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APPROACHES TO THE SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS OF YOUNG PEOPLE  
AS FOUND IN A STUDY OF  
THE LIFE AND WORKS OF ROBERT MURRAY McCHEYNE

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## INTRODUCTION

APPROACHES TO THE SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS OF YOUNG PEOPLE  
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INTRODUCTION

A. Statement and Significance of the Problem

In the preface to the third edition of "The Narrative of Inquiry to the Jews", Andrew Bonar has eulogized the memory of Robert Murray McCheyne by saying, "During the six short years of his ministry he was the instrument of saving more souls than many true servants of God have done during half a century."<sup>1</sup> Such a commendation confirms the selection of McCheyne as the subject of this paper. Since evangelism is the purpose for which the Christian Church exists today, it is proper to turn for insight to one whose influence has been so marked and of such superior quality.

The specific problem of this paper is to develop an approach to the spiritual problems of young people. A study of McCheyne's life, along with his published works, is especially apt for this problem since his ministry was

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1. Bonar and McCheyne: The Narrative of Inquiry to the Jews, p. vii.

a youthful one. McCheyne was twenty-nine when he died. In spite of his youth, however, he not only was instrumental in winning many to Christ, he also achieved a superlative degree of spiritual ken.

Because of these surpassing aspects of his life and influence still today, it is a privilege to inquire intensely for perceptions that will be useful in determining the spiritual problems of youth and an approach to their solutions.

#### B. Delimitation of the Problem

This paper will deal with the significant problems of youth that McCheyne experienced himself and those which he recognized as inherent in the Christian believer's attempts to live a godly life. It will, therefore, deal with the distinctively spiritual problems, such as conversion and prayer, and in addition will deal with the proper handling of certain everyday practical problems, such as marriage, the development of the intellect, and self-assertion.

While no attempt will be made to evaluate McCheyne's insights and interpretations, conclusions will be noted when occasion permits. Furthermore, the material will include significant attempts that biographers have made to analyze his spiritual development.

### C. Method of Procedure

The method of procedure will be to attempt first of all a character sketch of McCheyne against the background of his times and in the light of his influence then and now. Chapter two will set apart the specific problems that McCheyne acknowledged and dealt with. Chapter three will endeavor to discover the basis of his appeal to young people and to determine the channels he utilized in coping with their problems. The character and personality of McCheyne will be studied and applied along with the material in his papers in the attempt to secure suggestions for a reasonable approach to the solution of young people's problems.

It should be understood that McCheyne's proclamation was the same for all ages and that therefore it is difficult to determine in most cases whether his remarks were being addressed to adults, adolescents or even children. For this reason it will be necessary to make application during the course of study.

### D. The Sources

The primary sources include all available memorabilia of McCheyne, including a collection of his letters, sermons, lecture notes and several tracts, and so forth. Other sources will include biographical accounts,

book reviews, and historical works dealing with McChesney himself or his times.



CHAPTER I

THE CHARACTER OF McCHEYNE

## CHAPTER I

### THE CHARACTER OF McCHEYNE

#### A. Introduction

There is universal agreement that one must study closely the life of an individual before it is possible even to begin to grasp his purposes in life and to understand his particular message. Of course it is important to note along with this the various influences of his society, his family, and the events of the era, all of which acted upon him and at least helped to determine the man he became.

Robert McCheyne is particularly suitable for a study dealing with young people and their spiritual needs since his entire career was limited to a youthful ministry, McCheyne being only 29 years of age at his death. At the same time, however, he was a man of mature Christian faith. His spiritual perceptions, while vastly above the level of the average Christian, nevertheless were enough concerned with the common areas of life to render a study of his total personality fruitful.

#### B. Biographical Sketch

##### 1. The Times

The first half of nineteenth century Great Britain was a period of transition. In the literary field there remained the strong influence of the romantic writers, such as Wordsworth. At the same time, however, new writers were appearing whose approach to life was in certain aspects decidedly the opposite of romanticism. These men, including Thomas Carlyle and Matthew Arnold, were to be characterized as Victorian writers, this royal title suggesting something of the sophistication with which they styled their works.

Literature is but a reflection of its contemporary social life in terms of its thought and action. Thus it is not surprising to find that the romanticist's concern for the common man and the Victorian's adherence to the dignity of man converge in certain efforts toward social reform. It was in 1832, for instance, that the famous Reform Bill was finally passed, which set Scotland on a fresh course of political development.<sup>1</sup> The passage of this Bill was inevitable, for advance in industry and commerce had increased city population rapidly, labor was cheap, and slum areas were becoming steadily worse.

The Church, too, was in transition; behind it were the experiences of repeated revivals;<sup>2</sup> now its con-

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1. J.R. Fleming: History of the Church in Scotland, p. 1.
2. Donald MacLean: Aspects of Scottish Church History, p. 106.

temporaneous position was somewhat undermined by the attraction of wealth<sup>1</sup> and the conflict of liberal thinking.<sup>2</sup> In Scotland, during the ten years from 1833 to 1843, the struggle was raging over the spiritual independence of the Church, until finally in 1843<sup>3</sup> the great Disruption came within the Church herself. Though unfortunate, as is any controversy involving the Church, the results were to foster an evangelical revival and to quicken the already keenly felt missionary spirit.<sup>4</sup> In both these movements, Robert Murray McCheyne was a zealous and consecrated participant.

## 2. Early Life and Training.

Robert Murray McCheyne was born May 21, 1813, in Edinburgh, Scotland, the youngest child in the family. Concerning his childhood there is not much to be noted except that at the age of four years he was afflicted with an unspecified illness; while recovering from this young Robert took it upon himself to study the Greek alphabet. Bonar reports that as a child McCheyne was possessed with "a sweet and affectionate temper" and already had won respect for "his melodious voice and powers of recitation."<sup>5</sup>

As a youth McCheyne was especially fond of

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1. Ibid., p. 105

2. Ibid., p. 5,6

3. Fleming has designated 1843, which is also the date of McCheyne's death, as "the clearest dividing line between the old and new influences at work, so far as any single year can be chosen for that purpose." Op. Cit., p. 1

4. Ibid., p. 23

5. Andrew Bonar: Memoir of McCheyne, in Works of McCheyne, Vol. I., pp. 7,8

literary studies and modern languages, and also liked to sketch, to sing and to write poetry. He enjoyed these, together with physical exercise, while he was a student at Edinburgh University, which McCheyne entered in 1827 and where he maintained a very fine scholastic standing.

