convents and mosques that mar the simple outline of the hills. Nevertheless—it is good to be there. The view from the summit is the most affecting and perfect I have ever seen—even as a panorama it is magnificent."

Of Bethlehem he wrote, "the pathetic and beautiful incidents of the Nativity all seemed monopolised for purposes of traffic and show. I was glad to get out of the town into the country roads again. There everything was lovely, poetic and suggestive."<sup>1</sup>

"*Monday, March 15*—Left Jerusalem for Galilee and Damascus. A lovely morning and day. The last view of Jerusalem from the hill Scopus very impressive. Passed Gibeah, where Saul was born, etc. Lunched at Bethel. Spent the night in tents at Sinjil, near Shiloh."

". . . Jacob's Well . . . where Jesus, thirsty from heat and weariness, met the woman of Samaria, and where He spoke the word on which Renan says the Edifice of Eternal Religion rests. How real and vivid the whole story became while we were sitting where He once sat. There has been a recent attempt to surround the well with a stone wall, but the wall remains unfinished. It seems only fitting that where our Lord uttered the great words—'The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father . . . but in spirit and in truth'—the attempt to build a holy place should fail."

"*Friday, March 19*.—A quiet day at Nazareth. Visited the hill above the town three times."

"Nazareth . . . possessing little interest in its modern struc-

<sup>1</sup> He inclined more readily to the hypothesis that the scene of the Nativity was at another Bethlehem near Nazareth.

tures, but of unspeakable attraction considered as the place where Jesus passed His childhood and youth, and as still exhibiting the natural features on which His eyes so constantly looked ; the place of all His first impressions and early recollections, where He saw all those aspects of a busy life which afterwards sprang up into a second and immortal life in His parables. It is still one of the few places in Palestine where one feels a little relieved of the burden of desolation which weighs upon one. In the course of the time we were there I spent several hours on the hills about the town and picked wild flowers. From one height of three or four hundred feet above the town the prospect is splendid. To the west are unfolded the beautiful lines of Carmel, terminating in an abrupt point which seems to plunge into the blue Mediterranean Sea. Through a depression between the mountains of Solam and Tabor are seen the valley of the Jordan and the distant hills of Gilead ; to the north Hermon stands, snow-capped. Such was the horizon of Jesus. This nature, at once smiling and grand, was not the whole education of Jesus, as Renan says, but it was certainly a part of it. Everything here invited concentration and meditation. About the only trustworthy sacred place in Nazareth is the well. To this well it is in every way possible that our Lord, when He was a child, may have come morning after morning and evening after evening with Mary His mother to draw water."

"The Mount of the Beatitudes . . . sitting here in quiet contemplation, opening your soul to all the gracious influences around, the Sermon on the Mount is explained to you as no commentator can. It was from here I got my first view of the Lake of Galilee, lying in the distance more than three thousand feet below. It moved me, I think, even more than the first sight of Jerusalem. Apart from all sacred associations there is something wonderfully striking and supremely beautiful in this little inland sea, so deep among the hills, so still and silent, like a shining mirror set in a framework of purple mountains. Down by the western shore of that lovely sheet of water Jesus spent the years of His manhood. It was the country He loved the most ; every step taken in it becomes an emotion—an illumination. What waters in all the world can inspire thoughts and reflections more absorbing or profound than this lake, not longer or much wider than Windermere ?"

"*Sunday, March 21.*—

O Sabbath rest by Galilee,  
O calm of hills above  
Where Jesus knelt to share with thee  
The silence of Eternity  
Interpreted by love.

"Spent this Sunday morning in reading the Gospels on the beach of the Sea of Galilee. A great privilege, for which I ought to be grateful. Bathed in the sea. Preached in the afternoon at the

Mission of the Free Church of Scotland at Tiberias ; subject, ' Sir, we would see Jesus.' "

" It is not difficult from these surroundings to reproduce in imagination the striking scenes in the life of Jesus and to feel at least, if not to understand, the poetry of the Gospel. The lake seemed to me to have more of the awe of Christ's presence than Jerusalem. The very desolation deepened the solemnity and left the mind more completely alone with Him."

Damascus, Baalbec, Smyrna, Constantinople, Athens, Rome, Florence, Lugano—the remainder of the route home—seemed only a *diminuendo* after Galilee. They got back to Glasgow on May 6th. He wrote to his congregation from Athens :

✠ " *April 16.*—You will see from this brief letter that I have reached Athens on my homeward journey. The time of my absence may have appeared long to some of you, but it has passed only too quickly amid scenes, the memory of which will form an abiding part of the wonder and joy of one's life. It is little that even the most prepared mind can receive in a month of the impressions of Egypt—that land of mystery and mirage ; and at the end of four or five weeks among the places which suggested the psalms and parables, and witnessed the healing grace of Christ, one is only beginning to understand as never before the poetry of our sacred literature and religion. But brief and hurried visits and views may suffice to produce those impressions on the imagination and heart which make the great hours of life ; and I am grateful, therefore, to you for this break in my work which, I believe, will not be without its good effect on my ministry in days to come. It is commonly assumed that the Holy Land must necessarily disappoint cherished dreams and expectations ; I can only say that it has not disappointed mine. Again and again, on the Mount of Olives, on the hill above Nazareth, with its magnificent view, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, on the slopes of Hermon, and at other points of the journey, did I feel surprise when I recalled the word ' disillusion,' which I have often heard ministerial and other friends use when speaking of their visit to Palestine. But, of course, much depends on what the traveller expects. I found abundant evidence everywhere to show that in olden days the country deserved, and when delivered from Turkish rule, might deserve again the glowing praise of the Hebrew poets. What really does sadden one, especially in Jerusalem, is the way the beautiful and pathetic incidents of the story of the Divine Charity and Sorrow in the Gospel have been vulgarised and degraded to serve sectarian and selfish interests and ends. Still, mountain, valley, and plain ; lake, river, and sea, may be so seen to-day as to make the old impressions of the land of Jesus finer and dearer than ever."



## iii. 1897-1901.

Two or three weeks after his return from the East, Hunter received a presentation of a numbered edition of the works of Meredith, and a writing-table from the younger members of his congregation with the following letter :

“ During your absence in the East it occurred to some of us that your return might be a fitting opportunity to give, in some small way, particular expression to the special indebtedness which many young men and women in Glasgow feel toward your preaching.

“ We are attracted by the wide knowledge and sympathy, the recognition of all good thought and effort, the absence of priestly assumption and churchly exclusiveness, which are distinctive notes of your teaching. We admire your freedom from the trammels of creed and ecclesiastical organisation, and the consequent freedom of speech and thought which you rightly claim and exercise. But beyond and above these things there are many of us who recognise that there is in our city no preaching so helpful, and no church service so catholic and worshipful as the preaching and services of Trinity Congregational Church.

“ Your splendid work, so faithfully done, has made us your debtors for all time in many ways. Your sermons have been—beyond any others which we have heard—at once a recurring intellectual feast, a moral stimulus, a spiritual inspiration. Some of us you have helped to think on new and broader lines ; to some your words have given fortitude to work and to endure ; in others you have inspired something of your own deep faith in God and the unseen world. Nor can we fail to testify that the solemn Trinity service—always beautiful in its harmonious unity, and singular among church services for its reverent catholicity—has often in our experience helped to subdue worldly tempers and ambitions, to quicken our aspirations, and to strengthen our hearts.

“ We all owe to your ministry a great and various debt, and our little gift is simply meant as an acknowledgment of what we cannot repay. We have thought it would best accord with your own liking that the acknowledgment should be made as quietly and privately as possible. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

He replied :

GLASGOW, *May*, 1897.

*To Mr. J. Farquhar Macrae, M.B., C.M.*

“ I am far from realising my ideal of what a Christian church and a Christian ministry ought to be, but I am cheered to know

<sup>1</sup> The letter was signed on behalf of the subscribers by Mr. Farquhar Macrae, who has since made a name as a surgeon.

that my endeavours toward this end have not been wholly unsuccessful.

“There are times when it is wise and good to throw off our common reserves and to have the courage of our feelings. I am especially grateful to the young men and women whom you represent that they have chosen this period in my public life to let me know a little of what they feel and think about me and the work I am trying to do in this city. I value their distinctive testimony, and rejoice that it has not been withheld. Your letter shows that it is possible, while keeping the mind and heart open to the new and wider thought and life of our time, that our young people need not lose (as only too many do) the serious and worshipful spirit, and that interest in the ideal or Divine aspects of life which the Church exists to quicken and nourish. Your references to the order and character of the worship in Trinity Church are as full of encouragement as are your generous words about my teaching and preaching. To have been able to win from a band of thoughtful and earnest young men and women such sympathetic appreciation of the meaning and spirit of my ministry, and to know that my work has been such an influence for good in their daily lives, must henceforth be reckoned among the things for which I have to be grateful to the Giver of all.”

The following four years were years of power and influence. They marked the culmination of a “phenomenally successful ministry.” With the passing of John Caird, in 1898, Hunter came to be recognised as *the* spokesman of liberal Christianity in Scotland. He may have been “the most discussed man in the second city,” but his pre-eminence as a single influence and as a preacher were hardly disputed; his voice carried far; the courage that he had in stating his convictions, and the acceptance they won with the younger generation, inspired men of other churches to speak more boldly. The influence of his social teaching was increasingly perceptible in civic life.

“Although he did not often come forward in public affairs, he was a power to be reckoned with, and the fact that he disliked prominence made his occasional intervention the more effective. He said of himself, ‘I am not a good platform man, and never feel quite at home except in my own pulpit.’ All the same, he was never called on in vain, whether it was to forward some reform or to protest against some injustice or oppression (individual or national). None of those who were fortunate enough to secure his help as head of a deputation to the Town Council, or as Chairman or speaker at a public meeting, would agree with his estimate of himself.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Greenlees.

Between 1897-99, Trade Unionists and others in Glasgow made several attempts to persuade the Town Council to sanction the opening of the Art Gallery of the People's Palace on Sunday afternoons. It was a small matter in itself, but it happened at the psychological moment to provoke a great deal of controversy and discussion in Glasgow and Scotland generally. Principal Caird and a number of the leading professors signed a memorial in favour of the opening of the Gallery. A few ministers spoke in favour of the proposal, but the official Church was against it. Hunter made his position clear in the following letter :

“ Last Sunday afternoon I had to pass through a most dismal and depressing district of Glasgow. I saw hundreds of men and women in their working clothes standing in idle groups about the doors of their houses. The poorly-clad children playing in the damp and dirty streets, and in muddy and desolate fields, was the most pathetic sight of all. To improve this condition of things, to brighten just a little the lives of these poor men, women, and children, to open a door of escape from their monotonous and dreary surroundings would, I thought at the time, be justification enough for the opening of a dozen People's Palaces on a Sunday afternoon—provided, of course, everything in and about them tended to elevate and refine. People who are fully awake to their highest needs will not be likely to allow business and pleasure to encroach upon the day of rest, or to slight the opportunities of spiritual culture which the churches exist to supply ; but the movement in question does not, it seems to me, seek to diminish the sanctity of the Sunday broadly considered, or to interfere in the least with the ministrations of the Christian Church, which, taken as a whole, are of the greatest consequence to our higher civilisation.

“ We have to face the fact, whether we like it or not, that vast masses of the population are outside all our churches, and have no desire to enter them. The conditions of their life are such as to crush all aspiration, and to leave them with no craving for anything beyond food, drink, and shelter. It is the duty of those who live in happier and better surroundings, and do not require People's Palaces, to consider the wants of families, many of whom live in one or two-roomed houses, which certainly have no attraction on the score of quiet and brightness, and are not favourable to those influences which make the Sunday a peaceful and holy day. It is not a question of profaning or secularising the Sunday. The Sunday is already frightfully profaned and secularised by an immense majority of our people.

“ This movement is really a question of redeeming the Sunday from coarse vulgarity and animalism, and of preventing it from

being turned to waste altogether. If our places of worship have no honest attraction for many of our working people and young people, then let us try the next best things, and thus save the Sunday from being given over to worse desecration. The age of compulsion in religious and Church matters, like the age of miracles, is over and gone. Little is that attendance on the institutions of religion worth to any adult person which is not purely voluntary. It is a mistake at this time of day to seek to revive and enforce an outworn Sabbatarianism. We of the churches must not make our own private tastes and needs a rule for all others, but rather draw the line of the protection of Sunday as a day of rest and refreshment where all serious and thoughtful people who are looking only to the reasonable well-being of society will be willing to take their stand. As a lover of his kind, one ought to fight hard rather than surrender the Sunday or any part of it to those sordid, selfish interests from which it has been won.

“But both here and in England the men who are most actively interested in the Sunday opening of galleries of art, libraries, gardens, etc., are earnest philanthropists, deeply anxious for the preservation of the Sunday as a day to cultivate the enjoyment of quiet and noble things. People are losing much who are neglecting the old worshipful observances and habits of the world. But, after all, the divine blessings of life are not all in the churches and their forms. On the whole question much, I am well aware, can be said both for and against ; but I simply wish to emphasise the fact that the movement in favour of opening the People’s Palace on Sunday afternoon is an honest effort on the part of many to raise the lower classes a little higher, and not meant to stimulate and gratify the already too-absorbing love of excitement and pleasure among the more fortunate and leisured classes. Though for the moment it may appear to be taking a step backward, yet it is really a movement in the direction of a healthier and higher life.”

Two years later he was asked to head a deputation to the Town Council on the matter ; it consisted of ministers and professors and such-like, and members of the I.L.P., the Social Democratic Federation, and their like. “He made,” said the *Scotsman*, “one of the best arguments in favour of a more liberal and beneficent Sunday that has ever been put into a few words.” He laid down one broad principle : “No one who does not love can ever keep the Sunday rightly ; while if we love God and men as we should we shall keep it rightly as a matter of course.” On the other side were deputations from the three local Presbyteries, the Glasgow United Evangelistic Association, the Protestant

Alliance, Scottish Sabbath Protection Association, and the Y.M.C.A. The Council decided in favour of what was called the "Sabbath-Keeping Tradition," although it was clear that the working people desired the opening of the Gallery, and that the labour required was infinitesimal compared with that required to run the profitable tramway service.

Hunter upheld a similar principle when he and some other ministers were attacked because they allowed their names to appear as patrons of Mr. F. R. Benson's Shakespearean programme. Hunter enjoyed the theatre, and he liked it good. He admired Sir Henry Irving, and was an enthusiastic supporter of the educational work of Mr. Benson and his Company. Some years later—during his second ministry in Glasgow—he asked Mr. Benson to occupy his pulpit on a Sunday evening. On the earlier occasion Hunter stated his views on the theatre and its functions with some fullness, in his own pulpit, and in the Press.

*To the Editor of the "Glasgow Herald."*

" . . . The movement to which your correspondent refers is an honest effort to raise the theatre as an educational influence and a source of healthy recreation and amusement—an effort to gratify in a worthy way the instincts in human nature to which the theatre appeals—instincts which may be purified and elevated, but never eradicated. The dramatic interpretation and representation of life is a true art, and any movement therefore to redeem it from baseness and vulgarity, as fiction, painting, and music have been more or less redeemed, is one that deserves the sympathy and co-operation of all earnest and high-minded men and women.

" Your correspondent's general attitude to what he calls ' the world ' is altogether too narrow and pessimistic. The Christian ideal of life covers and includes the culture of all things true and lovely, and in its name we may claim an interest in beauty and art and knowledge. I distrust all sharp lines of division between classes of men and classes of amusement. They are unreal and misleading. There is much of the Church (in the good sense) in the world, and much of the world (in the bad sense) in the Church. God is in the world as well as in the Church, and His kingdom ruleth over all. The distinctions also which are drawn by many religious people between amusements are often quite arbitrary. Our popular amusements have no independent and permanent character of their own. They will be coarse and frivolous if the people are coarse and frivolous; they will be pure and refined if the people are pure and refined. There are theatres

and theatres, as there are churches and churches. In this world evil and good are more or less mixed up with everything, and the only right course therefore to pursue is to train ourselves and others to resist the evil and to be influenced only by the good. Instead of exalting artificial standards and drawing arbitrary lines—which are a snare to the sensitive and create unreal temptations and sins where there are only too many real ones—we must seek to educate the mind and conscience of the people, and thus to make the tendency towards the naturalisation of the drama in society a healthy and beneficent one. It is useless to fight against nature, but we may direct it. Religion, besides, is a reasonable service, and to make it unreasonable by an artificial rigidity or conventional pettiness is to do it a grave wrong.”

And again :

“ I am glad Mr. Benson has been moved to reply to the insulting charge brought by your correspondent ‘ Puritan ’ against an honourable profession. ‘ Behind the Scenes ’ is such a ‘ terra incognita ’ to people generally that very few are in the least qualified to judge righteous judgment. . . . From all I have seen and heard, I believe that actors and actresses are, on the whole, an ill-judged class. I have felt it to be my duty, now and again, to protest against the injustice with which they, along with musicians and artists of all kinds, are frequently condemned by the male and female Pharisees of society and the Church.

“ The evils connected with the theatre are, I believe, incidental and not essential to it. One has, however, no wish to belittle or whitewash them. Let the work of reformation be honestly faced by all concerned. Some years ago Sir Henry Irving, addressing an assembly of clergymen, said, ‘ Change your attitude towards the stage, and, believe me, it will co-operate with your work of faith and labour of love.’ But the true reform of the theatre must come from within as well as from without. Ministers, teachers, parents, and all serious persons have a right to say to actors and managers of theatres—‘ Be true to the ideal of your calling, realise your responsibility to society, purge your plays and playhouses of everything that tends to coarsen and corrupt the tastes of the people, put the stage on the side of what is healthy and good in the life of the community. You are no more justified in pandering to low and vulgar tastes because it pleases and pays than lawyers are in giving wrong advice, or bakers in selling poison for bread, or preachers in suppressing what they know to be the truth because their hearers like it.’ But the reformation of the theatre rests chiefly with the people themselves. Sooner or later the better audience will make the better stage. And we can only raise its standards by putting our influence openly and directly on the side of what is good in it, and against what is base.

“Not a few wise men think that there is little hope for the elevation of the stage till we have theatres not dependent entirely upon public patronage and support, but subsidised at the expense of the State. Very much may be said for that view. I would endow theatres here and there, and make much of them, on behalf of the poor. The middle and upper classes suffer from being over-amused, but the poor, on the other hand, suffer from being under-amused. Nearly half the drunken misery of the toiling masses of the population is owing to the want of facilities for wholesome amusement and enjoyment. Their dull, monotonous lives crave for brightness and excitement, and very much they will do and bear for the sake of it. We who have more pleasant surroundings cannot tell what it is for the poor to escape even into theatrical splendours from the commonplace discomfort of their homes. As a democratic institution, the theatre has vast possibilities and a great future.”

In the spring of the same year Hunter delivered a course of sermons on “The Church and the City, the ideal of Civic Life and Duty,” which gathered together and focussed his social teaching of previous years. He was never afraid to be topical in his preaching, though never cheaply or superficially so. In the subjects of his sermons the course of public affairs is reflected: elections, industrial crises, the deaths of great men, civic events, public controversies; but it was with the broad principles suggested by them that he dealt.

This particular course of sermons was fully and widely reported and discussed in the Scottish Press.<sup>1</sup>

The following winter he preached frequently on similar topics, and in connection with the Reading Guild of the Church a series of public lectures was given on industrial and social problems. He was striking hard equally against an individualist and exclusively other-worldly Gospel, and against the “business is business” attitude to morality and industrial welfare, which often goes with it. He was asked about this time to stand for the Town Council, but quite decidedly refused.

During the same period religious circles were extremely pained, and other circles were extremely angered, by a series of exposures by Keir Hardie in the *Labour Leader* of Lord Overtoun, a pious chairman of the United Evangelistic Association. Lord Overtoun

<sup>1</sup> His subjects were: “The Ideal City: a possible Glasgow.” “The Ideal Citizen.” “The Ideal City Church: or what the Church in Glasgow might do for the people of Glasgow.” “Home and City: the Training of the Citizen.” “The City: its Charities and Recreations.” “Women as Citizens.” “Young Men as Citizens.”

owned profitable chemical works in the neighbourhood of Glasgow, where the conditions and rewards of labour were unspeakably iniquitous. For a long time the attack was ignored in respectable circles, but Keir Hardie's facts were unassailable and crying. Even pious Sabbatarians were shocked to discover that the most zealous of their number worked his men seven days a week—not out of necessity, but through greed of profit. Righteous-minded people were more indignant because he worked his men longer hours for smaller wages, and under worse conditions than any other large firm. "No man," wrote Keir Hardie, "who ruins his competitors, pays his workmen 3d or 4d an hour, works them twelve hours a day, and seven days a week; fines them if they go to church on Sunday, keeps them working in conditions which destroy their flesh, does not provide even lavatory accommodation, and who allows his men no meal hours, is either a Christian or a gentleman." Keir Hardie's articles were interspersed with approving quotations from Hunter's sermons.

By an unfortunate irony, which was not lost upon their critics, Lord Overtoun and the Evangelistic Association were planning a great evangelistic campaign to win "the lapsed masses." Hunter sympathised warmly with Keir Hardie's position. He felt keenly the damage the evangelical leaders were doing the Church in the eyes of working-men and all people with a social conscience. He tried to mitigate the evil by his own preaching. He refused to have anything to do with the planned revival, and declared that type of revivalism to be ethically unsound and more potent for evil than for good. He was anxious about the condition of the churches on account of the way in which they were not only seeking to reach spiritual ends by worldly ways, but were getting into the habit of seeking worldly gains and advantages under the cover of sacred names. The revival of religion ought to mean more justice, more unselfishness, more brotherhood, and a deeper sense of responsibility for social well-being. They were on the eve, he often thought, of the greatest age of faith the world had ever seen. Men were losing their creeds, but they were finding their God, and finding Him as never before. He saw quite clearly that working-men were awake to the fact that the Church was standing for a reduced Christianity, and that they were coming to regard the Church as one of the forces opposed to their rights and welfare.



In the winter of 1899-1900, contemporaneous with the evangelistic campaign, he started a series of Sunday afternoon services for working-men as a concrete expression of his views. They were not P.S.A.'s; the form of service was his usual one, simplified and shortened, with hymns of the social type, and addresses on Religion and Social Life. He gave three himself, on "God and the People: a lesson from Mazzini," "What is Christianity?" and "The pleasures possible in a working man's life." The other addresses were given by the Professor of Economics, Dr. Smart, Professor Henry Jones, and Keir Hardie, who spoke on "After Twenty Centuries—What?"

The appearance of Keir Hardie in his pulpit nearly precipitated an "affair of honour" between Hunter and one of the friends he valued most—Sir James Marwick. The South African War had broken out, and Keir Hardie was emphatic and conspicuous in denouncing that war. Even before Keir Hardie's pro-Boer utterances, Sir James had deplored that he should speak in Trinity Church, but had determined to say nothing to Hunter until after the event. But now, considering Hardie's attitude to the war almost, if not quite, disloyal, he wrote to ask Hunter to cancel the engagement, adding that if the engagement stood it must affect his relation to the church; being a deacon of the church he would be compromised as a public man, and as a man of honour, by Hardie's appearance. Hunter risked their friendship, rather than give way on what he felt was a matter of principle.

*To Sir James Marwick.*

*"January 12th, 1900.*

"I need hardly ask you to believe that my great regard and affection for you would move me at once to do what you suggest; but in this matter a higher loyalty comes in the way and forbids. I am, first of all, not the servant of a particular congregation, but a minister of Jesus Christ, and as such I feel that I would be guilty of grave unfaithfulness if I were to set aside this engagement because of a question of views as to current politics.

"In taking this position I am not thinking merely or chiefly of the individual man, but of the class he represents. There will be social war in this country before long if more genuine and generous practical sympathy is not shown by the middle and upper classes, and by the churches, towards those who are bearing the brunt of the struggle for existence. In England the working classes are largely outside all the churches, and the more religious among them

are forming in all the large towns what are called 'Labour Churches' as a protest against what they consider the caste-exclusiveness of the ordinary church. In Glasgow, I know from first and best sources that the working men, especially the more intelligent and self-respecting, are drifting more and more out of all church relations.

"It was a very earnest desire to get hold of this class, and to infuse, if possible, a better tone and spirit into them, that moved me to start these Sunday afternoon services. Nothing I ever did came about so simply and naturally as asking Mr. Keir Hardie to speak as a working man at one of these services for working men. . . . He is a Socialist but a *Christian* Socialist, his views not differing essentially from those held and taught by Maurice, Kingsley, Canon Barnett and that school. He can only be called a 'paid agitator' in the same sense that all preachers and most public men are paid agitators. If he cannot support himself entirely on the work he is trying to do, he is one of a big company. . . .

"It is of the influence of the action which you wish me to take on his class that I think chiefly now. It would simply put an end to the work I am seeking to do, and be far more disastrous than anything Mr. Keir Hardie could say against the war or anything else. Only one thing has made me regret asking him, and that is the Overtoun controversy, which did not begin until two months after his engagement with me was made. I was sure people who did not know the facts of the case would be mean enough to say that I was taking advantage of that excitement. It made me seriously review the situation, but after looking at it all round, and weighing carefully every point for and against, I came to the conclusion that it was on the whole better that the engagement should stand. I feel the same now, feel that it will be better for all parties concerned to let the service go quietly on, and avoid even the very appearance of intolerance, which I know is as foreign to your real and normal self as it is to mine.

"I do not see that any member of the church can be compromised in the least by my action. No one has ever spoken to me more strongly than you against interference with the freedom of the minister, and the narrow interpretation which in this respect some put on Congregationalism. As long as I am deemed worthy to be minister of the church, I, and I alone, am responsible for the occupancy of the pulpit, and if there is ever any blame under this head, on me, and me alone, the blame ought to fall.

"But I am persuaded that Mr. Hardie will not speak, even at this special and informal service, in a way that will bring down any blame on me. When he spoke about the war he was speaking as a member of his own political party, and to the members of it, and he spoke as he had a right to do, whether one agrees with his

views or not. He was just doing what other political men are not slow to do. Dr. Fairbairn, I see, gives expression to exactly the same views in an article in last week's *Spectator*. But the pulpit and the Church are different. There one ought to keep to principles and their general application. I am sorry to see that many Church and Scottish clergy are using their pulpits to defend the war, anything of which sort is just as bad in another direction. . . . But, all the same, I shall write to Mr. Hardie and ask him plainly to keep out of his address allusions to current politics. Anything more my self-respect and my conscience will not allow me to do.

"Now let me ask you not to exaggerate the importance of this matter. If Hardie abuses his opportunity it would only be a few days' talk and then be forgotten; and I, and I only, would be blamed; but the action at which you hint and its consequences are irrevocable. If the relations of thirteen years are ever to be disturbed and broken, I hope it will be by something very much more serious than a lay address by a Hardie, or of twenty Hardies rolled into one. . . .

"P.S.—I ought to add that I appreciate the spirit that breathes through your letter. A month ago it might have been possible to get the address postponed, but not now."

The letter did not change his friend's opinion, but it prevented him from taking more drastic action. "Having made this protest, my affection for yourself and my high appreciation of you as a preacher have concurred with the persuasion of my family in inducing me not to insist on my resignation, and rather submit to being misjudged by numerous friends." Neither would he allow Hunter to write to Keir Hardie, as he had offered. So the incident closed. The disagreement, beyond troubling the waters for a few days, did not affect their friendship.

Hunter's judgment on the South African War was that it was a blunder into which the country had been led by financial and imperialist interests. In May, 1900, he signed, along with Edward Carpenter, John Clifford, Frederic Harrison, Cobden Sanderson and others, an appeal to the Nation, entitled "The Purpose of Conquest," which was a soberly and fully stated argument against an annexationist policy. It reviewed the history of the dispute, and did justice to the position of the Boers. It denied the logic, as well as the morality, of annexation. "If we take the part of the oppressor, we falsify our destiny. . . . Such a financial conspiracy, such a campaign of hypocrisy, such a suppression of rights, contrived in any other empire would fire Great Britain with the

fiercest indignation." While Hunter was careful not to discuss the ethics of this particular war in the pulpit, he spoke strongly on the subject of War. He was a member of the Peace Society from the outset of his ministry. He wrote in his *Monthly Calendar* for December, 1899 :

"Our thoughts at this time are, as I write, all but engrossed with the war in South Africa. With 'fightings and fears within and without' we are beset. You will find in this calendar a prayer which may be used in the worship of the home. I intend, without any direct reference to the present unhappy strife, to call your attention at the morning service on the 24th to the general question of war, and to ask you to consider it in the light of the Christian ideas and the Christian spirit. In these excited and exciting days we need more than ever to have the events of the time—our national crises, our social troubles, and all the varied experiences and incidents of our life—lifted out of the dusty and noisy ways of the world into the Eternal Light and Calm, so that they may be given a meaning which they did not have before. The very fact that the minds of men are indisposed by the strong feelings which the war has evoked towards the quiet and serious consideration of the law and ideal of Christ, is all the more reason why the pulpit should not neglect its duty to do what it can to produce the Christian temper and outlook. Besides, the Christmas season, with its message of 'Peace on Earth,' affords the most fitting opportunity."

He returned to the subject more than once during the war. In 1901, when a Peace Congress was held in Glasgow, he preached the sermon. While he was not prepared to say that war or the resort to physical force was, in every circumstance, wrong, he declared that war had no place in a Christian society. Although the day of war was not wholly past, yet morally it was an anachronism and a retrogression in civilisation. No method could be more unreasonable or more immoral for the settlement of an international dispute than that two peoples should choose masses of the most precious beings they had—their young manhood—and hurl them against each other till the mere physical issue inclined one way or another. A mere physical conquest conferred no moral right. The great back-wave of their country in the direction of barbarism, the obstruction of high ideals, the practical materialism and vulgar commercialism, and the refusal to allow that ethics and religion had anything to do with international politics, with which they had been so sorrowfully familiar

of late, made it difficult to say much about the moral uses of war. He ended by pleading for the establishment of an international court of arbitration, whose authority should be enforced by an international militia, as well as respected by the common council of nations.

Hunter took even less part in ecclesiastical affairs than in public affairs, except through his own church. He twice intervened on behalf of men who, so he thought, were being treated in an un-Christian way. In 1898 the General Assembly of the Established Church served a libel on the Rev. Alexander Robinson of Kilmun parish church, on account of views expressed in a book, entitled *The Saviour in the Newer Light*, which assumed the leading principles of modern criticism and incidentally stated its more radical conclusions in a crude and ill-advised way. His critics accused him on the ground that it failed in devotion to the personality of Jesus Christ—which he emphatically denied. The form of Scottish heresy trials is far from the form of brotherly admonition which St. Paul advocated in like circumstances. This gentle heretic did not adapt himself easily to litigation, and in 1897 he was expelled from his church.

Hunter, on the first opportunity, offered practical sympathy.<sup>1</sup>

“ On the last Sunday of September, when I preach in London, the services will be conducted by the Rev. Alexander Robinson, B.D., late of Kilmun parish church. While more conservative in my general attitude towards the miraculous element in the early Christian records, I am glad to have this public opportunity of showing my sympathy with Mr. Robinson in this crisis of his life. In the full and hearty recognition of the Incarnation of God in the life of Jesus Christ, and in the life of Christian humanity, I find a faith which leaves abundant room for the broadest Churchmanship, and enables one to keep an open house for all who love to call themselves by Christ’s name. The man who sees God in Christ, whatever his views concerning questions of Church history, philosophy and literature, or whatever his doubts, belongs through that great persuasion to the communion of the Church of Christ. Our local and separate churches, or organisations, are not truly and completely Christian; they are sectarian and not catholic when they exclude those whom the One Master would not have ‘cast out.’ . . . It has been one of the supreme aims of my ministry to keep a practical working faith in the essential Christian

<sup>1</sup> While the case was progressing he wrote more than once to the Press on Robinson’s behalf—anonymously, as he realised that his open championship might prejudice rather than help.

things, distinct from theological definition and theory, and from those critical questions concerning which men—even the wisest and most scholarly—must always differ. Let us continue with one heart and soul to labour together for a Christianity of which the weak need not be afraid nor the strong ashamed, and for a Church large enough to contain all varieties of views that are consistent with practical loyalty to Him Who said: ‘Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother and sister and mother.’”

He busied himself to find Mr. Robinson a pastorate among the Independent Churches, and was not a little disappointed when the officials of the Congregational Union would give no help. Eventually Mr. Robinson was settled as minister of the Congregational Church, Crieff. Both before and after his settlement, Hunter often asked him to preach in Trinity Church, although he was not a preacher of distinction. Mr. Robinson never got over his expulsion, hoping to the last that a more liberal Assembly would recall the excommunicating sentence. Hunter’s chivalry was one of the few consolations of his dark hours; and a quiet example to litigious Churchmen of a better and more charitable way.

Dr. John Duncan of Aberdeen, the friend of his youth, was another whom he was moved to defend. Dr. Duncan had served a long and faithful ministry in Aberdeen, and was by this time an old man. He was very different from Hunter in his way of thinking. “At the end of the winter (of 1896),” writes his biographer, “he was prostrated by a serious illness, which confined him to bed for some weeks. At this juncture it seemed good to a handful of the membership, including a number of office-bearers, to withdraw from the fellowship, and found another church with the man of their choice, who had been *locum tenens*, as their minister. . . . While the church was uninjured, it is difficult to overestimate the heart-pain inflicted upon the minister. To a man of his sensibilities the occurrence presented all the elements of misery. That he was hurt God knew, and those who came close to him, but it was not that he ever said so.”

A few months later the new congregation applied for admission to the Scottish Congregational Union. The Aberdeen District Committee, without expressing an opinion on the way that the church had been formed, passed on the application to the General Committee; and the General Committee recommended it to the

favourable consideration of the Union. Hunter objected. A minister who was present describes the scene :

“ There is one outstanding event in connection with Dr. Hunter, which I shall never forget, nor will any fail to remember who witnessed it. The occasion was the Annual Assembly of the Congregational Union, held that year in Edinburgh. It was a most unusual thing for the Doctor to attend the Annual Meetings, and a still more unusual thing for him to speak at them. . . . The session came when the application was to be considered. ‘ Hunter is here ’ went round the assembly. The application was read out. It was formally moved and seconded to receive. Dr. Hunter stepped up to the platform and begged to move an amendment. The usual time allowed for the mover of an amendment is ten minutes. Dr. Hunter said he would require an extension of that time. The gathering agreed that he should have his own time. With tremendous passion and eloquence he described how attempts had been made by the applicant to steal the hearts of the people from the old minister, who was lying ill, and held up a bundle of letters, which, he said, would substantiate everything he said. It was a thrilling experience, and emotion ran high. With great spirit and fervour he pleaded :

Woodman, spare the tree,  
Touch not one single bough.  
In youth it sheltered me,  
And I'll protect it now.

It was a great appeal. There was never anything like it before in the history of the Scottish Union, and those meetings are remembered as the occasion when Hunter pleaded for his old friend.”

Hunter was hot with moral indignation. His outspokenness nearly involved him in a libel action ; but he refused to apologise or withdraw a single word.<sup>1</sup> Disloyalty, a breach of moral and spiritual fellowship, was to him the only real schism. The honour of the Ministry was concerned, and honour was more precious than any other ecclesiastical privilege. His motion was supported by Dr. Garvie ; and as a result of their protest the question was referred to a special committee. At the close of the session the Chairman, not a particularly courageous churchman, went up to Hunter and put his hands on Hunter's shoulders with the remark : “ Hunter, you are a brave man.” The final decision of the Union

<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, the pith of his speech was not technically relevant ; he was concerned chiefly with the action of the *locum tenens*, who was not yet minister of the church, and had not yet applied for recognition. The Union, at that moment, had strictly to consider the action of the church ; morally they were inseparable, technically distinct. Dr. Garvie in his speech observed the distinction.

in regard to the seceding church in Aberdeen was a compromise. (A formal expression of reconciliation between the two churches was promoted, and the new church thereupon recognised.) Hunter did not push his protest further in committee, but he felt that he could not be compromised. As one of his opponents has written: "When a right is ably and bravely championed, the champion does not always or often get his claim completely satisfied, and in this case compromise pleased most people."

During the winter Hunter was thinking over his position. He could not but contrast the willingness of the leaders of the Congregational Union to boast the addition of another Congregational church, and their unwillingness to help that unhappy Christian gentleman, Mr. Robinson. The following spring he wrote to the secretary of the Union:

*"April 27, 1899.*

"After much reflection I write to say that I wish my formal connection with the Congregational Union of Scotland to cease from this date. The painful controversy in which I was engaged last year in the interests of my venerable friend, Dr. Duncan of Aberdeen, and his congregation, has led me since it was closed to review most thoroughly the whole situation, and my own relation to the Union. I now find myself so entirely out of sympathy with certain aims and methods of the Union, that I feel the only honest course for me is to withdraw. Be so good as to convey to the brethren my thanks for their unvarying kindness and courtesy towards me personally, and my desire and hope that I may still be able as heretofore to serve them as I do the ministers of other churches according to my ability and opportunity."

He withdrew quietly. His action did not become a subject of public discussion until six years later.

The circumstances were peculiar. An interested person obtained the consent of Mrs. Hunter to get the secretary to withhold the letter till Hunter returned from England, where he was fulfilling engagements. Hunter was urged not to press his resignation publicly. Ultimately, neither withdrawing nor pressing the publication of his letter, he did nothing. While maintaining friendly relations he acted, however, on the basis of his letter, and on his return from England, in 1904, continued to keep outside.

Hunter's sympathy with his old friend was the more sensible on account of a somewhat similar experience in his own church the previous year, as a result of his absence in the East. His church



was not hurt by it, but he was, and more deeply than people knew. It was a new experience—a breach of loyalty, as it appeared to him. The wound was in a sensitive spot, and the scar remained. The fact was that there were a few among his deacons who did not share his outlook on life, or sympathise with his ideal of a city church. His aloofness from the Congregational Union made the difference more marked. At times he felt anxious for the further development of the church. It was not right that the management of a church in which the great majority of members were progressive should be confined to a permanent group of senior men, some of whom were out of sympathy with what the church stood for. In 1892 he had secured the appointment of an annually elected church committee, which met with the deacons twice a year, but its powers were limited.

Towards the end of 1898 he was approached by a group of gentlemen on the south side of Glasgow, with the proposal that they should start a new church there, directly under his inspiration and the auspices of his church. He discussed the proposal with his deacons. But it was not practicable.

In December, 1900, he allowed an invitation to the Pastorate of the Congregational Church, Harrogate, to come to him. In a letter to the secretary of his own church he indicated his attitude :

“ I don't know what specially to say to you. I saw a deputation of three gentlemen from Harrogate at my house last evening. I need not say that they were keenly anxious that I should accept their invitation. Everything they put before me was very favourable and hopeful. Before I settled they would add chancel and transepts to their church building, and thus enlarge and beautify it. They also willingly and freely grant me all the freedom as to teaching, order of worship, etc., that I want.

“ Compared to Glasgow, Harrogate is a small place, but it is not only a health resort that attracts thousands of visitors for nearly the whole year, it is also rapidly becoming a place of residence for neighbouring towns and cities, especially Leeds, Bradford, and York. The congregation at present is not large, except when they have a special preacher ; but a few earnest and enthusiastic men feel that with a strong man it could be easily made one of the strongest churches in Yorkshire. In the meantime they are prepared to make sacrifices to attain that end. Personally, I should have no fear of the ultimate success of my work there, and of building up a church that would be in worship and work,

as one described it, 'an object-lesson to other non-episcopal churches in England.' The climate, also, has its attractions for the sake of my family. If I decide to settle there it would give me a little more time for work which I am almost daily by letter urged to undertake, viz. writing and publishing a few books. This is the Harrogate side.

"As to Glasgow, I cannot honestly say that my work here is done, because I do not feel it to be so. I have many things yet to say, as every minister who is a constant student of the eternal things must always have. My difficulty is to get time to put thought into shape, the weeks pass so rapidly, and claims on my time are so many and varied. It is needless to say that I have a great affection for my church and congregation, and love for my work in Glasgow, and to pull up my roots again and make a new beginning elsewhere would be a trial both to myself and family. I feel, too, very gravely, the claims of a congregation which is largely a personal one. A new generation also is springing up that leans on me for help, of which I have had great proof this week. I cannot lightly treat their appeal. In addition, I have had appeals from outsiders, who represent both city and University, and ministers not of our own order.

"Some friends, I may say, have been urging me to settle in London, but so far I have never encouraged them. The difficulties of London ecclesiastical life are in some respects greater than those of Glasgow. There is the drift, for example, to the suburbs—farther and farther away from the city. Now Harrogate is a place people drift into.

"I am seriously considering the whole situation, and only want to do what is right and best."

His congregation at once took alarm. Deputations were sent to him, memorials from the several organisations of the church,<sup>1</sup> and letters. Men and women promised to take more share in the work of the church if he would only stay. From outside his

<sup>1</sup> ". . . Attracted as we are from all parts of this city, we realise how much your influence extends beyond those whom it is possible to hold within the limits of a single building . . . the withdrawal of your influence would be a catastrophe to the life of the city, especially at this time so soon after the deaths of Principal Caird and Professor Bruce and the transference of Dr. Edward Caird to Oxford, it can ill afford to sustain. We feel, were you to make the wishes of the young men and women of Glasgow a main consideration, you could have no hesitation in deciding to remain." (*Young Men's Reading Club.*)

The temper of the few who were antipathic is reflected in the following letter :

"Do you think you can say a word or two to comment in a general way on the Retiring Collection for the Congregational Union? . . . Even a single word will help, and it will gratify more than me. I have not heard what has been the result of the deputation's visit to you, but whatever its outcome, I take this chance of saying that if you are led to decide that it is your duty to take this opportunity of service in a new and promising field, I hope that you will believe and feel that you have not ministered in vain to any one of us, and that your influence in the Union will be felt for many a day."

congregation the pressure was equally strong. Ministers in all the churches wrote to tell him that he had no adequate idea of the extent and intensity of his influence. Through a medical lecturer he received a petition signed by over three hundred of the students. Many people whom he had never met wrote to tell him how much he had helped them. The tribute was so universal that he felt humbled by it. It was clear that his congregation was enthusiastically loyal and anxious to make any reforms that he cared to suggest.

On the Sunday before Christmas he announced from the pulpit that he intended to remain in Glasgow.

From the moment that he stated his intention to remain, there was a running accompaniment of applause, and when he finished the congregation joined *con amore* in the Doxology—an unusual demonstration in that church. The proposals that the deacons of the church had promised to carry out were, briefly, that the government of the church should be made democratic, and that the younger men should be given more prominence and influence. He also explained his relationship to the Congregational Union, and deprecated any attempt to draw the church into closer relation with it, especially as a large portion of the congregation were not Congregationalists by conviction. After strenuous committee work, a revised constitution was drafted and adopted at the business meeting of the church a month later.<sup>1</sup> It was also arranged that the several "Benevolent Funds" should be gathered by a house-to-house visitation, from lady collectors, once a year, in order to interest everyone, rich and poor alike, in the work of the church. A good deal of the preliminary organisation of this scheme was done by Mrs. Hunter.