### 3. Spiritual Development

#### a. Influence of Brother

The greatest influence in McCheyne's spiritual evolution was the life of his brother David, eight or nine years his senior, who is described as an unusually gifted man in the realms of the mind and the spirit. In 1831 this deeply spiritual young man entered into a state of melancholia lasting several months, during which he became fatally ill. Shortly before his death in July, however, the depression left and "there was great peace and joy written on his face."<sup>1</sup>

Following his brother's death, it was observed that young Robert, age of eighteen, gave much serious thought to his poetry-writing; he began to lead a Sabbath School as well as to read his Bible and to attend church assiduously. Perhaps his innermost thoughts regarding David's death and the influence it was having on him are best expressed in two poems Robert wrote during this

. . . . .

1. Ibid., p. 10

period: "On Painting the Miniature Likeness of One Departed," in which he mourns his inability to trace strongly enough the fineness of character and depth of soul possessed by his brother; and "The Righteous Perisheth, and No Man Layeth it to Heart," in which McCheyne recognizes his brother's earnest desire that he (Robert) enter into a full Christian experience. In both poems McCheyne expresses admiration for his brother's surrender of his talents and genius to God and also speaks of the joy of his brother in heaven.

b. Period of Searching and of Growth

The winter following David McCheyne's death, Robert entered the Divinity Hall to prepare for the ministry. Here he began to question friends and to discuss with them the manner of God's dealings with them relative to their conversion. This group frequently gathered for Bible study and prayer.

About this time McCheyne read much in the lives of spiritual giants, such as Henry Martyn, Leigh Richmond, Jonathan Edwards and David Brainerd. (Brainerd was a special subject of veneration on McCheyne's part.) It is no wonder, therefore, that he often exhorted fellow Christians to read from the lives of such people.

Probably the most important single contribution to McCheyne's spiritual growth at this time was the thorough study of a booklet entitled "The Sum of Saving Knowledge."

Of this reading McCheyne himself later (1834) said, "the work I think first of all wrought a saving change in me."<sup>1</sup>

c. Nature of Conversion

McCheyne never was able to point to any specific time as the moment of his conversion. He was always careful to explain that his coming to Christ was brought about through "deep and ever-abiding, but not awful or distracting conviction"<sup>2</sup> and that it was not a sudden experience.

From his own journal it is evident that through his earnest study of the Scriptures and of lives of saints he came into a deep sense of unworthiness and sin which plagued his soul night and day. An insight into his own experience is to be had from the following excerpt from McCheyne's journal, written on a Saturday evening (May 6, 1832) as part of his preparation for the Lord's Supper the next day.

What a mass of corruption have I been! How great a portion of my life have I spent wholly without God in the world... Naturally of a feeling and sentimental disposition, how much of my religion has been, and to this day is, tinged with these colors of earth! Restrained from open vice by educational views and the fear of man, how much ungodliness has reigned within me!... Though my vice was always refined, yet how subtle and how awfully prevalent it was!... I come to Christ, not although I am a sinner, but just because I am a sinner, even to the chief.<sup>3</sup>

McCheyne believed that he had never been saved until he

. . . . .

1. Ibid., p. 16 - quoting from McCheyne's journal.
2. Ibid., p. 14
3. Ibid., p. 19

actually had come to Christ on the basis of His work as Redeemer.

Bonar offers an interesting and thought-provoking commentary concerning the manner in which McCheyne became a Christian.

It appears that he learnt the way of salvation experimentally, ere he knew it accurately by theory and system; and thus no doubt it was that his whole ministry was little else than a giving out of his inward life.<sup>1</sup>

Thus it seems that the nature of McCheyne's ministry, and especially his dealings with young people, which were largely evangelistic in character, were influenced by his own experience. Recognizing the deceit of appearances, he insisted upon preaching continually with the purpose of convicting of sin and converting to Christ.

#### 4. Ministry

McCheyne's first parish was at Larbert in Scotland, the historic locale of Robert Bruce's ministry. It was always a source of delight to him to be situated in this ministry under these conditions. It also served as motivation toward a spirit-guided ministry of his own. His work at Larbert began in November of 1835, following completion of theological training at Edinburgh, and the parish to which he came was a large one, with an outreach to some 6,000 persons altogether.<sup>2</sup>

. . . . .

1. Ibid., p. 29

2. Ibid., p. 35



During the year's work at Larbert McCheyne had opportunity to develop his style of preaching. There was, furthermore, decided commitment of himself to God's service as evidenced by a willingness to obey a call to foreign fields should that call come to him. From time to time he contributed articles to Christian periodicals, so that his reputation was soon spread throughout most of Scotland.

In November, 1836, Robert McCheyne became an ordained minister of the Gospel in St. Peter's Church, Dundee, to which he had come as its only minister.<sup>1</sup> This church remained his parish until his death in 1843, a term unbroken except by a year's journey to Palestine (March 1839 - March 1840) and by recurring periods of illness which separated him from his congregation and tried the spirits of himself and his people. It was at the Dundee Church that McCheyne's power as a preacher fully unfolded and that he spent himself in devotion to Christ.

### C. Characteristics as a Believer

#### 1. Devotion to Christ.

One of the outstanding traits of Robert McCheyne was his love for Jesus Christ. This quality of devotion and adoration colors all of his letters and his sermons.

. . . . .

1. Dundee was a good-sized city for its time. Fleming gives its population in 1844, a year after McCheyne's death, as a little more than 60,000. Op. cit., p. 5.

"In spiritual things," he wrote to one of his parishioners, "this world is all wintertime so long as the Savior is away."<sup>1</sup> That his Lord was continually in his thoughts is seen in spontaneous outbursts such as this one found in a letter to his parents, written during a trip down the Rhone River, from which the Alps could be seen in the distance: "I am perfectly wearied with looking - Ah! no joys satisfy, but the joys which Christ gives to the soul."<sup>2</sup>

Regarding this quality in McCheyne's life, the Rev. James Hamilton wrote the following shortly after his death: "A striking characteristic of his piety was absorbing love to the Lord Jesus. This was his ruling passion."<sup>3</sup>

It is only natural that one who rejoiced in such a present Savior and friend as McCheyne did in Jesus would look upon death as a means of achieving a yet sweeter fellowship with Him. "I long to be at Jesus' feet, and tell him I am all his, and ever will be."<sup>4</sup> And again, "Often I would like to depart and be with Christ."<sup>5</sup>

## 2. Personal Discipline

"I ought to spend the best hours of the day in communion with God. It is my noblest and most fruitful employment," wrote McCheyne shortly before his death.<sup>6</sup>

. . . . .