The excitement of three months left Hunter tired. The question of an assistant was brought up, but action was deferred until the autumn. Meantime, the Management, to mark their appre-

<sup>1</sup> By the new constitution, the business of the church was in the hands of a committee of management, consisting of the Minister and thirty-six persons elected by the church. This number was to include the Deacons, not exceeding sixteen in number, and six ladies. One-third, including the Deacons, were to retire annually—after the first three years in priority of election—and were not to be eligible for re-election until the expiration of one year. The special duties of the Deacons were, the serving of the Communion, the oversight of their respective districts, the care of the poor, the administration of the fellowship fund, and generally the spiritual interests of the church. The old committee resigned, but their members were for the most part re-elected, and there were also one or two changes in the office-bearers. The one weakness of the scheme was the size of the executive, which tended to make the formation in time of an "inner Cabinet," in order to facilitate business.

ciation of his decision to remain in Glasgow, offered him a special holiday, and a cheque which would enable him again to visit Palestine. It was too late in the year to visit Palestine, and for other reasons he did not see his way to accept their generous gift, but] he was glad to have an immediate holiday suggested. He went off to Italy for six weeks at the beginning of April, visiting Bellagio, Perugia, Ravenna, Venice, and Lugano.

Glasgow, however, was not able to keep him for long. Where Harrogate failed, London succeeded. "The King's Weigh House Church would be an almost ideal position were it only vacant," Principal Fairbairn had written to him a year before. The church<sup>1</sup> had been transplanted from the City to a site near Grosvenor Square, W., in 1891. It was a large pile of buildings, well endowed, but the minister, the Rev. Alexander Sandison, a native of the Shetlands, and a beautiful character—"He reminds me of some ideal figure from George Macdonald's novels," Hunter once said—had failed to draw a congregation. In 1900 attempts had been made with special preachers, but they were only successful on the two Sundays when Hunter preached. He seemed marked for the position.

Shortly after he had refused the invitation to Harrogate, Mr. Sandison wrote to him: "Ever since we had the great pleasure of your presence and service, a growing conviction has been with me in mind and heart. It seems to me that your ministry should be from this great city, and why not from the Weigh House, which is built in the very heart of it. . . . You know that I cannot write this—leaving out what it involves for me personally—without the most earnest thought. Is it possible for you to let me know if you could be led to entertain a call to the ministry of this Church? I write for myself, but I well know the church I love so well that I can thus think of leaving it."

Such unselfish humility was not lost on Hunter. He met Mr. Sandison when he was preaching in London early in 1901, and afterwards wrote to his wife:

"Mr. Sandison has just left me. I feel very much drawn to the man. I don't wonder Dr. Murray spoke so highly of him. He seems so absolutely sincere and good—and had such a fine, serious way of speaking about everything. He feels he ought

<sup>1</sup> Originally founded in 1662; so named because the first congregation met in a room over the King's Weigh (i.e. Customs) House,

now to resign—that is, if I see my way to take the place. They have an endowment of something like £13,000 or £14,000, which brings in 3 per cent or so—minister's house and premises in every way perfect for church work. He speaks very hopefully about the future of the place if I succeeded him. I could not, of course, say much. I am afraid London is to be our destiny. I don't object—if you like it."

Quite apart from the question of opportunities and conditions of work, Hunter's mind at the time was probably correctly diagnosed by Stopford Brooke in a letter :

"There comes a time in the mid-life of men and women, when they passionately desire to quit the old and grasp the new. It is not the youthful desire for the 'novel,' which we know so well ; it is something much deeper and more serious, and it knows itself for what it is. The whole nature of the man cries out for the change, and if the opportunity for it is afforded from without—is, so to speak, a call which comes unsought, and is plainly within the sphere of the man's special work—in the realm of his life and duty—then, I think, the man may fairly allow his desire for change to have its way. *One* beyond oneself seems to have spoken, to have called."

"I feel if I do not move now," Hunter wrote to his wife, "it will be Glasgow all my days." He was anxious, however, to delay the hour of decision as long as possible, for the sake of the church in Glasgow. He did not allow events to take their course until the beginning of June. The conditions that accompanied the "Call" were generous. He was guaranteed for two years the same stipend as in Glasgow, and the same freedom, the use of his Service and Hymn Books, and any alterations in the pulpit surroundings that he desired.

It was not an easy decision to make. The advantages and disadvantages of the proposal were alike strong. "I am drawn to London," he wrote to his wife, "yet I shrink from beginning anew. I do wish there had been a congregation of some size to go to." It was not a position to go to, but a position that had to be made, and in a district admittedly antipathic to Nonconformity. Fairbairn and others, in urging him to go, did not minimise the difficulties. The big one was the multiplicity of buildings. An institutional church was neither his ideal nor his *métier*. And then the parsonage was dark and noisy compared with his home in Glasgow, and from the domestic point of view difficult to work.

In Glasgow, on the other hand, he had an assured position, and a commanding influence, and a church now ordered after his own mind. It was hard to give these up.

He did not allow his friends in Glasgow to repeat their demonstration of the previous winter. He knew their mind and heart, and wished to decide quietly. They, too, realised that the claim of London was in a different category from that of Harrogate. The balance was definitely inclined in favour of London, when he was told that no doubt permission would be obtained to sub-let the parsonage, and the rent could be used to meet the rent of a more suitable house in a quieter neighbourhood. He decided to accept the risks and venture. He announced his decision to his congregation by a letter.

Having had a holiday in the spring, and in view of the Exhibition which was attracting visitors from all over the country, he decided to preach throughout the summer. He set himself a very heavy programme, and preached to crowded congregations. The atmosphere of the church in the closing months of his ministry was peculiarly vibrant, and drew out all his emotional and nervous energy. *Finis coronat opus*. September 15th was his last Sunday. He had intended to make his last sermon a farewell charge, and went so far as to write it out. He did not trust himself to deliver it, but preferred two sermons—one on the Pauline Grace—which recapitulated the substance of his teaching. "No minister," wrote a sympathetic critic at the time, "could have put more of his personality into his ministry than Dr. Hunter, yet the personal note, as it is commonly understood, never once obtruded." A farewell meeting was held during the week, at which presentations were made to him and his family. Hundreds of letters came to him, grateful, loving, sad—some almost heart-broken. The experience was overwhelming. He had not dared to believe that his ministry had meant so much to so many, and in the coming years in London it often haunted his thoughts.

*Last Letter in "Monthly Calendar."*

*August 26, 1901.*

" . . . I cannot let this monthly *Calendar*, the last which I shall prepare for you, pass from my hands without adding a few words. With its list of engagements I close a record which will never be reopened.

“In the pulpit I have always sought to avoid directly personal allusions, and even if this had not been my rule, I could not do it on the day when I close a ministry of fifteen years among you. My heart would fail me. Let me now and here bid you as a Congregation an affectionate farewell.

“It may sometimes seem that the body we call a Congregation has not any distinct personality about it, because it does not continue the same, and its members are changing at will. But human ties are not weak because they are obscure. It is impossible for any one to have led for years the worship of a people, and to have appealed in many ways, both public and private, to their holiest and best sentiments, without being conscious of an attachment that may not be easily defined, but can never be forgotten. If our fellowship in prayer, in sacred studies and meditations and in good works, has at all approached toward its ideal, then have we been drawn to each other by deeper and more lasting affections than those generated by the interchange of social offices—even by the faith, hope, and love, which, according to St. Paul, are the three great and abiding principles of religion and life.

“Our thoughts, I am sure, as we reflect upon the years gone by, will linger on many solemn and glad hours whose impressions and influences must have gone down to the roots of life, and have helped to nourish and strengthen us in that which alone makes life worth living. If we have found in the church light, stimulus and comfort, an atmosphere of inspiring sentiments and feelings, illuminating thoughts of life and duty, visions of larger circles of truth, gleams of Divine knowledge, strength for daily trial, moments of quiet trust and rest in God, then have we found the best blessings of life. These closing weeks have brought me many welcome and sacred assurances of the helpfulness of my ministry, which I may be pardoned for holding henceforth among my choicest memories.

“And now the time we have been looking forward to for three months is almost here. In a few days all will be over. Never more in this world will it be as it has been. We have come to a parting of the ways. Other paths and things are before all of us now. We must be sorry, you in your way and I in mine, not to have done more and better with our opportunities; but with regard to past failures and deficiencies, we may as well follow the example of the Apostle in ‘forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth toward those which are before.’ Whatever the imperfections of my service, I can say with perfect sincerity that I have only sought your good. I have never intentionally offended any one. The truth has always been spoken in love, that is, disinterestedly; and if it has hurt you, as I hope it often has, it has hurt you in order to heal you. The bond between people and a preacher who never disturbs them, and never sends them home uneasy and

dissatisfied with themselves, is the bond of shallowness. The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable.

“And now, I commend you all to Him from whom our ways are not hid, and myself to your prayers.”

The sower goeth but the seed is left,  
That which the hand hath scattered, none can  
Gather up till it is grown ;  
Some call it wheat, some tares,  
God knows 'twas sown for heavenly seed,  
And all shall know for certain when  
The harvest comes.

Let each and all remember,  
We broke the sacred bread and drank  
The ritual cup together,  
And pledged from month to month  
Full loyalty to Christ, and to His weakest friend :  
Ah ! let us wait and waiting keep our word,  
And wait in hope, however long,  
Till He lift up the cup on high,  
The cup of human tears transformed  
To heavenly wine.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE WORKMAN

"Mental power elaborates itself in solitude."—*Goethe*.  
"Nothing that he undertook to do but he did it faithfully and like a true man."  
*Thomas Carlyle of his father.*

#### I

JOHN HUNTER'S personality and work were focussed on the making of the Sunday and week-day services of his church as rich in religious experience and as valuable in religious instruction for those who assembled there as they were able to be made. That was his vocation of ministry. He loved it and was intensely happy in it. From the doing of this one thing well he never allowed himself to be deflected by other claims and interests.

He was a conscientious worker, gifted though not facile. Asked to speak on the spur of the moment, he was sometimes tongue-tied. By middle-life he had lost his early power of extempore utterance.<sup>1</sup> He had to summon the spirits from deep recesses, and often they were slow of coming. But no Sunday ever found him other than fully prepared. His level was extraordinarily even.

"It has long been somewhat of a mystery to me how Dr. Hunter has been able to keep up a ministry of such unvarying freshness and power as he maintains. I can very well understand how an able and earnest minister can delight and instruct his people by occasional services of great and stimulating power. But what has surprised and delighted me in Dr. Hunter is the unvarying high quality of his teaching."<sup>2</sup>

The secret of the mystery was unremitting, concentrated, hard work. What he said of Baldwin Brown was equally true of himself :

<sup>1</sup> One of the two occasions on which he intervened in a business meeting of the Scottish Congregational Union was in 1896, when he seconded the motion in favour of union with the Evangelical Union Churches. He did so formally. But a speech in opposition to the motion made him anxious to reply. Having found out how long the assembly would be in session, he went out, hired a private room in an hotel, wrote out a reply and came back and delivered it.

<sup>2</sup> Sir James Marwick to Mr. A. S. Michie in 1897.

“ All his reading and study from the outset were in the direction of his work. His delicate and disciplined instinct quickly discerned the line which separates legitimate work from work which cannot be engaged in without implying a lack of full consecration to the office he held. He was far from being one-sided and partial ; his culture and sympathy and his interpretation of religion lifted him above everything narrow and made of him what may be styled a universal man. But his universality did not consist in a meddling with many things in their separate forms and aspects, but in an earnest striving to illuminate and pervade all things with the truth and spirit which he held in trust.”<sup>1</sup>

And again :

“ His sermons were not easily produced. They were the fruit of much intense thinking and they reveal a studied and nervously conscientious effort to keep on a high level. His very life went into them—the inner life of thought and feeling and experience which the Good Shepherd gives for his sheep. He gave himself with his sermons. I have heard a preacher denounced by a Hyde Park orator as a ‘ seventh day worker, and earning his living cheap at that.’ Seventh day ! That is, indeed, the true preacher’s easiest day. I often hear people praise the self-denying devotion of Ritualistic and Roman Catholic priests because they are ever on their feet, calling here and calling there, attending this meeting and that, ready to visit the sick and the dying at any hour of the day or night. I say not one single word in disparagement of all that zealous activity. But the work of the Catholic priest or Nonconformist organiser and overseer is almost mechanical work when compared with the work of the preacher who puts brain and heart and soul into his sermons. Is there no self-denial in that secret, silent work which only God knows ? ‘ A worker in words,’ says some one ; but what if words be the vehicle of thought and passion, flashes of light, channels of inspiration, benedictions, or half-battles, as was said of Luther’s words ? Jesus was a preacher, and it is His words more than His miracles which still move the world.”<sup>2</sup>

Hunter did not live by time-table. He rarely looked at the clock except when an engagement was pending—for these he was punctual. But he lived a regular life. His hour of rising varied hardly at all from day to day. He was not, however, an early riser who worked before breakfast, as many of his generation were. He wasted little time in settling to work. The arrangement of his day, and of the week, were also uniform—this from habit,

<sup>1</sup> Lecture on Baldwin Brown ; published in *The Expositor*. April, 1921

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

rather than through conscious plan. He allowed himself to spend some hours during the first part of the week as the fancy of the moment inclined. From Thursday onward he concentrated on his Sunday sermons. Except on occasional Mondays or Tuesdays he did not go out until the afternoon. Then it would be to visit or to ramble down town, or to walk out countrywards. He usually put in three or four miles on foot daily, and once a month or so would take a day's walk in the country. Walking was his recreation.

The one irregular element in his life was week-day engagements. He lectured and preached constantly during the week. He was able to do it because it rarely involved special preparation, but it made demands on his strength and time, as he often went far afield.

He did not indulge in social engagements ; neither did he entertain ; indeed, latterly, he rarely invited acquaintances into his house. He used to "drop in" on his friends in their homes or offices, or talk for ten minutes or so if he met them in the street—but he did not encourage them to "drop in" on him. He never considered joining a club until a few weeks before his last illness, and then not chiefly for society. "I am looking for a restful place to which I can go when in town," he said to a friend in the National Liberal Club, and added with a smile, "but I am afraid I have not found it here."

There was a double paradox in his nature which it is difficult to convey to those who did not know him.

In address he was excessively shy. The first advance had to be made by the other person, whatever their station and age. Unlike Jowett, he was embarrassed by his own silences with strangers. His first instinct often was to dart down a side street when he saw someone he knew approaching, although he might, had they met, have enjoyed the meeting. It was a disability which men found difficult to understand, and one that made some sides of a minister's work difficult to him. "It threw him back too much upon himself and left him in the position of an outside critic." He was not, however, a recluse. This characteristic was due to temperament ; it was not unsociability. He was affectionate and enjoyed the company of sympathetic men and women. He brought laughter into many a house. When once he felt that he was not in danger of being misunderstood, he expressed opinions freely, was full of chaff and fun, humorous stories and most infectious laughter.

But there was a further paradox. Even with those with whom he was least reserved, he was impenetrably reserved on the subjects on which his mind was most engaged. One never discovered during the week the outline or the ideas of his sermons. He did not depend on men or conferences of men for intellectual or spiritual stimulus—this he got from books. It required the longest patience to get him to speak on those subjects which a man of his profession is usually supposed to have at the tip of his tongue and to be ready to discuss over every tea-table. He would talk about church matters and men, religious affairs and movements generally, but not about the religion of the soul, or the truths he cared most for, and on which he preached so eloquently.

And yet he did not leave the impression on those who knew him of a man whose life and mind were divided into water-tight compartments—an impression of inconsistency. Rather he was built on the plan of the Temple on Mount Zion, which had an outer court through which the traffic of life used to pass, an inner court where men worshipped, and a Holy of Holies into which the High Priest entered alone.

He was rarely quite happy and spontaneous at business and committee meetings. The prospect of having to “chair” one would sometimes distract him from his work throughout the day until its hour came. It was not the business of administration that he found difficult and uncongenial. In his own way—often too meticulous—“he could put a thing through.” He generally knew the best way to execute what he wanted. He was quick to criticise incompetency. But the dealings with men of different stamp to himself which the conduct of business necessitated he found difficult. The formal etiquette of business did not come easily to him. The secular temper he felt incongruous in the councils of the church—that was his frequent comment. The unconscious asperity of speech which men of the world often use on committee jarred on him. He could not discuss his personal affairs without extreme embarrassment. His temper was warm, but it seldom came to the surface. In the atmosphere of discussion and conflicting opinion where geniality and humour were absent, he was ill at ease; he could state his wishes, but found it hard to argue on their behalf.

Men of affairs found him at times difficult to work with—not more difficult than he found himself and them. He was more

simple than they imagined. There is nothing the plain man finds harder to understand than temperament. He believed wholeheartedly in democratic government, but temperamentally he was suited for a committee of one. His inability to argue or to use diplomatic methods, and his prejudice in favour of frontal attacks was not as some supposed a form of imperiousness. He was autocratic only in the sense that, like Robertson, "he was the most inflexible person with all his morbid delicacy of feeling—an iron will impossible to move when it was fixed by principle." For an ideal or principle he would fight doggedly; other matters of administration he used to leave to others if he could trust their competency.

As the years passed he tended more and more to conduct difficult negotiations by letter. Committees so disturbed the equilibrium which was essential to his work that he began to withdraw from them as often as he could, and in view of their effects he was encouraged at home to do so. When he broke down finally, his doctors vetoed them altogether.

The subjects of his sermons were usually planned well in advance, so that on Monday mornings he knew what had to be done by the end of the week. Until Wednesday he was reading all the material that he had to hand on a subject, jotting down thoughts and phrases in pencil on odd bits of paper and the backs of envelopes. I do not think that he ever made an outline of a sermon on paper before starting to write. He absorbed his material, let his thoughts work vigorously on the subject, selected in his mind the chief thoughts that he wished to present and the general line of treatment, drafted in pencil one or two passages if he had an inspiration—and then began to write. With the writing, the plan of the sermon would become clear. If it did not, he would start again. If he still failed to "get a line," he would take up another subject or, when time pressed, fall back on or re-write an old sermon. He was a slow starter—the original impetus often came from a book.<sup>1</sup>

Quiet and freedom from interruption were a necessity. Once

<sup>1</sup> "I was staying with him in Hull one week," Mr. Vickery relates, "when he had to prepare a sermon on Sacrifice in Progress. 'I can't get a line, Vickery,' he said with a characteristic throw of the hand. I suggested a sermon of Scott Holland's in *Logic and Life*. This gave him his 'line,' and the sermon became one of his most powerful and characteristic." In revised form it was the sermon on "The Cost of Progress," preached at the Congregational Union Assembly in 1889 which created a great impression. In its mature form it is included in *God and Life*.

well started he wrote without hesitation and quickly. Thursday, Friday, Saturday, he worked at his desk most of the day ; he often would come down to his lunch silent and preoccupied and quickly rush up to his study again. On those days he would prefer to go for his walk alone. On Friday nights and Saturday he worked late. It was usually 1 a.m. or 2 a.m. on Sunday before he went to bed. He never did so until the morning sermon was finished and the evening one well advanced. Luckily, he slept well and did not require many hours.

He always wrote standing—at a sloping plain deal desk, with a green baize cover, which hardly allowed sufficient arm-space or room for other manuscripts. It was a copy of the kind that used to be supplied in the studies of Free Church theological colleges—really business clerks' desks—on the principle, one supposes, that although horses sleep standing, men as a rule do not. Hunter liked the freedom it gave. He could take a turn up and down the room without the commotion that is made by the pushing back of a chair. After he had reached sixty he began to feel the fatigue of standing. On his return from America he allowed himself to be persuaded to use a sitting desk, but the constraint of it was irksome, and Saturday night usually found him standing at his old desk. Even after he broke down in health he would return to it now and then.

He had no inclination or power to make himself comfortable. He could not sit easily in a lounge chair. If one entered his study, the odds were that one would find him in one of three attitudes. He might be standing at his desk writing. In that case one would be greeted with a gentle wave of the pen and "Hush, hush," or "Be quiet—run away"; "Go to bed." I have known him advise the last in the middle of the afternoon! If one demurred he would laugh and then become oblivious to one's presence. To write, he had to be alone.

Or he might be kneeling on one knee on the floor looking through papers and pamphlets. "What have you been doing this morning?" "Oh, turning over papers." And we could reckon that the exhausting exercise had been going on for some hours.

Or again, he might be sitting, in an arm-chair, true, but on its very edge, leaning forward with his elbows on its arms, reading, or making pencil notes. Behind him in the chair would be a stack of books. When tired of leaning forward he would lean back on

these. Even when it did not contain books, it was not a comfortable chair as arm-chairs go to-day. After he became an invalid in 1911 he was given an elaborate invalid's chair, but it always required one of his family to put him properly into it. He often quite unconsciously made a visitor uneasy by sitting upright on the edge of a chair while they were talking together. To the modern generation, habituated to comfort, the habit requires explanation. Possibly it developed because the chairs of his study were nearly always piled with books, and he had to sit on the edge because there was only the edge left to sit on.

And yet, as one lived with him, he did not strike one as being Spartan. His hardiness was not ostentatious—it did not become a gospel. He did not insist that his family should also sit on the edge of alluring arm-chairs—he did not bother how they sat. “Simple” is the epithet which fits most truly his way of life. He lived simply, whether his surroundings were simple or luxurious—simply, too, because the motive of his life was transparently single.

He collected a large library. At its greatest expansion, before he left Glasgow in 1901, and London in 1904, it numbered at least 10,000 volumes, and masses of papers and pamphlets in addition. There were few books in his library that he had not read or into which he had not dipped. And he was rarely at a loss to lay his hands on a book although the library was only arranged in very general subject-divisions.

It was a workman's library. Much of it was only of value to himself. Books were his tools. They helped him to quarry in his own mind. He did not buy rare books or editions, beyond a fancy for belles-lettres and pocket-leather editions while they were a novelty. He was not ambitious to have a fine library. He bought books for use; he hated them behind glass or protected in wrappers. He did no reviewing—one fruitful source in collecting a library. Many books he picked up in second-hand booksellers, or on stalls. He was well qualified to conduct a tour round the second-hand booksellers of London, or indeed, of Great Britain. The bulk of his library, however, was bought first-hand. There must have been some years when he spent £100 on books. His average expenditure remained high until he returned to Glasgow. After that time he curtailed his buying and confined it chiefly to religious literature.

Collected in this way his library was an exact index of his personal tastes and loyalties. His taste was in one aspect catholic ; within the limits of one language his library was particularly rich in general literature and literary criticism, biography, religious literature, theology, the philosophy of religion, ethics, sociology, economics, travel, history and classical fiction.

His prejudices were strong. Over the study door might have been written "A Library of human idealism." It was the moral idealists in religion and letters that attracted him. All the great Victorians were on his shelves, and hundreds of books upon them. He had many editions of Browning, Tennyson, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley, believing that one could not have too many copies of a good book. The minor poets of the same age and outlook were most generously represented. So were its moralists, political philosophers, historians and critics—Carlyle, Ruskin and Emerson, Froude, Macaulay and Green, John Morley, Matthew Arnold, J. A. Symonds, R. H. Hutton and many another. And then there were shelves full of books on Shakespeare, Dante and Goethe. To the Puritans in theology and verse he was respectful, but distant. He preferred George Herbert and his group. The eighteenth century was almost entirely unrepresented. Neither did the French writers attract. He was not a prude, but he was acutely sensitive to impurity or sexual laxity, and abhorred both. He admired George Eliot, but disliked the pessimism of Hardy. The cynics he would not tolerate, and refused to see the idealist behind the cynic in Shaw. The æsthetes bored him because they were not human ; and George Meredith because he was obscure. He could not understand the man who stated a conviction obscurely ; he suspected its strength. On account of obscurity he was sometimes impatient with St. John, especially according to Westcott. Himself, he had the clarity of a popular teacher who is at the same time a vigorous thinker. His moral passion prevented that "woolliness" which pervades the writings of the mystics. And yet he was a mystic—that was evident in his prayers and in his praying. But the preacher's instinct forbade the attempt to express the inexpressible in a sermon. The mysticism lay behind the uttered word.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> He agreed with an exclamation of Sabatier, "Alas for the man who has not in his inmost heart some secret which may not be spoken because it cannot be spoken, and because if it were spoken, it would not be understood." Paul Sabatier, the author of the *Vie de St. François*, was a warm admirer.



In the field of religious literature also the wideness of his sympathy and the strength of his prejudices were marked.

“ You will note blanks in the department of German theology ; but the truth is, I care little for the German theologians—with one or two exceptions I have not found them helpful ; they are deficient as a rule in spirituality and wide human sympathies. I had a full set of T. T. Clark’s *Theological Library*, but I sold it when I left York.”<sup>1</sup>

The worshipful spirit that sent him a pilgrim to the shrines of his heroes and teachers prompted him to hang the walls of his house with their portraits, and fill his shelves with their books and books about them. At one time, he had all the works of Erskine, Maurice, Baldwin Brown, John Caird, Macdonald, Stanley, Stopford Brooke, Martineau, and of course, Carlyle. Carlyle’s obscurities did not prevent his homage. In his youth, he read all that Carlyle had written, and always reckoned him to be Scotland’s greatest writer.

Then, again, there were subjects—the Psalms for instance—on which he would buy nearly every book that came to his notice without weighing its merits.

His library probably contained as complete and catholic a collection of contemporary sermon literature as would be found in a private library, and a large proportion of it was from American sources. Every school was represented, but he kept chiefly the books of those who showed a liberal tendency, or social sympathies or spiritual depth.<sup>2</sup> In consequence his knowledge of contemporary religious thought and teaching was exceptional. He would speak generously from first-hand knowledge of the books of obscure men in America and Britain. “ I often get most help,” he would say, “ from the men you call second-rate and from occasional articles in periodicals.”<sup>3</sup> This, indeed, was a feature of the library. Partly it was because he read to stimulate his own thinking. He liked to see how other preachers treated a subject. He bought such books on the inclination of the moment, attracted by the title, a single chapter, a sermon on a favourite text, or by the name of the author. He would skim through such a book quickly, and mark vigorously any passage he thought worth noting.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The British Monthly*, June, 1904 ; Ministerial Libraries, VI. “ Dr. John Hunter’s Library at the King’s Weigh House,” by J. A. Stoddart.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Letter to Rev. J. M. Connell. *Infra*, p. 270.

<sup>3</sup> When he came to dispose of many books, his natural inclination was to get rid of many standard works and keep many which others would have considered of no consequence.

What he called "my papers" formed one of the largest, though least comely, parts of his library. He used to read a number of periodicals, English and American, and carefully tear out any articles that interested him. He would also write out long quotations—several pages—into notebooks. He kept innumerable notebooks on various subjects. These papers and excerpts he massed in bundles. Time and again he looked through them and rearranged their contents according to subject. He did not hesitate to tear out of a book sermons or chapters on particular subjects and add them to the other papers. If he did not wish to spoil a book he would jot down on the back of a manuscript where other sermons, etc., on the same theme were to be found. These bundles of papers were not labelled, but they were usually bound up in an old MS. of his own, together with notes, and the whole tied with red tape. Before he started to write on a subject, or before he wrote a fresh sermon on a subject, he would "turn over," i.e. read through all the material that he had collected on it, and all that he had previously written on it.

At first glance he seemed an unmethodical and unsystematic worker—no files, no catalogues, manuscripts rarely dated, references of quotations rarely given. But as one examines these carefully tied-up bundles of papers, the residue of years of reading and writing and sorting, one is conscious of method, though simple and rough and ready.

Hunter enjoyed reading—especially biography, which formed the largest section of his library after sermon literature. As he grew older he tended to concentrate on the literature of religion, and more particularly the religion of experience.

For a man who read so widely he quoted sparingly though well. Copious quotation is the fault of a lazy or a too retentive mind. He had not a good memory for quotation, but he always knew where to find the quotation he wanted. And by his method of going over old material a quotation when once found was never lost.

His reading contributed richness and elegance to his thought, the depth was native. Not in vain had he studied to be quiet. In a high degree he had the power of sustained thought and meditation.

Power of meditation passes imperceptibly into the power to hold communion with God. Deep, constant, intimate communion

with God was his source of power and the great reality of his life. In the words of the Psalmist, all his fresh springs were in God. Again and again, as one entered his study, one got the impression of a man withdrawn into another world and wrapped in an invisible fellowship. It was not from anything that he said. No one could observe more absolutely than he the injunction of the Master, "Enter into thy inner chamber and having shut thy door, pray." On that side of his life he allowed no one to look; of it he said little. He went out alone to pray. He had the mystic's love of solitude, stillness and contemplation. One was never able to discover what was his discipline of prayer, though in his teaching he emphasised the importance of systematic habits, and now and then he would let drop remarks like one to the writer, shortly before he died, "I have prayed for Maurice morning and evening every day since he was killed." This side of his life was veiled.

Half of a passionately pensive soul  
 He showed us not the whole :  
 Who loved him best, they best, they only, knew  
 The deeps they might not view ;  
 That which was private between God and him ;  
 To others justly dim.

Men wise in spiritual things often recommend men who are entering the ministry to order their private devotional life independently of their work. Either through force of circumstance or choice Hunter did not do this. The subjects that he chose for his sermons month by month were the focus of nearly all his reading and meditation, in so far as these were systematic. There were some sermons which were written as much to help himself as anyone else. So, too, in the matter of prayer. He has left in manuscript some hundreds of prayers. The actual writing of prayers was a devotional exercise that he found very profitable. But they are all phrased for the public use, though at times autobiography is thinly veiled to those who knew the circumstances under which some of them were written.<sup>1</sup>

## II

On Sundays he spoke little and ate little until the day's work was over. He passed from study to church and back again, and only relaxed for a short time after the morning service. However

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *infra*, chap. xii. pp. 241-5.

late he had gone to bed the previous night he used to wake early, and liked everyone else to be up early. He usually had an hour in his study with his sermon and service book before setting out for church. In his York days he had formed the habit of walking to church at express speed, rushing past members of his congregation, looking neither to left or right, so as to be alone. Latterly in Glasgow, when he used the tram-car, he took one of his family to act as a buffer against the world. He wanted to think without distraction, particularly, on his prayer. His order of service allowed for an "extempore" prayer. But he never trusted to the inspiration of the moment. He wrote this prayer beforehand, and more or less memorised it. If he were much interrupted before the service began he would read it.

He liked to be in his vestry twenty minutes before the hour of the service, and did not like to be bothered with church business or visitors until afterwards, and he was quite insistent that he should have the ten minutes previous to the service quietly to himself. By this quiet preparation, from which he never departed, he entered into the spirit and attitude of worship. We could always tell from something in his look and gesture, as he came into the church, if he had not had those minutes entirely to himself. It enabled him to communicate from the outset to the congregation the worshipful feeling and experience. His prayers were addressed to God, and instinctively we had to look in the same direction. Every action, from the first moment when he knelt beside the Communion Table to the Benediction, every inflexion of his voice in reading and prayer was instinct with worship. I have not seen anyone who put more of reverence into the act of kneeling down. He gathered a great congregation into his church, not simply or chiefly by his sermons, but by a beautiful order of worship, touched by awe, humility, tenderness and a wonderful sense of human need in the presence of the Divine. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

He was, so one used to discover, entirely unconscious of himself and of his actions throughout a service, except when he was giving out notices, and for that reason he hated having to do so. From beginning to end he was "rapt." The only trace of natural shyness was the exceedingly quiet voice in which he commenced a service. As someone waggishly remarked, "Dr. Hunter seems to

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. Joseph Wood.

have a rooted objection to letting the congregation know the number of the first hymn."

Before the service, silent, preoccupied and strained, afterwards, if all had gone well, he used to be full of light-hearted talk and laughter; still disinclined to talk church business, but for quite another reason. He liked to walk home and talk on the way, unless he was behindhand with his evening sermon, or had an afternoon engagement.

Usually he wrote all Sunday afternoon, and rarely appeared for tea. When he had had a busy week, it was often a race against time. I have known him finish the final sentence in the vestry as the clock was striking the hour of service. But that was not from choice. Some of these sermons were most effective; delivered with the same powerful impetuosity with which they were written. Up to his last years in Glasgow he used to preach occasionally on Sunday afternoons in other churches. It was really too much for him, but there were one or two friends to whom he was unwilling to refuse this help.

The evening was like the morning; the same quiet preparation before the service, the same spiritual intensity, the sermon often longer and more declamatory. After the evening service he used often to be kept by men and women who wanted his advice. There were one or two who made a habit of it and would settle down to a long innings. His attempts to regain freedom were pathetically futile. He was much too polite. So we had to devise various stratagems to keep these friendly tormentors at bay, or if they had penetrated the defences to dislodge them.

It was often after nine o'clock before he got home—in later years he never went out to supper on Sundays—and then he relaxed.

### III

Creative work of such intensity was costly in its nervous recoil. Hunter too seldom allowed himself the rest and the outlets of recreation and refreshment nature demanded week by week. But nature will not be gainsaid. Unspent nervous reactions accumulate. In a letter already quoted, written in 1896, he said: "I get more easily depressed than formerly, and need encouragement more." This tendency was accentuated, as his letters show, in the following years, especially by the strain of his ministry in London. It never occurred to him to husband his strength. It is noticeable

how he passed almost without break from the excitement of farewells to the excitement of new beginnings.

Sir William Gairdner, the physician, wrote to him in 1901 :

“ I have always wondered *when* you were going to break down utterly at that marvellous rate of production that was characteristic of you, so far as I know, ever since you came to Glasgow.”

And again,

“ Of course your last weeks in Glasgow must be expected to be fully occupied, but I find on your programme for July and August eighteen full services, including two communions, in which you are either to take an exclusive or a principal part ; and knowing how much of pith and originality you put into each sermon, I frankly confess that it appears to me quite too much for one man.”

Some years later another medical friend, Professor McKendrick, advised him to shorten sail. His reply then and always was that he could work in no other way. No doubt he might have curtailed his engagements—to some extent he did—but the strain of preparation was more severe than that of preaching. It was the continued tension of the nervous system rather than physical strain that brought on heart trouble—though it was precipitated by physical strain. Physically he was amazingly tough.

“ The deeper the interest in his work,” wrote Stopford Brooke of F. W. Robertson in that classic biography of a preacher, “ the greater the excitement, and the greater the excitement the more morbid the reaction.” The reaction in Hunter’s case was not morbid. He was happy in his work. His optimism and humour saved him, except once or twice, when the tension became so acute that the smile faded and a breakdown seemed imminent.

With the preacher as with the artist his strength lies where his weakness also lies—in a sensitive temperament. The sensitiveness and impressionability which gave Hunter power in the pulpit, caused him suffering outside of it. And yet one would not have wished him to be less sensitive, that way greatness lay ; it was his cross and his glorying.

From the way that he worked, it is a wonder that he did not overtax his constitution sooner. It was the quiet home, the joy of the work, the congenial conditions for study, the summer holidays in Switzerland that made his output possible. Even holiday time was not complete vacation. He used to take a case stuffed with papers and books, and read and think and plan. He wrote many—most, perhaps—of his prayers sitting on some high alp alone.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PREACHER

“He was not only a thinker, but the thinker for Man. He strove always fervently to make the ideal real by connecting it with humanity.”

*Stopford Brooke of F. W. Robertson.*

“To bring men to find refuge and rest in Eternal God is the purpose and end of all Divine revelation, discipline and teaching: of all Christian ministries, and of all the ministries, gracious and severe, of human life.”

*De Profundis Clamavi, and Other Sermons, p. 314.*

#### I

THAT our little systems have their day and perish, no one realised more than Hunter. He began to preach at a time when science and criticism were shaking the theological systems which had stood for centuries: enlightened thinking men were wondering how far the destructive process would go. To fearful saints it seemed as terrifying and irresistible as did the great sweeps of the German armies during the War. If the ground be solid, every tide has its term. But was the ground solid? The old theology was founded on the assumption that all parts of the Bible were equally inspired and verbally inspired, and theologically its scheme of salvation rested on the historicity of the first chapters of Genesis. Popularly taught and popularly believed, the authority of the one rested on the authority of the other. The British philosophy of the previous age was a philosophy of irreligion. Its scepticism forced an antithesis between faith and reason, as it was then defined. John Henry Newman, after tossing on a sea of doubt, chose Rome; the old evangelicals buried their heads in the sand like the ostrich, and chose not to think outside the narrow limits of the conventional system. Theology was a system detached from any reasonable philosophical foundation, and from life. Meanwhile men and women who thought and read at all were perplexed and baffled by questions which they could not begin to answer and which their religious teachers would not. In the middle of last century, one is tempted to believe, there was more

serious reading and thinking voluntarily undertaken by the middle classes than at the present day, but it was rarely on the basis of a sound education or a sound appreciation of the principles of knowledge.

Hunter had a vivid sense of God—more real to him and incontrovertible than any other thing. Amid the wreck of creeds outworn, he set himself to find and articulate a philosophy of religion and life which would recognise the truth and reality of his experience and would stand four-square, however destructive the results of science and criticism. Having found it he preached it throughout his life. He had a growing mind; he lived during years when human thought was moving quickly; but in his early days he laid the foundations of his thought so amply and truly, with such prophetic insight, that he never had to relay them. In his intellectual development there is an organic unity; the accent was modified, the tone mellowed, the emphasis was changed, fresh ideas were grafted on, but from student days till the day of his death it was the same stock. In the history of the Christian pulpit there are many—far too many—who are saying the same things at seventy in the same way and with the same accent they were taught to say them at seventeen; and there are a few, and not undistinguished, who feel constrained to make “a right-about-face” in the middle of their course; but Hunter’s freshness in age and maturity in youth are remarkably rare.

Dr. A. W. Forrest, the late principal of the United Free Church College in Glasgow, is reported to have remarked, on reading Hunter’s volume of sermons, *God and Life*, that he was surprised to find that he could have preached every word of them himself. Marcus Dods, in a review in the *British Weekly*, wrote similarly. On this Hunter’s comment was, “It is they who have moved, not I.”

In Hunter’s formative period Biblical criticism was passing through its wrecking phase. The Tübingen school was crying not peace but a sword. The olive-bearing scholars of the English Church—Lightfoot, Westcott, Sanday—had not come forward. There was no balm in Gilead. It seemed likely that the final results of criticism would be more negative than seems so now. Hunter was influenced by the radical critics in so far that he was a little uncertain to what extent he might rely on the accuracy of a given text or story or incident; he felt that he had



to allow a wide margin. Further, he always regretted that he was hindered by poverty in boyhood, and by his preoccupation in theology and philosophy during student days, from making himself a good enough scholar—i.e. classic—to be a first-hand critic, and had in consequence to accept conclusions second-hand. This made him hesitate the more to stake much on the historicity of certain passages. He read the critics, compared them, formed his own conclusions, but was diffident in trusting them. In private, towards the end of his life, he confessed with some gratification that the reasoned conclusions of criticism approximated to the opinions that he had formed in other ways. As far as he trusted any school of scholarship, it was the cautious scholarship of the English school represented by Sanday.

“ Our little lives are rounded not with a sleep, but with God, and of every moment and experience of our lives we can say, as of every place, Lo, God is here.” The basis of his thought and teaching was the fact of man’s communion with God. It was on account of this that the theology of Maurice awoke immediate response from him, when, as a student, he first met it. God, His character, His dealings with men, and man’s relation to Him were to Hunter an inexhaustible theme. He was thrilled by the great theocentric sayings of the Bible, and he communicated the thrill in sermons which brought the listener into the Divine presence in an unforgettable way. When he let his thought gather round some great affirmation, like “ the Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms,” or “ The Living God,” or “ Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire before Thee,” or “ This is my God and I will praise Him, my Father’s God and I will exalt Him,” or the Aaronic Benediction, or “ the first and great commandment,” or Psalms like the 23rd or the 139th, one felt that he had entered intimately into the experience which lay behind the words of the text. And the memory of the actual words of his discourse would often be effaced by the sense of God’s reality and presence which he had induced. The richness of his treatment of a theme that can be stated in a short sentence was amazing. It was richness not of fancy, but of experience. His passion for God was an unquenchable passion. He viewed this simple theme from every angle of human thought and every mood of human experience. He was like the painter

captivated by some fine mountain-peak which he must see and paint from every possible position ; from the valleys beneath, from the slopes and summits of neighbouring hills, from far and from near, with a rich foreground and in naked relief, in every possible light, and in every variety of weather.

The influence of his sermons cannot be dissociated from the influence of the prayers that preceded them in public worship. His prayers vibrated with the passion for God, and were filled with an intimate sense of His Presence :

“ In peace and yet again in peace we lift our hearts to Thee the Eternal source of life and blessing. Lord of Light, shine Thou upon us. With Thee no shadow dwells. Take pity upon our perplexities. Irradiate us with Thy beauty, and help us to win that purity of heart which evermore sees God and discerns the way of duty. We, the erring children of Thy kingdom, confess our wandering from the paths of Thy Integrity. We acknowledge the weakness of our best purposes and the poverty of our faith. Yet Thy faithfulness and Thy love are changeless. O Thou who abidest evermore, to Thee do we return. Coming to ourselves we return to Thee. Out of our shame may we once more rise forgiven. Cleanse us and we shall be clean from every thought and wish for self, strengthen us and we shall be strong to work with Thee while the light shines for the fulfilling of Thy will upon the earth. Take from us the pettiness of our lives, that we may be used by Thee to the utmost limit of our power in whatsoever way Thou mayest direct us. Abide with us through all the days of our stay in this world. Accompany our faltering steps all the way, and in the hours of darkness and sorrow, after that we have suffered awhile, reveal Thyself to us, Thy goodness and Thy love even in the suffering.”

It was his preoccupation with God, his sense of the Divine friendship and approachableness, that led him to break violently away from the forensic theology that used to pass for orthodoxy. It was contrary to his own religious experience, and to what he believed was the truest teaching of the Bible. Along the same way he was led to dislike all formal theologies, old and new. It was not that he disagreed with the essential positions of the Nicene confession, but rather that he disliked its confident definition. The *Quicumque Vult* frankly irritated him (apart from its intolerance). It jarred on his soul like a filial impiety. The mind that could think and write like that was as strange to him as that of a man who could “ botanise on a mother’s grave.”

His Trinitarianism was never explicit; in his reaction from dogmatism he went back to the New Testament and was reluctant to define more closely than the Bible did. Had a theological superman—if one may allegorise—entered his study and said, “I can tell you everything about God there is to know,” his instinctive answer would have been, “I don’t want to know it.” The mystery of God was for him as worshipful as His apocalypse. The strength and grandeur, the beauty and attraction of the mountains are enhanced by the clouds that gather around them. He could speak with rare insight and eloquence on such subjects as the reserve of God, or from a text like “And clouds were round about Him.” “I belong to the Church of all the poets,” he once exclaimed.

“As we attain to the Christian point of vision, it is clear that God can and does show His goodness as much in concealing as in revealing things, in withholding knowledge as in imparting it. . . . The Divine concealments have a most beneficent use. Man needs to feel this sense of uncertainty, to have this consciousness of ignorance on many matters of deep concern. Though it is customary to deprecate the reserve of God, we ought to rejoice in it. . . . That we know only in part is one of the blessed things in the world. I would not even, if I could, know everything, for then the world would be like a squeezed orange—with no taste left in it any more. The mysteries of life are the basis of much of our happiness and good. The reserve of God is not arbitrary. His revelations wait on our development. The world has been arranged on such a large plan that there will be always mysteries in it. . . . Yes—it is, indeed, ‘the glory of God to conceal a thing.’”<sup>1</sup>

Again, he was not a man of the schools, and he did not speak to academicians, but to ordinary men and women. The unconscious philosophy of the man in the street to-day is so widely different from the philosophy which underlay and moulded patristic theology that the attempt to teach him Christian truth in terms of patristic theology results in tritheism, more or less crude. And this inevitable tendency to the worst of heresies used to be confirmed by a theology which made an unscriptural antithesis between the despotic wrath of the Father and the love of the Son.

Hunter passionately affirmed the unity of the Divine character—it was for him the primary meaning of the Incarnation. He declared that the Church owed a big debt to Christians of the

<sup>1</sup> From a sermon on the Reserve of God (Prov. xxv. 2), Jan. 21, 1912; cf. also Prayer quoted on page 244.

school of Martineau<sup>1</sup> for their insistence on the Unity and Christ-like character of God.

Hunter did not belong to a credal Church and so was under no obligation to expound Christian truth in the phraseology of a bygone philosophy. As the years passed and he became more and more master of his thought, he became more and more emancipated from the old phraseology. The sermons of his York days look to the eye more orthodox than those of his later years, but in reality they are not. The developments in popular religious teaching during this century surely justify his method. The language of modern thought makes possible a truer and more adequate statement of the doctrine of the Incarnation than did the Hellenic philosophy with its distinction of substances.

He was not uninterested in the philosophy of religion, he read very thoroughly and widely in all branches of the subject; but his approach to it and interest in it were like the Hebrew thinkers', practical. He learnt more from the Bible than from the philosophers. Moreover, his thought was influenced by the fact that Sunday by Sunday he had to face an audience of people who wanted help in the business of life. It was a discipline—one that philosophers unfortunately lack—which would prevent any but the most unsympathetic from soaring into the realm of the abstract. Thus a discourse on Providence did not begin from a desire to solve an intellectual problem, but with a picture of acute spiritual doubt—of a man in the position of Job asking passionately, "Does God care?" And a discourse on the Omnipresent God ended with an urgent appeal that men should "practise the presence of God" in their daily life.

Two quotations from the latter sermon will illustrate another important element in his teaching about God :

"It is only when a man sees and finds God in himself that he is able to discern God in outward things. Having seen and found God in the silence of his own being, he goes out and finds God in the world of Nature and in the world of man—finds Him in every law and force, in every cranny of the universe, in the light and in the darkness, in the blowing clover and in the falling rain—finds Him wherever there is life . . . wherever there is power or order or beauty or goodness. Whatever is dark and hard and

<sup>1</sup> Martineau always refused to be denominated Unitarian. Significantly, the phrase, the Christlikeness of God, popular with the orthodox to-day, was coined, I believe, by a "Unitarian" minister, the Rev. H. Solly.

evil in Nature is only so much as is not yet completely shaped into the plan of God, for the world is still in the process of making, never finished, but always finishing. And it is not only in the outward universe that the sensitive soul sees and finds God, but in human life, in the law of progress which is leading the race on to the victory of good over evil, in every noble man or woman who touches life to finer issues, in the moral and religious tendencies which are part of the very constitution of man, in every human affection, pity and sympathy that more and more shall bind the human family into mutual service, fraternity and love. . . .”

“The Immanence of God in Nature and Man is one of the great thoughts of our time, but though many are just discovering it, yet it is the truth that lies at the heart of Christianity and which many before Christ’s day rejoiced to know. There are not a few passages in Hebrew prophecy and poetry which describe—if I may use the language of the schools—how God is at once immanent and transcendent, how He is in all things yet not included in their sum. But the general Jewish mind of Christ’s time conceived Deity in magnified and majestic human shape, on a distant throne beyond the seventh heaven, from which He managed His world by sending an angel here and an archangel there, occasionally interfering to heal or hurt, but as a rule afar off. Against this severance of God from His world and His children the Saviour made a steady protest. His message was : God is here ; He is now ; He is your Father and you are His children ; He and you cannot live apart ; He is with you and you are with Him, yea, He is in you and you are in Him.”<sup>1</sup>

Hunter was able to appropriate much of the language of pantheism, and yet avoid its fundamental error, because his conception of God was strongly moral and personal. His thought about God was Christo-centric. Lovingly, carefully, he traced the Portrait in the Gospels and then wrote underneath—This is the character of God. “Christianity as Christ taught it” was what he tried to preach—and in that title he meant by the teaching of Christ not only Sermon on the Mount and Parable, but also the Upper Room, Gethsemane and the Cross. “Christianity is Christ,” he declared.

He welcomed historical criticism, because it made Christ the standard of judgment, and he was at pains to familiarise his congregations with its principles and results. He was quick to point out that a particular verse in the Old Testament or its setting reflected a sub-Christian conception of God. But his normal

<sup>1</sup> Sermon on Ps. cxxxix. 5-12.

practice was to read the teaching of the Gospel into the old words. The exposition of the twenty-third Psalm, published posthumously under the title *Faith in Stormy Days*, illustrates very fairly his practice.

If spiritual experience was the foundation of his teaching, the idea and the fact of the Incarnation was its corner-stone.

“The supreme fact of historical religion is God in Jesus Christ. His personality was alive with His message, identified with it and inseparable from it. God in Him was not only taught, but incarnate. . . . St. Paul speaks of Christ as the fullness of the Godhead bodily, that is all of God that can be revealed in a single personality and a single life. At some places on the west coast of Scotland we stand at what appears to be a small lake enclosed with hills : but it is not a lake, only the head of a long inlet from the sea, which stretches into the land for miles. Of the main ocean we see nothing : we see only the sheet of water at our feet. But that piece of water is one with the ocean, and beats with its pulses and is swept by its storms. It is, as it were, the ocean manifested to us amid the surrounding hills. Such is the life of Jesus Christ in the history of our race ; it is the revelation within the limits of human life and character of the life and character of God. . . .

“The Christlikeness of the character of God is not a truth we have yet deeply and widely grasped. We have found it easier to think of the Son as Divine than of the Father as human. The Master might still say to His disciples, ‘Have I been so long time with you, and yet you have not seen the Father in Me?’ . . . A poor dying woman once said to me, ‘Now that I know God is as good as Jesus Christ I can die in peace.’ In her own way she had seized the very essence of the Gospel of the Incarnation. . . . In the feeling, disposition, and attitude of Jesus to the weak, the sorrowful, and the sinful, we see revealed the feeling, disposition, and attitude of God. What Jesus was to the little children of Palestine, God is to all lowly things. What Jesus was to the bereaved sisters of Bethany, God is to every saddened heart and household. What Jesus was to the traders in the courts of the Temple, God is to all who try to serve Him and mammon. What Jesus was to the heart-broken woman who was a sinner, God is to every sincere penitent. What Jesus was to His murderers in His prayer of unfathomable pity upon the Cross, God is toward all who scorn and reject His love.”<sup>1</sup>

Those who amuse themselves by fitting old party labels to modern thinkers would probably call Hunter a modalist. Of all

<sup>1</sup> *God and Life*, pp. 104-7, from Sermon on “The Vision of a Man.” In its broad sweep, firm outline and clear expression, one of his greatest discourses.

the patristic theologies that is the one to which *mutatis mutandis* he most nearly approximates. But in this case the *mutatis mutandis* invalidates the identification. So much water has flowed through the bridges that the old landmarks have been washed away and the old maps are therefore misleading. The cardinal tenet of the Sabellian exposition of the Trinity was that God is a Trinity not in the essential relations of Deity within itself, but in relation to the world outside and to mankind. Man, Hunter said in effect, can only know in part, and the part of God which he can know is perforce God in His manward aspect. The rest is mystery. An interesting subject of speculation, yes, but not for dogmatism. He protested as passionately against the ecclesiastical dogmatists, who claim for their speculative doctrines the same binding authority that belongs to practical beliefs, as Jesus protested against the Pharisees who claimed the same binding authority for their minute refinements on the Law that belonged to its weightier moral principles. He was as much out of sympathy with some liberal theologians as with the traditionalists at this point.

“I have said over and over again that the great central thing in religion is the soul’s experience of God. And one requires to say this over and over again. For the fundamental heresy of the Christian Church, without regard to sect, has been the substitution of a statement of belief for a spiritual experience—the experience of God. This heresy began in the second century and is now universal. One does not even escape from it when one gets among those who are called ‘new theologians.’ . . . The statement of belief, necessary no doubt, is the property of the intellect, but the essence of religion is the communion of the individual soul with the spirit and life of God.”<sup>1</sup>

In Hunter’s treatment of great subjects like the Meaning of the Cross, Immortality, the Trinity, the drawing is firm up to a point, but the edges melt in mist. The unknowable and the invisible were back of the visible and the knowable. He had not read Carlyle for naught. The submerged was greater in mass than that which was visible to the eye.

“The power of the great truths of religion lies in their infiniteness, and that means their indefiniteness as far as the intellectual statement of them is concerned. The objection to formal statements of belief is not that they express too much, but that they

<sup>1</sup> From a Sermon on the “Soul.” Dec. 5, 1909.

express too little. No definitions of sin can utter one tith of what there is in the experience of one to whom God's will concerning human life has been revealed. . . . No definition of the Christian Atonement or Reconciliation can express the experience of the soul that has been really helped by Jesus Christ out of the region and shadow of ignorant and guilty dread of God and for whom the burden of suspicion and fear has been rolled away and whose exultant song, 'Thanks be to God, Who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ,' seems all too feeble an expression of the gratitude and joy of the heart."<sup>1</sup>

He felt acutely the contrast between the agnosticism of Jesus and the dogmatic definitions of His theological disciples. He was deeply impressed by the "silences of Jesus," by His reserve and reticence, as well as by the concreteness of His "theological" teaching. Broadly speaking, he felt that the distinction between practical vital theology and speculative theology was coterminous with the distinction between Biblical and post-Biblical theology.

He was not free from inconsistency, and the colour and emphasis of his teaching have to be considered in relation to the age in which he worked and the forms of religious thought from which he was reacting. One illustration will perhaps suffice. He had a strong objection to the orthodox practice of addressing petitions to Christ. His reasons were largely those of Bishop Colenso, but more than he knew it was because the practice was associated in his mind with a school of thought which made a real distinction of character between God and Christ, and with a school of devotion which bred a small view of God and Life and ran to sentimental excess—a form of spiritual indulgence that he could not abide.

" . . . Prayer addressed to the Father through the Son was the devotional usage of the first three centuries of Christianity. In the Book of Devotional Services which we use in our worship here, all the prayers are directed to the Father in strict accordance with our Lord's express teaching. A sharp line is drawn between our revering and aspiring and communing with the spirit of Jesus as expressed in our hymns and that hiding our lives with Christ in God which alone is properly Christian prayer. . . . I believe Christian people differ in the object of prayer more in the application of names than in reality. . . . I believe that the sincerest worshippers of the Father may find in that worship all that satisfies the devotional wants and sentiments of those who pray to Saints and Virgin and to Christ as a Being standing apart from

<sup>1</sup> From Sermon on "Things which cannot be spoken." 1 Peter i. 18.



God. Yet I must say in all charity that only as we pass clearly and consciously and intelligently through all ministries and mediations into the Father's Presence and pray as our Lord taught us to pray, are we quite beyond the reproof of those other words of Jesus, 'Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship. Behold the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.'"<sup>1</sup>

In Hunter's teaching the Incarnation was not an isolated and wholly miraculous event, but rather the supreme, and therefore unique, illustration of the most precious law of the spiritual life, supernatural because the natural life is shot through by the supernatural. God with us, the unity of the Divine and human spirit, the immanence of God in human life and history—these form the basis of the pyramid of which the Incarnation is the apex.

"We can find no better way of approaching God than the way of the Hebrew prophets and poets—through man to God. The highest ideal of human character is ever the image of the invisible God. Humanity is our sole test of truth in the moral sphere. . . . The Divine perfection is the illimitable extension of the qualities of our moral life—the completion of the circle of whose vast sweep our spiritual being marks a few degrees. . . . Man can take no measure higher than himself. . . . When we go to Jesus with the problem of the ages, 'What is God?' we find at the root of His teaching this simple idea of the essential identity of human and Divine nature. There are not two kinds of goodness in the universe. . . . It was said of Thomas Erskine by one who knew him intimately: 'When I think of God I think of that man, and when I think of that man I think of God.' . . . It is in this way the law of mediation works. It was substantially in this way the first disciples found God through Jesus Christ. . . . It is only when we perceive and realise that God and man are essentially of one nature, that the Divine is not unlike the human, but only the human seen in its source and perfection, that we begin to know and feel the significance of the Christian revelation. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

"And as Christ was, so are His followers to be in the world. Christian Church and Christian ministry exist to bring man to God. Church and Bible, sacrament and creed, faith and experience are not the refuge. They only fulfil their work when they lead us to God, and leave us to find our 'all in all' in Him. When will men understand that they do not require to be protected from God, and that God Himself is their protection? Superstition, under

<sup>1</sup> From a Sermon on St. Luke xi. 1, one of a course of five sermons on "Prayer," dated 1916.

<sup>2</sup> *God and Life*. Sermon on "The Vision of a Man," pp. 98, 104.

Christianity, as well as in pagan times, has one common characteristic discovered through all its forms—to keep God away from man, to strengthen that dread and horror of God which dwells in every spiritually undeveloped and unenlightened soul. . . . There is no refuge from God but in God. The God whom Jesus Christ revealed is Himself our Refuge and our Salvation. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

If this interpretation of spiritual life is true, then it follows, said Hunter, that history is all of one piece. The laws which hold to-day held in the days of ancient Israel and Apostolic Church. This indeed is the philosophic basis of the modern historical approach to the Bible. Human life is the same to-day as yesterday, and the Holy Spirit is the same to-day as yesterday, and it follows not that one man is as good as another, or one age as good as another, but that the methods of God’s dealings with men are essentially the same then and now. The Spirit that spake by the prophets still speaks to the Church to-day. Inspiration is a universal fact in human life; actual in all ages and countries. Down the centuries and across the world God speaks to those who draw near to Him. The Bible is not belittled because one recognises the Light in the world; and the importance of the moral life is not belittled when one recognises the Divine source of the inspiration of artist and craftsman, poet and musician, scientist and scholar, thinker and man of affairs.

Hunter’s practice and teaching were a grand vindication of the modern method of Bible study. He did not pay it lip-service—he thought the phrase “Word of God” positively misleading—but he revered it, pored over it, searched it, meditated on it, studied it, mastered the letter and absorbed its spirit as completely and as humbly as any saint of ancient or of Puritan days. A teacher of the classics, who was an occasional worshipper at Trinity Church, remarked that what struck him most in Dr. Hunter’s preaching was his knowledge of the Bible and the appositeness of his quotations.

Equally remarkable was the freshness—and boldness—of his interpretation. It was not fanciful, but profound, and often extraordinarily illuminating; sometimes the result of his own spiritual and human insight, sometimes, no doubt, the result of wide reading. “Like the true artist he was, he firmly gripped his

<sup>1</sup> *De Profundis Clamavi*, p. 318, from the Sermon on “The Eternal God thy Refuge.”

text and got away behind the conventions and traditions that had overlain it. Along with the sturdiness, what impressed you throughout the exposition was the sheer common sense and sanity of the teaching. One marvelled why this plain and rational way of putting the matter had not been self-evident all along."<sup>1</sup> Apart from other qualities, his sermons on incidents of Old Testament history or the life of Christ, Old Testament characters, the Psalms or Parables, were intensely interesting and vivid. The Bible for him was *the* Book of life and revelation. And he would have deplored as sadly as the most ardent verbal inspirationist the prevailing tendency among professing Christians to give up the old habit of Bible reading.

"His was not a religion with moral interests and sequels attached to it," said Principal Forsyth, in his noble tribute,<sup>2</sup> "but one intrinsically and overwhelmingly moral, from the heart to the end moral—mystically moral." His kinship with the Hebrew prophets was close. Like them he loved beauty as the vesture of moral truth; like them he worshipped God in the beauty of holiness; like them he regarded history as the text-book of the Divine discipline and human life as the province of God's rule, and like them he called men to a warfare from which there is no discharge. He belonged by more than one attachment to the goodly fellowship of the prophets. No preacher of his day spoke with greater moral cogency and passion. He could not speak on any subject without ultimately getting through to its moral issue. His lectures on literary subjects were all sermons.

He enjoyed the militant metaphors of St. Paul, and held up to young men and women the picture of life as an endless battle between good and evil, love and selfishness, within and without the soul, on earth and in heaven.

". . . All human progress has been through conflict. The law of conflict is the law of growth." "The joy of life is the joy of progress." "Yesterday's virtue will not suffice for to-day. To keep what we have won, we must never be off guard. The will to do the holy right must be strengthened by constant discipline. Not to go forward in the moral life is to fall behind. . . . The force of true and righteous living is no doubt cumulative; . . . yet no man can ever afford to live at ease upon the accumulation of his past strivings.

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. David Dickie, D.D., of St. Luke's Parish Church, Glasgow.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *infra*, p. 289.

“ . . . It sometimes seems as if we were losing sight of the militant character of the Christian life. Our fathers were accused of belonging to the ‘Hard Church,’ but we are in danger of falling into the ranks of the ‘Soft Church.’ . . . The easy and pleasant way is not the way of Christ. In no age has the Christian life been an easy life. It has been always and everywhere an enduring of hardness ; and in this modern age it is more than ever the carrying of a cross and the fighting of a fight.”<sup>1</sup>

He had that knowledge of human motive and of the complex of personality which is part of the equipment of a writer of fiction and drama. He appealed to the universal in Man. He had power to reveal men to themselves—to compel a man to strip the flattering guises from his soul, and see it as God sees it. But his touch was tender and uplifting. He would leave no soul in Hell.

*Μετανοείτε ἤγγικεν γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.* One has seen him stamp with wrath, “Ye fools and blind, the kingdom of heaven is all about you, and yet you cling to your sordid, selfish ways.” But more often it was a pleading, compassionate voice that only a very hard heart could shut out—a gospel of renewal and repentance to a new life and a better. The cynicism of a Shaw or the gloom and fatalism of the Calvinist repelled him. As a method of inducing repentance it was, so he felt, bad psychology. Moreover, it was not the original message of Jesus.

“The sense of sin is not healthy in its influence when it fails to receive any hopeful interpretation ; when it breeds morbid and despairing thoughts of ourselves and God, of life, here and hereafter. It is not good to live in an atmosphere of self-reproach, self-distrust and fear. Despair is fatal to all high and sustained endeavour. We are saved by hope.”<sup>2</sup>

Hunter was by temperament and conviction an optimist.

Into a morn-red sea does his sail sweep,  
A sea not dim in twilight, flushed with dawn.

The background of his moral teaching was heaven and not hell ; the keystone of his theology was the potential divinity of man, not man’s depravity. He believed that the scales were weighted on the side of good.

“ . . . a month or two before my ordination at York, I preached in the little Independent chapel (at Banchory), and Dr. Duncan was one of my congregation. After the evening service

<sup>1</sup> *God and Life. The Holy War*, pp. 117, 121, 127, 138-9.

<sup>2</sup> *De Profundis Clamavi*. Sermon on “What must I do to be Saved,” p. 52.

we had a long walk. . . . While thanking me for my juvenile discourse, he thought there was one statement in it which longer and larger experience would correct. I had said that it was more difficult for a man fairly well-born and well-circumstanced to go downwards than to rise upwards. He had more to resist, for the powers and influence in the world and in the soul (for good) were more and greater than those on the side of evil. My friend's prophecy is still unfulfilled. My early conviction has grown with my growth."<sup>1</sup>

It was in this belief that he differed radically from the older theological systems, and earned the censure of those who think there can be no effective gospel of salvation that dispenses with the Fall, the Devil, Hell—the appeal to self-interest, and the substitutionary or penal theory of Atonement.

But his optimism was not superficial or blind. Of optimists of this type he once said :

“ They never find it difficult to believe in a God who is ‘ good to all ’ because of the safe distance between their lives and the worst forms of woe. They study the struggle for existence in evening dress. They are outside the real stress and strain of the world, and a pleasant view of things is not unnaturally the first article of their creed. . . . But we do not want faith in the goodness of God which cannot consist with the frankest and fullest recognition of all the real and apparent evil of the world. Much of the current belief in the goodness of life is the belief of men, who because they themselves wear shoes imagine that the whole world is carpeted with leather and who make the universe a copy infinitely enlarged of their own well-clad, well-fed condition. . . . We are all too fond of projecting ourselves upon an infinite scale and of arguing the worth or unworth of life from our own good or evil fortune. . . . He is not a true and brave soul for whom it (the beneficent aspect of existence) is not supplemented by some knowledge of the darker, harsher side of nature and life.”<sup>2</sup>

Hunter was a monist. He left Satan among the sons of God. He was also a believer in progress—that life was a process of education whose term was Christ.

“ In the Eden of innocence every child is born. In its life there is an element of beauty such as enters into all the processes of Nature. But we cannot remain children. . . . To be not only naturally good, but ethically good, is the goal of our life. Innocence is not purity. . . . In the Eden parable the loss of the

<sup>1</sup> Appreciation of Dr. Duncan (cf. *supra*, p. 8). Dec., 1908.

<sup>2</sup> From a Sermon on Psalm lxxiii. ; March, 1915.

innocence of ignorance is an onward step in human development. The expression 'Adam's fall' is not Biblical. It was a fall upwards—a rise in the scale of being."<sup>1</sup>

"The sublime affirmation, 'God made man in His own image,' is prophecy, not history. . . . It is the last and not the first Adam that bears the image of the heavenly. The manifestation of the sons of men as the sons of God is not the starting-point, but the goal of human progress. History is the story of the making of man in the Divine image."<sup>2</sup>

Universal redemption was to him a certain deduction from the Gospel of the Divine Fatherhood and the omnipotence of Love, but it was no easygoing sentiment. He envisaged the whole of life, in this world and the next, as a school where the discipline is not arbitrary, but homogeneous.

"We reap what we sow. Every moral offence has its moral punishment; every selfish act, every base surrender to appetite, every concession to greed, every triumph of the anti-social passions—has its instant and invisible effect in character. It sets in motion the corruption of the higher nature."<sup>3</sup>

"We bear and must bear the punishment of our sins. The remission of sin is not the remission of punishment. It is by this severity of discipline God makes us see the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Justice and mercy are eternally one. Justice is beneficent, and the retributive forces are redemptive. . . . The man truly awakened and enlightened wants to be delivered from the power of evil affections and evil habits, to be saved from his infirmities and sins, even though it be by fire. . . . Let us not be deceived. There is no other way by which a man can be saved from sin, except by ceasing to be a sinner. Men not even decently moral are often heard rejoicing in salvation on the ground of certain beliefs and emotional experiences; but they are hardly in the way of being saved—only inflated with a vain and foolish confidence. Let us not even dare to speak of being saved if we are still the willing victims of bad passions and tempers, of corrupt desires, of inordinate affections, of mean prejudices and false judgments."<sup>4</sup>

And again in the passionate appeal which closes the sermon :

"Thank God there is no escape from the Divine predestination to salvation; but by our persistent neglect we are strengthening our baser nature and life, and making the work of our salvation

<sup>1</sup> Sermon on "Why Temptation?"—"I was alive without the law once." Dec. 6, 1891.

<sup>2</sup> *De Profundis Olamavi*. "The Atonement," p. 107.

<sup>3</sup> *God and Life*, p. 131.

<sup>4</sup> *De Profundis Olamavi*, pp. 53-4, "What must I do to be Saved?"

harder and harder—dooming ourselves to be saved so as by fire.”<sup>1</sup>

As the passages already quoted in this chapter suggest, he did not always agree with the conventional standard in valuing sins. He did not profess to be able to separate the sheep from the goats.

“ We look out on the world and in the lives and characters of men we see good and evil so subtly intermingled that we find it difficult to believe that any honest and firm line of distinction between them can be drawn. . . . With the development of civilisation human character becomes less simple and more complex. . . . In our moral judgments we are too disposed to forget the complexity and many-sidedness of human nature, and to look upon it as much simpler and more homogeneous than it is.”<sup>2</sup>

At the same time he believed that every life had its dominant motive and tendency—and he urged the importance of self-knowledge as the one corrective of hypocrisy and self-deception. The criterion of Christ was Love. If men were faithful with themselves they would discover that their motives and impulses could be reduced to two categories—the selfish and the unselfish. This, he believed, was the test to which our lives were being submitted in the judgment of Christ.

“ By His preaching of a life of sacrifice and love as the divine life of man He sifted out from the careless and the selfish those finer spirits who had the courage to obey His call. There was also another way in which He judged men. He flashed upon them the light of His own goodness and mercy and pity and made them judge themselves.”<sup>3</sup>

Again, he hammered home the long-neglected truth in the teaching of Jesus, that salvation was a corporate experience and that the individual was saved only as part of the great society.

“ Vain, indeed, O man, is it to boast that you are saved while your brethren are at a disadvantage in the struggle for existence and in the attainment of good ; vain to boast that you are saved while your business life, professional life, social and public life are full of all manner of injustice and wrong, of unbrotherliness and ungodliness. Saved !—while you live what on the whole is a self-seeking life. Saved !—while society is unsaved. We are not solitary units—our life is bound up with that of our fellows. The salvation of all is necessary to the salvation of each ; and the salva-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> Sermon on “ The Sheep and the Goats.” Glasgow University, Feb. 17, 1901.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

tion of each to the salvation of all. This private isolated idea of salvation is selfish, unspiritual, inhumane, unchristian. The salvation of Christ is essentially a social salvation. The less we think of ourselves in a separate way, as isolated from our fellows, the more we give ourselves to helping our brethren, to the good of our kind, to the large interests of the world, the more do we hasten that salvation in which all are sharers, the more do we truly save ourselves—find, that is, through the Christian self-surrender, through the Christian enthusiasm for truth and justice and right and good, for God and all God's children—that which we seem to cast away: a deeper, richer, more powerful, more commanding personal life—the free, full life of the sons of God.”<sup>1</sup>

Hunter was an exponent of what used to be called in the nineteenth century Christian Socialism, and now, more usually, Social Christianity or the Gospel of the Kingdom. Indeed, it was this aspect of his teaching (and his theological restatement) which drew most public attention during the greater part of his ministry. In 1892 his friend, the Rev. A. J. Griffith, wrote to him from Australia: “. . . It is time you issued a volume of sermons. . . . Men are hungering just now for nothing more than to be told how to manage business and use wealth in Christ's way. Economic questions must have the light of Christ thrown upon them. Upon these and also upon social requirements and duties you can speak with wonderful clearness and power. . . . *Do publish.* Heaps of fellows would be immensely grateful to you. . . .”

When he first went to Glasgow his preaching on the social implications of the Gospel was a new type of teaching. It was not fashionable when he preached it—it can hardly be called popular in suburban churches even to-day, although it has many exponents and its literature grows almost daily. But the weakness of much of the social Christianity of our time is that it is social and little else. It does not therefore kindle and liberate the deepest and most potent forces of the soul. Hunter struck an almost perfect balance between a social and a theocentric gospel—between the horizontal and the vertical aspects of religion. His definition of true religion<sup>2</sup> was the two commandments of Christ's golden rule, and with supreme power he demonstrated the logic of the causal link—“and the second is like.” The dynamic of his social teaching was not simply or chiefly the vision of the new Jerusalem, or pity

<sup>1</sup> *De Profundis Clamavi*, pp. 57-8.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Sermon on “The Simplicity and Breadth of True Religion,” in the volume *God and Life*.



for human suffering, or anger at human injustice. The social Gospel, as he learned it from Christ, was thrilling because it sprang from and was permeated by the sense of spiritual reality—the Kingdom of Heaven—and the passion for God and the love of Christ, as the Guide, Redeemer, Friend and Judge of man.

When the catastrophe of the War shattered our too easy political optimism, it was to these Godward aspects of the spiritual life that he turned to find and give comfort and hope. Frail in body, often faltering in speech, shadow of his former strength, but with spiritual eye undimmed, he drew back for a space the veil that divides eternity from time. To the awakened and discerning spirits among his disciples throughout his ministry that was always the gift for which they most rejoiced.

Through F. D. Maurice he learnt the great thought of St. John's interpretation of the Gospel—that Eternal Life is not a prolongation of time, but is here and now to the believing, aspiring heart. The Christian life is not one that is lived in the world to-day and to-morrow in heaven, but, as he quaintly put it, in both worlds at one time. In a materialistic age and a commercial environment he sought to make the spiritual world more real to busy men and women, to help them to realise "the Kingdom of Heaven" within themselves, to show them the ladder that is always set up from earth to heaven for those who have eyes to see, to mediate to them the riches of spiritual knowledge that are in the catholic Church, and when death cast a shadow over their homes, to lift them into the blessed communion of the saints.

There is a line of Mrs. Browning's which expresses the kind of uplift that he gave to many who listened to him :

. . . I, who thought to sink,  
Was caught up into love, and taught the whole  
Of life in a new rhythm.

## II

Hunter published comparatively little. He was too busy preaching. Moreover, the sermons that he would naturally wish to publish were those that he liked to preach up and down the country. He knew that a sermon was more effectively delivered from the pulpit with the passion of personality in it than cold on the printed page. The time that he might have given to preparing

his sermons for publication he spent in preaching and lecturing. He felt "called" to be a preacher, not a writer.

Another reason why he published little was that he was diffident. "He had that pride which all true craftsmen share. He used to say that a sermon had done its work when it had been preached, and that usually its style and occasion unfitted it for publication."<sup>1</sup> That was less true of his sermons than of most. The two considerable volumes that he did publish<sup>2</sup> are, as the Principal of Mansfield once said, very complete essays in the fundamental doctrines and principles of Christianity. They represent very fairly his theological position, the range of his preaching, and his method. They hardly represent, however, the sermons that he gave Sunday by Sunday to his own congregations. *Faith in Stormy Days* does this more nearly; but before his published works become truly representative of his teaching they would have to be supplemented by a volume of sermons on the Gospels, another on his moral and social teaching, and another of sermons and addresses on the spiritual life—prayer, meditation and inspiration. The little volume entitled *The Angels of God and Other Papers*, published in 1898, is an example of the beautiful little meditations that he gave on week-nights during Advent and Lent.

He promised many volumes—the earliest was announced by the *Christian World* in 1882, on "Old Truths Restated." Publishers made him tempting offers, but in vain. Mr. Robert Maclehose of Glasgow said latterly that he had been compelled to give him up as hopeless. It was not for want of pressure and entreaty that he did not publish more.<sup>3</sup> When he left Glasgow in 1901 he received a hundred letters and more asking him to leave behind him, as it were, a volume of discourses. Unfortunately at the end of his life, when he had the leisure, the War came and he had not the strength.

His style of preaching was classical; it was before the ascendancy of the conversational style of modern preaching.

"It was on the tradition of the somewhat florid eloquence of the older Nonconformist Divines that Dr. Hunter's pulpit style

<sup>1</sup> Foreword to *Faith in Stormy Days*, p. ix.

<sup>2</sup> *De Profundis Clamavi* in 1908; *God and Life* in 1910.

<sup>3</sup> He used, however, frequently to send extracts from sermons to the daily papers and the weekly religious Press, when the subjects were those that he wished to bring before as wide a public as possible.

was modelled ; he mastered it and brought it to perfection, and in this case the style revealed the man. In his hands it became an instrument for virile and direct speech, as well as profound emotion."<sup>1</sup>

When he started to write he took a large canvas and worked out his theme amply and with careful detail. He generally had an elaborate and masterly introductory section. Reading a printed sermon one gets the impression that his style was Pre-Raphaelite, though not meticulously ; listening to the same sermon, so urgent and rapid was his utterance, the style seemed almost Turneresque. If he had read slowly and monotonously his sermons would have lost their effect—and would have lasted an unconscionable time. His style was really architectonic. The paragraphs were carefully built up. Each paragraph had its crisis. In succeeding paragraphs he massed his points till the conclusion became inevitable and—usually intensely practical—it fell like a sledge-hammer.

While his sentences were often epigrammatic, the argument moved slowly. Like the rhythmic style of the Hebrew poets he would repeat a thought in several different ways, turn it round, as it were, and suggest its implications before passing on. And the paragraphs stood in the same relation to one another as did the sentences in a paragraph. He repeated the master-thought of a sermon again and again in its course.

And his method of delivery made the style enormously effective. If one statement of a thought, one application of a truth left the listener cold, he was fired by the second or third. This was one secret of his wide appeal—there was something in his sermons for everybody.<sup>2</sup> Passing sentences opened up long vistas. The main thoughts of one sermon reappeared in the detail of the next. His figures, like those of the Italian painters of the Middle Ages, were set against an open landscape. The most generic impression that his sermons left on a listener was perhaps—"Now I know—my feet are set in a large place."

The language was simple and strong. If he were tired it sometimes lacked colour. But normally the flowing period was balanced by epigram. The style was rhetorical, of course, and

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. T. M. Watt, M.A., Assistant Minister of Trinity Church, Glasgow, from 1911-13.

<sup>2</sup> This style has made it difficult to find the kind of quotation required for this chapter. The passages that have been quoted—though they have been cut down and abbreviated of a phrase here and there—reveal the quality of style referred to.

suiting to his delivery and nobody else's. He avoided scrupulously both vulgar and academic jargon. He would prefer a relative clause to an abstract word. There was no obscurity in his meaning; the language was concrete, Biblical—clear because his thought was clear, beautiful often because his thoughts were often beautiful. He had a really remarkable gift of making difficult ideas intelligible to simple, untrained minds. This was another explanation of his wide appeal—learned men and students, and homely, uneducated folk sat side by side in his church—and all alike heard him gladly.

He was absolutely honest. He did not speak until his mind was made up. But once he felt reasonably certain that a particular idea was true, he declared it. He did not subscribe to the ecclesiastical virtue of expediency. "Ten minute sermons!" he once flashed out, in the middle of a sermon, "A ten minutes' sermon which is not sincere is too long by just ten minutes," and his fist came down with a crash on the side of the pulpit.

"It would be a great gain in religious teaching if there were a clearer understanding of the ideas that have been dropped and left behind, and a clearer and bolder appreciation and use of the well-established results of the new knowledge. There is too much playing with old words when the old ideas of which they were the fit symbols have been outgrown. . . . Do not be for ever concealing its (modern Christianity) light and obscuring its meaning. Make it as clear as you can. Drop from your prayers, hymns and even from your most familiar speech the phrases which mislead and are no longer true to your thought and feeling. Do not say that the progress of these truer and larger ideas is so rapid that you can afford to let them and their teachers go on without you. I tell you they are making no inch of progress which does not correspond to individual fidelity."<sup>1</sup>

He followed his own precept. He never disguised his own position.

"He did not much believe in what is called the 'economy of truth.' His courage was great. Controversy he hated. He took the liberal position to be granted by all thoughtful men and went on to declare the great positive convictions of a Christianity freed from the domination of ancient creeds and worn-out confessions of faith. The doctrine of reserve, an esoteric faith, the silence of mere prudence did not appeal to him as desirable in a teacher of truth. There was nothing that he shrank from saying in the

<sup>1</sup> Sermon on 1 Corinthians ii. 7. Jan. 15, 1905.

intent of truth. When he spoke you felt at once that he was speaking not only from the heart, but from profound, positive belief in the great things of faith, hope and love, free from affectations, egotism or pedantry of any kind. It was one frank human soul speaking all his mind to those who had ears to hear.”<sup>1</sup>

He assumed as axiomatic man’s religious instinct and the reality of its object, and thereupon built up several arguments to confirm the assertion. In this he followed the Hebrew teachers.

The preacher and the MS. were one. Principal Forsyth has called him “the greatest master we had of manuscript preaching.” Certainly he read every word from a manuscript, and at the same time he preached. He knew his manuscript so well before he went up into the pulpit that it was an instrument of liberty and not of bondage. It saved him the strain of remembering his points and the details of expression. The power was thereby enhanced, for the right word fell in the right place. He was, of course, extremely disconcerted if the light were bad or the desk intractable.

“All the obvious arts of the popular speaker were absent. Every word was read, and read closely—but with such an intensity of passion as held the mind in thrall. There were no oratorical pauses; the message was too urgent and essential to admit of any delay. This was the word that was given him to speak, and speak it he must at all costs. Manner and matter conveyed the same impression. ‘Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel.’”<sup>2</sup>

When he went from home he would take a dozen or more MSS. that he knew well, and would preach the one that was most in tune with the mood of the moment. In his own church he never used an old sermon unless he could get right into its mood. To do this as perfectly as he wished he would usually rewrite it. The labour and concentration behind a single sermon and a single preaching were immense.

He enjoyed preaching in other churches, and believed in the value of occasional sermons. He was glad to help and encourage fellow-ministers in this way, especially men who were standing for the same views as himself. “A good collection,” he once slyly remarked, “will cover a multitude of heresies.” He also had abundant testimony of the influence of his occasional preaching from letters he received from unknown men and women.

Usually the sermons that he preached away from home were

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. Joseph Wood.

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. M. R. Scott.

those that contained the substance of his message. They were long. Only an unusually receptive and sympathetic listener could digest them fully. Though the central thought always stood out clearly, it was often the moral earnestness and passion of the preacher that made the biggest impression. At times, too, the missionary got the better of the artist. He would add on bits to a sermon that was complete in itself or even string two together. But he could always hold an audience for an hour, though his average length in his own church was about thirty-five minutes. "My church," said the Rev. W. J. Nichol Service, "is used to fifteen-minute sermons; he preached forty, and you could have heard a pin drop. He held an audience as well as Caird without Caird's voice."

When, after his breakdown in 1911, his doctors forbade him to preach for longer than twenty minutes, he simply was not able to do it. His sermons were constructed on a plan that could not be compressed into so small a space.

He had a light, clear voice, and enunciated perfectly, even when "in spate." He raced along at those moments and was the despair of stenographers. An elocutionist, when he first came to Glasgow, prophesied that his voice would give way in six months, and tried to take him in hand; but in vain. As a matter of fact it never gave him any trouble. On the other hand, as Principal Forsyth once remarked, if theological students of their generation had been taught to produce the voice easily and not to force it from the chest, they would have been saved much fatigue and unnecessary strain.

Hunter's voice was not rich in variety or compass, but unconsciously he made it flexible to the emotions that he wanted to express. Those who heard him regularly he could move to tears or to enthusiasm by the very *timbre* of his voice. It could be exquisitely pathetic. He quoted verse beautifully.

"When you come to ask what was the secret of his power, you could not say it was his voice, though he could produce most thrilling effects, breaking his heart in every sermon. It was indeed a fine voice, what there was of it, but without the backing of his brilliant intellect it would have made but a slight appeal to an ordinary audience."<sup>1</sup>

In early days his gesticulations were often violent. As he grew

<sup>1</sup> Dr. David Dickie.

older he grew more restrained. But selfishness, insincerity, and failure in social duty, in particular, aroused his anger; in every sermon on the moral life or social duty there was some moment when the preacher's eye flashed, a hand shot out, or a clenched fist struck the side of the pulpit, and he shouted passionately down the church. When I was a child I used to wait for such moments, and they sent a thrill down the spine of my little natural man that is quite unforgettable.

“The voice, though not in itself musical, was used with subtle skill and mastery, so that a whispered sentence could be heard throughout the church. The flash of his eye, as well as the trembling curve of sensitive nostril and chin, spoke to his hearers of the swift emotions of his spirit, while at times his message was thrust home by the fingers and hand that shot forth, rapid as the pulse of his thought. He is the only preacher I have known who could, with dignity, stamp his foot in the pulpit when his moral indignation was hot within him.”<sup>1</sup>

Hunter was in truth an emotional preacher, though the emotion was severely curbed and chained to the service of thoughtful exposition and moral encouragement. His antipathy to revival meetings and missions was chiefly on account of their undiluted and reckless emotionalism.

This chapter will have failed of its purpose if it has not conveyed the impression of the catholicity and freshness of his teaching. He was a pioneer—“before his time” as a Nonconformist ecclesiastic once remarked almost reprovingly. It is, however, a lonely business. Dissent is never congenial to a man with catholic sympathies. Hunter was not, of course, afraid of being unorthodox. He quoted approvingly the remark made by A. B. Bruce in conversation with him, “The hope of Christianity is heresy.” He hated labels, but of the two he would have preferred “heretic” to “orthodox.” Orthodoxy was incarnate to him—it has more lovely symbols—in the figure of the smug tradesman-deacon of last century. “Heretic” suggested the ideas of chivalry, integrity, breadth, freshness, movement. In the introduction to his lectures on the Liberal Religious Leaders of the nineteenth century he said:

“In every age there are a few men who think and speak for themselves, who do not readily fall into line with political parties,

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. T. M. Watt.

who stand outside the churches, or, if they remain in them, are continually striving for modification and expansion. The world does not readily forgive these men for breaking with its customs, setting aside its conventions and taking counsel with their own souls rather than with its wisdom. . . . They are not so much at variance with their age as in advance of it, the prophets of its awakening soul, the voices of its unfolding and half-articulate thought, shaping into clearness its cloudy aspirations and saying what all men who think and feel deeply are trying to say. . . . All the great movements in the history of Christianity that lead forward from a comparatively dead and barren period into one of greater and more fruitful activity and life have been regarded at first with fear, and dreaded and denounced as heresy. . . .

“The men of whom these lectures treat belong to an organised movement during the last century and continued in this, which on its intellectual side seeks to associate traditional Christianity with the new knowledge of the times and to give truer and larger expression to the essential and eternal verities of religion as these have been embodied and preserved in historic creed and tradition. ‘Not to destroy, but to fulfil,’ was and is its watchword. Its representative men are not iconoclasts. They affirm all that the Bible affirms of spiritual realities, all that is central and vital in the Church’s affirmations, without the accretions or limitations which have gathered round the religion of Christ in its passage through the thoughts of men. Heretics they have been called; but their heresy is not the heresy of doubt and unbelief, but that which comes from finer and deeper insight into spiritual things and leads through truer and stronger convictions to more positive results.”