1. McCheyne, Works, Vol. I, Letters, p. 151
2. Ibid., Familiar Letters, p. 464
3. James Hamilton: Life of McCheyne in Gems, p. 26
4. McCheyne, Works, Vol. I, Letters, p. 248
5. Bonar: Op. cit., p. 142
6. Ibid., p. 141

"The morning hours, from six to eight, are the most uninterrupted and should be thus employed if I can prevent drowsiness. A little time after breakfast might be given to intercession."<sup>1</sup> These quotations, taken from McCheyne's personal "Reformation"<sup>2</sup> are typical of his continual soul-searching. Probably these are recorded as ideals, yet undoubtedly they are the result of tremendous insights and experiences in devotional periods. Bonar records that in addition to prayer it was McCheyne's custom to read three chapters from Scripture each morning and that often he sang a Psalm of praise upon awaking. Often his private devotions also included close study of the works of such men as Jonathan Edwards and Samuel Rutherford. Following breakfast there would be family prayer. In addition to daily periods of devotion, it was McCheyne's delight to set aside occasional days for fasting and special prayer. It will be evident that McCheyne encouraged Bible-reading and other means of daily devotions among his parishioners, young people included.

### 3. Reaction to Illness

McCheyne was keenly sensitive to his own faults and weaknesses, which he considered chiefly as the "lust

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1. Ibid.
2. This "Reformation," included in pp. 134-142 of Bonar's Memoir, was written by McCheyne for his own personal use as an examination of his heart and life, but was never finished.

of praise."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, when he was first seriously afflicted with a heart condition in late 1838, he forthwith accepted this affliction both as judgment upon himself and those in his congregation who remained indifferent to the Gospel message, and also as a means of grace, for through the experience McCheyne considered himself to be learning humility, patience and especially the power of intercessory prayer.<sup>2</sup>

#### D. Characteristics as a Minister of God

##### 1. Conception of the Ministry

"I thank Christ Jesus my Lord for...putting me into the ministry.... It is the greatest honor in the world."<sup>3</sup>

Robert McCheyne not only felt it to be an enviable honor to be a minister; with this honor went grave responsibility and conditions. He was aware of weaknesses in preaching but still declared it "God's way of converting souls."<sup>4</sup> A sermon was a serious thing, therefore, and he found it necessary to devote time for prayer preceding each service.

Sensing his own "lust for praise"<sup>5</sup> McCheyne

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1. Bonar: op. cit., p. 37

2. Cf. Bonar: op. cit., pp. 37,78

3. McCheyne: Works, Vol. II, Sermons, p. 67

4. McCheyne: Gems, p. 160

5. Cf. p. 11

especially felt the sin of striving to attract people to himself rather than to Christ,<sup>1</sup> and declared his chief joy in life to be that of preaching the "unsearchable riches of Christ."<sup>2</sup>

As far as his own sermons are concerned, criticism was made during his lifetime that often they were too long. Bonar himself says this, and there is evidence of McCheyne's awareness of this fault; "I have tried to shorten them," he wrote to a minister friend.<sup>3</sup> They are chiefly evangelistic in character, possessing searching appeals to saved and unsaved alike. This is explained by the following comment by McCheyne:

Most ministers are accustomed to set Christ before the people. They lay down the gospel clearly and beautifully, but they do not urge men to enter in.<sup>4</sup>

McCheyne, on the contrary, was vitally concerned that the way of salvation be made plain in his own preaching.

### 3. Use of the Bible

It was customary in the Scottish Church during this time to have the Bible read only preceding the sermon.<sup>5</sup> McCheyne followed this custom. His sermons are expository in style, for he regarded his task as a preacher to be that

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1. McCheyne: Gems, p. 155

2. McCheyne: Works, Vol. I, Letters, p. 149

3. Ibid., p. 239

4. McCheyne: Gems, p. 162

5. Fleming: op. cit., p. 9

of interpreting the Scriptures.<sup>1</sup>

In preaching, it was McCheyne's procedure to announce his subject and its text, following which he described the Scripture in its context before beginning his exposition. His texts are taken from the Old Testament as well as the New Testament.

### 3. Doctrinal Emphases

Bonar, in writing the Memoirs of McCheyne, says "(He) preached all the doctrines of Scripture as understood by our Confession of Faith, dwelling upon ruin by the Fall, and recovery by the Mediator."<sup>2</sup>

Thus McCheyne perceived all men to be sinners, ("Remember, a moral sinner will lie down in the same hell with the vilest.")<sup>3</sup> and in need of conversion. In spite of his own gradual growth into Christ, he declared that the Bible teaches that sudden conversion is to be expected.<sup>4</sup> Such a transformation of character and movement from death and the wrath of God into God's love is to be secured only by grace through Christ, the only begotten Son of God, whose atoning death has made peace with God possible. Conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit, who convicts of sin and who

. . . . .

1. Bonar: op. cit., p. 61. The full statement cited by Bonar reads as follows: "I am just an interpreter of Scripture in my sermons; and when the Bible runs dry, then I shall."
2. Ibid.
3. McCheyne: Gems, p. 235
4. Cf. Bonar: op. cit., p. 40

is the universal teacher concerning Christ.<sup>1</sup>

It is reported by Cummings that McCheyne disliked the phrase "giving attention to religion" because he felt it substituted doctrine about Christ for Christ Himself.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to these emphases it should also be noted that like other Scottish evangelicals of this period, McCheyne had a tendency toward Premillennialism. Bonar suggests this leaning as a result of McCheyne's belief that his own life would be a short one.<sup>3</sup> McCheyne was remembered to have said, "I do not expect to live long....and therefore I speak very plainly."<sup>4</sup> This, then, is another important influence governing McCheyne's objectives and methods. It has already been shown how much these aspects of McCheyne's doctrinal stands were determined by the nature of his own conversion.