In these days of the Conference habit, when we study and discuss most things except the history of thought, there is a tendency to think that the new view of religion and life we enjoy has grown up in a night, and simultaneously in a thousand minds and hearts. But it is not so. God has always revealed new truths to men first through a man—a prophet. And from that man it has spread to a small group of men. Then, as it were suddenly, it becomes a common possession. The process is like that of a rising river flowing through an open valley; when it reaches a certain height, water rises out of the ground in all parts of the plain. Where there was a green valley when one went to bed, in the morning there is a great lake. The War has been such a night. There are, of course, corporate discoveries of truth, but they are more rare than it appears.

John Hunter’s originality was not in any single idea that he



taught so much as in the catholicity whereby he included in himself diversities of thought and religious practice which are rarely united. He had the moral passion of the Calvinist and his sense of God's transcendent mystery and holiness. He taught with the Quaker the Gospel of the Inner Light, and the possibility of friendship between God and man, and between man and man. He had the intellectual boldness and breadth of the liberal school, and it brought him into fellowship with modern Unitarians like Martineau and Thom in England and Hosmer and Peabody in America. He shared the Evangelical's passion for souls, and at the same time enjoyed the rich devotional culture of Catholicism.

“He was a remarkable combination of two qualities—spiritual breadth and spiritual intensity. His sermons, service-book and hymnal show the comprehensiveness of his theological sympathies, both medieval and modern, and above all his place among the liberal Christian teachers of the time. But not even Spurgeon could have been more urgent, more insistent, more clamorous, more aflame with the desire to save souls. Christianity and Christian worship were for him an infinite possession, and their want an unspeakable misfortune.”<sup>1</sup>

He was often involved in controversy, but he was not a controversialist either by nature or by choice. His ministry was essentially a ministry of reconciliation—between schools of thought, between churches and classes of men, and between man and God—through Christ.

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. E. I. Fripp, B.A., of Altringham.

## CHAPTER IX

### A FIGHT AGAINST ODDS. LONDON, 1901-4

"I am deeply sensible of the great opportunities West London offers for a ministry of my order, and for the building up of a Catholic Christian Church on free and independent lines; and I hope and pray that I and those who will gather round me may have wisdom and strength to make the most and best of this opportunity. . . ."

*From Letter of Acceptance to the King's Weigh House Church.*

HUNTER was congratulated on his decision by many friends in London and the country. "The party of religious toleration and freedom has no great representative in this great city. I hope you will introduce your service. The London congregationalist is dreadfully afraid of some bogey which he calls ritualism." "I am convinced," wrote Dr. Mackennal, "it will become one of our strong places in London under your ministry." John Massie wrote, "We have some men in London whose worthy emotions are stronger than their judgments. Then we have our 'flash' men and our vulgar and vulgarising windbags who are looked upon as leaders. They end by being dreadful examples—which you do not require." And Herbert Stead, "Brave men are few everywhere. Brave men in the pulpit, I fear, are still fewer, and men who can without obsequious complaisance keep the ear of the public are a remnant of a remnant. It is an augury of great good for this poor London of ours that one who has taken your attitude on Labour Questions is being sent among us. I greet you as a graciously sent reinforcement against the leagued forces of Mammonism, selfishness, and vulgar pietism which have long played havoc with the metropolis." And the Rev. Joseph Wood, "It seems to me a place which must be held solely by the force of the pulpit and, if it is not impertinent to give advice, I hope you will not allow yourself to be frittered away on countless committees and institutions." All who wrote to him agreed that he was undertaking "a hard thing."

It was the hardest thing that he had ever undertaken—too hard at his time of life. The odds against him proved to be

greater than he knew when he undertook it. In later years he described his time in London as "a pilgrimage to an ecclesiastical North Pole."

He had to commence to build a congregation almost from nothing. Of the membership roll of the church all except forty-seven were discovered to be either lapsed or merely nominal members who lived far away. Of the forty-seven, a third were elderly people who had been members of the church before it had been moved to the West End and lived in the city, and another third were from neighbouring mews. There was only one man on whom he could confidently rely—Dr. Montague Murray, and his time was absorbed in the financial administration of the church and its property. To a child of eleven the contrast was vivid between the farewell meeting in Glasgow and the inaugural social meeting in London—a few old folks sitting round the walls of a big hall drinking tea—like a mothers' meeting.

The church on the first Sunday, however, presented a different appearance. There were large congregations, and during the winter following it used to be well filled Sunday by Sunday. By the spring the nucleus of a regular congregation had been formed. The preaching was too serious to attract permanently that floating mass of sermon-tasters which flows from the suburbs into the centre of London on Sunday in search of novelty. The order of service, also, made serious demands. But he began to attract an interesting congregation. Among his occasional hearers, increasingly as the months passed, were many who had made a name in life or letters. Some of them soon identified themselves with the church—several members of Stopford Brooke's former congregation like Sir William Collins and Dr. Sydney Coupland; Glasgow men who had come to London such as Dr. Abraham Wallace, now well known as a Spiritualist; other medical men like Dr. Charles Hawthorne, and subsequently Sir Thomas Barlow, Mr. Timothy Holmes, and Dr. Samuel West; Sir Albert Spicer, the Treasurer of the London Missionary Society; men and women well known in the political world, the Earl and Countess of Aberdeen, Mrs. Henry Fawcett, and an old friend, Mr. Robert Cameron, M.P., Liberal member for Houghton-le-Spring, Durham, for many years until his death.

The week after the opening of his ministry the Young People's Union of the London Congregational Union opened a club for the employees of the big shops in the neighbourhood in a suite of

rooms below the church. Hunter encouraged the congregation to take an interest in the club, though he did not spend many hours in it even when latterly it came under the control of the church.<sup>1</sup> Social clubs were not his *métier*. He was more embarrassed to surprise a couple on a sofa than they were to be surprised.

Outside his church he was in great demand for services and addresses, and met it too liberally. He was able to serve the Congregational churches in this way more effectively than by sitting on committees. There are many ministers of struggling "causes" around London and in the South who have blessed him for his free help. He allowed himself to be nominated for some London committee of the Congregational Union, but was thankful when he was not elected. He was not at all a committee man, and he at least knew his limitations. Sir W. Robertson Nicoll once asked him why he did not attend the meetings, etc., of the Congregational Union. He replied with a laugh, "It's not the nature of the beast," and the conversation lapsed. He spoke at the Union meetings in 1902 and in 1903 as a passionate believer in the Independent ideal of the Church and ministry, and in opposition to the ecclesiastical policy of the majority. The unorganised catholicism of Independency appealed to him: and when in the sectarian struggle for existence the Independent or Congregational churches tended to narrow into one of the denominations of Nonconformity he felt that its catholicism was being obscured and its distinguishing virtue of liberty was being mislaid. The centralising policy gave too much influence, he thought, to a type of man that did not represent the best life of the churches. He was prepared to believe that in some cases if a small "cause" were languishing, its plight might be a call, not for subsidy from without, but to merge its identity in co-operation with the "causes" of other denominations in the locality.

"My first lessons in Independency I received from that great teacher of many, James Baldwin Brown, and a sentence of his indicates my own ecclesiastical position or attitude: 'It is because Independency is not a church system that I cleave to it. A company of men and women meeting for religious worship and teaching and work is not a sect. Any number of such companies meeting for brotherly counsel and co-operation is not a sect. It is the

<sup>1</sup> After a year the Young People's Union was anxious to hand over responsibility to the church and concentrate on similar work elsewhere, but although dual control was unsatisfactory the church was not yet able to undertake complete responsibility.

simplest form of church organisation in which the Christian life can nourish itself and act on society.' That I maintain is the Independent ideal, an ideal that seems to be rapidly fading from the minds of many among us. . . . Freedom has its disadvantages as well as its advantages, and we cannot have the one without the other. What we have to do is not to seek outside interference and regulation, but to educate our congregations so that they shall be able to guard themselves and to choose true and good, well-disciplined and inspired men as their leaders. The truth is our church order requires strong men and can only be worked by strong men. It is an order that is not only difficult but almost cruel to weakness. Let us face the hard facts of the situation, and not adopt methods that will only weaken our strength and strengthen our weakness; methods that will not recover for us the ground we have lost, or enable us to possess the land we ought to win. We cannot do all kinds of work; let us be content to do that which Providence has assigned us, and to do it thoroughly and well."<sup>1</sup>

His first year in London was a constant struggle against difficulties and disappointments. It began badly. The Duke of Westminster, the ground landlord, refused to allow the parsonage to be sub-let, so Hunter decided to try to live there. Though it was a big house, it contained no room large enough to hold his library. He was therefore given one of the rooms in the church buildings adjoining, and a doorway was made from it into the house. At the beginning of October the house was not ready, so the first few weeks had to be spent in lodgings in Bloomsbury, away from books and papers. Dr. Parker, of the City Temple, chose Christmas-time to make a thinly-veiled attack on his new neighbour's liturgy and theology. Hunter felt keenly his lack of chivalry.

The New Year brought new troubles; his eldest son had a severe illness, and then his wife—in her case more prolonged and serious in its after-effects. The strain and fatigue of the previous months and the noisy environment brought on sleeplessness and nervous depression. Hunter was also affected by the surroundings—his study proved peculiarly noisy. Immediately above it was a hall let out to a Welsh Methodist congregation, and used by them for both services and social meetings; below was the main hall of the church which was used not only by the Sunday-school

<sup>1</sup> From an address at the meetings of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1903.

on Sunday afternoons, but was let during the week to various societies for concerts and meetings, and choral and orchestral rehearsals. On Friday and Saturday evenings and Sunday afternoons—the very times when he was working most intensely—he would be demented by competing concerts or services above and below. He was conscious that sometimes the quality of his work was being affected. For the first time in his life he began to have frequent headaches and to sleep badly. In June he told his committee that he could not go on living there. They offered to pay the rent of another house whenever he decided to move.

During this year and throughout his ministry in London he had (in the absence of experienced officers) to attend to the details of church business more closely than he used to do in Glasgow. He had, for example, to come to the aid of organists who were accustomed to use tune-books mechanically—there was not a musical edition of his hymn book. He did these things as intensely as he did all his work.

Some men find that it is helpful to live adjacent to their work ; Hunter was not of that type. It weighed on him. To gain the detachment of mind that he needed for writing became increasingly difficult. He was as sensitive as a barometer to the fluctuations in the affairs of the church next door, and he was always more worried by “secondary disturbances” than a man accustomed to business would be.

As the summer came round his wife's health was still an anxiety, and he was also beginning to wonder whether he would be able to hold out until the end of July. He had not had a holiday of any length since the spring of the previous year. The preparation for Sunday cost more nervous effort each week. There was one relief ; the old secretary, a man advanced in years, resigned, and in his place one of Hunter's friends, an able administrator, was appointed. But on the day that Hunter was intending to leave for Switzerland, the new secretary sent in his resignation, feeling that he had not the confidence of his colleagues. By the same post he received a letter from another helper—his oldest friend in London—who gave agnosticism as his reason for withdrawal. This on a Monday morning. To cap all he mislaid the bank-notes which were to pay for the holiday, and for half an hour thought he had been robbed—of his last comfort. I have never seen him so near a breakdown as he was that day. However, some-

how he got across the Channel, and so to the Alps. It was the worst year he had ever had.

While he was in Switzerland Hunter reluctantly came to the conclusion that he would have to resign from the pastorate of the Weigh House on account of his wife's health, and, to a less degree, his own. When this became known his friends in Glasgow at once set about planning for his return. The congregation had not been able to choose a successor, so that his return seemed a happy solution of the problem. He stated the position in the following letter to the committee of the King's Weigh House Church :

“ *November 17th, 1902.*

“ I think it right to let you know that the Deacons and Managers of my old church are bringing strong pressure to bear upon me to induce me to return to Glasgow. Although I have persistently declined to commit myself in any way, yet I have yielded to their pressure so far as to promise to ‘consider’ any proposal that may be sent me by the church. I have done so for two reasons.

“ First, the condition of things in Glasgow. The secretary writes, ‘It seems to me quite clear that your return is the only salvation for the church.’ Sir James Marwick also writes, ‘Seeing that Trinity Church has so largely been built up through you, and can but be held together by your resumption of the pastorate . . .’ These sentences indicate the state of things in Glasgow, which cannot but have great weight with me, considering my long and close attachment to the place and people.

“ Secondly, the environment and conditions in which I have to do my work here, conditions which I did not anticipate when I accepted the call to the Weigh House, and which I do not feel able to bear much longer without health and work being seriously affected. I shrink from laying the burden on the church which the removal of these conditions involves, while fully appreciating your willingness to do what you can.

“ In justice to the church I must say that the conditions affecting my work here being known to my intimate personal friends, they felt justified in approaching me without, as they said, any intention to disturb the helpful relations with the congregation of the Weigh House Chapel.

“ Before going further, I think it but fair and courteous to inform you how matters stand, and to be quite open and frank with you.

“ I think that there is every reason to be gratified with the results of the last fourteen months’ work, especially when it is borne in mind that I came to what was practically an empty church, in a very difficult district of London. Let me again say that though I have promised to consider the case of Glasgow, I am not in the

least committed to anything, and am quite prepared, therefore, to consider quite dispassionately what you may have to say from your point of view, which I prefer to have, not by letter, but in conference."

As soon as the managers of Trinity Church felt reasonably certain that he would return if the call were enthusiastic, they summoned a meeting of the church, but through a breach of confidence on the part of one of the members of the committee, who reflected the views of the old faction in the church, the members first heard of the proposal to invite Hunter back from an invitation to a meeting of those who disapproved of his return. This circular was sent to Hunter; it reached him the morning after a friendly and sympathetic meeting with the committee of the London church, and decided him to withdraw his name at once.

After this uncertain start, the year's work was the easiest of the three years in London. His committee tried to lessen the burden on him, though they failed to find an expert secretary. He did not feel justified in leaving the parsonage, though he found the conditions as wearing and irksome as ever. The development of the church was encouraging. Men and women of widely different temperaments, beliefs and churchmanship were coming to the church. Some were attracted by the preaching. Young people who were perplexed with questions began to discover that Hunter was able to help them. They did not predominate in the congregation as in Glasgow: the number of men was unusually large, but they were not of one age. Culture rather than youth was the dominant feature as far as there was one. When Parliament was in session there would always be several Members in the congregation. Others were attracted by the worship. Sir Albert Spicer tells a story of one man who used to come regularly, but always went out before the sermon. As he did this at every service, a neighbour in the pew made bold to tell him that he was depriving himself of the *bonne bouche*. The next Sunday the man sat out the sermon. "Well, what did you think of it?" his neighbour enquired at the close of the service. The man shook his head. "I have suffered much from many preachers and have lost all liking for sermons. It is the worship that I come for—it gives me just what I want—the help and inspiration one needs to carry one through the week." Many of those who came were members of the Church of England. If Hunter had still been at the Weigh House



when Dr. Page Roberts left St. Peter's, Vere Street, for the Deanery of Salisbury, the number would no doubt have increased, for already many of Dr. Roberts' congregation came occasionally, and some regularly.

In London Hunter was meeting more people who shared his interests and outlook than ever before. At all times he was able to talk freely only with those whose pulse kept rhythm with his. Southerners were more successful in thawing his reserve than Northerners. It was a novel experience and a liberty that he began to enjoy. A temperamental disability, possibly the result of his peculiar and lonely boyhood, made him incurably shy. It required sympathy to draw him out—he was not able to set himself to win it. Certain types of people embarrassed him—the sententious and sophisticated, those who pretend to a social position which is not theirs, men without a sense of humour. Academicians bored him because they were rarely alive; ecclesiastics because they were rarely human. Pride of purse roused his hostility.

In public fearlessly outspoken, he shrank in private from debate with almost physical shrinking. If his views were criticised or if he were rudely addressed, he would close up as instinctively as a butterfly its wings at the approach of something alien. It was this sensitive quality, combined with pressure of work, which kept him away from ministerial clubs and fraternals, especially in London, at a time when he was disagreeing with the majority in his denomination upon some questions on which feeling ran high. Ministerial fraternals and their apparatus of regular meetings and discussions did not appeal to him at any time. His friendships were unorganised. He liked men one at a time. His confidences were curiously casual; without knowing it he chose his company according to mood.

His mind was quickly unlocked to those who shared his admirations. A man or woman who had known or loved Maurice or Baldwin Brown or Phillips Brooks or the Victorian idealists was soon invited across the threshold.<sup>1</sup> Reminiscence was indeed at all times the staple of his talk.

<sup>1</sup> He was prejudiced in favour of the very places that had known them—even the Russell Hotel. "Maurice's house," he once told an interviewer when he was staying there, "stood on the ground now occupied by the hotel. He lived for many years in it, and this drew me the first time to the hotel—that I might look out on the same trees that had been familiar to his eyes."

His admiration for the witness of Bishop Colenso gained him the friendship of the Bishop's eldest son. Regard for Henry Drummond led to a warm and lasting friendship with Lord and Lady Aberdeen—he was more than once their guest at Haddo House and in Dublin. Some of his oldest friends in London were followers of Baldwin Brown. His admiration for Martineau and others of his school of thought brought him into touch with his disciples. He gave the principal address at the annual conference in 1903 of Free Christians and Unitarians on the Church Worshipful. The address was afterwards published under the title, *A Plea for a Worshipful Church*. The influence of this little book, reinforced by the services at the King's Weigh House, was *urbi et orbi*, and brought him a large correspondence. It led to an acquaintance with Baron von Hügel, the Roman Catholic modernist. A portrait of John Hunter is among the elect on the mantelshelf of the Baron's study. The book also brought him a letter from Father Tyrrell in October, 1904.

"I feel sure that you value the deep tie of spiritual communion too really to take it altogether as an impertinence if a dweller at your ecclesiastical antipodes writes to thank you most cordially for the delight and help derived from your *Plea for a Worshipful Church*. I will not inflict on you the many reflections to which it gave birth. Here and there I might have put in a 'but' or a 'yet'; though oftener a 'moreover.' Most that I should wish to say about it, or rather à propos of it, is said far better in some of the 'Thoughts for Quiet Moments' in your *Monthly Calendar*, No. 93,<sup>1</sup> which my friend, Baron von Hügel, let me see. And the mercenary, though indeed not the principal, inspiration of this note is to beg a copy (two if possible) of the said No. 93 if they can conveniently be had."

More than one affinity led to intimacy with the successors of the Victorian Broad-Churchmen. Through Dr. Morrison of St. Mary-le-bone, he addressed the Churchman's Union at the end of 1902, on "The Coming Church—A Plea for a Church simply Christian"—an address subsequently published. A friendship of a more personal kind grew up with his neighbour, the Vicar of St. Mark, North Audley Street—the Rev. R. H. Hadden.<sup>2</sup> Towards the end

<sup>1</sup> The first calendar that he prepared on his return to Glasgow. It contained two pages of "Thoughts" on the Coming Church, from Richard Baxter and very various writers.

<sup>2</sup> "You will be sorry to hear that Mr. Hadden dropped down dead in Piccadilly on Friday. He was very friendly to me. I dined at his house with a clerical club which he wished me to meet. You remember he came to my last service at the Weigh House." *Letter June 15, 1909.*

of 1903 he invited Dr. Hensley Henson <sup>1</sup> to preach at the King's Weigh House. The answer is of interest at the present time.

“ Frankly, my first disposition of mind was to return a prompt acceptance, and if, on reflection, I must decide to send you a very reluctant refusal, I shall ask you to believe that my decision is determined by no personal unwillingness to do what you have been good enough to ask, and by no doubt as to my own legal right to do so, but simply by consideration of expediency—I fear that just now, when, as seems not improbable, I shall have to stand the brunt of a very sharp conflict with prevailing Anglican sentiment on the matter raised by Bishop Gore, my coming to you might have the effect of weakening my hands, and of putting weapons into the hands of my opponents. I shall trespass so far on the good feeling which you have expressed towards me as to ask you to renew your invitation presently, when circumstances may be more kindly, and the legitimate effect of my public association with you, on terms of frank ministerial equality, might not run the risk of being prejudiced in the Anglican mind.”

In 1904 he took an active part in the formation of the London Society for the Study of Religion,<sup>2</sup> and, two months after his return to Glasgow, read the paper at its first meeting on “Tendencies to Religion in the Nature and Life of Man.” The Society was made up of a catholic selection of Christian and Jewish scholars and thinkers—the other papers of the first session were given by Mr. Claude Montefiore, Professor Estlin Carpenter, and Baron von Hügel. Its catholicity was the main attraction that it had for Hunter.

There was barely a week when he had not several engagements to preach or lecture, but he was seldom out of his pulpit on a Sunday, except during his holiday—only four times in the three years. On those occasions he preached in his old church and to students at Glasgow and Edinburgh and Mansfield College, Oxford.

He worked very hard on the same lines as in Glasgow—giving courses of sermons on the fundamental truths of Christianity and moral issues of life, monthly addresses to young men and women, and occasional sermons on the religious teaching of great poems. In the summer of 1902 he preached a course on the post-resurrection narratives. His explanation of them won the approval of spiritualists. They came to the Weigh House for a season and brought with them Socrates, Moses and several of that ilk, but a

<sup>1</sup> Now Bishop of Durham.

<sup>2</sup> Its first president was the Rev. A. L. Lilley, now Archdeacon of Hereford.

couple of sermons on Spiritualism in which he showed a strong aversion to the occult dashed their hopes of a convert.

In 1903-4 he gave a series of lectures in the church on week-nights on the religious leaders of the nineteenth century, *inter alia*, Robertson, Maurice, Cardinal Newman, Edward Irving, A. J. Scott, Thomas Erskine, Macleod Campbell, Bishop Colenso, John Caird, Baldwin Brown and Martineau. It was hard work, especially as he had set himself a heavy programme of new work for Sundays<sup>1</sup>; but they attracted an audience that repaid the trouble.

During 1903 the controversy over Mr. Balfour's Education Act reached a climax of bitterness in the Passive Resistance Movement. Once again Hunter found himself in opposition to the leaders of his denomination. He was acutely distressed by sectarian warfare and alarmed at the political bent of Nonconformity and the tendency to identify it with one political party—albeit his own. A year before, Sir James Marwick had written to him :

“The meetings of the Congregational Union last week have given serious dissatisfaction by the arbitrary and offensive way in which the English leaders made political questions take precedence of the proper work of the Union and by resolving on resistance to the law—howling down those ministers and deacons who claimed that such a resolution should not be passed without careful and deliberate consideration. All I can say or think is that, if the Congregational Church is to adopt that attitude, it is not the church for me and for many others.”

For a year Hunter kept silent, but the conviction that the movement was unwise and its temper wrong, and the way in which its leaders claimed to speak for the whole of Nonconformity moved him to protest in a letter to *The Times* :

“May I, as one to whom Nonconformity is a question of personal honour and a condition of spiritual veracity, be allowed to say how profoundly aggrieved I am by many of the words and ways of many of the men who in the present controversy on education are putting themselves, or are being put, forward as the representatives of the Free Churches of England? I have no wish to condemn or even to judge them, only to say publicly, for the first and last time, that there is a very large section of English Nonconformists whom they do not represent, but very much misrepresent. We may be perfectly at one with them in the end they seek, but we

<sup>1</sup> “Courses on the Primary Truths of Religion,” “The Cross in the Light of To-day,” “Inspiration.”

cannot and dare not seek it in their way. We have no sympathy with them so far as they may be moved by political motive, or by hostility to or jealousy of any section of that Holy Catholic Church in which and for which we have our being. We cannot be passive resisters, and cannot take part under the auspices of ecclesiastical organisations in the political or semi-political demonstrations which are doing so much to demoralise the Free Churches of England and their order of Christian ministry. We are not opposed to sectarian education because we fear lest children should be converted to Anglicanism or Roman Catholicism. The evidence is, indeed, striking that sectarian schools send forth into the world young men and women altogether indifferent to the religion which has been taught as a lesson and enforced as a task. It is for our common Christianity we fear, lest its Divine simplicity should suffer at the hands of those who seek to use it, directly or indirectly, as an instrument of tyranny. Our religion, we are persuaded, will gain respect and recover the natural and rightful authority which it has lost, in proportion as it is delivered from all imputations and suspicions of denominational rivalries and plottings, and as the Christian culture of our country is entrusted entirely to those sacred influences which best flourish when they are free from any protection save that given by the Holy Spirit of God moving and ruling the souls of His worshippers."

The letter made him unpopular with his own party, and it was at once used for election purposes by the other side. He was attacked, as he had expected, publicly and in private. But he was looking beyond the next election. By many quiet men and by men of the other party he was thanked. He was provoked by misrepresentation to explain his position further in a Leeds daily paper.

" . . . I learned in Scotland that churches ought to be strictly non-political, and that men of all political views will feel at home in every church that is worthy to bear the name of the universal Christ. I wish that both English Conformists and Non-conformists had learned this lesson. Fierce partisanship is as unfavourable to ecclesiastical catholicity as it is to just judgment. It is our desperate one-sidedness that makes the present situation so hopeless. With many Nonconformists all over the country, I do not think that there is anything in the Education Act to justify passive resistance methods, and which cannot be remedied by constitutional means. In these days of full Parliamentary representation (representation which our forefathers did not possess), it seems to me that to grant the principle of passive resistance concerning one question is to open the door to endless strife and con-

fusion about many other questions. We cannot say where in our political life this policy, if once adopted and encouraged, may not finally lead us. . . .

“All this political agitation is simply ruining our churches, as churches, and destroying their spiritual influence. An earnest minister in South London said to me the other day that he found it increasingly difficult to do purely religious work and to gain a hearing from the general public, because in his district the Free Churches were regarded as ‘Radical centres.’ The more devout and thoughtful people are quietly leaving them. The same is more or less true in other places—even in Leeds, which I know well. . . .

“The politicians and others who like to have the Nonconformists as their allies are, as a rule, not Nonconformists themselves, and do not care one straw for the effect which political controversies and extreme ideas and methods are having on the spiritual life of our churches—do not care for our churches, as churches. We need to be saved from many of our friends and champions. Militant Free Churchmen and the Free Church journals in their partisan and sectarian zeal may choose to ignore or misrepresent my protest, but I am persuaded that the day is not far distant when it will be seen that the men who take the position I do are the truest and best friends of the Nonconformist section of the Church of Christ in England.”

Throughout this year Hunter was genuinely excited over a plan to alter the interior of the Weigh House Church in such a way that it would become the church he had dreamed of, but had hardly hoped to have.

A new organ had become necessary, and he proposed that it should be divided in such a way as to form a chancel. Mr. J. J. Burnet of Glasgow was asked to submit plans, and these were approved. “I am sure you will like Mr. Burnet’s sketch of the alterations,” he wrote to a friend, “with the exception perhaps of one or two details. A rood beam with a cross on it frightened a few. It can be left out. People are easily frightened. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

The outer walls of the church are elliptical in form, and therefore it was not easy to make a chancel without destroying the harmonious lines of the building. Most visitors to the church to-day would probably not realise that originally the interior had once been different. The floor of the chancel is of white and green marble, with steps leading up to the Communion Table; the upper part of

<sup>1</sup> The cost of the organ (£2300), and the structural alterations (£2000) was to be met out of the endowment fund.



the east wall is faced with terra-cotta and has three window lights. At Hunter's suggestion mosaic glass, designed by Anning Bell, was put into them in memory of the ministers of the church since 1662—this by private subscription.

At the end of the year when the new organ was completed a surpliced choir of men and boys was introduced. To a young Puritan friend who questioned this innovation he replied :

“Surpliced or unsurpliced choir is to me a small, non-essential matter—simply a question of what is becoming—a question of taste, not of principle. It does not do to magnify these matters on the one side or the other. Let the great things be great, and the little things, little. There is no fixed Congregational service. We are *free* to adopt what is good in the order of all churches. Besides, I am not much of a Congregationalist ! I only care for it—for its freedom. . . .”

But difficulties began again to multiply. The alterations had made it necessary to hold the services for some months in the Hall, and the temporary closing of the church arrested the growth of the congregation in the following months. This was an unexpected financial embarrassment coincident with the loss of some of the income from the endowment. It worried the Treasurer, and it worried Hunter, and they worried one another. At the same time Hunter felt that he must move out of the parsonage if health and work were not to suffer. The offer of his committee still held, but in the circumstances he did not feel justified in accepting it ; on the other hand, his domestic bursar assured him that he would not be able to move unless he did.

Some time during 1903 the Trust-deed of the church came to his notice, and also the fact that a Mission in the City which was connected with the church had a claim on the endowment fund. The Trust-deed was a formidable document. It ordained that a two-thirds majority of the members might require the minister and the deacons at any time to sign their assent to an explicit theological statement which represented the theology of Thomas Binney's forefathers and of Thomas Binney in his more conservative moments. It also required that members of the church (i.e. those who had a vote at church meetings) should “hold the doctrines and be governed according to the principles set forth in the Declaration of the Faith, Church Order, and Discipline of the Congregational or Independent Dissenters

as adopted at the third general meeting of the Congregational Union of England and Wales in 1833."<sup>1</sup> The contents of the Deed made him unwilling in future to ask those who were being attracted to the church to become members, especially as many of them were Anglicans.

It was also becoming clear that the full responsibility for the Binney Institute would soon come upon the church, and although it was not the kind of church activity that attracted Hunter, he felt that proximity gave it a prior claim to the Mission, which was in those days a maudlin philanthropy carried on in a dilapidated building.

He felt, moreover, that the congregation, as distinguished from the Sunday congregations, was still small and had not begun to have a corporate mind. He did not think it wise or right that its lines of development and its activities should be pre-determined by "the dead hand," or by a committee. It was, moreover, likely that his views would be more representative than those of anybody else of a congregation that was being drawn together by his personality and preaching—and so it proved. Activities should grow spontaneously out of the fellowship.

These problems gave him much anxiety and worry.<sup>2</sup> Before they had been solved, or the underlying issues exposed, and when he was getting exhausted with the winter's work, his old congregation in Glasgow sent him an invitation to return. They had been without a minister ever since he had left.<sup>3</sup> The membership had declined; the minority was still at grips with a dwindling majority and biding its time. All those whose opinions he valued in Glasgow prayed him to return. The call was their last venture; if he refused they would leave the church to the minority. Many who did not sign the call, in fairness to him wrote with equal emphasis. The pressure by deputation and by letter was strong and persistent day after day until he made his decision.

<sup>1</sup> This was a complete surprise. In 1902 he had written to a friend: "The members of the church are as free and unpledged theologically as their minister. Discipleship to Jesus Christ is the bond of union."

<sup>2</sup> ". . . I was quite poorly last week over these worries and should be glad to be protected from them. I want you to come to the help of the Lord (that is me) against the mighty! If you can spare a few minutes to-night I shall be glad."—To a friend on the committee, Feb. 2, 1904.

<sup>3</sup> After the *affaire* in 1902, which had caused dissension, the vacancy dragged its course—and many left the church. In 1903 the Rev. G. H. C. Garcia of Sunderland was invited. He accepted, but fell ill and died before he was inducted. Then another long interval. In 1904 a call was sent to the Rev. F. Y. Leggatt, but he declined it. Then it was decided to ask Hunter to return—a minority of 110 disagreeing. The call was sent with the signatures of 588 members attached to it.



Should he return to keep in life an ideal already actual—the work of his best years—or should he stay and try to build a similar church where unforeseen circumstances were making the possibility less probable?—that was the broad issue. He also realised that he and his wife had had as much nervous and physical strain as they were able to bear—so much so that she could not judge the issue dispassionately, or disguise her desire to return to Glasgow. He was sensible of a financial obligation to the Weigh House Church,<sup>1</sup> though he entirely refused to agree that a beautiful church was a personal foible and indulgence, but he felt that there was a greater obligation to serve during the remaining years of his life where he might serve best.

The situation was delicate and liable to create a misunderstanding with the officials of the London church. It did. . . . Hunter sensed—a Scotsman is quick to sense—a tone of patronage. “I will be no man’s private chaplain,” he cried. For some time the balance was even in his mind between the two claims—inclining towards London; but a tactless note precipitated action. With a gesture of weariness and despair, and in keen disappointment, he resigned. Unfortunately, he did not himself lay his difficulties before his people until he had resigned.<sup>2</sup>

At the informal farewell meeting, a month later, Sir William Collins was in the chair, and the Earl of Aberdeen presented an address. The burden of Hunter’s reply was contained in a few words: “For the last twenty years one of the objects nearest my heart has been a free, unsectarian, comprehensive worshipful church, a church simply Christian and nothing more. I had hoped to build up such a church here, but this cannot be now, and could never have been, I am afraid, because of the burden and conditions of the property.”

The bulk of the congregation left with him.

“. . . I have gathered some fine people here,” he wrote to the

<sup>1</sup> The only debt he felt fully responsible for was that on the memorial windows, and he himself discharged the balance on this—£75—before he left.

<sup>2</sup> “These difficulties the congregation I have gathered was as ignorant of as I was a year ago, and they are also new to most of the committee. I was about to make a new beginning and I wanted a clear policy put before me about the Mission, institute, letting of halls and the deliverance of the church out of the hands of lawyers and outside trustees, etc. A vague offer to relieve me meant practically no relief, as men and committees come and go.

“The Church would not have lost its self-respect in discussing ‘matters with me. . . . As to the money spent on the alterations (the price of the organ I had nothing to do with) it has been put to better use in this way than money has been put for the last 25 years in keeping up a dead church.”—Letter to a friend, June 19, 1904.

Rev. B. J. Snell, "from the Church of England and No Church—and they will return whence they came. Some have been anxious to buy a proprietary chapel for me—others are eager that I should enter 'the Church.' I must die a free man—as I have lived. You will, I know, welcome me to your pulpit occasionally. I know what I am going to in Glasgow—so my heart is at rest. . . . I am sorry I have not seen more of you. But you know this animal. You have a warm place in my heart always. . . ."

He had, of course, accepted the call to Glasgow, but before he returned there in the autumn his followers in London were able to invite him to remain and form a church on the principles that he laid down in his *Coming Church*. If a tithe of the criticism current in certain quarters had been true, the men and women who gathered round him and made this offer at some cost to themselves—and repeated it two years later—would not have done what they did. The invitation came to him in Switzerland. He looked at it wistfully, and put it from him. He was bound in honour to return to Trinity Church.

Three years is too short a time in which to make a deep impression on a city so vast as London. He left, so many thought, just when the hardest bit of the work was done and success was assured. But even in three short years he had gained many warm friends and devoted followers. What was it that enabled him to win so quickly and with so little effort such loyalty and love? It was partly what he did for people and partly what he was. He was able in the pulpit to help men and women in those deep troubles that cannot be spoken of until they are past, and not always then. "Every worshipper *must* feel who has lived through great sorrow that we owe him an unspeakable debt for the spiritual help and comfort he gives us. . . ." And it was also his shy, warm humanity and its sincerity. "I love him, for behind that shy diffidence is a man of heroic mould and of rarest courage; simple as a child and strong as the strongest of men. It is a thousand pities that he is going away, and he ought not to go." In the pulpit he revealed what he fain would be, and in private he never pretended that he was other or better than he was. In the church, to many he often seemed "inspired" in prayer and preaching, but he never for effect wore his pulpit robe in the world outside. It was a vestment that he touched as reverently as would any of those who listened to his voice. Two verses of his

own, entitled "Dream and Deed," are true to this quality in his life :

Dear Master, in whose life I see  
All that I would but fail to be,  
Let thy clear light for ever shine,  
To shame and guide this life of mine.

Though what I dream, and what I do,  
In my weak days are always two :  
Help me, oppressed by things undone,  
O thou whose deeds and dreams were one.

### AN APPRECIATION

*From Professor Jacques Chevalier, LL.D., Université de Lyons, France  
(A Roman Catholic).*

C'est au commencement de l'année 1904 que je fis la connaissance du Dr. John Hunter, et très précisément, si mes souvenirs sont bien exacts, le Dimanche 3 Janvier. Ce jour-là, je me rendis à King's Weigh House, pour assister aux deux services du matin et du soir. Dès l'abord, le lieu me plut : le Dr. Hunter avait fait de son église, non pas seulement un lieu de réunion, mais un sanctuaire. Le service commença par des prières où je remarquai un souci très juste de combiner deux formes de culte également légitimes et nécessaires, la prière liturgique et la prière libre, et la compréhension très exacte du rôle de la *forme* comme servante, mais d'ailleurs servante obligée, de l'esprit. L'une de ces prières, tirée, je crois, des *Devotional Services*, fut dite par le Dr. Hunter avec une profondeur de recueillement et une intensité d'expression qui, tout de suite, me frappèrent. Je me souviens encore de ses appels à Dieu, qui retentissaient au dedans de moi comme l'appel même de l'âme chrétienne à la Source de Lumière, de Vérité et de Vie : "O Dieu ! guide-nous dans cette obscurité qui nous environne. Toi seul es notre soutien. Sans toi, c'est la solitude et la peine." Après les prières, entrecoupées d'hymnes, puis après les lectures de l'Ancien et du Nouveau Testament, les lumières s'éteignirent, sauf auprès du prédicateur, et le Dr. Hunter commença à parler.

Il y avait dans sa parole, dans le geste comme dans l'intonation, une ardeur contenue, et parfois une violence, qui lui donnaient l'apparence d'un prophète. (Here follows a long quotation from the sermon.)

Le soir, le Dr. Hunter parla de la morale. Elle est, dit-il, la base sur laquelle tout repose. La société est édifiée sur l'homme, et l'homme n'est vraiment homme que lorsque, s'étant renoncé lui-même pour se

donner à Dieu et aux autres hommes, il a confiance en soi et inspire confiance, et lorsqu'il a suffisamment la maîtrise de soi pour s'affranchir des influences extérieures et ne relever que de soi dans le gouvernement de sa vie. "Or, vous ne serez vraiment un homme, une individualité que si vos principes sont fermes, votre volonté droite, et si vous avez une *intense*, une *enthousiaste* croyance en Dieu, en son infinie justice, en sa relation directe avec l'âme de l'homme, et en Jésus-Christ, fils de Dieu." Tandis qu'il scandait ces dernières paroles, le visage du Dr. Hunter s'animait, ses gestes devenaient plus pressants, son corps tout entier entraînait en action, et de l'homme émanait une puissance communicative qui empoignait l'auditeur.

Le Dr. Hunter était un maître homme. Il avait des dons remarquables ; mais plus précieux que tous ses dons était son *esprit*. Il était, au sens le plus plein et le plus haut du terme, un *mystique*. C'est dans les trésors de la vie intérieure qu'il puisait son inspiration ; et cette vie intérieure elle-même n'était que l'expression d'une personnalité qui, selon le mot de Pascal, se dépasse infiniment elle-même, parce qu'elle a su voir avec les yeux de l'âme les réalités supérieures, et que, par elles, en elles, c'est-à-dire en Dieu même, elle communique avec toutes les âmes des fidèles qui constituent "l'Eglise universelle du Christ et la famille unique de Dieu sur la terre et au ciel." C'est à la même source, sans doute, que le Dr. Hunter avait puisé la force qui lui permit de discipliner sa nature et d'arriver à un parfait *équilibre*. On sentait en lui une ardeur de foi et une puissance de conviction qui ne le cédaient en rien à celles des plus grands croyants ; mais il y joignait, ce qui est assez rare chez les hommes de croyance passionnée et exclusive, une largeur, un libéralisme, et, comme disaient nos ancêtres, une *gentillesse* d'esprit, qui rendaient son abord exquis et faisaient de lui l'ami le plus sûr, le plus accueillant, le plus apte à comprendre et à pénétrer l'intimité des âmes.

A King's Weigh House j'avais connu le prophète et l'apôtre : dans son intérieur je connus l'homme, et il m'attira par le plus vive sympathie. Il discernait, mieux peut-être que nul autre de ces coreligionnaires, ce qu'il y a de grand, de vivant, de fécond dans la tradition de l'Eglise catholique romaine, dans ses symboles et dans ses dogmes, dans son culte, dans l'idée de sacrifice qui en est le centre, dans la manière dont elle a su sanctifier chacun des actes de la vie et chacune des heures de la journée. De mon côté, c'est à lui particulièrement que je dois d'avoir compris l'esprit des Eglises libres, la sincérité de leur expérience spirituelle, la force de cet individualisme qui s'appuie sur Dieu et sur la communauté "des deux où trois réunis en son nom." Aussi le lien entre nous fut-il immédiat : en dépit des divergences de formes ou d'expression, nous avons la même compréhension intime de cet esprit chrétien dans lequel tous les vrais chrétiens éprouvent leur unité. Je lus avec un intérêt passionné ses ouvrages, *The Angels of*

*God: A Plea for a Worshipful Church.* Ce dernier fut pour moi une révélation, et, en revoyant à 15 ans de distance les notes que je pris en le lisant, les réflexions qu'il me suggéra, je ne doute pas qu'il ait influé sur l'orientation des études de philosophie religieuse que j'entrepris depuis.

Je revis une fois le Dr. Hunter à Glasgow : je retrouvai en lui l'ami que j'aimais. Depuis, la vie nous a séparés ; et maintenant la mort nous sépare. Mais il n'existe pas de barrière qui puisse rompre l'union des âmes. Puisse un jour cette union s'étendre aux corps ; puisse le groupe congrégationaliste prendre sa place dans la société catholique, afin que soit réalisé la parole du Christ ; *unum ovile, unus pastor.*

## CHAPTER X

### THE CHURCHMAN

"Public Worship is the most important single function in the life of a nation."  
*Emerson.*

"There must be no lines of orthodoxy inside the lines of truth."

*Phillips Brooks.*

"Wherever Christ Jesus is there is the Catholic Church."—*S. Ignatius.*<sup>1</sup>

Two remarks made casually in conversation may serve to introduce this chapter. "He was a High Churchman," Baron von Hügel once said, and added that the title was more appropriate to him than to some of whom it was used. "He was no ecclesiastic," commented Dr. A. E. Garvie.

It is significant that of the first five books that Hunter published four were concerned with the Church. In spite, however, of this earlier literary activity, it was in the later years of his life that the idea of the Church dominated his mind most powerfully and influenced most markedly his actions and relationships. Most of the quotations in this chapter are from sermons preached between 1904-13.

Hunter had a large idea of the Church—"that great world-embracing society which has God for its foundation, Christ for its Head, and all faithful people for its members—the most ancient, the most continuous, the most universal society—for it began with the beginning of the race, it has drawn its members out of every nation and tongue, and out of every age of history, and it is existent in the world beyond this present world."