#### 4. Efforts in Evangelism and Revival

Robert McCheyne possessed an unusual concern for the souls of believers and non-believers:

He was often in agony till he should see Christ formed in the hearts of his people... Like Moses he spent much time in crying mightily to God in their behalf.<sup>5</sup>

Often in his sermons he was known to speak of his own tra-

. . . . .

1. Cf. McCheyne: Vol. II, Sermons, especially those beginning pp. 51, 55, 99, 111, 158.
2. Cummings: Holy Men of God, p. 238
3. Ibid: p. 142
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 13

vail for his people's souls. "My heart sickens within me," he once said concerning the sight of so many unconverted.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore only natural that he would devote himself to evangelism and revival. Frequently he was invited to conduct services away from Dundee, and rarely refused such opportunities when they came on week-days.

His letters indicate that many awakened by his sermons came to call upon him, that he received them graciously and followed up the meeting by calling and by writing letters. Many of these occasions dealt with young people. The letters, many of them, are entirely filled with religious truth, whether to good friends, to family members or to inquirers. They were written in a simple, clear and earnest manner. Bonar says that even in visiting with friends, McChayne attempted to promote greater interest in the spiritual life.<sup>2</sup>

McChayne also was the author of tracts and pamphlets through which he sought to explain Christian doctrine and the sacraments, including the Lord's Supper. Some of these include: Daily Bread, an arrangement of Scripture for daily devotions; Another Lily Gathered, an account of the death of a child who had been brought to Christ; "Reasons why Children Should Fly to Christ" and

. . . . .

1. McChayne: Works, Vol. II, Sermons, p. 51.

2. Bonar: op. cit., p. 69



The Lambs of the Flock. From these titles it is evident that McCheyne was vitally concerned that all ages, including the very young even, should be brought to Christ. In addition to tracts, McCheyne wrote many poems, some of which are included in Volume II of the Works of McCheyne.

As to method in approaching persons, McCheyne was quite direct. The story is told, for instance, of his watching in silence as a workman at a quarry opened the furnace door and added fuel to the already raging fire. As the man turned from this job, McCheyne said to him simply, "Does that fire remind you of anything?"<sup>1</sup> Thus it appears that McCheyne took the man's immediate circumstances as a starting point. Bonar adds that the man sought out a church and was frequent in attendance after this occurrence.

While McCheyne was returning from a mission to the Holy Land, reports reached him that a revival had begun in his own church in Dundee as well as in numerous other Scottish churches. He determined then to carry on the work already begun. It was during these efforts that many preaching engagements called him into Ireland and northern England as well as other parts of Scotland. Concerning some reactions to this period of awakening, McCheyne said,

Several were offended; but I felt no hesitancy as to our duty to declare the simple truth impressively

. . . . .

1. Bonar: op. cit., p. 38

....If he (God) saves souls in a quiet way I shall be happy; if in the midst of cries and tears, still I will bless his name.<sup>1</sup>

This statement is indicative of McCheyne's single purpose and also of his desire to give God the praise when souls were saved.

## 5. Denominational Activities

McCheyne's decision to keep himself open to a possible call to foreign mission work was always uppermost in his thought. In 1836 he had first declared himself ready to go to India. At that time he became interested in The Church Extension Scheme and its efforts to reach the unchurched of Scotland. Earlier, while still a divinity student, McCheyne had made the slums of Edinburgh a sort of personal mission field and the impressions received then tended to incite greater interest in denominational agencies for meeting the needs of these people. In 1837 McCheyne was made secretary to the Association for Church Extension in the County of Forfar, and for this group he traveled about the County on many speaking engagements.<sup>2</sup>

The mission of inquiry into Palestine, to which reference has already been made, was instigated by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, which commissioned McCheyne to go, along with Black of Aberdeen, Alexander Keith and Andrew Bonar. The purpose of this journey was,

. . . . .

1. Ibid., p. 121

2. Ibid., p. 65, 66

as its title suggests, primarily an investigation of conditions among the Jews in Palestine. McCheyne considered it also a mission by which the Gospel would be given to the Chosen People of Israel.<sup>1</sup>

Bonar points out that McCheyne was faithful in attendance at Presbytery meetings and that his high Christian attainments were acknowledged by his fellow ministers as a source of inspiration. In the controversy finally leading to the disruption of the Scottish Church in 1843, McCheyne unashamedly and unhesitatingly took a stand against any Moderate influence; and at the Convocation at Edinburgh November 7, 1842, he was present at all meetings of this assembly. Here it was that he maintained a firm stand against any connection between the Church and the State.<sup>2</sup>

#### E. Influence

That Robert McCheyne had widespread influence during his lifetime is evidenced by the extent to which he was invited to preach in neighboring and far-away places. The results of these preaching engagements were genuine awakenings and revivals wherever he went.

. . . . .

1. Cf McCheyne, Vol. I, Letters, especially p. 153, and also the book written by McCheyne and Bonar together, The Narrative of a Mission of Inquiry to the Holy Land.
2. Ibid., p. 124, 131

McCheyne was convinced of the necessary separation of the Church and State and therefore took a decided stand against any interference by the State upon all functions and phases of church life. His decision, he felt, was according to Scripture.

It is very interesting to note that McCheyne, while not a delegate at any time to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, nevertheless felt free to send suggestions to this governing body through those who were to be in attendance. One suggestion he offered was that the Church ordain "ministers at large" whose duty it would be to go about as evangelists to spiritually decadent churches.<sup>1</sup>

Another of McCheyne's channels of influence lay in his efforts among ministers of other denominations. He initiated prayer groups of preachers in Dundee; he also invited guest preachers of other denominations to speak in his own church pulpit.

Aside from these influences upon individuals and groups during McCheyne's lifetime, it would be impossible to gauge the effects of publications of his letters, sermons, and tracts. They were first published as early as 1849, and even a century later (1947) another publisher in the United States brought out a revision of Bonar's original

. . . . .

1. Ibid., p. 124

compilation.

In the editorial preface to this latest revision and edition, entitled "Memoirs of McCheyne," S. Maxwell Coder speaks of "the exceedingly rich works of McCheyne which have been treasured as one of the great heritages of the Church."<sup>1</sup>

Donald MacLeod claims that of all the preachers of his time,

there was none that left his mark on the Evangelical Churches more than Robert Murray McCheyne of Dundee, whose sermons have had as wide a circulation as any of the Scottish pulpit.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the place of Robert McCheyne in Christian devotional literature is established for all time.