He used again and again to point out the psychological basis of institutional religion :

"Life, so far as we know anything about it, is always connected with some kind of organisation without which it cannot be developed. As the soul of man cannot be sustained in this world without a body, so the spirit of religion cannot be kept permanently alive in the world without institutions and forms. Men die, but institutions live. An institution wisely founded and wisely

<sup>1</sup> Quotations Hunter liked to use in this connection.

ordered may contain within itself the accumulated wisdom and goodness of many ages, taking up into itself the best thought and life of each generation, and handing them on to the new generation. This is the idea of the Christian Church. There ought to be no contrast between the finer essence and spirit of our religion and its institutions and rites. . . . If the form be a true one, it not only borrows life from the spirit, but it reacts upon and strengthens that spirit. . . .”

He did not believe that Jesus founded the Church in the sense that He established an ecclesiastical institution :

“ It was unquestionably His purpose to be the leader of a movement. His work begins with the single soul, but it does not end there. They who have the affection which He quickens cannot keep apart. The ties which relate them to Him bind them to all His brethren and friends. But it is a flock He gathered and gathers, and not a fold that He reared. Folds were bound to come, but about them He said nothing. Organisation, the simpler the better, is necessary. But about matters of organisation we have no definite rules—only principles to guide us.”

The fellowship which stirred Hunter’s eloquence was mystical rather than tangible. Very characteristic is a sermon in which he proclaims the Church to be the home of lonely men and women. It is not Christian sociability of which he is thinking.

“ The Holy Catholic Church is the most splendid conception, I sometimes think, that has ever dawned upon the human mind. It is not limited to any particular church. It embraces them all, but it is larger and greater than them all. It is co-extensive with the life of God in the soul of man. It is the blessed company of all faithful people. . . .”

“ . . . ‘I believe in the Holy Catholic Church.’ One does not say, I believe, concerning things to which one can point and say—I see. Yet in making this confession, one does not lay himself open to the charge of pure idealism. It is no imaginary or visionary Church. It is a great spiritual ideal that is slowly realising itself. Those who believe in it are something better than mere dreamers. We have some foundation for our confidence and we know it. Every age of history has revealed some fragment of the ideal, and every sect has borne witness to some phase of it. We see and know it in part, and though that which is perfect is not come yet the day is coming when if not we then others shall behold our faith justified.”

“ If ever in your loneliness and isolation for conscience’ sake—because you cannot pretend to believe what you do not believe—you are ready to envy the members of a great body like the Roman

Catholic or the Greek Church their sense of membership in a fellowship of men who have uttered for centuries the same confession of faith, then may you here and now . . . realise that you are a member of a yet larger and grander communion. Look behind and beneath orders and words and feel the life of the Church visible and invisible, militant and triumphant, made yours by spiritual affections and affinities. This is the true Church catholic—not of man, but of God.”

For him, “Holy Catholic Church” and “Communion of Saints” were nearly synonymous. His conception of the Church “did not recognise death.” The catholic emphasis on the Communion of Saints attracted him as much as the kind of emphasis on death in Protestant theology repelled him. The number, variety, and beauty of the prayers in *Devotional Services*, into which the thought of the Communion of Saints comes, is a unique feature of that book. His thought of them was simple and natural; “. . . in the body and out of the body, Thou hast made us one family in Thee, and Thy care and love for Thy household cannot be told.” All Saints’ Day was a festival in which he rejoiced.

The human associations of places always gripped his imagination, and in church he used this sentiment in order to make real and concrete to people the Communion of Saints—as in the following prayer on his return from America in 1910.<sup>1</sup>

“O Thou without Whom nothing is strong and nothing is holy, let Thy blessing continue to abide on this church and congregation. We give Thee thanks for all the sacred memories and associations of this House of God, and for the hallowed hours which many of Thy children have spent here thinking of Thee.

“For all the souls that have been quickened, for all the minds that have been enlightened, for all the hearts that have been strengthened and comforted, and for all the lives that have been helped by what they have found within this sanctuary, we bless Thee. . . . We remember all those who once worshipped in this place who have gone to other parts of the world. We commend them to Thy care, O Thou good Shepherd of the sheep. May grace, mercy, and peace be upon them this day, and suffer not the holy fire to fade and die out of their hearts. For all the voices

<sup>1</sup> “In Boston, Chicago, and many another city, I was much touched by the number of young men and women who had something to say to me about the helpful Sunday evenings they had spent in Trinity Church. . . . Men and women have seen the power and glory of God in this sanctuary. Some can look back and thank God that here religion first became a real thing and God a living reality. . . . God led them hither and He met them here. . . . These things constitute the true consecration of a House of God.”



that have been raised here in praise and in prayer now praying a better prayer and singing a better psalm in a temple not made with hands, we bless Thee, O God. We bless Thee for what others have done for this church, for ministers who have put their strength into its service, for devoted men and women who counted it a joy to give of themselves and of their substance to its work. Let the past with its dear and sacred memories be a call to those who remain to be loyal to the high ends of religious fellowship, to carry forward Thy work, to sustain Thy worship, to speak and to spread Thy message, to make and to keep this sanctuary holy and beautiful,—so that while all things around us change, and the generations come and go like shadows, the breath of prayer may ever rise here like incense, and the light of Heaven fall upon the minds and hearts of Thy children, and this house may still be for years to come a House of God to many souls, and the God of the fathers be the God of each succeeding race.”

Although the Communion of Saints was a dominant idea with him, he had from the first the emphasis on this life which characterises modern Christianity.

“ If all the energy that has been expended in preparing men to live in another world had been expended in preparing them to live more worthily in this, if the enthusiasm which has rushed heavenwards with such impetuous eagerness had been directed to build on earth the Kingdom and City of God, how good it would have been for both worlds. . . . The true way of possessing the future is through fidelity to the present.”

The central fact for him in organised religion, as for Psalmist and Prophet, was personal experience of God.

“ . . . the persons are few who have really grasped the fact that the Church exists chiefly to quicken and deepen the sense of God, to cultivate those instincts and feelings which find expression in prayer, to do institutionally what Jesus Christ did personally to bring men into direct touch and fellowship with God, and that if it fails to do this it fails to do its real work. Its work is not that of the school, the literary society, the political club, the charitable organisation. Its work may touch these at some points, but it exists to accomplish that which lies for ever beyond their power. . . . Worship is the greatest act of man. The history of Christian prayer is the history of the Christian Church—for it leads us out of that region where controversy and strife reign to that upper region where God is all in all.”

And again :

“ It is not at all difficult to interest the minds of men, to answer many theological difficulties and to start them on a round of

activities, but to make them feel the reality of God instead of discussing God with them, to make them worshippers in spirit and in truth . . . this is a far more difficult task and one which demands the finest and rarest powers—both priestly and prophetic—the power of the keys.”

Hunter was not able to persuade himself to be content with fellowship that was only mystical. Increasingly he felt the sacramental value of membership in a body. At times the isolation of the Independent position satisfied his conscience and little else. He was not a militant Independent or Nonconformist. Ecclesiastical proselytism left him cold.

“Other things being equal, I could be a Presbyterian or Episcopalian as far as church government and worship are concerned. These are secondary matters. But there ought to be no compromise on principles.”

He regarded Independency, so to say, as a symptomatic church. If in the more organised church systems there were movement, freedom, diversity and sensitiveness to truth, then there would be little necessity for Independent churches. But in fact they were narrow and creed-bound and rigid.

“When I look for Jesus Christ in the history of the last 1900 years, I find Him outside the ecclesiastical camp as often as within it. The notes of the true Church are often more audible in the little companies who meet in upper rooms or in caves and dens of the earth than in the great ecclesiastical bodies. In every age those who have most faithfully sought to recover and realise the Christianity of Christ have been invariably forced—often much against their will—to be anti-ecclesiastical in order not to be anti-Christian. The continuity of Christ’s Church is a sublime reality, but it is not anything outward and formal, but a vital and sympathetic relation to the Christian life of former ages. God may be our Father and Redeemer though Abraham be ignorant of us and Israel acknowledge us not. . . . If close and elaborate organisation be useful for certain purposes, yet it has always been found to create a rigidity of view and a fixity of vested interests which have been hostile to the freshness and therefore to the fascination of Christ’s truth and been unfriendly to honest expression and progress. It is well that we are being driven back to the simplicity that is towards Christ. A return to it earnestly and thoroughly attempted would put an end to much sectarian strife and bring about a reformation such as has never been known in the history of our religion.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also *The Coming Church*, chap. ii.

He yearned for the coming of the true Catholic Church, visible and yet free, truth-loving and simply Christian. Tempted sometimes to join the Presbyterian or Anglican communions, he was prevented not by mystical churchmanship, or by the individualism of the preacher, but by intellectual honesty. Peace and unity at the price of freedom and truth were bought too dearly. He found no justification in the mind of Christ, and very little in St. Paul's teaching, for theological tests.

“To our thought the physical and spiritual universe have both been reconstructed since *The Book of Common Prayer* and *The Westminster Confession of Faith* were formed. . . . To make free with solemn obligations is not the same as to be freed from them. Reforming from within is always difficult work, and it may become morally dangerous.”<sup>1</sup>

“The moment we have to examine whether what we sign or say agrees with what we in our innermost hearts believe—that moment an element of human casuistry enters into the act of worship. . . .”

He believed the Churches were alienating more men—or at least better men—by their obscurantism and indifference to truth than by any lack of brevity and brightness in their services or sociableness in their life. They also asked men in the initial stages of the religious life to believe too much.

“The Church suffers as much from hyper-agnosticism as agnosticism. Dogmatism creates the unbelief it deplores, and the generic characteristic of dogmatism is just the introducing of a spurious certainty into matters which by their own nature must be uncertain. There cannot be too much genuine believing, but it is not the quantity so much as the quality of the believing for which we ought to care.”<sup>2</sup>

Thus his own experience as much as his idealism led him to attack the question of Unity at a time when the Churches of our country were still busily attacking one another.

The problems about which there is most discussion and difficulty in ecclesiastical gatherings were not for him. Diversities of order and theological expression he accepted as a reflection of the natural divisions in humanity. “God's unities are all composed of great varieties.” “Unity of the faith is not unity of belief.”

<sup>1</sup> *The Coming Church*, pp. 37-8.

<sup>2</sup> *Creed Revision in Scotland, Its Necessity and Scope*, by leading Scottish Ministers (a series of articles reprinted from the *Glasgow Herald*), 1907. Concluding article, p. 153.

“The organic union of all Christians in one great ecclesiastical fellowship all repeating the same creeds, all joining in the same prayers and singing out of the same hymn book would be to many persons like heaven on earth. But it is an impossible dream and not desirable even if it were possible. . . . That which is truly universal must cover much diversity. It is discord we ought to mourn over, not diversity. The flock of Christ may be perfectly one though the folds may continue to be many. . . . There is a tendency to make too much of formal union, and the want of a sense of proportion which is a common failing of the ecclesiastical mind may lead to a world of misdirected effort.”

It was his own experience that the beliefs—the moral and spiritual loyalties—which united Christians were more vital and essential than those which separated them. The hope of unity was in the general recognition of this truth ; the basis of unity in the coming Church would be common loyalty to Jesus Christ and faith in the moving power and communion of His Spirit in the world to-day.

“ . . . Christ was and is essential Christianity—its sufficient creed. The recognition of Christ under whatever theological forms as the revelation of what God is to man and of that which God desires in man is the ultimate fact of the Christian religion. In this simple and unreserved Christian loyalty there is at once the most steadying and commanding principle of order, and the most inspiring and effective principle of progress.”<sup>1</sup>

And as he read the signs of the times he believed that men—the younger, non-ecclesiastical men—were looking for a Church so founded, and that only such a Church would fulfil its calling and establish the Kingdom of God in the world.

He did not believe that the Church would ever be reunited on the old basis of identity in theological views and opinions, uniformity in order and ritual or submission to external regulation and ceremony—he did not think reunion on such a basis desirable. That is the burden of the critical sections in *The Coming Church*. “The method of the past did not lay sufficient stress upon the dissimilarities of religious experience.” The sacramental and the non-sacramental, the emotional, mystical, rational, moral, practical, are all valid forms of the Christian Life ; and there must be room for them in the comprehensive Church. In the meanwhile he thought that there was need for a consolidation of denominations, and a federation of Churches, of course on the basis of intercommunion.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.

“The Christian force of any village or town is to a large extent neutralised by the presence of different churches so burdened with the problem of maintaining their own existence that they have hardly means or energy left to prosecute any active Christian work. Where one or two churches could make their power felt, six or eight with no machinery of co-operation and very little spirit of co-operation can hardly do any united work for the common good.”

Inconsistent to some extent with the belief in the validity of the several approaches to God in Christ was his belief—a belief that he acted upon—that worship should have in its rites and language so little of what divides Christians that one local church might satisfy the spiritual needs of widely different types and temperaments. “I have striven,” he said in 1912, “to make this single community, so far as it has been possible for me, represent in its worship and all its ways the catholicity of the Church of Christ.”<sup>1</sup> In its liturgy the Beatitudes took the place of the Creed. In hymn and prayer the language was kept as undogmatic and unsectarian as possible.

There are sentences here and there in his writings corresponding to occasional moods and moments in his life which suggest that feeling and not a common object of faith and devotion might be the bond of unity. It was partly that he was over-generous in assuming that breadth of mind in other people was as securely based on Christian catholicity and depth of conviction as it was in himself. He was at times aware of the distinction.<sup>2</sup> The burden of his preaching, moreover, was the importance of thinking truly concerning the objects of belief. Without being dogmatic, it was essentially doctrinal.

He did not fully or continuously realise the fundamental difficulty in the way of church reunion, namely, that the different forms of worships arise from different conceptions of the Sacraments, and that in catholicism an intensely real spiritual experience is bound up with its doctrine of the Sacraments.

The Lord's Supper was observed in Trinity Church more often

<sup>1</sup> It was ready to admit to its communion “all who are sincerely seeking and striving to do the will of God and have faith in Jesus Christ sufficient to be disciples in His school, followers in His footsteps, and sharers in His work.”

<sup>2</sup> E.g. the preface to *De Profundis Clamavi*: “With the theological liberalism which finds little space for the culture of the devout life, and with the dogmatism of inverted orthodoxy which has lost ‘the passion for souls,’ I have no sympathy.” Cf. also the first sermon in the book, “What is described as ‘New Theology’ must have much of the old Theology in it if it is to satisfy. . . . Its preachers must have the historic sense . . . . Of all men, the preacher must not be weak in faith.”

than was customary outside the Episcopal communions. He preferred to administer it according to the Episcopal form, especially when the introduction of individual communion cups destroyed for him the beauty and dignity of the Presbyterian form. But he did not find in the Sacrament the kind of experience that the Catholic finds: his spiritual life was not built up round it. The language of the order of service that he prepared and used is that of a Service of Commemoration and Fellowship—symbol rather than sacrament, though in later years his mysticism played around the symbol.

Another paradox that he did not altogether resolve was the conflict between the Independent theory of the congregation gathered in Christ's name, and the proposition that the bond of union in the Coming Church should be "aspiration, not attainment, purpose, not character."

"I have always had more sympathy with the Roman and Anglican idea of the Church as a training place for young and old than with the Puritan theory of a sacred inner community."

Until human nature is perfected, he realised that the Puritan theory must remain an unfulfilled ideal.

"Could we but find a company trained in the school of Christ, obedient to all divine impulses, seeking not their own will but God's will, not their own private good but the great ends of the Divine Kingdom, free from pride and vanity and egotism and self-assertiveness—surely of such a Church gathered together and living together in the spirit of Christ it might be said—Whatsoever it does on earth shall be ratified in heaven."<sup>1</sup>

Like all strong idealists he was painfully conscious of the shadow of the actual. He was deeply distressed by the "wave of God-forgetfulness which is sweeping over our country, as it has already swept over the Continent." "It is the Church that is suffering to-day, but life in all its relations is going to suffer to-morrow." For a contemporary he was shrewd in his diagnosis of the cause. He summarised the causes of non-church-going thus :

"About the things good and bad which have brought all this to pass much might be said—change of life, change of thought, wider ideas of certain things; want of leading and training; neglect of family discipline, absorption in business, the secular habit of mind,

<sup>1</sup> The inconsistency is in a measure verbal. Before the Reformation and until recent years the word "Church" has covered two ideas—the preparatory school of the Kingdom and the fellowship of the Kingdom itself.

the love of pleasure and luxury that has vitiated the austerity of religion, the extension of facilities for recreation and travel, the tone of the Press, the mistakes of the churches, the love of theological controversy and sectarian strife, the foolish endeavour to satisfy the living present with the dry bones of a dead past, the lack of the note of reality in our preaching—the depreciation here in Scotland of the worshipful side of Church life and the failure to quicken and nourish in the people the devout spirit, a custom of church-going which is only custom. . . . The very spiritualising of our theology has helped in an age when men are engrossed in material pursuits to lessen the sense of divine realities—the spiritual seems shadowy to people immersed in material interests more or less coarse.”

The failure of the Churches to recognise and meet the situation, except by inadequate remedies and with bad arguments, weighed on him. None of his teaching is more positive and explicit than that on the true function of the Church in the world.

“Religion is essentially a political principle and power; the ultimate purpose and aim of Christianity is unquestionably a Christian civilisation. A religion that cannot be trusted to direct men aright in civic, national and international affairs is not fitted to be a principle and law of action in any relation of life.”

“. . . As never before the religious problem of our times lies along the line of social welfare. The call of the Church in these days is not, as it used to be, to save isolated souls. It is a call to deal with single souls as they are placed in the complex organism of society. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

He was critical of the political church and the institutional church; more than ever after he had seen the latter in America. He felt the need for a big extension in Social Work, Recreation, etc., but he would have it left to societies like the Y.M.C.A.

“It is often said that the great movements for social betterment are outside the Church. That is true, and that is exactly where they ought to be. The members of the Church as citizens are bound to deal with such matters as poverty, drunkenness, disease, sweating, housing and the like, but it is not the business of the Church as a Church. . . . The fundamental mistake that runs all through this kind of speech is the confounding of the duty of the Church as an institution with the duties of the men and women who compose the Church.”

He believed in the world-wide mission of the Church, but not much in missionaries and missionary societies—as they were a

<sup>1</sup> Address on the Ideal City Church.

generation ago. He felt they stood for and believed the very theological ideas that he was combating. Moreover, he did not believe that they could tackle their work in the right way and spirit until they had studied Comparative Religion and learnt to appreciate the good in other religious systems and civilisations, and some of the evils that existed in our own. To carry sectarianism into new fields seemed to him a sin against the spirit of Christ. Although he invited missionaries occasionally to occupy his pulpit, he could not be more than tepid in the support of foreign missions, as long as they were run on old-fashioned lines.

To him Public Worship was the alpha and omega of institutional religion, and much of his teaching was directed to the revival of its traditions and their rational defence. He pleaded for the revival of liturgical forms, the catholic custom of the open church, an enlightened observance of Sunday.<sup>1</sup>

“It wants no argument to show that the customs of good society—though not infallible—are a safe guide in matters of conduct. It should be equally apparent that the customs of the Church are a safe guide in matters of religious observance and ritual. If a certain set of customs have been observed throughout the Church since early days, then there is the strongest presumption in their favour. It has been the fault of Protestants that they have sought too much to eradicate traditional and time-hallowed forms of worship, instead of seeking to purify and reform them. I think I could prove if it were necessary that there is hardly a form even in the Roman Catholic Church which did not at the first spring out of some natural human need and did not symbolise a method of spiritual attainment.”

And again :

“Special places and seasons and acts of worship are meant to have a representative character ; to teach men the art of living and working with God in all the places where they live and work ; to interpret and nourish the ideal side of common life, and to supply the inspiration which is necessary to make the ideal actual and the actual ideal. Our churches do not say, or rather ought not to say, we are the only places in which you can, or ought to, worship ; but, we *are devoted* to purposes of worship so that, by our aid, every place may become worshipful and possess its own secret and wonderful consecration. . . . To argue that because all space and time, all life and work ought to be sacred to our feeling and thought there is no need for churches and special seasons

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *A Plea for a Worshipful Church*. As apposite to-day as in 1903.



and acts of worship is to oppose things which are not only perfectly consistent, but are absolutely necessary to each other."

Socially and nationally we owed so much to the tradition of worship that had come down to us that we were under an obligation to pass it on to the next generation :—

" We are living in critical days when the lust of gain and the lust of pleasure are sweeping thousands on to ruin. If our children are to stand strong they must be stronger than their fathers ; they must get in some way increase of moral fibre and power. Where are they to come from if religious faith is lost ? "

" A divorce from religion means in the long run a drift from the humanities."

Hunter was not content to prophesy like Amos outside the courts of Bethel, he tried to build with his own hands a better sanctuary, where men might worship in spirit and in truth. " The catholicity of the Church of Christ may be epitomised in a single worshipping community," he once said. He loved the sanctuary with the quiet, intense passion of the author of the eighty-fourth Psalm. He was zealous to educate people in the discipline of reverence. The pulpit stood at the side of his church, not in the centre.

He tried also to make the worship and life of his church independent of his own personality.

In a farewell sermon, he once said :

" Do not believe because one man thinks he must go, and one voice that has been heard so often within these walls has ceased, that therefore the good cause in the midst of you is to suffer a hindrance. It is no such thing. At least it need not be and ought not to be. You are not so dependent on a single instrument. Do not fear for that. The Church is never forsaken. God will provide."

But he was not altogether successful. His work and influence were too uncommon, whether as a preacher or as a leader of public worship, not to attract a personal following.

*Devotional Services for Public Worship* is to many the chief ground of Hunter's fame. As a result of continual labour during fifteen years it expanded through eight editions. If there are few churches where it is used so thoroughly as it was used in his own, most churches have felt its influence. It has proved one of the most influential contributions during the last thirty years to pastoral

theology in the non-episcopal churches. Ministers who would dislike to read or to be seen to read prayers from a book in their pulpits, have sought inspiration and suggestion from its pages. Many men, too, who have made little use of it in the ordinary services of the Church have made regular use of its special orders of service, such as those for Baptism and Marriage and Burial, and the occasional prayers which it contains.

The book, apart from title-page and editorial note, is anonymous. It is not possible to tell exactly how much of it is Hunter's own work. It is better so. The language of Christian devotion is an inheritance; its phrases cannot be made copyright. An original prayer is happily an impossibility; the most extempore of utterances bears witness to the tradition of the ages. Hunter drew from many sources, but adapted freely. He absorbed the devotional literature and liturgy of Christendom, and gave it out again with the impress of his own personality and spirit. More than most Prayer Books, however, *Devotional Services* is the work of one man; the majority of the prayers and petitions that it contains were first written in Hunter's handwriting. The form of it also is his own creation. The combination of liturgical forms and free extempore prayer in one order of worship, which it allows, was one of his strongest convictions.

He loved it increasingly as the years went by. He felt that he himself could do little to improve the last edition—beyond a few additions and alterations here and there. It remains a unique book, although a number of Free Church liturgies have appeared in recent years, for he had a rare gift of liturgical expression. Moreover, the book combines the spirit of catholic devotion with the modern outlook and the modern mind. It is liturgical without being sacerdotal, catholic and yet undogmatic.

“It is often said that the great and growing disparity between forms of worship and the actual beliefs of men is the gravest and most threatening of all the religious signs of our time. In preparing and revising this book I have sought to find words at once large enough and deep enough to express the common worship of Christian hearts. No honest man cares to repeat in church what is unbelievable out of church. The spirit of truth and the spirit of worship are not two, but one. The best prayers are those which express in simple language the simple needs, aspirations, trusts and fidelities of the religious and Christian soul. It is possible to welcome and love the new light and freedom of this new day of

God, and yet keep the old reverence for the Church and its worshipful observance and ways.”<sup>1</sup>

There were two elements in Hunter’s religious life which he never resolved into a logical consistency—perhaps they cannot be. He was an uncompromising Independent and a catholic Churchman. His early spiritual experience was purely evangelical—and so it continued, but he grew to love, and to love increasingly, catholic forms of worship—he first became acquainted with them in childhood—and he derived spiritual comfort from them.

“I think,” wrote Baron von Hügel recently, “that he was, at bottom, rather a staid or even High Churchman than a Non-conformist, indeed, than a Puritan of any kind, in the all-important matter of his attitude towards the senses—the sensuous. I remember well the profound impression of a comforting *détente* made upon my mind by my first contact with his spirit—my first reading of his *Plea for a Worshipful Church*. I remember also feeling then what I felt with him to the last—an uncertainty as to how far he had any vivid consciousness as to the lengths which this principle or affinity of his would logically carry him. But his uncertainty was not in the least any uncertainty as to whether or not that principle or affinity were at work within him. Perhaps he did not quite distinctly hold it; in any case, it very really held him: it was truly present, truly operative within him.”

But the Protestant and Independent in him recoiled from the theology, and still more from the oppressive ecclesiasticism, which have been bound up with catholic forms of worship. He was convinced—his experience confirmed the conviction—that a great truth lay both in Catholicism and in evangelical Protestantism; he felt that they were parts of a greater whole; but he was not able to achieve that synthesis perfectly in his own mind and life. There they were only federated. In his teaching the Protestantism is crisp and clear and articulate, the Catholicism on the whole is an undefined and powerful sentiment.

#### A NOTE ON THE INDEPENDENT THEORY OF THE CHURCH

The axiom on which Independent Church polity rests is that “the members of a Christian church should be Christians,” and conversely that wherever two or three were gathered together in Christ’s name there was a Christian congregation. The Elizabethan separatists

<sup>1</sup> Note to *Devotional Services* in the 7th and subsequent editions.

accepted literally the verse, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him," and consequently were horrified by a national basis for a Church which did not recognise the awful distinction between the saved and the lost. They were in the fullest sense High Churchmen, for they believed and acted on the belief that the members of a Church "by a willing covenant with God are under the government of God and Christ."<sup>1</sup> The affairs of the Church were equally the affairs of the members—hence the stress on the teaching function of the ministry. With splendid faith they made no provision for men's infirmity and disloyalty. There was no doctrinal test of membership. In early days persecution was an adequate test of a sincere profession. Afterwards it was held that whatever really commands the confidence of generous and trustful men in a man's Christian integrity is a sufficient reason for admitting him to membership. Similarly, a man's sense of vocation, approved in the congregation by a call to a pastorate, ratified by a service of recognition in which his fellow-ministers take part, was his divine "ordination."

The Independent or Congregational theory, wrote Dale, "is that the living Church is in every generation in union with the living Christ . . . and should be left absolutely free to listen to Christ's teaching and to accept it. With fresh discoveries of Divine thought, the more scientific definitions of truth long known to the Church may require modification. The imposition of a doctrinal system as a condition of Church communion or ministerial office is therefore abhorrent to its genius."

Further, in the seventeenth century when Independency as a church polity was most articulate, trust-deeds were unknown. They were a result of the Evangelical Revival in the early nineteenth century. They came into existence partly because the individualism of that movement obscured the distinctive churchmanship of Independency, and partly because numerous Independent congregations under the influence of the rationalism of the eighteenth century had drifted from orthodoxy into Unitarianism. (E.g. the doctrinal trust-deed of the King's Weigh House Church, London, only dates from 1847. The church was founded in 1662.) Historically, most of the old churches now associated with Unitarian teaching were in the seventeenth century Independent or Presbyterian churches. The majority of Independent—or, as they came to be called, Congregational—churches founded in the first half of the nineteenth century have doctrinal trust-deeds. Their doctrinal clauses caused a great deal of dissension and considerable litigation in the latter part of the century. They are for the most part ignored now. But these churches are still in the anomalous position that if a majority of their trustees acted as it is their duty, according to the law, to act, the ministers and congregations

<sup>1</sup> R. W. Dale: *Two Essays on Congregationalism in Essays and Addresses*, 1889.

would be turned out, even as Stannard and his friends were turned out in 1881.

The Congregational Union of England and Wales was only founded in 1831. Its objects were to bind together in closer fellowship and for mutual assistance the Independent Churches and to "uphold and extend Evangelical religion." This was defined in a Declaration of Faith, Church Order and Discipline (1833), which was prefixed to the *Congregational Year Book*. The Union is voluntary, its Confession is "declared," not "imposed" on a church. In the course of the century the Union has gained the allegiance of all the churches. Few can afford to stand without it. Under the influence of circumstances (the decline of Independency in the country and poor districts where Methodism by its circuit system has been able to maintain itself) and of the Church Assemblies of Presbyterianism and the Methodist Conferences and the like, the Union and its officials have had an increasing power in the life of the churches. It was this tendency that Hunter deplored.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE PILGRIM OF AN IDEAL. GLASGOW AGAIN, 1904-11

" I remember well  
    . . . When suddenly its spires afar  
Flashed through the circling clouds ; you may conceive  
My transport. Soon the vapours closed again,  
But I had seen the city, and one such glance  
No darkness could obscure. . . ."  
    *Browning.*—" Paracelsus."  
    " All your days ye shall dwell in tents."  
    *Jeremiah.*

THE *motif* of these last years was given out with emphatic tones on the first Sunday that Hunter resumed his ministry in Glasgow. His opening sermon was an impassioned plea and apologia for a free, unfettered, truth-devoted, prophetic ministry. In the evening and on the following Sunday evenings he gave his address on the Coming Church as rewritten for publication. The House of Lords' decision on the Free Church was an additional stimulus. In Scotland, it was calling forth a flood of sermons and letters in the Press, and Hunter took his part. He had seen once and yet again more vividly the ideal Church, and in the following years he was looking for the signs of its coming, keen on the scent of those who were crying, "Lo here, Lo there." He looked for it in England and Scotland, and looked for it in America, but he never found anything so near to it as his own single church in Glasgow.

Coming back to an old home or a scene of happy and successful work and life is an experience rich both in satisfaction and disappointment. A man always hopes and expects to find them as he left them, and in reality he finds they are the same and yet not the same. For there is no abiding in this life.

So it was with Hunter's return to Trinity Church. The first Sunday seemed and felt like a resuming of [work after a long interruption, but the appearance and the first impression were in part deceptive. In three years the congregation had changed, Glasgow had changed, Hunter himself had changed.

The membership of the church had declined. Three years with-

out a minister depress the life and tone of a congregation, and when it has been divided by sharp dissensions leave deep scars. It was the knowledge of this that influenced Hunter to return. He brought the balm of unity; but the unguent which heals the wound does not necessarily restore as quickly the interior weakness which the wound has left. Again, the congregation was being affected by the general decline in regular church attendance. Even as late as 1901 the bulk of his people attended twice on Sunday; but three years of "supplies," good, bad and indifferent, effectually broke the habit. After he returned in 1904 only a minority came twice, so that the evening congregation was chiefly drawn from outside.

Glasgow also had changed. The severe traditions of religious observance, which had held longer in Scotland than in the South, and still hold more strongly, were breaking up. The working-classes were more markedly alienated from the churches. Commercialism was sapping the spiritual life. There had been changes in the personnel at the University and in the churches. It so happened that most of the men that he knew best in former years had gone; but there was real compensation in the increasing number of younger ministers who had been influenced by his preaching in college days.

And then Hunter had changed; the early summer had given place to autumn. The three years in London counted as ten. His appearance had continued youthful into middle life, but when he returned to Glasgow his face was more lined and his hair grey. After six months he was congratulated on looking years younger, and undoubtedly the change brought mental and physical relief; but he had nevertheless entered into the third period of a man's mature life. His preaching was more mellow, its flavour richer and fuller, the passion as intense as ever, but more restrained. The flame which used to leap so fiercely, burnt with a steadier and clearer light. There was added now the ripeness, wisdom and depth which only the years bring. His thought was fresh and moving, but the tone was meditative. Symptomatic, too, of autumn was the inclination to prefer the deeper, the more advanced aspects of religion to the simpler moral issues of its threshold. There was, in short, a transposition, and the bourdon tones of pure religion that sustained the moral passion of the earlier preaching now became the overtones and pervaded the whole music.

He quickly fell back into the old ways and took again his old place in the city. He "has taken hold of his work with both hands," was a comment. Outside the church he spoke and lectured often, notably on Christianity and Social Questions, confining himself to broad principles rather than to their application. He frequently addressed working-class audiences and used often in private to say that artisans made the best audience in Glasgow. He still drew crowds. I remember an address one Sunday evening in 1908 under the auspices of the "Clarion Scouts," when Glasgow's biggest music-hall was packed with working people, and his address—sympathetic and yet without any attempt to court favour—was on the "Training of the Citizen." During these years, too, he must have lectured scores and scores of times on "Hamlet," Goethe's "Faust," "The Ancient Mariner," and less frequently on "Right-Thinking," "George Macdonald" and "Robert Burns."

He also identified himself very prominently with Women's Suffrage. All through his life he had stood consistently for the ideals that inspired the Woman's Movement. He was always reiterating them in his sermons and addresses. At the request of Mrs. Fawcett he preached a sermon in 1905 on the Civic Duties of Women, under the auspices of the National Union of Women Suffrage Societies, for whom it was afterwards published.<sup>1</sup> His wife was also enthusiastic, and was President of the Scottish branch of the Women's Social and Political Union, until that society became centralised and aggressively militant. In the early days of suffragette tactics, when journalists were trying to persuade the public that all suffragettes were unwomanly and mildly insane, he took the chair at big meetings in the St. Andrews Halls, for Mrs. Pankhurst, Mrs. Despard, and others, and at a drawing-room meeting in his own house for Mrs. Pethick Lawrence. His position in the city won for these speakers a fair hearing, which probably they would not otherwise have obtained, for at first he stood out almost alone among the ministers of Glasgow in this view. He was most uncomfortable in the chair at political meetings which promised to be disturbed, and he instinctively disliked even the early methods of the suffragettes, but he was convinced of their sincerity and felt that they were not being fairly heard or treated. Of their later policy, arson, etc., he disapproved.

<sup>1</sup> "Civic Apathy," Williams and Norgate, 1905, afterwards included in *De Profundis Clamavi*.



Women's suffrage he regarded as one of the political issues which are moral as much as political, and therefore the concern of religious teachers.

“The nineteenth century has been described as the century of the working man ; the twentieth century is going to be the woman's century. Within its richer years, a wider justice, a larger freedom and greater kindness are to prevail, and no distinction of sex will affect the exercise of women's rights. . . . But I confess I am just a little tired of the old phrase, ‘Woman's right to vote,’ I would fain substitute for it a higher and nobler watchword, namely, ‘The nation's need of the woman's vote’—the nation's need of the co-operation of those who can best help in legislation which concerns itself more and more every year with health and home, with temperance and refinement, with mother and child, with unprotected girls, with the degradation of cheap labour and shop tyranny, with the dangers of our streets, with public vice, with the unnatural crimes which are making the city of Glasgow a byword, and many such-like things. It is because I, as a man, am deeply and passionately interested in many schemes of social reform that I have been for many years an earnest advocate of Woman's Suffrage. It is women, and women alone, I believe, who can supply the insight, the detailed knowledge, the mastery of facts, and the driving power of enthusiasm which are necessary to carry out several of these great reforms.”

In the autumn of 1908, Dr. Paton of Nottingham promoted a fortnight's campaign in the chief cities of Scotland to give stimulus to the Scottish Christian Social Union. He secured the services of the present Bishop of Manchester, then a youthful Fellow of Queen's College, Oxford, and still a layman, as an itinerant speaker. Mr. Temple also preached one Sunday morning in Trinity Church on the social aspects of Christianity. Hunter's services were also sought, and he spoke with Mr. Temple at the meetings in Aberdeen. Dr. Paton was continually writing to him in these years on behalf of his numerous social schemes.

But although Hunter spoke more frequently on behalf of various social organisations than in previous years, his influence in civic life was still indirect rather than direct. “He formed a centre from which many social workers and many a good cause in Glasgow drew their inspiration and direction. . . . To be a member of Trinity almost invariably indicated a breadth of vision and a deep and true sympathy for humanity.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Miss M. H. Irwin, secretary of Scottish Council for Women's Trades.

The circumstances of his return to Glasgow re-fired his passion for liberty. This passion was not resentment that the work of a pioneer should be costly. He used to quote approvingly a remark of George Macdonald that men who preach new views of truth ought to have to suffer for it: "The endurance of hardship is a pledge of earnestness that they are bound to give." But it was unendurable to him that the truth should in any degree be constrained. Liberty was indispensable to truth, and truth to spiritual life. Whenever there seemed a conflict between truth and the institutional aspect of Christianity, he came down emphatically on the side of truth and liberty.

For the remainder of his life he kept apart from organised Congregationalism. His church, with his approval, ceased to have an official connection with the Scottish Congregational Union, and was styled "Trinity Church" instead of "Trinity Congregational Church," as formerly. He encouraged an enquiry into its trust-deed, which went so far as taking counsel's opinion on one or two matters. He also caused some heart-burning by saying in the course of a published interview—he was an easy victim to the wiles of a clever interviewer: ". . . I am afraid if I had remained in England I should have left the English Congregational Union. Its churches and ministry are losing their distinctive character and note, and are getting to be religiously more and more 'Wesleyanised,' and I think they ought not to be identified in any way with party politics." He defined the meaning of 'Wesleyanised' in the words of an American minister. "I have no quarrel with Methodism, but when we try to reach Methodist results by Methodist methods without possessing the Methodist temperament we are bound to fail. If our denomination has any reason for existence it is that it may be a pioneer on the intellectual frontiers of Evangelical Christianity, opening the way for the Gospel among people whom mere emotionalism can never reach."

Disappointed in the tendency of Congregationalism, he turned to the disciples of Martineau in the churches commonly styled Unitarian, who prefer to call themselves "Free Christian." Several of the younger men of this school had made themselves known to him and he was surprised and pleased to find how much they had in common with his own outlook. And he approved of the "open" trust of the old Presbyterian churches.<sup>1</sup> "I felt

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *supra*, note to chap. x, p. 213.

it a great privilege," wrote the Rev. J. M. Lloyd Thomas,<sup>1</sup> in reference to an address on "The Coming Church" in Nottingham, in October, 1904, "to have so convincing a pronouncement for Catholic Christianity delivered from my pulpit. . . . Our people need your wider outlook quite as much as the orthodox bodies. Indeed, I sometimes think we need it more, because we are beginning to claim it proudly as our own special discovery and monopoly. . . . When your plea is published, may you as editor organise a united chorus of voices proclaiming a new reformation on the lines of your sermon!" "I wish we could meet for a talk," wrote another, "on 'Free Catholicism.' Some of us have been very much impressed by your 'Coming Church' and have been lecturing and preaching on it a good deal. Now we feel as if something ought to be done."<sup>2</sup>

About the same time that saintly scholar, Dr. James Drummond, invited him to preach at Manchester College, Oxford. "Our College has always stood for Catholic Christianity, and would lend itself, so long at least as I have control, to any effort towards that great end." He accepted, and in the next two or three years he was in close touch with this group, preaching occasionally in their pulpits and inviting them to preach for him. Throughout he consistently maintained the position that being an Independent he compromised no one by his action, and that as long as he was allowed complete liberty of speech he was willing to preach under any auspices—for the Jews, if they would ask him. Indeed, he did give an address one Sunday evening in connection with the Jewish synagogue in Glasgow. For the rest, if people construed his action as an expression of goodwill and fellowship, he was glad that it should be so construed. It was time that the prevailing contempt and indiscriminate condemnation of "Unitarians" on the part of the orthodox should cease. If orthodoxy had moved, Unitarianism had changed no less. Its modern exponents were standing for some truths of Christianity which orthodoxy had too long neglected.

At the beginning of 1906 he was invited to be Hibbert Preacher and Lecturer on "Preaching and the Preacher's Office" at Manchester College during the session 1906-7. The distance between Glasgow and Oxford made acceptance difficult, but eventually

<sup>1</sup> Now of Birmingham and President of the Free Catholic Movement.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. Henry Gow of Hampstead.

his church allowed him a month's leave of absence in each of the three terms. He also received invitations to visit Australia and Canada, and to preach for three months in New York; these he had to refuse.

When he returned to Glasgow in 1904, he had by no means decided that it was to be "Glasgow for the rest of his days." His immediate purpose was to rally and reunite the church. That done, he felt the future was open. He did not, therefore, wholly discourage his friends in London who were anxious to provide him with a free church there. In the summer of 1905, at their request, he preached for six Sunday mornings in the Bechstein Hall, and these services were so appreciated that in the following summer he preached for four more Sundays. In August, 1906, the group who had arranged these services sent him an invitation to return to London. Considering the guarantors of the scheme only numbered one hundred and twenty, it was a singularly generous proposal, but none the less it was a hazard, and he did not feel that at his time of life he could face the risk and uncertainty that were involved. A quotation from the letter of invitation shows how attractive the proposal was to him.

"In proffering this appeal we are not unmindful of the fact that your assent to it will involve much personal sacrifice on your part. We are not enabled to offer you at present any material advantages over those you enjoy at Glasgow. We are only a scattered band drawn from all quarters of this vast Metropolis by the magnetism of your preaching and the simple, yet lofty, conception you have of Divine worship. We believe that you have in London an opportunity of promulgating the truth you have to deliver which is not available elsewhere, and that there is every prospect that your ministry here would become a most powerful factor in the maintenance of true religion. We look to you to guide the younger generation in those religious principles and ideals which you here so clearly enunciated in your discourses on 'The Coming Church.' . . ."

The proposal had, moreover, secondary attraction. "They only asked me for one service on Sunday, which would have been a certain relief, and also set me at liberty to serve other churches and causes." The desire was now strong within him to spread certain ideas as broadly as he was able in the years that were remaining to him. And he quickly realised that Glasgow was not so strategic a missionary headquarters as London. Mr. Allanson

Picton wrote him : " For your own development and the spread of your influence it is most desirable that you should not be confined to one pulpit. In fact, I hope your people are not so selfish as to desire it." And he agreed.

The lectureship at Manchester College was a new experience to which he looked forward.

*To the Rev. J. M. Connell.*

*"September 4, 1906.*

" I have been appointed, as you may be aware, to give lectures for three months next session to the students of Manchester College on Worship and Preaching and related subjects. As you were a student there it has occurred to me that you might be able to give me some suggestions as to the work on these lines which most requires to be done. You also know me and know what I can do well,\*and what I cannot do. I am anxious to do all I can to help the students and the College during the time I am at Oxford. The Committee of the College were quite unanimous, I believe, in appointing me and some of them very earnest about it, but I am not sure if all the professors take kindly to my appointment, so I may have to rely very much on suggestions from other quarters. During my residence I should like to have prayers, morning or evening, with the students in the College chapel. Is this customary? Could it be arranged, think you? I should like to have the opportunity of giving a few devotional addresses. Your churches and ministers sadly lack devotional fervour. Any suggestions you like to offer will be gratefully received. I hope you are well and at work somewhere and happy."

He preached morning and evening during the months he was in residence—the evening sermons being really lectures, and long ones. He also gave public lectures, chiefly on the leaders of liberal religious thought.