#### F. Summary

This chapter has examined the distinctive traits of McCheyne's character as well as significant features of his spiritual development with the purpose of finding insights which will be helpful in developing an approach to young people's spiritual problems. Some of this material naturally dealt with his younger days, followed by an account of the chief influences leading to his conversion. Most of the material, however, was concerned with the dis-

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1. Maxwell Coder, Memoirs of McCheyne, Editorial Preface, p. v.
2. Donald MacLeod, op. cit., p. 277.

tinguishing elements of McCheyne's Christian faith, especially as demonstrated during the six and one-half years of his ministry.

It has been found that McCheyne's gradual conversion came about primarily as a result of his Christian brother's death, after which he was for some time under conviction of his own sinfulness. He developed an unusually vivid impression of the holiness of God and therefore continually examined his own soul for hidden sin.

After 1836, when he became minister of St. Peter's Church in Dundee, McCheyne was plagued with a heart condition, but continued to preach, to conduct evangelistic services throughout parts of the British Isles and even to set forth on a "mission of inquiry" to the Holy Land.

In doctrine, McCheyne was Calvinistic, emphasizing the fall of man and redemption through Christ, as well as the second coming of Christ.

As an ordained minister in the Church of Scotland McCheyne was influential as an evangelical as well as a firm contender for the spiritual separation of Christ's Church from any other influences. He also supported all missionary endeavors with enthusiasm.

CHAPTER II  
McCHEYNE'S CONCEPTION OF YOUNG PEOPLE  
AND THEIR PROBLEMS

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A. Introduction

With a brief examination of the general character of McCheyne as a background, this chapter will attempt to isolate certain significant insights that have relevance to the spiritual needs of young people. It is necessary to point out that many of these were not concerned specifically with young people in their original context, and that therefore application will be made during the course of the chapter.

This chapter will first gather some of McCheyne's statements regarding the conversion of youth; it will then deal with some of the outstanding problems noted by McCheyne which many Christian young people confront in relation to their spiritual growth following conversion. Finally, the chapter will study some problems of everyday living that he dealt with and concerning which young people may need guidance in order to make a satisfactory adjustment to society as Christians.

B. The Nature of Young People's Need for Conversion

One of the primary functions of the Christian



Church is that of evangelizing the world. McCheyne gives helpful insights concerning the desirability of reaching people at an early age and concerning also some obstacles to their accepting the Gospel.

#### 1. Hindrances and Barriers to Conversion

It has been noted that much of Robert McCheyne's work as a minister was that of an evangelist. Actually it seems as if one of his weaknesses was that of preaching mainly conversion messages, for it was by way of his letters and presumably his personal counseling that he was able to advise concerning Christian growth. This tendency is readily understood in the light of his own experience, for he never forgot his own period of searching and unrest as the result of an inadequate conversion, while at the same time he gave all appearance of being truly Christian. As Bonar says,

I have heard him say that there was a correctness and propriety in his demeanor at time of devotion and in public worship, which some, who knew not his heart, were ready to put to the account of real feeling.<sup>1</sup>

This seems to be a meaningful insight for workers with youth. Perhaps a greater attempt needs to be made on their part to determine the validity and depth of the Christian experience of young people who have been nurtured in the church from an early age. McCheyne deeply felt the

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1. Bonar: op. cit., p. 8

danger of allowing a pious appearance to conceal definite need for conversion, and so his letters and sermons contain pungent questions and even accusations, as well as exhortations to make certain concerning one's salvation. Lest they rely on a "works righteousness", he would say, "Remember, no outward observances, no prayers, or church-going, or Bible-reading, can ever justify you in the sight of God."<sup>1</sup> Thus he strove to arouse inner searching on the part of his congregation.

Closely related, yet distinct from this aspect of misleading appearances is the attitude of complacency against which McChesney fought. He disliked any sloth, and particularly so when it interfered with one's response to the Gospel. "Almost Christians" was the term he applied to the indifferent, and often he spoke bluntly to them. "The deepest place in hell", he once said, "will be for almost Christians."<sup>2</sup> Again, "Many have lazy desires after Christ that are never satisfied, and they are none the better for them -- like beggars wishing they were rich."<sup>3</sup> Such complacency McChesney believed to be caused by pride and a hardened heart.

Although McChesney was so concerned with the convicting of sin as an aspect of evangelistic preaching and

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1. Hamilton: Gems, p. 213
2. McChesney: Works of McChesney, Vol. II, p. 128
3. Hamilton: Gems, p. 221

thus dwelt often on sin, God's wrath and judgment, he also felt futility at leaving those who heard with no more than this inner conviction. Probably from his own experience he came to believe that there is a strong tendency to search inwardly without also looking to Christ for help. This he feared greatly, as he felt it to be an act caused by Satan himself. Understanding the spiritual unrest involved in such a response, McCheyne gave earnest warning:

Some of you turn for faith much in the same way as you would dig for a well; you turn the eye inward upon yourself...you search amid all your feelings at sermons and sacraments to see if faith is there.<sup>1</sup>

So it seems that McCheyne believed it to be his duty to redirect faulty attempts to grasp hold of faith.

Along with this inward search, he felt another hindrance to be that of reliance on outward occasions as the source of faith, as in the following statement,

(Satan) makes them look to ministers, or books, or meetings or duties--to feelings, enlargement in prayer: he will let them look to anything in the universe except to one object, 'the cross of Christ'.<sup>2</sup>

While apparently none of the above quotations was addressed specifically to young people, the implications are clear for an understanding approach to some of youth's problems. McCheyne himself was keenly aware of the simplicity of the Gospel; yet, having experienced such fretting

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1. McCheyne: Bethany, p. 59
2. Hamilton, Gems, p. 76

and spiritual hunger in his own late adolescence, he knew that young people often expect more than is really involved in the manner of conversion. As he put it,

I do not feel that there is anything more in coming to Jesus, than just believing what God says about his Son to be true. I believe that many people keep themselves in darkness by expecting something more than this. Some of you will ask, 'Is there no APPROPRIATING of Christ? NO PUTTING OUT THE HAND OF FAITH? no touching the hem of his garment?' I quite grant, beloved, there is such a thing, but I do not think it is inseparable from believing the record.<sup>1</sup>

One gathers from this that McCheyne felt that often those who are searching mistake the conversion experience as requiring some positive act on their part, rather than being submissive in nature. Perhaps he is also referring here to the expectation of many for a cataclysmic experience. At any rate, it is apparent that his insight is valuable for an approach in evangelizing young people. According to his principles, young people not only need to hear the Gospel and be challenged to become Christians, but also they need to be guided in the manner of entering this desired relationship with Christ.

There is yet another barrier McCheyne regarded as a hindrance to young people, especially as they consider becoming Christians. In a Sunday morning sermon preached in Dundee, he spoke frankly of the misconception that the Christian life is a gloomy one, in which all pleasure is

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1. Bonar: op. cit., p. 73. Caps indicate italics in the original.

removed. "Be not deceived my young friends",<sup>1</sup> he said as he proclaimed the joy of the believer. "A believer is to be known by his peace and joy..",<sup>2</sup> he also declared. Later in this paper there will be opportunity to determine what evidences there are pertaining to the lightheartedness of McChesney himself, which probably would have affected his influence with young persons.

## 2. Youth the Time for Conversion

McChesney was convinced that youth is the most opportune time for a conversion experience. He even sought to convert children, and his message was the same to all ages. His conviction seems to have been based on the following principles; the impressiveness of youth, youth's open and non-biassed approach to truth, the lack of distracting attention to the business of the world and the cares of life, youth's natural searching, and their eager response to the influence of Christian lives about them. McChesney believed that both "conviction of sin and conviction of righteousness are most easily wrought into the youthful mind".<sup>3</sup>

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1. McChesney: Works, Vol. II, p. 24
2. Ibid, p. 86
3. Compare these suggestions with McChesney's statements in Revival Truth, p. 148. Part of this appeared in the British Messenger, November, 1858, and is quoted by the compiler of Revival Truth.

### C. Problems of Spiritual Growth

After young people have been brought to Christ it is important for them to realize that the Christian life is dynamic. They need to learn how to pray and how to read the Bible effectively. They need to be aware of some of the hindrances to this important spiritual development. Some significant insights in these areas will be seen in McCheyne's treatment of them.

#### 1. Necessity of Spiritual Growth

In spite of McCheyne's evangelistic emphases, he became increasingly aware of his responsibility to aid the growth of those who are sincere believers, and upon several occasions he confessed this ministry to be one of his weak points. His sermons, therefore, while seemingly directed chiefly to the unsaved, also contain admonitions regarding sanctification. McCheyne believed spiritual growth after conversion to be essential. "The only way to keep from falling", he wrote to his congregation, "is to grow. If you stand still you will fall."<sup>1</sup> Thus he established on practical ground the need to advance in Christian experience.

McCheyne also felt this growth to be very natural, as well as necessary. It is "the truest mark of

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1. McCheyne: Works, Vol. I, Letters, p. 179

being born again".<sup>1</sup> And again, "Every real Christian is making progress. If the sheep is on the shoulder of the shepherd, it is always getting nearer the fold".<sup>2</sup> He himself seems to have felt a constraint to increase in holy living and never was satisfied with his own attainments, as is evidenced by his writing the "Reformation".<sup>3</sup>

Although McCheyne declared sanctification to be the purpose of salvation, he also warned against its becoming "a Christ" in itself. Since it is the work of the Holy Spirit, it is necessary to trust Him to produce a fruitful life. McCheyne warned Christians not to strive for holiness on their own strength in the following statement,

Many look to the wrong quarter for sanctification. They take pardon from Christ, then lean on themselves, their promises, etc., for holiness...you might as well hold up the sun on its journey, as sanctify yourself. It needs divine power."<sup>4</sup>

So it is that McCheyne's exhortations, which appear both reasonable and sound in approach, seem especially helpful for young people, who need to have specific guidance as they enter the Christian life. It is apparent that he used a pragmatic approach; he also made use of illustrations. He seems to have sensed a need to approach problems in as

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1. Ibid., p. 215

2. McCheyne: Works of McCheyne, Vol. II, p. 49

3. Ante. p. 11

4. Hamilton: Gems, p. 138

direct, yet practical, way as possible. It is to be noted in the above quotation that he warned against what may be a tendency for all Christians, namely, that of relying on one's own strength to achieve spiritual stature.

## 2. Common Hindrances to Spiritual Growth:

It is obvious that all Christians face many problems in the development of their spiritual lives. These are some which McCheyne noted.

### a. Indecision regarding God's will.

Robert McCheyne himself had many important decisions to make in the course of his short life. For example, the journey to Palestine was proposed while he was completely cut off from all work because of illness; preaching invitations came to him constantly, and in all these matters he sought God's guidance. The advice he gave in determining the will of God seems to be sensible, emphasizing prayer and the reading of Scripture to be the primary sources of direct guidance. He expressed hesitation to ask for signs; however, he felt these often to be given in confirmation of decisions.<sup>1</sup>

Even while insisting on God's Word and prayer as entirely sufficient for determining God's will in a particular matter, he also realized that Christians are

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1. Cf. Bonar, op. cit., p. 63 and 64



to use their own powers of reasoning, as in this statement:

We do not lean upon our own understanding...  
But we do not throw away our own understanding,  
because it is through that understanding alone  
that we look for the guidance of the Holy  
Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

So it is apparent that Christians need to learn to think for themselves in the light of the Bible and of prayer. McCheyne urged also that no problem was too small to be brought to God for His guidance.<sup>2</sup>

b. Hurried living

In a sermon entitled "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our Confession", McCheyne declared that one of the greatest hindrances to the Christian is simply overcrowded days. He claimed that this is one of the ways the devil works against a Christian's growth. "He always hurries us on."<sup>3</sup> So he preached from his pulpit the necessity of finding time to consider and meditate upon spiritual matters. As will be shown later, he fought against this hurried tendency by supplying his parishioners with devotional material for daily use.<sup>4</sup>

c. Spiritual pride

From McCheyne's own journal is found his regret that Christians take pride in such things as faithful at-

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1. Hamilton: Gems, p. 98

2. McCheyne: Bethany, p. 14

3. McCheyne: Works of McCheyne, Vol. II, p. 15

4. Post p. 39

tendance and in active participation at prayer meetings; he especially regretted that they did not sense this as a real danger.<sup>1</sup>

He did not feel himself nor any other minister exempt from this tendency and wrote this exhortation to Mr. W.C. Burns, who had been supply pastor at St. Peter's during McCheyne's Palestinian trip.