" Besides public addresses," writes Dr. Estlin Carpenter, who was Principal at the time, " Dr. Hunter very generously undertook much private intercourse with the students. In particular he often conducted the College prayers. I do not know how regularly, as the morning chapel arrangements were made by the resident Warden; but I learned that the short devotional addresses which he then delivered were warmly appreciated by many of the students, and gave an unusual warmth and richness to the daily worship of our little community.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> His addresses at these daily prayers were after the model of Peabody's " Addresses in a College Chapel." Many of them were on the Devotional Classics and the Mystics.

“ I fear that Dr. Hunter’s ministrations with us interfered with an old and valued friendship with the Principal of Mansfield.<sup>1</sup> I think it involved a breach in their intercourse, but I never heard him say any bitter word about it. When Mr. Campbell launched his ‘ New Theology,’ a large meeting was held in the Corn Exchange (700 or 800 people) to hear him expound it. I was asked to preside, and I asked Dr. Hunter to open the meeting devotionally. His beautiful little service gave exactly the right tone to the proceedings. We had been warned that there might be troublesome disturbance. The spirit of opposition was subdued at the outset.”

Hunter was puzzled to know what attitude he should take up to the “ New Theology ” movement in 1907. It was, of course, largely a Press “ stunt,” but the sensationalism persisted. This and the egotism of its leaders, its theological crudity, and its religious superficiality, made him dislike the agitation intensely. He doubted, and as the years passed the doubt became a certainty, whether a movement so begun would bear appreciable fruit. Indeed, he was afraid it would prejudice a deeper movement which some day was bound to come. But he also disliked the attitude of the Congregationalist leaders. Their theological manifesto drew a sharp retort from him :

“ I do not think these ‘ got-up ’ manifestos serve any good purpose—no matter whether they hail from Rome, Canterbury, Hampstead, or Lancaster Gate. They are the sign of weakness, not of strength ; of fear, not of faith. They make estrangement wider than it need be. Besides, the day for such declarations is over and gone. In our time it is the personal word alone that has life and reality in it, or carries any genuine authority with it. This pretentious production of Congregational Union chairmen and principals of theological colleges will not appeal to a single man who cares for truth as truth and is seeking to get at the reality of things. It does not read like an honest piece of witness-bearing, but more as something that has been drawn up at the dictation of two or three busybodies in the interests of denominational institutions. It has too many reserves, and will bear as many meanings as it has signatures. I wonder so many wise and good men could have been coerced into signing it. It must surely be that they are making too much of an agitation which has been chiefly a newspaper one—created and carried on for the sake of good copy. North of the Tweed we have no theological panic. It would almost be a hopeful sign if we had. It is not thinking,

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Fairbairn. It was only a temporary coolness at the most.

but the absence of thinking on the high themes of religion which we have to mourn. It is religious indifference among all classes, both Greeks and barbarians, against which we have to contend. This declaration of Union chairmen and heads of colleges is undignified, unwise, and is bound to convey an impression which some who have signed it are, I am persuaded, as far as possible from wishing to convey."

In response to a request, he invited Mr. Campbell to give an address in his church on a Monday afternoon. He never identified himself closely with the movement, though he read a paper on "Miracles" at a small New Theology Conference at Montreux in August, 1907, and a paper on "Inspiration" the following year at another conference at Penmaenmawr. He also preached the sermon at the induction of Mr. Campbell and the Rev. E. W. Lewis to the pastorate of the King's Weigh House Church in 1909. The fact was that he did not trust the stability of the leaders of the Movement, and disliked its shallow iconoclasm.

In 1907 he had a sharp disappointment. Mr. Timothy Holmes, the principal guarantor behind the invitation that was sent to him from London the previous year, decided to place eight thousand pounds in trust to endow such a scheme if Hunter would return to London. The only condition which he made was that Hunter should remain an Independent. The deed was actually drawn up and ready for signature when Mr. Holmes fell ill and died. The committee of Manchester College had also asked him to continue his work there subject to the Hibbert Trustees continuing the financial grant. This they unexpectedly refused to do, ostensibly on financial grounds. Hunter had practically made up his mind to accept both London and Oxford, and resign his position in Glasgow. The action of the Hibbert Trustees took place within a few days of the death of Mr. Holmes. It was an emphatic ruling of fate.

He had enjoyed his visits to Oxford. He did not mingle much with University society, but he gave himself to the students with whom he had to do, and felt a genuine "vocation" for the work. Although the more distinctively Unitarian of the staff hardly approved of him and his teaching, he was happy in the friendship and goodwill of the Principal and the ex-Principal, Dr. James Drummond. He also gained more intimate knowledge of the Unitarian denomination, both official and unofficial. The few men through

whom he had made contact with the body continued to hold his warm regard, but he felt they were not representative of the majority, either of its ministers or laymen. The cold, intellectual atmosphere of its devotional life repelled him, and he was at times irritated by the attempts to capture him for the denomination.

*To a Unitarian Minister.*

“GLASGOW, *June 24, 1907.*

“I am surprised at the little influence men like Martineau and Thom and Sadler have had on the Unitarian denomination. The men of the Essex Hall order have no sympathy with Martineau’s ideal of an unsectarian and catholic Church. I see no future for the body. It is only endowments that hold it together. The students do not look forward to their work with (proper) interest. It is *religion*, not theology, their churches need—need if they do not want it. Look at this wretched ‘van mission.’ It cannot do any good—only stir up controversial bitterness in villages. What they ought to try to show is that their form of faith has some real religion, devotional and missionary power in it—that it can produce living churches. I wish the better men would stand out and start a movement on catholic lines. I don’t wonder at your dissatisfaction.”

While he was in Oxford he received an invitation to preach the sermon at the Fourth International Congress of Liberal Religious Thinkers at Boston in September, 1907. He regarded this as an honour not to be refused, although following his engagement at Oxford it came at an awkward time. He was grateful to his congregation for the necessary leave of absence and was relieved in mind when he secured Stopford Brooke to take his place during six Sundays. From books and journals he was intimate with the Liberal Religious movement in America, and was glad at last to have an opportunity to study it at first hand. He spent a month in America on this first visit, and as he had only ten or twelve engagements he was able to see a good deal of the country and its life. He landed at New York and preached his first sermon in America in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, famous for the ministry of Henry Ward Beecher.

“*September 22nd.*

“I have got my first Sunday over. I had a great congregation this morning, and I preached, I think, well—my sermon on ‘Forgetting God.’ Dr. Hillis took part in the service—and at the close he stands near the platform and shakes hands with people



who care to come up to him. I stood beside him, and more than a hundred came up and spoke to me and thanked me for the sermon. . . . It was an honour to stand where Beecher had preached for more than forty years. . . .”

The subject of his sermon to the congress of Liberal Religious Thinkers was “Religious Depth—the Passion for God.” He allowed the occasion and the place—Channing’s pulpit—to weigh on him; he felt afterwards that he had over-elaborated the treatment. But it was delivered with immense fervour. Both text—Psalm cxxx—and discourse were a challenge to the intellectual liberalism of the conference.<sup>1</sup> The account Hunter wrote home was succinct—“The sermon has passed off well, and I had an immense congregation; but I never perspired so much in my life. Dr. Adams said it was a real prophet’s message.”

He enjoyed Boston. “I like Boston; I hated New York. People are kind.”

“September 30th.

“I have spent pleasant days here. The meetings have not interested me very much, but some of the men have, and the country about Boston. It is a lovely neighbourhood. I was in the houses of Longfellow, Holmes and Lowell, and at their graves in Mount Auburn cemetery—where also Channing and Phillips Brooks are buried—a beautiful cemetery.

“Yesterday I preached at King’s Chapel—the oldest place of worship here, and where they still use the English Prayer Book with words omitted. I enjoyed the service. In the evening I preached at the opening service of the Harvard University (session) in their chapel. I had a fine congregation of young fellows. . . .

“The principal Congregational minister here is Dr. Gordon, a strong, liberal man. I lunched with him on Saturday. He is an Aberdeenshire man originally. Unitarianism here is different from what it is in England, and the gulf between it and Congregationalism is not so wide. They freely exchange. Dr. Gordon hopes that the two bodies will come together. The influence of Harvard—which was originally Unitarian, and the professors there like the Peabodys—has been catholic. . . .”

From Boston he went to Ann Arbor, where the University of Michigan is situated, and from there to Chicago. Both on this visit and on the second one he was impressed by the buildings of the State Universities and their equipment.

<sup>1</sup> The sermon gives the title to and comes first in the volume—*De Profundis Clamavi*. It is printed in the report of the proceedings of the Congress published in Boston—*Fellowship and Freedom*.

“ October 6th.

“ . . . Yesterday we spent driving about everywhere in a motor-car—to all the sights worth seeing in Chicago. What most interested me was the University. The fine buildings surprised me. I had lunch with the professors. I had tea at the Hull House—a centre of a great philanthropic work, which you may have read about in *Scribner's*, at the head of which is a Miss Addams, a Quaker lady.

“ Pulsford is settled here. . . . He was kind and hearty. His accounts of church life in Chicago are not cheering. He says it is almost impossible to get on unless you go in for sensationalism.

“ I preached this morning to a large congregation. Professor Moulton and his wife were in the congregation and came and spoke to me. He said he often heard me preach at Hull. He is now a professor here. . . .”

“ October 21st, *R.M.S. Ivernia*,

“ I am writing this in mid-Atlantic. I had booked my passage in the *Lusitania*, but cancelled it. I did not want to return to New York, and, further, I did not like the excitement there was over the *Lusitania*.

“ I have on the whole been much pleased with my visit to America. I met with kindness everywhere. I hope to go again—say the spring after next. I have just made ends meet this time. I am glad I have seen so much of America. This visit has enlarged my world and given me new impressions of things. The country is great and has tremendous problems to solve. The best people of America are just like the best people of England. Boston I liked much. . . . I wish I had come here ten or twelve years ago—when I was younger. . . .”

There was one place in America that moved him to rhapsody—Concord, the home of Emerson, Thoreau and Hawthorne. At one period of his life he had learned many things from Emerson, and later he found him a serviceable ally in the defence of public worship. He was able to find time to visit Concord more than once, and he entered deeply into the spirit of the place. In an informal lecture on “ A Visit to Concord ” that he wrote on his return he said :

“ It is the constant appeal to some of the richest associations of one's intellectual history that makes a first visit to Concord so memorable. Certain names are continually upon the lips, certain books speak once more with the powerful inspiration of those golden hours when they first kindled the fires of aspiration and set all life to a celestial music, certain forms vanish and reappear along

the highway. Reverence for those who served us greatly when we most needed help will not die while men keep any spark of soul alive in them, and he is greatly to be pitied who can stand in houses where great men have thought and wrought, or by the graves where all that is mortal of them lies—and not feel lifted far above the moods of common life. . . .

“ . . . . (The Old Manse) stands so secluded that its very aspect rebukes vulgar curiosity—but the house in which Emerson wrote *Nature* and Hawthorne *The Mosses from an Old Manse* must always keep its door ajar to the imagination of the world. I could not resist playing the Vandal in a small way here. I had counted upon bringing away a bit of moss, but I found I was a generation or two too late for that and had to be content with one or two locust leaves from an overhanging tree. . . .

“ . . . A mile and a half from Concord is Walden Pool where Thoreau in his earlier days built himself a hut among the woods and lived eight months upon bean soup. . . . It was a very pure pleasure to me to seek out this place and to be left for hours to weave my thoughts and fancies about it without any interruption. One who sees Walden Pool, as I saw it for the first time, on a clear, lovely afternoon in autumn, its translucent depths full of colour and light, feels at a glance the charm which drew Thoreau to its wooded margins, and understands with hardly a tithe of his marvellous natural perception how he found so much of the overshadowing world of forest and sky in its quiet waters. . . . One gets an impression of distinct individuality from this little sheet of water which holds itself apart from the wooded heights that encircle it, and rises and falls by some mysterious law of its own; as if it needed no feeding from the skies, but like the man who once haunted its shores had found the source of inner life.”

After his return from America for three years he was seldom away from his own pulpit on Sundays. His visits to Oxford and America, in 1907, had embarrassed the finances of the church, especially as Brooke had failed him at the last moment. The congregations used to be small in his absence, and consequently, if he were away for long, the income of the church began to suffer. Whenever he was away the officers of the church were anxious that he should secure a substitute who would “fill” the church, but he would only ask men who stood for more or less the same ideas as he did. This conflict of obligations tended to make him fill up his weekdays and holidays with engagements at the very time of life that he required more leisure and rest. A church which, with its several organisations, required an annual income of three thousand pounds began to weigh as a burden. But these thoughts were still

undertones and came only occasionally to surface. The years from 1907-10 were happy, uneventful years. If he mourned the death of men who had been with him from the beginning—and such losses are irreplaceable to a man who has passed sixty—he enjoyed the friendship of those who were left. His children, too, had reached companionable age. Although his congregation was no longer growing, it was strong and consolidated, and its activities full of vigour.

He writes to a friend in 1908 :

“I have never lost the desire to return to London. It grows instead of diminishing. I wish I could see my way. Find me a cottage on Amersham Common where I can live on half my present income. During the last twelve months I have lost by death several of my best friends—this week my best friend and staunchest supporter—Sir James Marwick. So that loosens the ties here.

“My book, I am afraid, will not appear as soon as I had hoped. For the last three weeks I have not even been able to correct proofs. I have never been so engaged and busy. I have preached three times since Sunday, had two funerals and one wedding and sick and bereaved people to visit—which takes many hours and is very upsetting for my kind of work. I am trying to get five days at Bruges after Easter. On the last Sunday of April I preach at Dr. Maclaren’s church in Manchester—so I have only the days between the Sundays. But I feel I must have a little change. I am almost at the point of breaking down and I mustn’t.”

The volume referred to was his first considerable volume of sermons. He rewrote all the sermons with extreme care and he meant the book to be broadly representative of his teaching on the great Christian doctrines—the Incarnation, the Fatherhood of God, the Atonement, Salvation—as well as the Christian Life. He also, about this time, prepared a much enlarged edition of *Prayer and Praise for Children*. It was only printed for use in his own church, as he did not feel that it was sufficiently expert and considered to be published for the general public. It was a collection of three hundred hymns, simple and innocent of theological phraseology.

Outside his regular work, the most interesting episode in his life was a scheme, described in the following letter, to which he gave himself entirely :

*To Miss Mary Scott.*

“*March 16, 1908.*”

“I have had a very strong desire for a number of years to do something to commemorate the men who did most for the widening of religious thought in Scotland during the nineteenth century—Edward Irving, John Macleod Campbell, A. J. Scott, Bishop Ewing, Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, George Gilfillan, Robert Lee, Norman Macleod, James Morrison, John Tulloch, Robertson Smith, A. B. Bruce, George Macdonald, John Caird.

“I have received permission from the managers of the church to erect two memorial windows (behind the pulpit, in place of the two hideous ones we have now), and a brass memorial tablet with the names—on condition that I raise the money myself. This I have undertaken to do—if I can. The cost of two very good windows will be not less than £500. Towards this I have received from twelve friends (some outside the church) £240. Now I venture to appeal to you and also to Mrs. Littlejohn. Draw her special attention to the representation of Dundee in my list! It is a pity that all these men should not have a memorial. It is fitting also that it should be in Trinity Church. There is no other church broad enough to have it. I leave the matter with you, asking you to forgive my intrusion. . . .”

From members of his own congregation and friends outside of it, by letters and by personal interviews, he raised a sum sufficient not only to pay for these two large windows, but also for a smaller window to commemorate English Churchmen of the same school. The work was entrusted to Mr. Stephen Adam, Senior, F.S.A. of Glasgow. The broad conception was largely Hunter's. He and the Rev. David Watson and Mr. Adam spent hours over the plans and the cartoons, and while the work was progressing Hunter would go down to Mr. Adam's studio once or twice every week. The result was two windows quite out of the conventional category. As stained-glass work they are good examples of the renaissance of the medieval craft, being of pure mosaic glass, free of paint. The draughtsmanship is here and there weak, but the ensemble is balanced, dignified and reposeful—which was important, as the windows face the congregation.

The idea of the windows is that of broad historical parallels. On the first tier of each of the four lights (each window has two lights) there are pairs of figures—John Knox and George Buchanan, Melancthon and Erasmus, Chrysostom and Wycliffe, Zwingli and Thomas à Kempis, representative religious leaders in their times.

Above them are the single figures of Hilkiah, Isaiah, John the Baptist and St. John ; above them allegorical figures of Truth, Tolerance, Fervour and Faith ; in the cinquefoil at the apex of the one window Christ as "Lux Mundi," and in the other the descent of the Spirit of Truth. The historical figures are as far as possible portraits—the result of Mr. Watson's researches. This is perhaps the best part of the work, for as the thought ascends from man to God the treatment becomes more conventional. One *jeu d'esprit* caused comment—in default of authentic portraits Chrysostom was given a likeness to John Caird, and Isaiah to George Macdonald.

The third window was a more difficult subject, and as a composition is less successful ; the rich colouring rarely gets adequate light. Its best quality and the one which will augment its value as the years pass is one which distressed some people. It consists simply of life-size portraits, in ecclesiastical or academic robes, of F. W. Robertson, F. D. Maurice, Charles Kingsley, Dean Stanley, and Bishop Colenso, at whose feet in native war-paint sits a Zulu. It is dedicated to the memory of these men and Thomas Arnold. The names associated with the larger windows were A. B. Bruce, Robertson Smith, Carlyle, A. J. Scott, Bishop Ewing, George Macdonald, John Caird, Edward Irving, James Morrison, John Service, Macleod Campbell, Robert Lee, Erskine and William Pulsford. It was a desire perfectly fulfilled and a debt handsomely acknowledged to all time. What Baron von Hügel once said of the "Thoughts" that Hunter included in his *Monthly Calendars* is true also of these windows—"they reveal the man and his mind as vividly as his own writings."

The English Church took a considerable place in his thought in these years, although he had no direct contact with it except on his holidays. The Episcopal Church of Scotland is not so prominent in the religious life of Scotland as English people are led to suppose. Hunter did not mix much with Scottish Episcopalians, and disliked their narrow traditionalism. Its one Bishop whom he admired was Alexander Ewing, the friend and contemporary of Erskine and Macleod Campbell ; and he was thoroughly untypical. Hunter knew the Church of England through the biographies and writings of its great men and the worship of its great churches—an ideal and rather misleading introduction. He admired its comprehensiveness, its worship, and, within limits, its venerable traditions. Of its machinery he was blissfully

ignorant. On the whole it was more than any other Church the one to which he would have liked to have belonged. He was not able to do so, of course, but he urged his younger son to take Orders in it. Medievalism and ecclesiasticism he hated, but he loved the ideal of worship that in practice they enshrined, and he anticipated the day when this spirit would be free of its bondage. His attitude was not constant—in part and at times he was drawn to the Church of England, and in part and at other times he was repelled. Over against the letters which are quoted in a later chapter must be set a considered statement like the following :

“There is much in and about the Episcopal Church which deserves our love and reverence; especially the witness it bears and has borne to the need of reverently ordered worship and the central place worship ought to hold in the Church. But I cannot regard it as an adequate expression of a truly Catholic Church, because it systematises exclusion and supports caste in religion.”<sup>1</sup>

In the early summer of 1910 he made a second visit to America in order to conduct a ten weeks' preaching mission in the Universalist Churches.<sup>2</sup> During his first visit to the States, he had come across the Universalist Book-room in Boston, and when he showed interest in their publications was brought into touch with the leaders of the denomination. As an organised body they seemed to be standing for many of the things for which he as an individual was standing in Britain.

He sailed from Liverpool in the middle of April—alone, and not in his usual good health. During the winter he had suffered from rheumatism in the hand—a form of writer's cramp. He was hoping that the voyage would freshen him, but it had the opposite effect, as the ship encountered heavy seas.

Hunter had the experience common to most public men who visit the States—of being confronted with a list of engagements twice as long as he had expected. He was a poor hand at self-defence, and his protests were soon broken down. Unfortunately, his wife was not there to stiffen them. But to attempt such a tour was folly for a man of sixty-two at the end of a winter's work,

<sup>1</sup> Lecture on “Alexander Ewing, Bishop of Argyll and the Isles.”

<sup>2</sup> They represent a sort of secession from the Congregational Churches in America during the nineteenth century on the part of those who dissented from the evangelical orthodoxy of the time and, more positively, believed in universal redemption.

and in the heat of an American summer. In experience the programme proved even more exacting than on paper. Although every comfort had been provided in the way of travel and hotels, yet in every place his visit was made an "occasion." The way had been prepared by a most thorough Press campaign.<sup>1</sup> The atmosphere of expectation which such preparations produce in a congregation draws out the emotional and nervous energy of a sensitive preacher. Moreover, he nearly always preached long sermons which in themselves demanded vigorous and passionate delivery.<sup>2</sup> Broadly, it was a mission to promote the Christian Life and Religious Fellowship. In most of the towns that he visited his engagements consisted of a sermon or lecture, followed in American fashion by hand-shaking with several hundred people; an address at some social function or banquet; one or two informal meetings with ministers, and a motor trip round the local "sights." In the larger towns, where his stay was longer, his engagements were more numerous.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For example, his visit to the young industrial town of Muncie, Indiana, where he preached on a week-evening was preceded by flamboyant notices in the local press for days before—running to about a dozen columns in all; the service was held in the largest church—and admission by ticket. And similarly elsewhere.

<sup>2</sup> Most of the sermons that he preached are included in *God and Life*. The lectures that he gave were on "F. D. Maurice," "George Macdonald" and "The Coming Church"—he also gave addresses on the "Church in the City," "Citizenship," "The Theological Outlook in Great Britain."

<sup>3</sup> His itinerary was as follows :

- April 24. Sunday. Lynn, Mass.  
                   Boston. Joint Service of greater Boston churches.  
 Monday. Meeting with ministers of Boston churches.  
                   Banquet at Faneuil Hall.  
 Tuesday. Malden, Mass. Sermon.  
 Wednesday. Providence, R.I. Sermon.  
 Thursday. Worcester, Mass. Sermon.  
 Friday. Springfield, Mass. Sermon.
- May 1. Sunday. New York and Brooklyn. 3 Sermons.  
 Monday. New York. Universalist Club Banquet.  
 Tuesday. Washington. Sermon.  
 Wednesday. Cincinnati. Sermon.  
 Thursday. Muncie, Indiana. Sermon in Presbyterian Church.
8. Sunday. Chicago. S. Paul's Church.  
                   Address at "Evening Club" to 3000 people.  
 Monday. Chicago. Lunch with Congregational ministers.  
                   Banquet at University Club.  
 Tuesday. Joliet, Illinois. Sermon.  
 Wednesday. Hoopston. Sermon.  
 Thursday. Urbana. Students' Church. Sermon.  
 Saturday. Minneapolis. Banquet.
15. Sunday. Minneapolis. Sermons.  
 Tuesday. Waterloo, Iowa. Sermon.  
 Wednesday. Marseilles, Illinois. Sermon.  
 Thursday. Indianapolis. Sermon.  
 Friday. Lansing, Michigan. Sermon.



That he was able to carry through the programme was remarkable. Once, about the seventh week, he caught a cold motoring, and for a few days his voice troubled him. Ten days later he had—what he had never had before—an attack of nose-bleeding. He wrote from Baltimore on June 10th :

“I have not been very well the last two days. . . . I dare say the heat and strain have had to do with it. . . . I seem to have shaken something off—I feel so much better, indeed, quite well. I am glad, however, that the end is near and that the work gets lighter. It will be better for me to rest quietly somewhere when I get to England. I don't want anything stimulating. I have had enough in that line.”

But he enjoyed the experience, in spite of the pace. It was an

- May 22. Sunday. Detroit. Sermons.  
 Monday. Detroit. Address to Ministers.  
                     Lecture on “George Macdonald.”  
 Tuesday. Columbus, Ohio. Sermon.  
 Wednesday. Akron, Ohio. Sermon.  
 Thursday. Buffalo. Sermon.  
 Friday. Albion, N.Y. Sermon.
29. Sunday. Rochester, N.Y. Sermon.  
             Syracuse, N.Y. Sermon.  
 Monday. Watertown, N.Y. Sermon.  
 Tuesday. Canton, N.Y. Lecture to Ministers and Students on “F. D. Maurice.”  
                     Sermon.
- June 1. Wednesday. Utica, N.Y.  
           Thursday. Troy, N.Y. Sermon.  
           Friday. Newhaven, Conn. Sermon.  
           Saturday. Hartford, Conn. Meeting with Ministers.
5. Sunday. Hartford, Conn. Sermon.  
           Meriden, Conn. Sermon.  
 Monday. Meriden, Conn. Lecture on “George Macdonald.”  
 Tuesday. Bridgeport, Conn. Sermon.  
 Thursday. Baltimore. Sermon.  
 Friday. Reading, Pa. Sermon.
12. Sunday. Philadelphia. Sermon  
           Newark, N.Y. Sermon.  
 Tuesday. Brookline, Mass. Lecture on “Macdonald.”  
 Wednesday. Boston. Tufts College Commencement. Speech at Luncheon.  
 Thursday. Concord, N.H. Sermon.  
 Friday. Manchester, N.H. Sermon.
19. Sunday. Portland, Maine. Sermons.  
 Monday. Dover, N.H. Sermons.  
 Tuesday. Lewiston, N.H. Address to State Convention on “Coming Church.”  
                     Thursday. Lowell, Mass. Sermon.  
                     Friday. Gloucester, Mass. Sermon.
26. Sunday. Augusta, Me. Sermon.  
           Bangor, Me. Mass. Service in the City Hall.  
 Monday. Rockland, Me. Sermon.  
 Wednesday. South Weymouth near Boston. Sermon.  
 Thursday. Boston. Meeting with his “Commission,” and Farewell Luncheon with ministers.

opportunity to rejoice an evangelist. He gave gladly all he had to give. He wrote from Boston at the end of June :

“ My course is finished, my mission ended, and, I think, with joy and amid much appreciation. I have just bidden good-bye to over twenty Universalist ministers who met at lunch to see me. . . . I have had a splendid trip and it has cost me nothing. I shall never forget it. It has been a great experience.”

Except for the long train journeys, sometimes by night, he found it full of interest and delight. His letters, hurried and breathless, register some uniform impressions. The way in which he was placarded and lionised he accepted with amusement once he got used to it. “ The local paper here has a most extravagant notice of me. These puffing notices make me almost take to my heels and refuse to put in an appearance.” And from another place : “ I was actually introduced by the minister as ‘ the world’s greatest preacher ’—it is too bad.” Like all visitors to America he was impressed by the vitality of the people, by the mushroom growth of cities, their handsome buildings, and the evidence of abundant wealth and also by the natural beauty of many places that he visited.

“ You can have no idea of the growth and largeness of these American towns and the fine buildings and the fine residences. It all speaks of vast wealth. Practical materialism is the besetting danger. People seem to live so exclusively for this world. Last night I was at a place called Akron, which has more than doubled its population in two or three years by the growth of the rubber trade.”

He wrote similarly from Detroit and Minneapolis. Washington he greatly admired :—“ This is a fine city—one of the finest I have ever seen. It is so beautifully laid out, and the buildings are so imposing.” While he was there he was asked to take the opening prayers of the House of Representatives one day—an honour that he deeply appreciated.

“ The Speaker and others were very cordial. It is a magnificent building—finer, I think, than our Parliament Houses. This afternoon I called by request on our Ambassador, Mr. Bryce. He was very gracious. He said he heard me preach several times at the Weigh House. He would have taken me to see President Taft at the White House, but he was from home.”

He was struck by the church architecture, especially of some of the churches in which he preached. He was less appreciative of the methods of public worship.

“They make too much of the music here in the churches—all quartettes. In the church where I preached this morning they spend 6000 dollars a year on the music.” “I preached last night in the most churchy Church I have been in among the Universalists. Fine chancel, in every way like a fine English parish church. The minister was in sympathy with my ideas of worship. Quite the opposite to the place where I was on Sunday night. The minister there—a good man—had no conception of reverence and dignity in public worship.”

By contrast, many who heard him remarked on Hunter's reverent demeanour and his prayers. “That which he has in a marked degree, and which we, perhaps, most lack is religious fervour and devoutness.” A correspondent in Washington wrote to him: “The prayer you gave impressed me as no other prayer has ever. I wish to thank you for it. I sincerely wish it were possible for me to have it to commit to memory.”

The abounding hospitality that met him everywhere, and the trouble which busy men took to entertain him, touched him. He refers to it time and again.

“People are all very warm in their welcome. A dozen of the leading men met me at the station when I arrived and conducted me to this hotel.” “You have no idea how kind the people have been everywhere. I am struck by the number of Glasgow people I meet.”

Among the hundreds that came and shook hands after every service there always were some Scotsmen, and usually one or two who had heard him in his own church. In one place the “clan Campbell” marched to the church in their kilts and with bagpipes playing! Everywhere, moreover, his visit was the occasion of an inter-denominational rally. “All denominations were represented at my service last night. Two Episcopal rectors stayed to speak to me—also the Jewish rabbi!”

It is not easy to discover behind their glowing reports and generous compliments what his hosts and audiences really thought of him. He was something of a surprise. Many were disappointed when his visit “turned out to be a purely spiritual mission.” Dr. Bisbee, the editor of the *Universalist Leader*, who was more perfectly acquainted with the results of Hunter's mission than anybody, wrote at the time of Hunter's death: “It is rather humiliating to confess that many of our people could

not understand him. As he went over the country there came the comment, 'Why, he is only preaching!' 'There is nothing new to us in what he is saying.' We had expected someone who would with sensational methods slaughter the Orthodox and exalt Liberalism, and behold, he just came preaching the Gospel, but what a Gospel! Perhaps he did not tell us anything new, but, as Dr. Shutter finely phrased it, 'he translated our theology into a religion.' . . . The visit showed another thing about this wonderful man, and that was the amount of work he could do, for within two months he travelled thousands of miles and averaged more than a sermon a day, a feat which would have exhausted the most strenuous American. All of which shows how absolutely and unselfishly he gave himself to the mission of Christian unity, performing this great work without recompense other than his actual expenses."

"The coming of Dr. R. J. Campbell, of London, to America as the apostle of 'Liberal Christianity,' was as spectacular as the coming of Dr. John Hunter was unpretentious. There was no indication on the latter's part of uncertainty; the experimental stage had been passed by him, and he knew and therefore spoke. He stood for a Church which was both Christian and Liberal, and there was never a sign of variableness nor shadow of turning. . . . Others will gather the fruits of his labours and put them on the market, even trying to adjust them to the most eager market, but to him the honour if not the glory."

One of his last addresses was on the Christian Ministry at the Commencement (i.e. degree day) of Tufts College, near Boston. The College conferred on him an honorary degree—*verbi divini disertum praeconem et virum eximia benignitate pietate doctrinaque qui et Deo fidelissime servit et homines verissime amat ad gradum Sacrae Theologiae doctoris honoris causa admisit*. From Boston he went to Montreal, Ottawa, and Quebec, and after a week in Canada sailed for Liverpool. He preached in his brother-in-law's church at Crosby the day after he arrived, and then went to Ilkley and Ingleton in Yorkshire for a quiet fortnight before he returned to work.

Before he left the States he was informally offered the position of Dean of the Theological Faculty of Tufts College, and the invitation was officially confirmed after he had returned home. He considered it seriously.

“The Tufts College position would have been an ideal one for me—if it had been on our side of the Atlantic. But when one is over sixty a big change looks bigger than it really is. I am, however, to consider it well. It will be my last offer of any position. I cannot think of London—even if anything came of it.<sup>1</sup> It would mean pioneer work again, and I want to be free of all such responsibilities. Tufts would be an assured place, and with no church cares—just preaching here and there, or morning preacher at some one place.”

He declined the invitation.

During the winter he found work laborious, and began to look forward to the time when he would be able to retire. In March, while he was busy with Lenten courses and addresses, he had an attack of influenza, and his doctor discovered that the heart was badly strained. After a month's rest at home and at Portinscale, near Keswick, he went up to consult specialists in London. Their report was serious. The valves of the heart were degenerate, and in consequence the blood pressure was dangerously high. They forbade all work and sent him to Bad Nauheim to try the cure there under Dr. Schott.

<sup>1</sup> The Universalists were thinking of starting a church in London.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW. ILLNESS AND THE END OF HIS GLASGOW MINISTRY, 1911-13

"I find great comfort in God."—*Lowell.*

"Life here is simply unintelligible if it is not continued in another sphere."

*From a letter dated August, 1913.*

His breakdown, the prospects that it opened up, was a blow that he had never contemplated. He had had almost perfect health all his days; and he—and his family, too—had come to accept health, and an almost limitless reserve of strength, as a matter of course—although there had been warnings as far back as his last year in London.

His congregation was most kind and allowed him the necessary leave of absence. He had two long periods of treatment at Bad Nauheim, with a month between them which was spent in the Black Forest and at Lucerne. Bad Nauheim owed its fame not a little to Dr. Schott. Hunter used to tell a story of him at the opening of the new English church there. Schott had a fair knowledge of English, and was present on the occasion. The sermon was on the blessings of health, and the preacher introduced his peroration with the words "But we must not forget the Great Physician." Whereupon with some commotion Schott got up, stepped out into the aisle, and bowed stiffly towards the preacher.

Schott at least proved a good physician to Hunter. The cure greatly reduced the blood pressure. The condition of the valves of the heart was, of course, incurable; it was, as Dr. Hawthorne used to say, like a china vase that has a crack, if it is handled carefully it may live out its natural term.

When Hunter went to Nauheim it was uncertain whether he would be able to preach again. He was only sixty-three. All his gifts and powers had been poured into this one channel—preaching. The gifts and powers were at their full development. Was the channel to be suddenly closed to them and closed for ever? It

was a mysterious providence, and bitter. He said little about it in letters or in conversation except to his wife, and not much to her. But among his papers there is a small leather-bound manuscript book containing prayers in which the first is dated "St. Blasien, Black Forest, July 12, 1911," and the last "Bad Nauheim, August 6, 1911"—fifteen in all. They are written for public use, but it is clear that he wrote them as a help to himself and out of the stress of the time. Some are intercessions and thanksgiving in which the needs of the individual are merged in the larger needs of society, but others are the prayers of a man who is suffering and to whom the way is not plain. They are the nearest approach to spiritual autobiography in the records of his life—the more revealing because they are not intended to be individual, and are not self-conscious.

"Infinite God, Who hast always been and will ever be : in Thee we live and move and have our being, and to Thee we bring the wants which none but Thyself can satisfy and the unquiet hearts which Thou alone canst still. To us belong the courses of continual change. We come and go, we pass through the light and darkness of this world, we know its joy and grief; but Thou art ever the same.

"In this quiet hour we would gather strength for duty, patience for suffering. We would not shrink from hard things and from painful and searching experiences, but take them from Thy hand as a challenge and a trust. Whatever life may do with us, whatever it may take from us, make us of a humble and teachable spirit, willing to learn and conscious of our need of discipline and direction. We would that all should be as Thou ordainest. Even in the midst of dark and troubled experiences our way is not hid from Thee. We are in Thy hands, and that is best.

". . . We ask Thee, good and gracious God, in the coming time such things as Thou willest and delightest to give. As we look back on days and years which can never return, we say, goodness and mercy have followed us : as we look forward to the morrows that may still await us we are persuaded that neither things present nor things to come will separate us from Thy love. Ever may we feel that it is good to live and to serve Thee on earth, and that it is good when our appointed hour comes to die and to be with Thee where all fair and good things dwell for ever and are perfected. These our prayers we offer in the communion of Jesus Christ and His Church." (St. Blasien, Black Forest, July 12.)

". . . O God, the giver of every good gift, breathe into our hearts true and noble desires. When we are moving among the

evil things which we were taught in childhood to hate, may we not hate them less as the years go on. Suffer not our vanity and selfishness to make us blind, even for a moment to truth and right. Banish from our minds the pushful and boastful confidence that is too often regarded as the means of success. Give us a just sense of our relationship to Thee and to our fellows that we may respect our task in the world, the place and the right of others, and do all our work with a quiet conscientiousness and integrity. Give us more and more the mind of Christ that we may be humble in spirit, not striving who shall be the first, but who shall serve Thee most faithfully. May we learn of Him to be modest and gentle of heart, lovers of truth and righteousness and peace, and workers together for the Kingdom of God." (Lucerne, July 17.)

" . . . We confess, O God, that we too often forget Thee and lose infinitely by our forgetfulness. Our faith and hope and love droop and fade, and the rich and holy meaning goes out of things. Without Thee we cannot live our true and complete life. It is only as we realise Thy presence that we realise the worth of our human existence and the greatness of the world, and have that fullness of joy which is fullness of life.

"Thou knowest, O God, all that we know and all that we do not know; and problems of life and duty which lie heavy upon our hearts are plain and clear before Thee. And Thou art ever ready to teach us and guide us. Thy mercy is for ever. The waters of healing always flow and the bread of life ever comes down from heaven. Give us minds and hearts to receive Thy blessings; an eye that sees clearly the good, and strength and will to do it." (Lucerne, July 19.)

" . . . Thou, O God, hast created us, and from the beginning hast known us one by one, and while sun and moon endure the generations of Thy children shall worship Thee. In Thy thought are the mysteries we seek to fathom—the remembrance of the past which we wonder at and the knowledge of things to come in which we trust. Thou hast committed our life and work to us, and we would commit our cares and our destinies to Thee. We would leave ourselves to Thee in joy and sorrow, in life and death. We are not our own, but Thine. Give us strength to be what Thou desirest, and to do in and through all our earthly tasks Thy holy will. Lead us in the paths of simplicity and truth. Let the days yet to be lived through, whether they be many or few, be wholly consecrated to Thee. Dwell with us while we live in this world, and stay with us when we die, the strength of our hearts and our portion for ever."

(In the Gutsch Woods above Lucerne, Wednesday afternoon, July 19.)



“ . . . If Thou shouldst call us to endure hardship for a season, may the remembrance of Thy loving-kindnesses which have been ever of old save us from despondency and move us to look forward with hope. . . . Let it be our wealth, O God, that we know Thee and are called to follow after Him Who had nowhere to lay His head. Make us ashamed of ease and leisure, of learning and riches that we share not with our fellows. May all suffering and self-denial be dear and sweet to us that are for Thee and Thy children, and all enjoyment and rest wearisome that are not in Thee. Bring home to us the folly of our selfish ways, how much we lose by thinking of ourselves, what truth and joy pass by the self-loving and the self-occupied. Amid the deep and solemn issues which surround us may our purposes never be small and poor. Help us that we do not tread with careless feet the holy ground of this great and wonderful world, but go forward with reverent steps to the work Thou hast given us to do, counting it our joy to serve our generation, according to Thy will.”

(Lucerne, July 21.)

“ . . . Lord of our life : Thou dost try and train us to make us wise and strong. Thou searchest us and art often stern with us. Thou callest us to high and hard things. Thou dost beset us with difficulties and pains. But Thou art Love, and through all Thou dost lead us to good. Thou desireth better things for us than we ourselves could choose. Thou dost bless us in unsought and unthought-of ways.

“ Father on earth and in heaven, we will trust in Thee for all the coming time. We put our trust in men who are wise and good and true, and shall we not have faith in Thee Who art the source of all wisdom and goodness and faithfulness ? Help us to live without anxiety and to do our work as for Thee. Give us of Thyself and our fears will leave us. We are alarmed no more at what life and death may bring. There is nothing to dread in the universe if we dread not Thee. . . .”

(Bad Nauheim, Sunday, July 30.)

“ Thy Presence is in everything—the Hope of all that is good, the Light of all that is true, the Soul of every high endeavour. Thou art present with us when we think not of Thee. Thy Power and Love sustain and bless us even when we forget and deny Thee. But we need Thee ever : and most of all when Thou art absent from our thoughts, and we are living as if we were without God in the world. Apart from Thee there is no centre in things, no deep and holy meanings in the world and life. In Thy Presence we confess the mystery there is above and beneath us. The universe is too high and wonderful for our best and most far-reaching thoughts. There are depths on every side which we cannot fathom.

“ O Thou whose secret is with the reverent and humble soul, save us from intellectual pride and the weakness of a selfish judgment. We would see things as they are and not merely as they affect ourselves. We would see them steadily and as a whole and with Thy light shining upon them. We would have a wise and modest estimate of our own power and live in full contact with all things high and great and good. Teach us our failings and faults, give us courage to acknowledge them and by Thy grace to overcome them. Lift us above the unstable currents of our self-will and establish us on the rock of Thy purposes. Be to each of us the secret stay and inner guide of life. If the way be rough, may we put our hand in Thine and cast away all fear. If the shadows deepen, may our trust grow deeper still. When we are tried and troubled comfort us as Thou alone knowest how. May Thy Spirit dwell in us more and more that the peace of God which passeth all understanding may keep our hearts and minds.”

(Bad Nauheim, August 2.)

“ Almighty God, Who hast given us being and sent us into the world, we thank Thee for the things we can see which are every day before our eyes and under our power. We thank Thee also for the things that we cannot see and are outside our will. We thank Thee that we live in the midst of the known and certain, that on every side are the laws on which we can rely and the events we can predict : but we thank Thee also that we are in the presence of the mysterious and the unaccountable, that there are paths we may not enter and limits we cannot pass and unseen forces beyond the measure of our thought. If all were known, where would be our trust and tenderness ? If all were plain and easy, what were there to train character ? We have life and one another for a time, and we have Thee Who art eternal. We love our friends because they are with us, and we love them more because we know not what shall befall them. A blessed uncertainty unites us to them and leads us to Thee. We thank Thee for the fear and the trembling, the weakness and the precariousness which teach us our humanity and our need of Thee, which awaken in us a finer and deeper thoughtfulness, which hush the harsh voice and the careless laugh, and break down every vestige of false and earthly security. We rejoice at last in a world that is insecure save in Thee, in a world of danger and surprise and menace in which Thou dost challenge our souls. Thou, O God, art everything to us—the dawn to our darkness, the answer of hope and peace to our prayers, and when heart and flesh are failing Thou art the strength of our hearts and our portion for ever.”

(Bad Nauheim, August 3.)

“ O Thou unchangeable God, we are in the midst of things that change and we ourselves day by day are changing, but we lift up our hearts to Thee Who art eternal and quiet our souls in Thee. In

touch with Thee amid the swift passage of our days and amid the changes of the world we have a sure dwelling-place.

“ Our life is sometimes stern, but never cruel. Thou liftest up and castest down. Thou shakest the strong earth in its beauty and majesty. Thou makest our way rugged and difficult, waking us from slumber and sloth and dost challenge us to believe in Thee when we are in darkness and trouble. We live in the midst of peril and face to face with death. But even in our insecurity we rejoice. We are Thy children born to do and to dare, to hope and to believe the best. Thy will be done. Our days are few and fleeting, yet they are many and long enough to bring us to Thee and to know and to do Thy will.