Now remember, Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone. Looking at our own shining face is the bane of the spiritual life and of the ministry.<sup>2</sup>

This quotation helps to show how strongly McCheyne felt about spiritual pride, and his honest reckoning of it in himself as well as in others may indicate the importance of dealing directly with it as a decided hindrance to the Christian's growth.

### 3. The Importance of Prayer

It is already evident that McCheyne was a man of prayer. Hamilton says that "his walks and rides and journeys were sanctified by prayer".<sup>3</sup> Thus it is to be expected that many of his exhortations in letters and sermons are on the subject of prayer, for he believed that "No person can be a child of God without living in secret

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1. Bonar: op. cit., p. 112

2. Ibid., p. 118. W.C. Burns, who was instrumental in the revival in Scotland during this period, later became one of the earliest companions of Hudson Taylor in China, as noted in The Spiritual Secret of Hudson Taylor, pp. 50ff.

3. Hamilton: Life of McCheyne in Gems, p. 33)

prayer".<sup>1</sup>

While again it is true that many of these insights concerning prayer were not shared for the benefit of young people specifically, McCheyne's deep sense of the meaning of prayer and his suggestions regarding its practice seem readily applicable to their needs.

To begin with, he insisted that prayer is personal fellowship with God. It is not mere words spoken "to the back of their chair, or out to the world, or to the empty air."<sup>2</sup> In this same quotation McCheyne's sense of divine Presence in prayer is expressed:

When a believer prays, he is not alone, there are three with him; the Father seeing in secret, his ear open; the Son blotting out sin, and offering up the prayer; the Holy Ghost quickening and giving desires. There can be no true prayer without these three.<sup>3</sup>

So McCheyne seems to have believed that in order for his people to want to pray, he must make prayer meaningful to them; he apparently was convinced that the best way to accomplish this was to point out the functions of the three Persons in the Godhead relative to prayer. Understanding this, they can be expected to realize how prayer can be a vital experience and a sharing in God's work. If his reasoning is valid, then youth's knowledge of this

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1. McCheyne, Works of McCheyne, Vol. I, Letters, p. 205
2. Hamilton: Gems, p. 143
3. Ibid.

concept would perhaps serve as a further stimulus to their prayer life.

McCheyne was interested not only in helping Christians understand the underlying concepts of prayer, but also in helping them realize that its various types and techniques are direct outgrowths of these basic facts. When he spoke of petitioning, therefore, he referred to it as "filial asking", as if to remind the believer that in coming to God in prayer he must place himself at God's disposal. He also reminded them that "Urgency in prayer does not so much consist in vehement pleading as in vehement believing".<sup>1</sup>

While in these statements McCheyne seems to be, in part, stressing the believer's attitude of humility, he earnestly enjoined them to be sincere also, as in the following injunction. "Do not feign humility before God nor use expressions of self-aborrence which you do not feel."<sup>2</sup> That he should say this seems significant since his basic explanations of prayer depend so much on the greatness of God, and the believer's "filial asking" referred to above.

As the Christian comes to God to make certain requests, therefore, he should avoid presumption<sup>3</sup>, yet

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1. McCheyne: Bethany, p. 16
2. McCheyne: Works, Vol. I. Letters, p. 223
3. McCheyne: Bethany, p. 16

be sincere.

With these thoughts in mind, it will be interesting to note some suggestions made by McCheyne to various people to help them learn to pray effectively. To one organization in Blairgourie, whose purpose was for "Diffusing the knowledge of the Truth," he wrote that it might prove helpful for the members to agree what petitions should be offered before going to prayer.<sup>1</sup> In considering his own efforts in intercession, he felt it would be helpful to have a map of the world before him which would include the names of missionaries.<sup>2</sup> As far as learning how to pray is concerned, McCheyne wrote to one youthful parishioner that he "turn the Bible into prayer."<sup>3</sup>

These suggestions have dealt, for the most part, with petitioning, including intercession, and naturally lead one to wonder what McCheyne said about receiving answers to requests. In this respect he emphasized the believer's expectancy during the act of prayer as well as the wisdom of God in all matters. His above suggestion relating to the use of the Bible might indicate that he felt God's will would thus be clear in matters brought before Him in prayer.

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1. McCheyne: Works, Vol. I, Letters, p. 222
2. Bonar: op. cit., quoting from McCheyne's "Reformation", p. 141
3. Ibid., p. 48

Still another element in prayer that is closely related to what has already been said, yet distinct and significant enough to bear scrutiny, is the element of confession. It is not difficult to realize from McCheyne's basic concepts of the nature of sin and the Gospel message, as well as of prayer, that he believed confession to be necessary for a continuing relationship with God. However, the following ~~statement~~ from his journal is interesting to note:

I find that the devil often makes use of the confession of sin to stir up again the very sin confessed into new exercise, so that I am afraid to dwell upon this confession. I must ask experienced Christians about this.<sup>1</sup>

Thus it seems that McCheyne came to believe that confession itself is an act of faith and that a Christian, having sincerely offered it, should then consider his repentance as acceptable in God's sight and proceed in prayer under the Spirit's guidance.

These insights may be especially helpful for young Christians whose patterns in prayer are being formed. It would seem that a youth worker should seek first of all to explain to them what prayer is and how it operates from the standpoint of God's activity as they pray. Furthermore, one gathers that sincerity should be emphasized, along with humility, and that practical suggestions should

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1. Bonar: op. cit., p. 135

be given to promote successful prayer among young people of the Christian faith.