“ Be with us and nothing that can happen to us can be evil. Be near to us, O Father, as Thou hast been in every age to the good and the faithful who rejoiced in Thee and served Thee with quiet trust. Be near to us as Thou wast to Thy Beloved Son Who said under the shadow of the Cross—‘ I am not alone, the Father is with Me.’ Lead us and keep us in the way of Thy holy and blessed will, and in the next world, as in this, we shall be in Thy Temple still. And unto Thee be praise and glory for ever.”

(Bad Nauheim, August 4.)<sup>1</sup>

He returned to Glasgow with instructions that he must on no account preach more than once on Sunday, and that he must preach without undue exertion and for no longer than twenty minutes; and more generally he was told to avoid strain and worry. An assistant now became essential. Through Dr. Selbie, Principal Fairbairn's successor, he secured the services of the Rev. T. M. Watt, M.A., who had for some years been on the staff of Mansfield College. Mr. Watt's appointment was only for six months, but the Committee of Management allowed Hunter to extend it from time to time until the summer of 1913. His relations with Mr. Watt were easy and cordial. Hunter preached in the morning, the assistant in the evening. At the one service Hunter did not seem much less vigorous than of old. He was not able to cultivate a twenty minutes' style of sermon so late in life, but continued to preach a full half-hour, and once in the pulpit he quite forgot all instructions to go softly. In appearance his high colour made him look in good health. And there were one or two who implied that he might divide his morning sermon into two parts, and give the second part in the evening without hurt to himself and with benefit to the offertories. But in

<sup>1</sup> These MSS. are written in an unhesitating and unusually clear hand; hardly a correction or a word out of place.

other ways he was visibly an invalid. His nerves were more easily set on edge; an ungenerous word, which before would not have troubled him, now rankled. He was more quickly exhausted and took longer to recover from exhaustion. His last two years in Glasgow were not happy. He began to worry about ways and means, not only the church's, but his own—a subject he used to leave to his wife.

The next summer his doctor again advised a course of treatment. "My doctor, who rules me with a rod of iron, urges me to go to Bad Nauheim." He went rather in the hope that it would enable him to overtake more work. It repaired the damage of the winter's work, but more it could not do. He wrote to a friend on his return :

"The same restrictions as to work are laid upon me. My doctors would like me to free myself from the care and worry of a large church—but I cannot very well afford it yet. A cathedral canony with occasional preaching would have suited me admirably, but there are no such posts among Nonconformists."

He found it very trying not being able for the whole of one's work.

"The ministry is a severe strain on a sensitive man. I should be glad to have a few years of relief and comparative rest. My elder son is settled,<sup>1</sup> and my younger boy will finish his course at Oxford next year. So the way is more clear."

His sermons during these years were, nevertheless, well wrought. If he was only able to preach once that once was to be of his best. About this time, or shortly before, his friend, Dr. K. C. Anderson of Dundee, had become a convert, more or less, to the "Christ-myth" theory. The theory distressed Hunter. "He was keenly perturbed," writes the Rev. T. M. Watt, "when some liberal theologians with exaggerated zeal for historical truth were maintaining that the Christian documents gave no positive proof that Jesus ever existed. I remember him again, and again, in sermons during the last years in Trinity reiterating his belief in the historic Jesus as the Gospel paints Him."

In May, 1912, Trinity Church celebrated its jubilee. The occasion led him to preach often during the year on the Church

<sup>1</sup> He had had a severe operation and a long convalescence after leaving college. He was appointed to a Junior Examinership at the Board of Education in January, 1912.

and its function. The second Sunday of January was the twenty-fifth anniversary of his coming to Glasgow.

“ In a short time at most there will be another preacher in this pulpit and other faces in these pews. Let us, therefore, while we are together live together, so that our Sundays may mean a store of happy and inspiring memories when the present has vanished into the past, so that we show by our lives that our worship here is a deep reality to us, and by the faith it quickens and strengthens it may enable us to meet and bear whatever the coming years may bring, and to go forward with hope and joy and quiet energy into the unknown future.”

In January, 1913, his doctor reported unfavourably, and advised him to take a month's rest and to resign before another winter. He postponed the holiday, but decided to resign. This he did to a meeting of the congregation on March 5th. His address was largely a retrospect. It ended with the following words :

“. . . It has been very hard, I need not say, to bring myself to face the breaking of the ties that bind us together, but I have fought the battle with myself and seen it my duty now 'to walk out.' . . . The help of an assistant, however excellent and acceptable, could in the nature of things be only temporary. And I have always resolved that, come what may, I would never have a colleague. It means divided responsibility, and this usually produces friction. Besides, I am afraid it would never have worked well in a congregation which is, to a large extent, a personal one. Gradually, then, my outlook changed. I feel the burden of this church has become too much for my present strength. . . .

“ I have to thank the congregation as a whole for their forbearance, and to apologise for keeping you so long in suspense. The reasons for the delay were many. Resignation meant the giving up of my work and my living. . . . I had a natural dislike to recognising the fact that I should never again have back my old strength. I had also a strong shrinking from leaving a place which has meant so much to me, into whose worship and work, even into whose walls and windows, I have been building myself for so many years. I felt, too, when I resigned this time it must be final and irrevocable, that all my comings in here and goings out would be over for ever. It is also a very solemn thing to dissolve such sacred ties as have bound us together as minister and people. . . .

“ I do not like to think that I am ending my ministry. It does not seem long since I began. I have never yet got over the sense that I am just beginning. What the future has in store for you and me I cannot even guess. But the past at least is secure. It has gone into our character and life—with all its sermons and hymns

and prayers, and all its glad responses to new and higher revelations of the Infinite and Eternal God. Words cannot tell how glad I am that I have been with you for wellnigh five-and-twenty years—with all of you, the living and the dead, the whole congregation, visible and invisible, on earth and in heaven—nor how grateful I am for all your sympathy, kindness, friendship, and thoughtful love. And may God bless you all.”

It was a relief when this ordeal was over. “The meeting passed off well. . . . I am glad it is all over. I was depressed and irritable yesterday—but when I got home I felt light-minded, free and frivolous.” His congregation made him the generous retiring gift of £3100. He allowed it to be known that he would prefer a single sum to a pension, as he felt a pension was an unfair burden to place on the future congregation.

At the end of May he went off with his wife and Miss Sutherland to Bad Nauheim for seven weeks. He wrote to his son Maurice : “According to Dr. Schott my stay at Nauheim has done me much good. He was disappointed with my condition when I arrived. He said I was worse than when I came the first time—the worseness due, no doubt, to the strain and worry of last winter.” The treatment requires an after-cure in a bracing climate. The family united in Switzerland. He wrote to his other son : “I am looking forward to being with you and Maurice at Giétroz. It will be most likely the last time we shall all be together in Switzerland. I do not expect to be able to afford it after this year. Let us try to make it a happy time.” It was not altogether happy. The place was too reminiscent of former days when he had been able to go for long walks ; now he had to let the others go without him. This was his last visit to Switzerland. He was not anxious to return, for it reminded him continually that he was an invalid. In his last years he enjoyed the scenery of the South of England. “It suggests nothing so much as peace. It has a soothing quality which is infinitely restful.”

He felt the parting keenly during the last months. In his sermons and in the *Monthly Calendars* there was often a wistful note. As early as May he had written : “I am beginning to feel the approaching break-up of my life here. One cannot help it. . . . ‘Ye shall dwell in tents all the days of your life.’ Yet I have no wish to remain—only that some things had been a little different.” He preached for the last time a week earlier than was announced—

on Sunday, October 12th. "I had my own last Sunday," he remarked over the telephone to the Rev. A. J. Forson, when during the week he asked him to preach in his place; "I don't feel like facing a crowd of strangers who have come to see a dying man." The subject that he chose for his final sermon was the old Hebrew benediction—"The Lord bless thee and keep thee . . ." and at the close he told the congregation that it was good-bye in these words :

"I cannot leave this pulpit to-day without letting you know that with this service I close my ministry among you. I am closing a week or two sooner than I intended and you expected; first, because I feel the strain of this sorrowful time to be greater than I anticipated; and, secondly, because I wish to end my work quietly and to avoid the publicity and excitement of a formal farewell. I dislike, as you well know, to speak about myself, and fear lest I should force the personal note. I am feeling too keenly the close of my labours to be able to dwell in public speech upon it or to make an occasion of it in any way. I have always sought to teach those to whom I have ministered not to applaud, but to pray, not to praise man but God. I have not sought to win them to a personal allegiance, but to the Christian obedience and service. But there cannot fail to be in my case a soreness of heart, in which I know many of you share. After all these years of going in and out among you it is a great uprooting, and at my time of life it is not in the least likely that I can root myself anywhere else as I have done here—though I hope after a winter's rest in a warmer climate to have regained sufficient strength to be able to take up the work of preaching again as opportunity may offer. And the resignation of my ministry in this place does not mean the resignation of the friendships and affections, the trusts and loyalties, that have been woven during these long and eventful years. Since I first became your minister a whole generation has passed away. Forms dear and true and generous are no more present to sight, and in the anxious time I have passed through during the last two and a half years my heart has sighed after them. More loyal friends a minister never had than have been mine from the day of my ordination in the city of York in 1871 until this day. For those departed this life I thank the Giver of every good and perfect gift. I thank God also for those who remain—men and women of whose interest and care, trust and love, I feel, and have always felt, sure. For all that they have been to me and done for me and mine I desire, before I leave this pulpit, to express my deep appreciation and gratitude. I also want to thank publicly my ministerial brethren of all denominations, especially ministers of the Church of Scotland, for the help they have most willingly given me in times

of need. I have striven to do my own work according to my best light, but I have been against no Church, but have, on the contrary, been most sincerely anxious to serve all and to maintain the unity of the spirit. And let me again ask those who have received any help from my ministry, and to whom any words of mine have ever given larger vision, courage and motive in the action, strife and endurance of their lives, to remember him in their prayers from whose lips the Divine message came and whose hands have broken to them the bread of God."

#### AN APPRECIATION

*From a Working Woman who was a Member of the Congregation,  
Miss Janet Hodge.<sup>1</sup>*

I first heard Dr. Hunter preach on a week evening at the time of George Macdonald's death. By Easter, 1907, I was a regular attender at his church, and from then until he left Glasgow, in 1913, the only services at which he officiated that I missed were a few held in afternoons when I was at work.

One did not at the time analyse his attraction, one simply felt its tremendous power.

It was not due to his eloquence, nor to the breadth of his mind, nor to the depth of his thought, great as these were, not even to the sum of them, but to something greater—it was the man himself, his personality, which charmed. Anything which could be said about the power of his preaching would be feeble in comparison with the reality, for it seemed as though it were the channel into which the mighty stream of his spiritual power poured itself, a vehicle for that which was profoundest in his nature. . . .

I always felt most strongly the passion which lay behind Dr. Hunter's preaching, the depth of his love for God and man, and the uniqueness, the splendour of his sincerity. Because they were alive to him he could make God and religion live for his hearers, make them, so to speak, no longer things one heard about, reasonable explanations of the universe and the like, but vivid realities of personal experience. . . .

What we learned in Trinity Church to value above all things were sincerity and devoutness. One knew it was the intensity of his personal practice of the presence of God which made him able to lift others there, and was the root cause of the power of his preaching. That uncanonical saying of Jesus, "He that is near Me is near the fire," was true of Dr. Hunter; coldness was impossible where he was. . . .

<sup>1</sup> (A large part of this eloquent tribute is omitted. The writer has travelled a long way on her spiritual pilgrimage since those young days and, like so many of the proletariat, is now antagonistic to the churches.)



Under Dr. Hunter's influence whole new worlds of thought and feeling were opened up. Personally, I read practically under his direction for years—he stimulated both mentally and morally. I think it is Emerson who said somewhere that parents are constantly being astonished at the fruit of their own loins, and sometimes I think Dr. Hunter might well be astonished at the spiritual fruit of his. One realises now that he never tried, as he easily could, to bind us to himself in personal loyalty, but desired only that we should be loyal to the truth. He taught us to think, but he did not do our thinking for us, and because of this even when most completely under his spell we developed along our own lines.

Those I knew in Trinity Church were in the main the working-class members of the congregation. Without personal knowledge of it the depth of their regard for Dr. Hunter would have been almost unbelievable. There was no channel for the expression of this love unless it were in trivial things like calling a child 'John Hunter.'

Some years before, a member of Trinity Church told me about a child of hers, her only little girl, who had died, and what a grief it had been to her; then in October, 1913, she said to me, speaking of Dr. Hunter's retirement: "I would not have believed it possible, but this is a greater grief to me than even the death of my own child." All spoke of his departure as a personal bereavement, the loss of one who had "recreated the world for them." How close he was to their inmost souls was shown by the little stories which one and another told me, of a brother who had died with Dr. Hunter's name on his lips, of a sentence from one of his prayers which had steadied and heartened in time of trouble, or of a life-long following which had become a mental habit whose breaking was indescribably painful. All this and more from people who had never once spoken with Dr. Hunter face to face, who only knew him in the pulpit. Of course we knew that the essential Dr. Hunter was the man in the pulpit, there he exercised his divine gift and through it became to us the mediator of God in whose face we saw the Eternal.

One wonders if Dr. Hunter knew how much he was loved, in how many lonely hearts he was the central thought, the bright star in their firmament, and hopes that this inarticulate devotion was a joy to him if he did know it. . . .

## CHAPTER XIII

### HOME LIFE—A PERSONAL REMINISCENCE

THE memory of my father is pervaded by one quality—his affection. There were other striking and endearing qualities—playfulness, humour, quietness, mysterious power in the church, but this one outlives them all—a deep and tender affectionateness. It was never absent. Silence and speech, look and touch, sorrow and laughter, all the small familiarities of life were charged with love. It was never fulfilled, always overflowing. He was devoted to his children, and the devotion was clear to them and to all the world in his ambitions for them or his anxieties, or in desolating anguish when his elder son was killed in the War.

Very pleasant hast thou been unto me :  
Thy love to me was wonderful,  
Passing the love of woman :

—so David of his soldier-friend. There was a womanly quality in my father's love—its delicacy and sensitive tenderness. And the affection that he inspired was the affection women inspire more often than do men. As he grew older he was gentle and unassertive, fragrant and picturesque—silvered, silken hair curling over his ears, luminous eyes looking out under thick eyebrows, a beautiful expressive face. On one's return home his smile was more eloquent than ever words might be. It was a physical pleasure to wait on him, to discover his wants and to supply them. His gratitude was so gracious that only a churl would refuse to walk with him the second mile.

But he was not weak and sentimental. His love was bracing ; his moral sense robust. There was always more feeling at the heart than found expression in word and gesture, and consequently every word and gesture were true and telling. He had the reticence and reserve of a Scotsman. His playfulness was often boisterous, his banter often had a sting, his humour was masculine. The

womanly quality in him explains the attraction of his personality ; but there was no trace of effeminacy.

In very early days I had an unpatriotic aversion from the sound of the bagpipes. However faintly they sounded, I would wake from deep sleep howling with terror. And he, deep in his sermon-writing, would hear them as sensitively and rush up two flights of stairs—often pen in hand—to comfort. Into the impromptu games of our childhood he entered fully. Once or twice a week in his study before we went to bed we played a species of hide-and-seek in the dark in which he impersonated Giant Blunderbore, Jack the Giant-killer's antagonist. His "Fee, fie, fo, fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman," made our young blood run cold. Very early he communicated to us his love of the mountains and of walking. I was taken to Switzerland for the first time when I was five, and can remember being carried on his shoulders all the way down the mountain behind S. Beatenberg. Holidays as we grew up became rather a problem. More and more he felt Switzerland to be indispensable, and less and less he enjoyed a holiday without his family. Thus an uneconomical compromise whereby we frequently went together.

When my brother and I got to the schoolboy stage he was no longer able to enter into our games. He did not know how to play "serious" games, and would not bother to learn. I remember our surprise, therefore, first humiliating and then proud, when one summer near Dunkeld he slogged our best bowling all over the garden.

He taught us by force of example also to love nature, and to love it tenderly. He was fond of pet animals, and they became very attached to him. We had a canary that went into a flutter of excitement as soon as he entered the room where it was, and a Persian cat, which the rest of the family—even the cook who fed it—found morose and savage, but which was towards him another creature. Indoors and out-of-doors it would come to his call. Every morning it would, so to speak, knock at his bedroom door, and on being allowed in, would walk round him in circles while he was dressing, talking volubly, or it would wait patiently outside the door while he had his bath, smelt the breakfast haddock from the kitchen ever so succulently. True, he used to cement their affection by injudicious and excessive feeding. He never killed higher game than wasps. My brother developed a passion

for natural history, and was encouraged and given the best books on the subject. I was encouraged to collect flowers. My father loved flowers—the old-fashioned, sweet-scented garden flowers, mignonette and Sweet William, lavender and thyme ; and also the rare, bright flowers that shine on Swiss Alps. Now and then he liked to pick a flower and put it in the book he was reading ; but the picking of flowers at random was almost sacrilege in his eyes.

Religion was never made a burden to us. I was taken early to church and allowed to read or sleep on my mother's knee through the sermon. He believed in the forming of habits and the creating of an atmosphere, but was chary of explicit instruction. We grew into it rather than were trained. I have no recollection of being "instructed" by him, and my mother's attempts were, I think, foiled by my brother's perverse curiosity.<sup>1</sup>

My brother represented the intellectual, truth-loving element in my father. He had the enquiring, scientific mind, and would believe nothing that could not be proved by demonstration. A nurse who told him that God was all-seeing brought on herself a volley of questions—"Could God see him through a wall—could He see through a piece of wood so thick—could He see through iron ? . . ." When he grew up he was not interested in public worship; the Psalms of David seemed to him priggish, and the symbolism of the Lord's Supper crude. He had the brightness and high spirits which evidently characterised my father's youth and my mother's mercurial temperament. He filled the house with sunshine and storm. He was gay, boisterous, laughing and hot-tempered: straight and clean and frank and devoid of tact; thoughtless and often obstinate and kindly, and immensely pitiful. Children, with whom he was always ready to play, adored him. He was passionately fond of games—especially lawn tennis; and of books and book-lore. His bent was to science, he was directed towards literature and religion. His tastes were open air, his work was sedentary. He was extremely fond of society, was friendly and natural with women, and got to know them more intimately than he did men. He liked restaurants and social functions, and yet was simple and rather lonely. He enjoyed life, and found it infinitely difficult and puzzling. He learned its lessons hardly, and his own faults with

<sup>1</sup> Rashly she attempted too soon to explain that God is an indwelling spirit and got the retort: "I'm not going to pray to a drop of blood."

pained surprise. He appeared open and easy to read—and so he was, but there was a deeper self which rarely came to surface, and which he never spoke of, and perhaps did not understand. There was at times, especially latterly, wistfulness in his laughter; surely the heart of him was sad. His father was often worried over his future, for he seemed unable to find his vocation—unless it was the Army. There he was happy and fit; and as he was absolutely without fear, war had few terrors for him. He died with a smile.

In the matter of Sunday observance our father was a good Puritan. Sunday was observed strictly as a day of rest and quiet. Toys were put away, and books—not necessarily “good books,”—were encouraged. In later years he was distressed when my brother played tennis on Sundays, though he could not object on principle.<sup>1</sup> Sunday clothes were *de rigueur*. He was not really happy unless he was dressed in a black frock-coat and top-hat on Sundays. Truly he wore them not to be seen of men, but to the glory of God. Sunday was observed as carefully on holidays as at home. Long excursions were vetoed, and respectable clothes had to be worn. He always took us to church in the morning and again in the afternoon if he could. He did not always succeed, as my mother did not share his enthusiasm for church-going, or his leniency towards preachers. He spent much of the day alone.

He was a family man, but not a typical one. He was not at all *paterfamilias*. We did not know corporal punishment. The discipline as well as the administration of the home he left entirely to our mother. She was the practitioner and he the consultant. They agreed on the principles of our up-bringing, and he trusted her judgment in matters of detail. She helped us with our lessons, engaged tutors, and interviewed schoolmasters. As we grew older he was very much one with us. Outside the study we lived together from morning-bath till bed-time. He did not stand on ceremony, and we treated him with shocking disrespect, bullying him, teasing him, chasing him out of doors for his daily exercise. In spite of this and although he was not self-assertive, and did not dictate, his will was authoritative. The only way to do something that he disliked was to do it before he

<sup>1</sup> If pressed I think he would have said, not mere amusement, but edifying amusement. Art galleries, but not cinemas or excursions down the Clyde.

knew or had time to express a wish upon it. His wish—his considered wish—was inhibiting.

The one thing on which he insisted in the house was quiet. Anything which disturbed it put him, as it were, out of gear with reality. He loved peace and made it—perhaps he loved it too much—in the sense that sometimes he tried to effect it without going to the root of the trouble. He had temper himself—hot and quick, but it was disciplined, so that it showed only when his nerves were tired, and then like summer lightning or an April rain-cloud that passes quickly before the sun.

There were many things we never dreamt of discussing with him, but few that we could not, although he talked seldom on personal religion and moral issues, and not easily or directly. He moralised more in his letters than in conversation.

He was a silent man; the more he felt the less he spoke. He hated when we were away from home, and we never were for long until college days. (He was not able to reconcile his belief in the home and its educational value with Public Schools.) He would write urging 'Come home as soon as you can'; 'The house is empty without you.' And yet, when one came home, he would have little to say. He just liked to feel that "we were about," that the visible unity of the home was restored, and to hear our voices in the house. He rested too much on unspoken sympathies.

Shortly after he returned to Glasgow there came to live with us Miss Marion Sutherland. She was an intimate friend of a family we also knew well—the Beilbys.<sup>1</sup> Her parents were dead, and she had left St. Leonard's School and was meditating a University course. Having come, she stayed, and became as a daughter in the home. Both our parents were very attached to her as she to them; and towards the end of their lives they were more and more dependent on her companionship and cheerfulness. It was one of those unexpected and unusual relationships in life which may fairly be called providential.

The management of his income was also left to his wife. About money matters he was amazingly simple. Until he was married he did not have a banking account, and it had not occurred to him to insure his life. After marriage, once they had opened a joint-account, I do not think that he ever entered a bank to transact

<sup>1</sup> Sir George Beilby, F.R.S., LL.D., now Director of the Fuel Research Dept. He and his family came to Trinity Church.

business. Rather than cash a cheque himself he would send one of us into his own bank to present one of his own cheques while he waited outside. He seemed to have a feeling that to ask, say, for five sovereigns in exchange for a piece of paper signed by himself was to ask a favour and trade on his own good name. The principles of investment he grasped as little as he did the principles of banking. At the end of his life he was averse at first from his money being invested, as he had an idea that all investments were speculative. And seeing the unfortunate experiences of many ministers he had a dread of losing his savings.

He was not thrifty by nature. He gave the price he was asked to give, even when he knew he was being "done," and to beggars the benefit of the doubt. He refused to dispute with "cabbies" or haggle with hotel managers or even enquire the price of things he wished to buy—not an economical traveller in foreign parts where he knew little of the language.

It would be misleading, however, to suggest he was superior to the advantages of money on spiritual grounds. He knew its value in a comfortable house, family education, books and holidays. But he gave only occasional thought to these things, and the thought was almost humorously naïve for a man who worked in commercial cities the greater part of his life.

In this and other ways he was more childlike and boyish than his own boys. He was simply responsive to big events and occasions. He thoroughly enjoyed his reception in the States, although afterwards he often laughed over it. There is a characteristic sermon in his second volume of sermons entitled "The great hours of life." He saw "the great hours" of his own life as they were approaching; he prepared for them and entered wholly into them when they came, and afterwards he lingered on their memory. It was a quality which made him a delightful guide to life. He sent one to a book in expectancy; he brought one to a fine city, a building, or a picture, ready to receive its full impression. On the mountains he prepared one for a view that was round a corner, or at a summit; and when the corner was rounded, or the summit was topped, he used to drink it in with great deep draughts in a way that was infectious. Apparently he did not analyse such impressions, but accepted the beauty of nature without criticism. He never lost the child's enjoyment in the simple, natural experiences of life, or even in physical pleasures

like walking, a Sunday supper, plenty of jam, and good fresh tea. Making tea was his one domestic accomplishment. He liked it choice and strong, and would always make it himself at breakfast. I remember once in the Weigh House days how he returned one afternoon with seven samples of different China teas which he had bought in several shops. He tried them separately, and then together. The ideal brew was one which poured out tolerably black thirty seconds after it was infused—in China tea an expensive taste. The one complaint he had against Switzerland was the tea her hotels used to provide. She should have been stung to repentance by the picture of him every morning at breakfast surreptitiously drawing a poke of tea from his pocket and emptying it into his teapot in order to colour the insipidity of the native brew.

His foibles were some of them quaint. He did not take them seriously, and was always amusing over them. His dislike of tobacco has been mentioned already. He disliked even the smell of it in the house, and never provided it in any form for his guests except once when he bought three or four cigars for Stopford Brooke's entertainment. While in later years discretion tempered his love of Turkish baths he enjoyed visiting the hairdresser. Latterly in London he was always attended by a Serbian known as "John," and his instructions invariably were "do everything you can"—this yielded an hour's entertainment that he would have been sorry to miss.

In the streets of Glasgow he was a noticeable figure, always dressed in an open frock-coat, silk hat, a low collar and large black bow tie, both peculiar to himself, and walking swiftly when alone and extremely slowly when in conversation.<sup>1</sup> He was in a way particular about his appearance, though he became almost helplessly dependent on his wife in all matters concerning the apparatus of dress.

His humour also was boyish and quite irresponsible, and therefore was kept for those who would not misunderstand. It was best under the stimulus of excitement—after the Sunday service, on holiday, or with old friends. He kept it carefully out of his sermons; if present at all it was usually satirical and passing.

It was never far below the surface. One used to see it rising.

<sup>1</sup> On Sundays and at public or religious functions he wore the white dress tie—definitely tied—which used to be a tradition with the Scottish ministry.



Its approach was like footsteps along a passage that come nearer and nearer—expectantly one looks up, and then the door opens and someone enters the room. A glint in the eye, a twitch at the corners of the mouth, a tightening movement of the body, a merry look, a rare smile—and out it would come: a story, an extravagant remark, a drollery, with a jolly laugh if it were matter for laughter. He laughed well, an irresistible laugh, immoderately when in the mood, but not without occasion. He saw keenly and quietly the humour of life. Mr. Griffith, in his reminiscence, refers to his “quaint sayings.” My mind is stored with half-memories of quaint sayings he used when we were children, and afterwards. Jacob Primer, the Scottish Kensit, became an apocryphal figure, who used to accompany us on our walks, and there were others. It was admirable fooling.

On holidays one got the full flavour of the natural man. He was off-hand with the proprieties, except on Sundays, and often behaved in a way that shocked our youthful sense of what was fitting to his position. An Anglican Dean, walking down the path from the Riffelberg to Zermatt, fully gaitered and aproned on a hot day in August, was a phenomenon that he could not understand. That same summer he became possessed of a large pocket-knife and used to amuse himself and shock us by cutting his initials—“my mark”—on seats, and to tease us, even on trees. He kept it up for more than one summer, until the knife was lost.

There was something essentially roguish about him. He kept through life a love of practical jokes. One of his best—or worst—was at the expense of his wife's sister with whom he was staying at the time. In his wanderings round the churches of the neighbourhood he had dropped in to a “high” church of a parish a mile or two away. As he was passing out he saw a notice asking parishioners who wished a special call from one of the clergy to put their names on a paper in a specified box. He wrote the name and address of his hostess and put it in. The next afternoon a curate called, puzzled to receive a request from such a distance, and as sometimes happens he had not a sense of humour. My aunt—a Congregationalist—had an uncomfortable ten minutes. When she was relating her grievance with some heat at the dinner-table the culprit gave himself helplessly away. He was past sixty then.

He was, as may be imagined, excellent company on a holiday. Once across the Channel he enjoyed all the experiences of travel. He was a sturdy walker, and up to the age of sixty would go for big all-day walks. He liked to get to the top for the exhilaration of a sweeping view, but he was not a climber, and was distressed when my brother developed a taste for it.

His birthday nearly always fell during his holiday, and he made much of it. It was one of the red-letter days of his spiritual year. He would spend several hours of it alone—in retrospect and spiritual stock-taking. If we were not with him he wrote to us on the day, or about it.

“Yesterday was my birthday. The years fly. It is a good many years now since you and Maurice bathed in the Lake of Lucerne one Sunday afternoon. You were a dear little creature then. You remember it—the Marwicks were with us. It was in 1878 I first came to Lucerne. Dear old Stannard was with me. I recalled it very vividly as I sat yesterday afternoon listening to the organ recital in the Cathedral. He was also there with me, and wrote a description of it to the *Christian World*.” (Lucerne, July 15, 1911.)

Stannard—“poor Stannard”—was a real presence in his life and in our home. We were always meeting him on our travels. The places which Stannard and he had visited together were hallowed. Often he would go out of his way to visit them. Stannard stayed an element in his life as real as when he was present in flesh and blood.

But apart from Stannard, he remembered “auld acquaintance.” He was rarely embarrassed to recollect a name when he met such a one after a long gap of years. He did not, as so many of us do, allow experiences to slip into oblivion; he reflected on them, and so their memory stayed.

He might have been a good musician if he had been educated in music. He had the feeling, and also the hands. He was fond of it—as an accompaniment to thought rather than an alternative. His taste, like that of his ecclesiastical generation, was vitiated by the post-Mendelssohn tradition. But although he liked it well-sugared he did not like it sickly. The tunes that at heart he preferred were the old ones and especially the Scottish psalm tunes. He had an intuition of religious values in music. And this was the only kind of music that he really cared for. During his

last illness he liked to hear the piano, and found, like the dying king in Shakespeare, that music brought sleep at night :

Let there be no noise made, my gentle friends ;  
Unless some dull and favourable hand  
Will whisper music to my wearied spirit.

A slow movement from one of the early sonatas of Beethoven was, so to say, the last word I spoke to him before he died, except a " Good night."

His personality did not dominate a room, partly because he was medium in stature and low in voice. Only those who were in some measure akin to him felt its strength. Over them it had a subtle and potent mastery. His influence was quietly pervasive, his manner subdued, yet full of individuality. His gestures as he talked, the inflections of his voice, were peculiarly his own. I can see him now sitting on a rock—he never sat on the ground—slightly bent, reading from a book. Most characteristic of all was his touch. He liked to hold one's hand, and had a way of stroking it with a movement of the thumb—wonderfully caressing. In this way he used to express shades of feeling that neither words nor looks were able to convey. In his last illness when he was weak, touch was a satisfying language. " Sit beside me—don't talk—I just like to hold your hand."

His affection is the characteristic which has the first place in my memory of him. It grew stronger rather than weaker as the years passed. He was never able to reconcile himself to the break-up of the home as we grew to manhood. When he retired in 1913, it was a joy to him that we should in London be able to live together again. Then the War, and when the blow fell, the bitterness was not that he had lost an heir, but rather that the visible unity of the home had been irretrievably broken.

And there is another characteristic that lingers in one's memory—his humility. It was a virtue he admired and cultivated. When we were at the age that takes itself seriously, there was sharpness in his "ragging." Pretentiousness provoked his satire. He used humorously to half-apologise to every visitor for an oak side-board in our dining-room which had "1674" cut on a prominent panel. He had a real and genuine pride—and in some degree the egotism which is inevitable to a man of his individuality and position. But in his generous appreciation of other men's work,

in his constant criticism of his own, in the manner of the man and his worshipful spirit, there was a profoundly Christian humility. And as one goes about the world and marks the ways of men, men less gifted and less successful, perhaps, than he was, one realises how rare, and beautiful, and infinitely precious, is this among the fruits of the Spirit.

## CHAPTER XIV

### LETTERS 1904-1914

*To his elder son*

“GLASGOW, *October 12, 1904.*

“My Dear Boy Maurice,—I have been thinking much about you. It means much to me, this first breaking-up of our home. Things can never be again what they once were.

“I want you to go to Oxford with a brave purpose to live the life of a real student, and to do only and always what is right. You are having a grand opportunity, which was denied to me; and I will not grudge, you may be sure, all the anxiety and cost if I find you making the most and the best of it. Strive to excel in all honourable ways.

“I have always found you to be most truthful and just, and these qualities you must keep and cultivate while you give heed to the culture of others in which you are not so strong. I want you not to be too sensitive to the opinion of others; not to be swayed by what others think and say and do. Be an independent soul, living out *your own* life in a straightforward way. Remember you are an ‘I,’ responsible for yourself.

“You must always strive to keep in touch with me, and tell me everything. I want to have your full confidence. You will always find me sympathetic and very anxious to be a good father to you in every way. I am persuaded, you will not do anything that would give me pain, or make me ashamed of you.

“As to Church matters, I leave you free, but I want you to make the best of the Sunday. Attend whatever services there may be at Balliol; lose no opportunity of hearing Dr. Caird speak; hear the best men who may be preaching at Oxford in any church. Don’t get into the undevout ways of some young fellows. *Reverence* is an essential element in a strong and beautiful life, and character; and though in later life it may manifest itself in other ways,

yet no fine character ever loses it. Seek, above all, to live a pure, unspotted, blameless life. I need not say more. You know well what I most like and wish. It is my one desire that you may grow up to be a good and noble man; able, in whatever sphere of activity you may choose, to do the best work. The future depends on how you live in and use these Oxford years. God be with you and bless you, my dear boy.

“Be careful about companions at first. Don't give yourself too freely to anyone. Learn self-control and be master of your own life. Cultivate your tutors as you have opportunity, and don't get into the average fellows' way of depreciating those above him. But I trust you. Again I say—all good be with you.

“P.S.—I have to preach at Nottingham on Tuesday. I was thinking that I would come on to Oxford and see you. I should just like to see your rooms and have an idea of your surroundings.”

“NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE, *April 30, 1905.*

“. . . I have seen Dr. Finlayson's report of your case. I am glad it is not worse. You will, however, require to take great care of yourself, and avoid all physical strain—very quick walking even. Go on to your work with a cheerful, bright heart, and make the best of things. I feel more and more that it is getting to be 'towards evening' with me. I preached here for the first time in November, 1871. But I am not complaining. Every dog has his day, and I have had mine. Revisiting old places makes one think of the passage of time. Only I am anxious to see you and Leslie well on your feet before I retire. I hope you will both be a credit to me and a help in my old age—if I am spared to old age. Now do your best and God bless you. . . .”

“*February 9, 1906.*

“I hope all is going well with you this term, and that you are calling forth more and more your latent talent to the surprise of all who witness it! . . . Be known as a *student* and a *worker*, and not as a brewer of tea.

“Be sure and hear Mr. Brooke every Sunday. Be early and get near him and you will not miss his words. Speak to him if you can. . . . Hear all the big men. Gore is a stronger man than you think.

Some of these men too often speak *down*, instead of giving of their best. . . . Have you read Pater's books? Read them for style. Watch the construction of sentences as you read the great masters of style. . . ."

*To his younger son*

"August 21, 1907.

"Glad to get your letter. Is it not time you were coming home? I am spending all my affection on the cat just now. I preached in Glasgow Cathedral on Sunday night. I should like you to have been there. I have had good congregations since I returned, both morning and evening, but nearly all strangers.

"Stopford Brooke has failed me. He has to go abroad on account of his daughter's health. He has put me in a corner. I am doing my best to fill up the Sundays.

"You will keep in mind what I wish you to be, and prepare yourself for it. It would delight me. And from all I can see of your bent and temperament it would suit you. . . . Love to your big brother. . . ."

"October 30, 1907.

". . . Do not be in too great a hurry to throw down your idols because of their limitations and faults. Ruskin and Carlyle were both great and good men. You must be just and generous in your judgments. You must get *inside* men and inside their lives in order to understand them and do justice to them. I get more sympathetic as I get older. The more generous view of men I have always found to be the *truer* view—when all is known. Do not make too much of the imperfections and defects which are almost inseparable from men at the present stage of human development. Ruskin had a peculiar temperament, which he no doubt inherited. Carlyle's faults were little more than flies on the dome of St. Paul's. The reading of his *Life and Letters* always impresses me. His humanity was so rich and deep. His was a grand life in many ways. He growled a lot, but much of it was due to dyspepsia, and much of it was a strange kind of humour which his critics took seriously. His *Reminiscences* show how capable he was of idealising those near to him in the tenderest and most childlike way. . . ."

“LES AVANTS, *August 5, 1908.*

“My time at Montreux was very pleasant after all. Everyone was kind and appreciative. I did very well. I seem to have got nearer Campbell than ever before. I personally conducted the party to the graves of Amiel and A. J. Scott. Our old friend, Mr. John Lomas, is here for three days. He was asking after mother and ‘your two fine sons.’ I like this place and hotel better than ever. It is a pleasure to be here—only I miss my boys. I was sorry when you left me. We get on well together. Write and let me know your movements. By the bye, I am surprised to find I left no ‘marks’ in this place. I was up at the Cubly this morning, and have been rectifying the woeful mistake. . . . Now I hope you are returning full of earnest purpose. You have had a good holiday. . . .”

“BORDIGHERA, *January 15, 1909.*

“. . . We like this place very much. It is very lovely. The appointments of the Villa are good. The people are true gentle-people and very attentive. Last night I was bothered with mosquitoes. It was my own fault. I did not draw the lace curtains about my bed—not expecting such visitors at this season. The fellows, I can assure you, had a high old time over my prostrate corpse. I got up and rubbed some brandy on my brow, thinking the smell would warn them off, but instead of that it made them still more irresponsible and reckless in their behaviour. I had the satisfaction of killing two out of six I saw when the light dawned. It was terrible to see the good blood they sucked out of me.

“Maurice looks himself again.

“The house which George Macdonald built and lived in for 23 years has been enlarged and converted into an hotel. There is a tablet on it with his name. Captain Lucas says that Macdonald really made Bordighera. His residence here and the people who came about him made it known. There is a window to one of his daughters in the English church—a fine church.

“I have read the last two nights, for the second time, the life of the late Archbishop of Canterbury, by his son, A. C. Benson. I should like you to read it *at once*. The reading of it will mark, I am sure, an epoch in your life. The Church of England produces



a fine and noble type of character which no other Church does so well. The book will give you an insight into many things. Be sure and get it. . . . It is my heart's desire to see you in the Church of England. I should feel that you were—where I ought to have been. Benson when a youth had a wish and dream to be a canon of a cathedral—he loved the worship and ritual so much. . . . He was a true and good man. The biography is well written.”

“GLASGOW, *May 14, 1909.*

“I was glad to get your *undated* letter to-day at noon, and glad to learn that all is going well with you and that you are enjoying your new surroundings. I must see Caen some day. . . . I might have a week there returning from Switzerland. I must have my mountain air. I wish my holidays were here. I am beginning to feel fagged out.

“I have been writing a lot of letters for Maurice this week. Lord Aberdeen has just telegraphed to say that he will do what he can for him. . . . I have been admonishing him about slipshod ways of writing. Go in for careful writing. You don't form your 'r's' well. You finish them off like a 'd.' Take pains. It is important for you.

“Will you be going to the English church? You could go to the Communion. You will, of course, want to hear all the French you can, and on Sundays as well. Don't forget your own prayers. I was praying for you at your own bedside the other night. I miss you. I often go into your room. . . .”

“LES AVANTS, *July 10, 1909.*

“I have been missing you every day. The place is not quite the same without you. . . . T.<sup>1</sup> and I have had two or three walks. Miss Mary Scott and John Lomas arrived yesterday. 'John' was enquiring after 'my boys.' He is a great churchman. I had a long conversation with him last night. He is 'High,' but deeply interested in things. The Church here belongs to the 'Low' society. There is a poor specimen of a chaplain. T. and I sat under him last Sunday. . . . On Sunday I shall go down to John Lomas's church at Territet, where they do things

<sup>1</sup> Miss Sutherland.

well, or up to the place at Caux. I prefer the churches managed by the S.P.G.—they attend to the service better.<sup>1</sup>

“Make the most of your opportunity. . . . I wish you to make up your mind as to what you shall be, and not drift. You know my wish. Mother will be sending your money to-day. Be careful. You and Maurice are making huge demands on me just now. Wednesday is my birthday. How the years go! It will soon be all over with me, but I hope you will continue all that is best in my life. ‘My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof.’ . . . Now good-bye, my dear boy—with much love.”

“VEVEY, *July 14, 1909.*

“. . . I am spending my birthday here—that is, lunching by myself. I chose this place because here my dear friend Stannard and I spent two days in this hotel in 1879. I can remember how he enjoyed it, especially his smoke after dinner with the blue lake and the Dent du Midi in sight. It was a lovely night. It is now a sacred memory. He was the best friend I ever had—so devoted to me. He has often celebrated my birthday with me in years past.

“I sympathise with what you say in your letter about the Church of England. It has always drawn me on the devotional and æsthetic side, but repelled me intellectually. I have never been able to say or even appear to say what I do not really believe. But I have been hoping there may be some change. The sects have never attracted me. I value independence, and I hate the feeling of being so much dependent materially on one’s congregation. Still, I want you to keep an open mind. I have always thought you had something of my spirit. The coming days may bring guidance and direction for you.

“This is a lovely day. It brings back many memories and awakens many thoughts. . . .”

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to compare this remark with one in a letter written from Meiringen thirty years before, 29-6-1879. “. . . I have just been to the English Church here—a beautiful little building done up in the High Church style—crosses and candles which disgust me. The chaplain’s wife was decorating it and bowing every time she approached the altar. One would think they have enough of that kind of thing on the Continent without having more of it imported. I shall go to the Swiss church. It is Protestant, like the one at Brieg. I hate High Churchism; I love simplicity. . . .”

*To Miss Turner*

“GLASGOW, *December 16, 1909.*

“I was deeply grieved to hear of your great bereavement. All my cherished recollections of your mother come over me and the loss which now darkens your home presses upon me as a personal sorrow. I know how much she has been to you all. And now it will all be transfigured and made part of the inner and eternal life. But you cannot make her dead; you cannot feel that she has gone from you. And these feelings are not illusions; they are true and of God's own tender giving and you must cherish them. Out of your mortal sight she has gone, but still near you, and still loving and caring for you all.

“May this dark and troubled hour bring to all the members of your household all the comfort and strength they need. May the care of God that folds in our little lives come near to you now when you need it most—holding you in a tenderness such as none can know. Give my love to your sisters and the assurance of my deep sympathy. You will all be ever dear to me for your mother's sake.

*To his elder son*

“On board s.s. *Megantic, April 13, 1910.*

“. . . I am glad you are liking your work. I think it will suit you. . . . Just let me say . . . how much joy you give me by your way of life. It would have broken my heart if it had been otherwise. Go on as you have been going—and God bless you, my dear boy.”

*To his wife*

“On board s.s. *Megantic, April 17, 1910.*

“More than half my voyage is over—thank Heaven. I have had a most uncomfortable and miserable time. . . . On Thursday I was in bed all day. . . . The steward said it was the worst day in his experience for six years. Friday and Saturday I got up, but felt very poorly. The steward thinks I must have been ‘run down,’ which I suppose is true. Last time I stood it well, but it was after our time at Buttermere had set me up. I cannot

honestly say I enjoy the sea. The sea itself gets terribly monotonous. Water, water everywhere. We have only seen one other vessel. . . . I have made up to no one.

"I have read Ian Maclaren's *Life*, by Nicoll. He was not a 'great' man, but got very popular by his stories. His letters are modest. He was not carried away by his popularity. I have also read one or two books on Canada. They have been a revelation to me. It is an immense country: the history is full of interest, and the prospects are great. I shall look forward to Quebec and the St. Lawrence. I know something about them now.

"I hope all is going well with you. You and the boys are always in my thoughts. This has been a queer Sunday. I read our psalms and prayers by myself. Then I went to the service conducted by the captain—brief and formal. . . . Good night and God bless you."

*To his younger son*

"BOLTON ABBEY, July 27, 1910.

". . . When do you return to the arms of your father? I have been staying on the Ilkley moors. I am here for the day. I heard the Bishop of Ripon preach last night at the reopening of Ben Rhydding Church. It was a beautiful sermon, and moved me very much. I wish you had heard it. He is a most eloquent preacher, and such a simple, unaffected man. His text was: 'They found Him in the Temple.' It was the assertion of individuality. He worked it out finely. . . ."

*To the Rev. J. M. Connell*

"GLASGOW, May 6, 1912.

"I am glad you are doing this work.<sup>1</sup> It interests me much. I have often thought of doing the same, but life is short, and mine has been very full.

"I read freely from the Apocrypha in church, but I have never gone much farther afield. I have once read *The Happy Warrior* and *Romola's Counsels to the son of Tito*, which I see you include.

"I think you might get some suitable passages from the best of

<sup>1</sup> Compiling "a Book of Devotional Readings."

the High Church men. For depth of piety I know nothing like Dean Church's discourses. There are others, almost equally fine—Dr. Illingworth, Congreve, Maturin, etc. I read them constantly for private edification. They make nearly all other discourses appear shallow. You ought to get a good lesson or two from F. D. Maurice, and also from Jowett—not late of Birmingham. I like Hamilton Thom's sermons. They strike a deeper note than Martineau's. George Macdonald ought to yield you something. Have something from Dr. J. Drummond. Do you know his early volume of sermons—*Spiritual Religion*? There are some fine passages in them. Some one gave me the book when I was a student. In my early days they suggested not a few *prayers*.

“I wish you success. I see you are at Lewes, where my dear old friend, Dr. Crosskey, was born. I wish you could do something to revive the spiritual life of your churches. . . . I wish we could get evangelists like Campbell Morgan on Broad Church lines.<sup>1</sup> . . .”

*To Miss Muriel Whiteman*

“BAD NAUHEIM, *June 25, 1912.*

“My Dear Little Friend,—What can I say to you, save this: God comfort you and have you now and always in His gracious care. Let your father's love be to you a revelation and assurance of God's love. Like as a father pitieth His children, so God pitieth them that fear Him. I have just had a letter from Mrs. Colenso, and she tells me that your father still lingers. Tell him that he is much in my thoughts and prayers. I pray also that you and your mother may have all the strength you need in passing through this period of strain and trial. All you can now do is to say, Father, into Thy hands I commend his spirit. Yes, in God's hands it is well with your beloved—here or there. With my heart's sympathy. . . .”

*To his younger son*

“BAD NAUHEIM, *June 10, 1912.*

“. . . I earnestly hope the way will open clearly before you. If I had my own life to begin again I should certainly enter the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. a similar remark in another letter about that time. “What we want in our ‘Broad’ churches are Evangelists who can put our simple Gospel with all the fervour of old-fashioned men like Spurgeon and Campbell Morgan.”

Church of England. It has its limitations, but for all that it is the freest church in Christendom. The non-episcopal churches—even the Presbyterian—are too much at the mercy of the people, of small cliques, and moneyed men. Now a church to serve the people in all best ways must be in a true and good sense independent of the people.

“. . . Now be of good cheer, my dear Leslie. You are at the beginning of what, I hope, will be a right, noble, and useful life. Keep in close touch with the best things, and cherish the devout spirit—and all must be well. . . .”

“GLASGOW, *November 14, 1912.*

“. . . At last I enclose your essay. . . . You must take more pains with your sentences, especially the little connecting words. Say what you have to say in the simplest way. If you can use a simple word do it. The subject does not attract me. You, I doubt not, understand it better than I do. It is the kind of thing I used to do at college. But it is not of much use, save as a discipline. One likes to deal and has to deal in practical work with the very simplicities of religion. . . .”

*To Mrs. Littlejohn*

“GLASGOW, *March 10, 1913.*

“. . . You will know by this time that I have resigned. I felt it very much. But it had to be done. I have been a long time at it—a long time since I first preached at Broughty Ferry. I feel I ought to have been able to have gone on for another ten years. But I hope to preach about. It will be a relief to be free from the strain and worry of the church, and I have no doubt I shall feel it to be so in course of time. But now I only feel the pain and pathos of it all. Please keep Miss Scott in proper order. . . .”

*To Miss Mary Scott*

“*April 6, 1913.*

“I am very sorry that I cannot visit Dundee this week. My cold still hangs about me. It was increased yesterday. It was a beautiful day and I went out for a walk. Unfortunately the keen east wind that was blowing did me no good. It will be better, I

think, to run no more risks at present. It will give me much pleasure to visit Mrs. Littlejohn when I am quite better. . . .

"I preached this morning on 'The valley of dry bones.' It is the first time that I have ever preached on what is one of the noblest symbolic passages in the Old Testament. I applied it to modern nations, modern churches, and modern individual sinners—like yourself. I spoke very plainly, especially about churches and their reliance upon anything and everything but the Divine Breath or Spirit.

"It is time you were coming home. My Sundays here are numbered. . . ."

*To Miss Muriel Whiteman*

"HARROGATE, *September 26, 1914.*

"You will be very pleased to see my name in some sort of connection with your 'Society.'<sup>1</sup> It is very hard that I cannot escape your emissaries.

"I hope you celebrated your twenty-first birthday in a proper and becoming way. I wish I had been with you. You had my prayers. Your holiday, I trust, has done you much good, and that you have returned feeling equal to managing the whole society by yourself.

"I am very sorry to know that you are to be troubled with recruits. This war is a most unspeakable business.

"I go to Leeds to preach to-morrow morning, returning here in the afternoon. If I am able to deny myself my dinner I may hear the Rev. Frank Lenwood in the evening.

"It is no use wishing you happiness all your days, because we don't get it. Life is meant for something else. It is an education. May your life yield you all noblest and best things—character, which is the end and crown of all. With much love."

<sup>1</sup> The London Missionary Society.

## CHAPTER XV

### LAST YEARS, 1913-17

“ O Thou Who holdest our souls in life and sufferest not our feet to be moved, as the night drawe on and one by one the tasks of the day are laid aside, and the busy distractions of the day cease, and the noises of the day fall into silence, we are brought back to that which endures, that from which no accident can separate us, the deep realities of life in which our souls are held by Thee—the Love which abides amid the things that change and pass, the Voice that speaks to us for ever above the tumult of conflicting tongues, the Peace that passeth understanding and seeks us out when we are weary with our own troubled thoughts. In this assurance of the Invisible and the Eternal at the heart of the visible and temporal, send us to our rest, that from our rest we may arise fresh and strong to perform the duties and overcome the difficulties of a new day, as becometh disciples of Him whose joy it was to do and to suffer Thy holy will. AMEN.”  
(February, 1915.)

HE was low in spirits when he left Glasgow. With his wife and Miss Sutherland, whose cheerful kindness meant very much to them, he wintered on the Riviera, first at Cannes and then at Bordighera. From there they went to Rome. His spirits soon revived, and by the time he got back to England in April he was full of cheer and in better health than he had been since 1911.

#### *To one of his sons*

“ BORDIGHERA, *January 29.*

“ I have neglected writing lately. The weather has been so fine that I have much out-of-doors. I have also been attending to my soul. The Riviera parsons have been holding a conference here. On Sunday week I heard the Bishop of Gibraltar, a very feeble brother and a poor successor of Dr. Collins, who died a few years ago. I attended a few meetings. What I most enjoyed was a ‘Quiet Day,’ conducted by Dr. Robinson of All Hallows, London. His addresses were very fine, not a jarring word in one of them. I preached in the German church, and had what old Dr. Millar described as a ‘record congregation and a record collection’! Dr. Purves of Belfast is the regular Presbyterian Chaplain. He preaches at San Remo in the morning and here in the afternoon.



My lecture passed off well. I am 'popular' here, judging by the number of 'Teas' I have been invited to.

"We will be moving off from here in a few days Romeward. Mother has got an idea in her head not to take a house this year, but to stay on the Continent. Of course, I have to preach for fourteen Sunday mornings in London. I don't quite take to the idea. I don't like being homeless, and I must settle down if I am to do any real work. Hotels and knocking about are dissipating in their effect on the brain. I do not want to lose my power of work. . . . Now good night, my dear lad."

"FLORENCE, *April 1.*

"I have been much drawn to the Rector of the American church in Rome (the Rev. Walter Lawrie). I enjoyed his preaching. I sent you this afternoon the Calendar of the American church here. They are on the whole more liberal than the Anglican. I went into one of the two English churches here this morning, and found it to be extremely ritualistic—draped so gloomily that it might answer for a cemetery chapel. It is most absurd to have that extreme represented here where there is so much of it. . . .

"I wish the money I spent in Rome and Florence had been spent on you, enabling you to visit these places. My day is almost done, and you are more open and susceptible to things. It is thirty-two years since I was first here. . . .

"My funds are getting very low. Better bring to Charing Cross on Saturday week enough to cover my cab fare from the station."

*To Mrs. Whiteman*

"BORDIGHERA, *February 10.*

". . . I have been asked to preach at a few Congregational churches since I gave up, but I have been unable to accept, because they all expect me to preach twice, and this I cannot do—not at present, at least. The University Hall suits me well just now. It is small, and they only want one service from me, and their terms have been very generous. . . ."

*To Miss M. Scott*

"HAMPSTEAD, *July 28.*

"I was very pleased to hear from you again. I finished at the University Hall on Sunday. I was asked to go on for another year,

but I declined. I felt it to be rather compromising to dwell too long under the Unitarian banner. I am an *Independent* of the old school, and like to stand on my own feet. A few of my old friends wish me to start early in October in the Æolian Hall—the most beautiful little hall in London. I should like very much to do it—if I can see my way. I feel very well, and am preaching, according to reports, as well and vigorously as ever I did. My doctor here is also favourable to me going on—indeed, would like me to have some regular Sunday morning work as an aid to good health and continued interest in life. But many of my old and most generous friends in London are dead or removed. Ten years make a great difference, especially in London. But I feel moved to risk it. It will be a great joy to be able to use my own Service again.

“We have not yet got into a house, but we have one in view, not far off from here. Mrs. Hunter will not go very far this summer. She has to be nigh at hand on account of the house. I am not going to Bad Nauheim as I hoped. I cannot afford it very well, after the winter’s expense.

“Many thanks for the magazine you sent me. I like the Friends, especially the broad-minded ones.

“Give my love to Mrs. Littlejohn.<sup>1</sup> I am glad she is so well. I wish her many happy returns of her birthday in case I forget when the time comes. There is no reason why she should not live as long as the Old Testament saints lived according to tradition.

“And in old age when others fade  
They fruit still forth shall bring,  
They shall be fat and full of sap,  
And aye be flourishing.” (*Psalm* 92, 14.)

“This was a favourite Psalm of an old Aberdeen minister I used to hear in my boyhood. A wicked report had it that he patted his stomach when he read out the third line of the above verse.

“Maurice is well and happy. Leslie is liking his work in connection with the Student Christian Movement. It is an education for him in Christian breadth. He meets ministers and men of all Churches. He is now attached to the Church of England, and on the whole, as Churches go, it is the best. Though I like much about it, yet it would never have suited my order of preaching. But it makes all the difference when one begins young. Dissent is very unattractive in England and getting to be more and more so. It bears hard—unnecessarily so—on the ministers, especially upon sensitive souls.

“. . . Now I must close. Don’t expect such a long letter again

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Littlejohn of Dundee was then in her 90th year.

—at least not on this side of the resurrection morning. Then I expect there will be new or much-improved methods of communication.

“What a state the country is in—and Europe. The judgment day is long due.

“Remember me to all my friends and say I am much better.”

The War had been in progress for two months when the family moved into 8 Prince Arthur Road. It was a smashing blow to his optimism and his trust in Peace Societies and in attempts to bring the Churches closer together. As the horror grew deeper and it became clear that the struggle would be long, he felt, as many of his age and position felt, that his life-work was being cruelly undone. There were deep searchings of heart. He was driven back on God, and on God he rested and bade others rest. “This is a terrible time to be living in. One must study to be quiet,” he wrote to a friend.

He did not question the rightness of the Government's action on August 4th, but his sympathies were more with the Friends than with the men who preached ‘a Holy War.’ Few if any bitter words passed his lips, either before or after his son was killed. At the same time he was not inclined to go all the way with the Christian pacifist. He felt the arbitrariness of the latter's logic. He realised that the War was a consequence, not a cause, and that as we were corporately responsible for the cause, so we had corporately to bear the consequences. But while he thought the nation had no choice but to fight, he felt, and said it strongly, that Christian ministers and those who were preparing for the ministry were honourably bound not to fight, but to witness to the more excellent way.

After some hesitation he decided to commence the services in the Æolian Hall in October, as had been arranged.<sup>1</sup> Until the beginning of his illness in March, 1917, he preached fairly regularly on Sunday mornings. He was supported by a group of affectionate friends. At first the services also attracted a considerable number of strangers, but latterly when his appearances became more uncertain and his strength began to weaken, the numbers fell off. Sometimes he would comment with rather a sad laugh on the

<sup>1</sup> They were organised by a small committee of friends of which Mr. W. R. Dennis was the secretary. The congregation was provided with copies of his *Service and Hymn Books*.

contrast between the crowds of former days and this "handful." But it was as much as he was able to do, and it brought him real happiness, and others help. The anxiety of the time used up much of his available strength. To preach up and down the country would have been beyond it.

His sermons, in contrast to the majority of sermons of the time, were neither "recruiting sermons" nor discussions of the ethics of war. He tried to lead the thoughts of people away from the War to God, from the temporal to the Eternal.

"I intend on the next six Sunday mornings to speak to you on some of the darker sides or aspects of human life and experience—the things that are making it hard for so many in these troubled times to believe in the goodness and care of God. I am doing this because in my correspondence and in personal contact with men and women week by week these questions are constantly recurring. As lovers of truth and reality, and as disciples of Jesus Christ, we can face no questions more serious than these. I am not sure but that the upheavals and sufferings of this present time are not doing a real service to many of us, in making us consider as we have never done before the dark and difficult problems of life. It is but few in our congregations that can give good reasons for the hope that is in them. People read books of all kinds, they hear lectures and sermons, but they do not give themselves time to think of what they read and hear, to realise the meaning of what is given to them, and to develop ideas and convictions of their own. We must get back again the lost art of meditation. We must study to be quiet, and learn to be still, in order to know God. The scheme of the world and life does not lie patent on the surface of things so that he who runs may read and understand. . . . The hope which I am anxious to inspire and sustain in my hearers is not based on any half-seeming optimism, but on a faith, verified in my own life and experience—even the faith of Jesus Christ in God and man, in the Eternal goodness at the heart of things for ever working itself out in life—even through sin and suffering.

"From all temptations to conceal or suppress any of the difficult aspects of the problems which we are trying to solve, from ignoring what we cannot explain, and refusing to recognise facts which seem to disturb our theories, may the Spirit of truth preserve us all."<sup>1</sup>

In his prayers there was the same spirit. He prepared some singularly beautiful prayers and litanies, tender and strong and

<sup>1</sup> From the *Calendar* for February-March, 1915.

free from bitterness. These morning services were as complete an antithesis to the daily newspaper as could be desired. One course, in particular, stood out—on the twenty-third Psalm. He was preparing it for publication when illness overtook him. This volume, *Faith in Stormy Days*, perfectly represents his war-time ministry. It is, so many think, in form the most perfect and spiritually the most mature of his published works.

He could hardly bear the thought that one of his sons was training for war.

*To his younger son*

(September, 1914.)

“You must use your influence with Maurice. I am afraid he is inclined to enlist. It is almost impossible for young fellows to resist the invisible pressure here. But M. is not physically fit. He is not able to bear great hardship and fatigue. If he came back at all he would come back weakened and maimed for life. Besides, things have to be kept going here. . . . It would break my heart if he were to go. I have been looking forward to reunion in our new house. Come back and help us. This war rests as a burden on my spirits night and day. What will be the end thereof?”

By the end of the year, when his son took a commission in the Wiltshires, he was more reconciled to the step.

*To his elder son (in Camp on Salisbury Plain)*

“HAMPSTEAD, April 16, 1915.

“This is just to wish you as happy a birthday as you can possibly have in your present circumstances. It is so utterly unlike all the other birthdays you have known. It makes my heart sore to think of you there. I have nothing to send you but my good wishes—my purse is empty and likely to be emptier. I hope you will save your money. You don't know how much you may need it in coming days. Mother has gone down to the Army and Navy Stores to send you an electric light. T. comes home to-night. Leslie is in Largs instructing women on sacred subjects.

“I hope you are fairly comfortable. It is now warmer and brighter. Mother and I once spent thirty nights in tents, when we went up Palestine. God bless you, my dear Maurice.”

*To Mrs. Littlejohn*

“ HAMPSTEAD, *July 27, 1915.*

“ You are, I hear, at Kingussie. I hope it will do you lots of good. It is many years since I was at Kincairaig. The boys were little then. Old Mr. M. and Dr. M. have since joined the majority—ministering in the upper sanctuary, and I hope with more ability and acceptance than they did in the lower. Maurice is still in training for the front, but expects to be sent out soon. Leslie, like his father, pursues the paths of peace. . . .”

In September of 1915 he visited Scotland for the last time, preaching for his friend, Dr. Dickie, in St. Luke's Parish Church, Glasgow, and during the following week in Aberdeen. “ Perhaps his spiritual genius never had a more effective setting than when two years ago he preached here a sermon bearing on the War—‘ Comfort ye, comfort ye my people.’ Assuredly he comforted the great congregation that had come from all over the city to hear him. . . . When he had finished his discourse the whole sky had cleared and there was a rainbow round the throne.”<sup>1</sup> In Aberdeen he said good-bye to his brother. Both occasions were exhausting. On Saturday, October 2nd, his son left for the Front. The following day he recommenced the services in the Æolian Hall.

The nervous strain of these events and the constant anxiety that succeeded told quickly on his health. He had a severe attack of influenza in November, which left him shaken. However, he persevered, although more than once he was unable to finish a sermon on account of an attack of faintness. As a result of the care and attention of Dr. Hawthorne who used to prevent people from talking to him after the service and to motor him home in his car, the fatigue and strain were reduced to a minimum. In January he went to Bath for a month's treatment.

*To the Rev. David Dickie*

“ BATH, *February 4, 1916.*

“ Your letter was forwarded to me here, where I have been for three weeks, getting all the good of the hot spring baths and the

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Dickie, Memorial Sermon.

waters which were first discovered by our pious ancestors, the Romans, in the first century. I am glad to say I am about all right again.

"It will give me great pleasure to preach for you again at St. Luke's. I do not intend to continue my London services after June. I have felt them to be a bit of a strain just now, so I am to fall back on occasional preaching here and there until my speaking days are done.

"I thank you for your very kind letter. Your words of appreciation are welcome, even to an old stager. I don't wonder you think of relief and rest. You have so many things to do besides preaching. If you are ever troubled with rheumatism or gout come here. The baths are perfect, and the city is the loveliest little city in England. It is surrounded with hills and the Avon flows through it. It reminds me of Florence. There is also, you will be glad to know, a Presbyterian Church here. I tried it last Sunday morning, but I cannot recommend it. About fifty present in a big place that had once been a circus. It was dreary. But the minister is a very decent man. He deserves a better place."

*To Sir William Collins, M.D.*

"HAMPSTEAD, *March 21.*

"I was sorry to miss you. I did call to have a talk about Mr. Brooke. I have known him for wellnigh forty years, before he left the Church of England. In 1881 he was to have preached for me in York, but something came in the way—illness, I think—so he could not fulfil the engagement. In Glasgow he preached for me some thirteen times. You will remember his service at the Weigh House. As far as I know, mine is the only pulpit he ever occupied outside the Unitarian Church. . . . In a letter I had from him after he left the Church of England, he said, 'I do not intend to join any of the sects; I am to keep an independent position.' I wish he had adhered to his original intention.

"It is a great privilege to have known him. I saw him for the last time about a year ago. He was well and hearty then. But I always thought he would die suddenly.

"I am thinking of saying a few words about him on Sunday morning.<sup>1</sup> They will not be many, because I don't feel quite equal to it. But we can sing his hymns. Unfortunately, the hymn he most liked and thought his best—'All lands, all peoples, all the

<sup>1</sup> The sermon—an adaptation of an old one from the text, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof," was afterwards printed for private circulation.

earth ; Put off the night of sadness '—is the same tune as the German National Anthem ; there is no other.

“ I think I am much better. I was at Bath for four weeks. The baths there did me much good.”

*To his younger son*

“ *March 22.*

“ You have been neglecting writing to me and I have been doing the same to you, and so we are quits and there is nothing to forgive. I hope you are all right again. We have been having terrible weather—snow and rain and east winds.

“ You will have seen from the papers that Stopford Brooke died suddenly last Saturday. He is a grand figure gone. The notices in the papers have been all very appreciative—the *Times* and *Manchester Guardian* especially. He was cremated this afternoon. A memorial service was held at the same hour at Gow's Chapel. Your mother and I went. The place was about full, many distinguished people there. . . . It is strange to think of his grand body as a handful of dust to-night.”

During these years he lived quietly. He enjoyed his friends, his old friend (now a neighbour), Principal Forsyth, especially. There were occasional public engagements—a lecture to the London Society for the Study of Religion on “ A. J. Scott,” and an address to the students of New and Hackney Colleges at the end of the session on “ The Call to the Ministry,” both in the summer of 1915. He went to various meetings as the spirit moved him and the weather permitted. It led him once, while his son was at the front, down to St. Bartholomew's to a memorial service for a son of Prebendary Isaacs. Years before, when the Prebendary was summer chaplain at Mürren, he had met him, but they had not kept up the acquaintance. They met in the church. Mr. Isaacs says he was singularly moved by this touch of sympathy, so much, indeed, that during my father's last illness he was “ remembered every day at the altar in Chiswick Parish Church.” Frequently he went down to the afternoon service at the Abbey on week-days ; attracted by the building and the singing of the Psalms. On Sunday evenings, when he was able to go out, he sampled all the churches in Hampstead, and greatly preferred Dr. Horton's. “ I had a long visit from Dr. Horton last week. He is a dear, good man. His voice soothes me.”



He was alone at Hindhead when the Somme Battle opened. His son had twice been home on leave, each time looking fitter than he had done for years, and the feeling had grown that he would return again. He was killed on the evening of July 2 by a sniper's bullet.<sup>1</sup>

*To his son, Maurice (written three days after he was killed)*

“HINDHEAD, July 5, 1916.

“My Beloved Maurice,—You are constantly in my thoughts. I picture you in the thick of this terrible battle. God help you,

“I am here for a few days. It is 900 feet up. I return next week. I am intending to call on Miss Brooke at Ewehurst. It is not so very far from here, but it is across country and on another line. But I am to make an effort. I want to see the place where Mr. Brooke spent the last months of his life.

“We had a great review in this neighbourhood on Saturday. The King was present. There were 25,000 soldiers, chiefly Canadians. I heard a Canadian chaplain preach on Sunday. I hope he can fight better than he can preach.

“What can I say to you? Only be cheerful and calm and brave. May God spare us, my dear boy, to meet again. Ever your loving father.”

He was still at Hindhead when the telegram came, and his doctor insisted that he should be brought home somehow before he was told. The blow was shocking. It was like striking a wounded man in the face. He broke down badly. Within a few days he began to have trouble with his breathing—a tendency to asthma.

*From Colonel Walter Long, D.S.O.<sup>2</sup>*

“July 10, 1916.

“Will you forgive me for writing to say how much we all feel the loss of your son. He was one of the bravest men I ever met,

<sup>1</sup> He was buried where he fell in the German trenches, some hundred yards S.E. of La Boisselle, near Albert. The tide of battle swept back and the mark of the grave was lost. His father always imagined that the grave was behind the lines and duly marked.

<sup>2</sup> Colonel Long was at that time in command of the 6th Wilts, and was himself one of the most gallant officers in the Army. He was killed some months later, soon after he had been made a Brigadier.

and he died carrying out a most difficult task, displaying the greatest gallantry possible. I regret his loss, not only as an asset to the English army, but as a personal friend."

*To his wife*

(Undated, August, 1916) "Thursday.

" . . . I feel more and more Maurice's loss. It has left my heart sore and desolate. I believe all that I ever taught concerning God, and the nearness of the invisible world and the life to come; but the heavy change that has fallen upon our outward life and our home remains, and none of these divine assurances can alter the fact that it is most hard to become accustomed to our great loss, and everything here vividly reminds us of him. Stay a day or two longer if you feel you are getting good. You need the change. When you return I should like to go to the place in Wales. We might all go. Breathlessness continues to trouble me. Consult with David<sup>1</sup> about the Æolian Hall. . . ."

(About the same time) "Saturday.

"I forgot to say in my letter yesterday that on Tuesday afternoon I went to the service at Westminster Abbey. On my way back I went into the Education Office and asked to see Mr. Richardson. I thought I should like to see the room where Maurice did his work. It is on the first floor, and looks into a kind of court. (He was on the third floor at the beginning, but only for a month or two). It is now in possession of the munition people. The spot where Maurice's desk stood was pointed out to me—on the left of the window. He and another occupied the room. He again said how much Maurice was liked by all in the office, especially by himself. But he was not built for a sedentary life.

"Leslie comes home after his service to-night. The house is to me awfully lonely. . . . Stay over Sunday if you wish to. It is less lonely than other days for me. Let us try and cheer one another."

*To Miss McAdam*

"HAMPSTEAD, October 16, 1917.

"I thank you for letting me know of the great sorrow through which your home is passing. The loss of a father is one of those losses which go down to the roots of life. I earnestly hope and pray

<sup>1</sup> Mr. David Thomson of Liverpool, her sister's husband.

that in this troubled time there may come to you all the comfort and strength you need. He has gone out of mortal sight, but he is still in the care that folds in our little lives, near to the Heart of Love that gave you his love. Try also to think that though unseen he is not far away, still a member of your household. You will find it a great comfort to remember him in your private and family prayers. Death does not mean any real separation—only invisibility. Whether here or there we and our beloved dead are still one in God.

“Your mother will feel your father’s loss most keenly, and for many days to come. Life will never be quite the same again. But the record of the years they have lived together will be full of many fair and comforting memories—memories that will make the unseen world more real, no longer unfamiliar, but bright and warm with the treasures and light of home. Give her and all the members of your family my sincere sympathy. God bless and comfort you all.

“The death of my dear Maurice has been a great blow to me. He had grown into such a bright, vivid, and helpful personality. One of the great joys of my life has gone from me, never to return in this world. In poor health, one feels it even more. But he is never absent from my thoughts and prayers, and I try to do what he would like me to do. I am resuming my Sunday morning services just because in his last letter, written a day or two before he was killed, he wished me to go on with them. All good ever be with you.”

The flame was now beginning to burn low and uncertainly. It was a trying winter. His wife was suffering acutely from the strain she had been through. Air raids had begun. His breathing became more troublesome, and he was not able to do much work. One would often find him asleep in his chair in the middle of the morning. He was hardly able to speak of his son without a break in his voice. “It is a terrible time to be living through. It takes all our faith and courage to meet the days as they come.” And yet he was wonderfully patient and serene. “The clouds, I hope, will soon roll by,” he wrote to a friend.

One of the last times that he went into town was with his wife to the memorial service to his son’s C.O. at St. Margaret’s, Westminster. One of the last times that he went out was to a meeting of ministers at Dr. Horton’s house, where he was amazed when in the discussion several men said that they found difficulty in finding subjects to preach about. He felt himself that the War only threw the essentials of the faith into stronger relief. He promised

to open the next discussion with some remarks on war-time sermons.

*To Mrs. Littlejohn*

“ December 22, 1916.”

“ I appreciate very deeply your kind remembrance of me at this season of the year. It will be spent on a rather expensive book on Hebrew poetry, which I have been wanting for some time.

“ I am glad that you are so well, and keeping up your interest in passing things. I earnestly hope that before you leave us your eyes will see the salvation of God—the end of this terrible war, and the dawn of a new and better time for Europe and the world.

“ I do not get over the death of my beloved boy. He was so much to me—part of myself. He died for a great cause, but the loss remains the same, one of the greatest joys of my life has gone from me never to return in this world. I read Oliver Lodge’s book on *Raymond*, but it disappointed me much. It seemed trifling with the subject. It is not in these foolish and questionable ways we gain the sense of communion with our dead.

“ My six sermons on the twenty-third Psalm have not yet been published. My publisher asked me to wait a little. Everything is so dear and labour scarce. But I am re-writing them, and hope to see them in print after Easter. I want to do something in memory of Maurice. They will be dedicated to him.

“ I had a call this afternoon from Mrs. Kirkwood. She seems very happy here. She is near her own people.

“ Mrs. Hunter has been very poorly for the last few months. She feels keenly Maurice’s death.

“ Leslie was admitted into full clerical orders last Sunday morning in Southwark Cathedral. He can now do everything—even absolve his own father.”

On the 1st of March at the funeral of an old friend, Mr. Edward Crailsheim, at Brookwood, he had a sharp attack of breathlessness. It was clear now that his condition was serious, and that the services must be stopped for a time. A few days later he had an attack of angina.

So began a tormenting illness, which dragged on for six months. After a fortnight he rallied, and for three weeks he seemed to be improving; but the kidneys became affected and a long period of

intermittent delirium followed. Doctors pronounced the case hopeless. By the middle of June he had become very weak, and for several days barely conscious. And then—possibly the quiet renewed the heart's vitality—he reawoke to life, and to our surprise and joy suddenly asked for a cup of the best China tea that we could buy in Hampstead. For the next six weeks he was gaining strength, and was quietly happy and free from pain. As he got stronger he read a good deal—more, perhaps, than he ought to have. Erskine's *Life and Letters*, I remember among many. He liked to discuss my sermons with me, and he was able to see one or two friends. But he was too weak for much talking. Most of his waking hours were spent in quiet reflection. He told us that he had been going over the whole of his life. His mind was also preoccupied with the life to come. He used to read the Psalms appointed for the day in his own hymn book, and in the Book of Common Prayer.

Early in July Dr. Fort Newton sent him a gracious message from the congregation of the City Temple one Sunday.<sup>1</sup> It was a graceful act, and bore fruit an hundredfold, for it came when the sick man was too weak to have many thoughts, and so it lingered fragrantly in his mind.

The following letter was written at the high-water mark of his convalescence, pencilled in a feeble hand—he was still too weak to be lifted out of bed.

*To his brother James*

“ August 17, 1917 (probably 15).

“ My Dear Brother,—This is my first attempt to write since March or February. I send it to you to let you see that I can still scrawl. I have had a dreary time of it. At the end of August I have been six months in bed. A fit of indigestion has thrown me back this week, but for that I am on a fair way to recovery.

“ I hope you are maintaining your strength. You have one advantage over me—you are able to get up and to put your head

<sup>1</sup> “At the City Temple last Sunday morning Dr. Fort Newton asked the congregation ‘to send from its communion service a message of greeting, sympathy, courage, and hope to dear Dr. John Hunter, whose long, weary illness we watch with so much solicitude . . .’” On the proposal of the hon. treasurer of the church, the congregation rose as a sign of approval of Dr. Newton's suggestion.

out of the window. I hope a week or two will see me up once more. Take care of yourself. Thanks for the blackberries. They brought back Culter and our early days. Ever your affectionate brother."

He was tremendously anxious to get well. "I should like to have two or three more years. There are a few things I should like to do before I die." He was always asking the doctors when he might get up and be allowed out. He pined for the country.

On the day he wrote to his brother he had a very bad relapse. Fluid had collected at the bottom of the lungs and for nearly three hours he was struggling in agony for breath; only skilful nursing and doctoring kept the heart going. These attacks continued at intervals of about ten days—just when he was beginning to recover from the exhaustion of one, another came. It was as though some sinister force were dragging the man with all his faculties keen and alive down below the water. He bore this disappointment with fortitude, his humour even did not leave him. He still did not give up hope of recovery, although he knew that his condition was grave. After his marvellous rally we did not dare to tell him it was hopeless.

A ray of brightness during these months was the care of his friend Dr. Hawthorne, and his own utter trust in him. In addition to the local practitioner, Dr. E. A. Seymour, Dr. Hawthorne would come out from Harley Street, at times daily, and spend much time with him, though there was not much that he or any other doctor could do. It was to Dr. Hawthorne that he remarked with sudden emphasis not many days before his death: "I die believing in the liberal Christian faith I have always preached."

He died on Saturday, September 15th. The previous day there had been a change of nurses, but he seemed to settle down quietly for the night. In the early hours, however, another attack of acute congestion developed, and after two hours of speechless agony, as it was beginning to abate, the heart failed.

The funeral service in the King's Weigh House Church, the following Wednesday, was attended by friends, and many of the public. It was according to his own Order of Service, and included the hymns he cared most for: "O God of Bethel," "O God our Help in Ages past," and the twenty-third Psalm. It was made memor-

able by the tribute of Principal Forsyth. His body lies in a spot that he greatly favoured—a corner of the burial-ground of the old Parish Church of Hampstead, near to the graves of Stopford Brooke and Llewellyn Davies.

The body of his wife now lies there also. It was marvellous how with a delicate heart she went through the long and painful months of his illness. Physically she never got over the strain. She died suddenly during what seemed a mild attack of influenza at an hotel in Cannes, where she was spending the winter with Miss Sutherland, on March 5th, 1920.

She had given devoted thought to her husband's grave. The memorial stone is designed in the unusual form of a triptych. Over the simple record of names—including that of the son who was killed—there is a cross in bas-relief worked in lead. Surmounting the wings of the triptych in the same material are two flaming torch-heads. On the back there is a single verse—his favourite text—which gathers in few words the glad message of his preaching and the faith for which he lived and died :

“THE ETERNAL GOD IS OUR REFUGE  
AND UNDERNEATH ARE THE EVERLASTING ARMS.”

### A TRIBUTE

*Spoken by the Rev. Principal P. T. Forsyth, D.D., at the Funeral Service  
in King's Weigh House Church, September 19th, 1917.*

We are here for a tribute—and not an estimate—to honour a dear and brilliant memory in the light of an immortal faith and hope.

There in our midst lies silent one of the most eloquent tongues of his generation, moved by a soldier soul of manly power and tenderness. He belonged to the great race of prophet and apostle. O that the prophetic voice were less rare in Christendom and more welcome ! He had a voice like a trumpet and a heart like a violin. If he was a warrior, he was a warrior of the Holy Ghost, with fire in his preaching and dew in his prayer. He was in some ways a free lance among men—whose point was always sunk before God—one as apt to pray as powerful to preach, who reached men always because he always touched God. He waited on God and not on man. He never lost his apostolate in catering to the public. He was one of the very greatest preachers of Victorian liberalism. Among his last words were : “ I die believing in the liberal

Christian faith I have always preached." He was the greatest master we had of manuscript preaching. And both his bold preaching and his humble prayer rested on a sound foundation and severe training of professional knowledge. He had great gifts—but from first to last he worked always as if he had none. He was a furious toiler both before the pulpit and in it. Here was no soulless labour and no lazy soul, no victim of casual inspirations nor of the latest book. His was much more than mere sincerity. He had the greater note of urgent spiritual reality. Through his temperament it took the tone of moral passion—moral insight and passion, going sympathetically but going to the conscience, and preaching neither a mere sect nor a mere fatherhood nor a mere fraternity, but the Kingdom of God. He had the austerity of a rich nature, but there was the austerity which did not commend him to all. It is not easy nor common to combine that moral passion with culture like his—moral passion of height and range to be a public power. His was not a religion with moral interests and sequels attached to it, but one intrinsically and overwhelmingly moral, from the heart to the end moral—mystically moral. It was the religion of moral redemption, the redemption of a moral universe. The religion he most dreaded—and there were popular forms of religion he did dread—could not rise to feel that human history is the one great epic, and that the epic of Humanity is the struggle for the Kingship of God in the Cross of Christ as the crisis of the moral world. He was impatient and even intractable, like some of the first figures of faith, in the face of moral stupidity sicklied with religious sentiment and easy egoism. His prophetic soul rose against crude sentiment, yet he never lost warm feeling for men; and he was rich in spiritual feeling, deep, solemn, and shy.

You know what he strove to do for public worship and its reverence. He was so acquainted with God that he could never be familiar with Him. How much was meant for that side of him by his long walks on Swiss or Scottish hills accompanied only by the Book of Psalms! A prophetic mystic he was of the moral stamp, the historic mind, and the instinct of the holy war. That note of austere passion came chiefly from his great master Maurice, with streaks of Carlyle; and it lost him the crowd (as it did with our Lord). He did not always get quite alongside the religious mind of his own communion because he had found his soul outside it, *as it then was*.

We leave him to his rest. But for such as he sleep would be no rest—this fiery spirit with the sweeping wing. He was finely mellowed in the last few years, but never quenched. For such souls rest is the full-blown energies of heaven. It is a share in the incessant resurrection of Him whose kingship is the energy of the world, and Whose fullness and freedom are their own rest. May he repose in that peace. May light perpetual cheer him. May the glory of the Lord shine round about him, and transfigure all his spirit's flight of flame!



We gather about this precious memory, and thank God—as our faith is he does now.

But we dwell neither on a memory nor on a thought, but (as he does now) on the great Name, the eternal Power, the loving Saviour and the one our Lord Jesus Christ—his and ours.

Our brother is taken from us, but not severed from us. Only he is so urgently closeted and occupied with that Majesty that he cannot see us at present. We come nearest him in the worship of the same Lord, in Whom we leave him hidden, and to whose holy love we join him in ascribing all might, majesty, and dominion world without end.

21-27  
5/1/29

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

1872. *Tracts for the Times*. York. Reprinted, Hull, 1882-3; Glasgow, 1886-7.
1877. "The Age in which we Live and its Claims upon Young Men." An Address to the Congregational Union at Leicester. York.
1880. *Devotional Services for Use in Salem Chapel, York*.
1882. *Devotional Services for Use in Nonconformist Chapels*. Pp. 28. J. Clark & Co.
1886. *Devotional Services for Public Worship*. Pp. 62. J. Clark & Co.
1889. *Hymns of Faith and Life*. (Edited.) Maclehose, Glasgow.
1890. *Life Here and Hereafter*. (Reprinted from *Good Words* for circulation in India.) Maclehose, Glasgow.
1890. *Devotional Services*. Fourth Edition. Pp. 142. Maclehose.
1892. *Devotional Services*. Fifth Edition. Pp. 259. Maclehose. (Also in abbreviated form.)
1895. *Devotional Services*. Sixth Edition. Pp. 271. Maclehose.
1896. *Hymns of Faith and Life*. A New Edition. (Revised and enlarged.)
1897. "No and Beauty." Two Addresses for Boys and Girls, printed for the Stockport Sunday Schools. Maclehose.
1898. *The Angels of God and other Papers*. (Small Books on Great Subjects, No. IX.) J. Clark & Co. (2nd ed. 1899; 3rd ed. 1903. Out of Print.)
1899. *Prayer and Praise for Children*. Printed for use in Trinity Church.
1900. *The Atonement in Modern Religious Thought*. A Theological Symposium. (Article No. XV, afterwards included in *De Profundis Clamavi*.) J. Clark & Co.
1901. *Devotional Services for Public Worship*. Seventh Edition, revised and re-arranged. Pp. 328.
1903. *Devotional Services for Public Worship*. Eighth Edition. J. Dent & Co. (Subsequent editions were simply reprints. Tenth Edition. 1920. Also abbreviated edition.)
1903. *A Plea for a Worshipful Church*. J. Dent & Co. (Out of print.)

1903. "The Christian Ministry and War." An Address at the Annual Meeting of the Peace Society. The Peace Society.
1904. *Hymns of Faith and Life*. Third Edition. J. Dent & Co.
1905. *The Coming Church: a Plea for a Church Simply Christian*. Williams & Norgate.
1905. "Citizenship and the Duties of Women; or Civic Apathy." A sermon published for the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. (Included in *God and Life*.)
1905. "The Eternal God Thy Refuge." A sermon for the New Year. Maclehose.
1906. "Guarding the Holy Fire: A Plea for the Culture of the Devout Life."
1906. "The Day's Work." A sermon printed at the request of the Earl and Countess of Aberdeen.  
(The above three were included in *De Profundis Clamavi*.)
1907. *The Universal Cross*. A paper. Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier.
1907. *Creed Revision in Scotland: its Necessity and Scope*. A Symposium by leading Scottish Ministers. (Concluding article.) George Outram, Glasgow.
1908. *De Profundis Clamavi*; and other sermons. Williams & Norgate. (Out of print.)
1908. *Prayer and Praise for Children*. Second edition, revised and enlarged. (For use in Trinity Church.)
1910. *God and Life*. (Sermons.) Williams & Norgate. (Out of print.)
1916. In Memory of Stopford Brooke. A sermon on 1 Kings ii. 12, preached on March 26. Printed for private circulation.
- Also numerous papers, articles and sermons in the *Christian World Pulpit*, *British Weekly*, etc., etc. Also (1) Annual Addresses in *Trinity Church Manual* and Year Books; (2) Trinity Church *Monthly Calendars*, Nos. 1-69, 93-177 inclusive.

## POSTHUMOUS

1918. *Faith in Stormy Days*. Being six addresses on the 23rd Psalm, together with one on the "True Measure of Life" (also containing prayers). Maclehose, Glasgow.
1919. Lecture on "John Caird," *Modern Churchman*, Vol. VIII, Nos. 10-11.  
Lecture on "Thomas Carlyle," *Modern Churchman*, Vol. IX, No. 8.
1921. Lecture on "Baldwin Brown," *The Expositor*, 8th Series, No. 124.  
Lecture on "A. J. Scott," *The Expositor*, 8th Series, Nos. 125-6.