#### 4. The Importance of Bible Reading

Shortly before McCheyne left Scotland for his mission into Palestine he was given a pocket Bible by one of the women in his congregation. In writing his appreciation to her he said,

All my ideas of peace and joy are linked in with my Bible; and I would not give the hours of secret converse with it for all the other hours I spend in this world.<sup>1</sup>

This enthusiastic comment is substantiated by Bonar, who says that "(he) acted on the principle that whatever God has revealed, must deserve our study and prayerful investigation."<sup>2</sup>

Since he found Bible reading so profitable for himself, it is to be expected that he would speak often about the importance of every believer's earnest study of the Scriptures. It seems unfortunate that, although he emphasized complete reliance on God for understanding, he gave little or no advice for methodical or even devotional study. As mentioned previously,<sup>3</sup> he supplied the members of his church with calendars of suggested daily Bible readings. Each day called for the reading of three

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1. McCheyne; Works, Vol. I., Letters, p. 152
2. Bonar; op. cit., p. 100
3. Ante, p. 33

chapters in addition to a Psalm. While the concern prompting this effort on his part is to be commended, it seems regrettable that he failed to include some helpful devotional thoughts arising from the particular passages. The only practical suggestions he gave regarding Bible study were to approach Bible reading expectantly and to search patiently into meanings. In this respect he advised comparing passages of Scripture.<sup>1</sup>

#### 5. The Importance of Lay Evangelism

Just as McCheyne declared sanctification to be the purpose of salvation<sup>2</sup> he also emphasized the necessity of sharing that salvation. He himself expected fruit from his ministry and if there were none for awhile, he reasoned that it was due to some imperfection in himself.<sup>3</sup> His own experience was that of constraint to preach, and he felt that all believers should feel the same way. This is seen in the following brief comment, "There cannot be a secret Christian."<sup>4</sup> Thus McCheyne encouraged laymen's responsibility to Christ; in fact, he told them they should "make it the business of your life."<sup>5</sup> Along with this daily witnessing on the layman's part, as a legitimate respon-

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1. McCheyne: Bethany, p. 40

2. Ante p. 31

3. Bonar: op. cit., p. 133

4. McCheyne: Works of McCheyne, Vol. II, p. 79

5. Ibid., p. 192



sibility, he also suggested that such work stimulates a Christian's growth.<sup>1</sup>

It is significant to note that these stresses on laymen's active participation in evangelism were made a little over a century ago, and that today youth leaders of the church are urging young people to win others into the Christian fellowship. The United Christian Youth Movement, for instance, is promoting a campaign called "Youth to Youth Evangelism," and is publishing many pamphlets describing its importance, and including suggestions on reaching non-Christian youth.<sup>2</sup>

#### D. Problems of Practical Christian Living

While the previous sections dealt with spiritual problems per se, this section will concern some of the experiences of everyday living in which the Christian may need guidance. It will be in terms of human relations and also in terms of other personal adjustments that may become necessary from time to time.

##### 1. Inconsistent Daily Living

McCheyne, who by nature was outspoken, fre-

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1. Ibid., p. 109
2. Some of these publications include: "Evangelism Through United Christian Youth Action" and "Helping Other Young People to be Christian." These are published for the U.C.Y.M. (which is administered through the N.C.C.C. in U.S.A.) by the N.C.C.C.'s Department of Publications And Distribution, Chicago, Ill.

quently assailed the inconsistency of professing Christians in their homes and places of business and he warned against dishonesty and questionable business practices. Again, these remarks were not addressed to young people exclusively, but they seem to have a relevance to Christian youth.

He noted the fault of self-assertion as one of the behavior problems contrary to Christian faith. It will be helpful to note the particular faults of Christians that he named in one sermon.

Are there not talkative, forward Christians?  
Are there not self-seeking, praise-seeking,  
man-pleasing Christians? Are there not proud-  
praying Christians? Are there not ill-tempered  
Christians? Are there not rash, inconsiderate  
Christians? Are there not idle, lazy, bad-  
working Christians?<sup>1</sup>

The heart of the trouble as presented by McChesney seems to lie in concern for self, which knows no limit of time nor age and therefore is, of course, applicable to youth. Perhaps it is possible to surmise from this that it is important to help young people enter a deep commitment to Christ, and thus to live more consistently as Christians.

## 2. Problems of Young People Specifically

McChesney dealt with two problems of special concern to young people: that of marriage and that of the

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1. McChesney: Works of McChesney, Vol. II, p. 47

intellect. In handling the problem of marriage, he emphasized the meaning of Christian marriage, relating it to the Scriptures.<sup>1</sup> He also admonished from the pulpit that a Christian should "abhor the idea of marriage with the unconverted".<sup>2</sup> In the same sermon there is a warning also against allowing any human love to come before the love of Christ. This he declared to be idolatry.

Considering the intellectual problem, McCheyne advised young people that study is important, and gave the following admonitions: (1) they should remember that the formation of character is the purpose of all study; (2) they should avoid slovenly habits of study; (3) they should attempt to do everything in its own time, and then in earnest; (4) it is important to practice the presence of God and to pray for teachers and fellow students.<sup>3</sup>

It was apparent to McCheyne that some learning could lead to confusion and misunderstanding of basic realities in life. To one young man he wrote that, while it is not necessary to forego reading the classics, he should be discerning in handling material that seems in opposition with the Scriptures.<sup>4</sup> In addition to these suggestions, McCheyne preached Christ as the Truth, empha-

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1. Cf. McCheyne: Bethany, p. 42

2. McCheyne: Works of McCheyne, Vol. II, p. 153

3. Cf. Bonar: op. cit., p. 30

4. Ibid, p. 32

sizing that every individual needs Christ at the center of all learning if there is to be order and understanding rather than conflict and confusion.<sup>1</sup>

The spiritual counselor to young people might find these suggestions of value because of their practicality and because their appeal seems positive rather than negative. Thus they might appear challenging to students eager for a Christian interpretation of all phases of living.

### 3. The Problem of Affliction

Since McCheyne himself was a victim of serious illness during most of his ministry,<sup>2</sup> one may approach his exhortations relating to affliction with assurance that he speaks with authority. It has already been shown that he regarded his own illness to bear elements of both judgment and grace. Naturally his letters and sermons contain much advice along this line. He again used a positive approach, as in maintaining that "afflictions are sweet to taste".<sup>3</sup> He could apparently say this because of his recognition of all such trial as God's testing. Yet in addition to testing, he believed that its purpose was to produce a more enduring faith in Christ. "He has taken

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1. Cf. McCheyne: Works of McCheyne, Vol. II, p. 12, 13

2. Ante p. 11, 12

3. McCheyne: Works of McCheyne, Vol. II, p. 25

away the stream that you may go to the fountain".<sup>1</sup> He also said that "sickness brings out graces that cannot be seen in a time of health."<sup>2</sup>

In applying this attitude in work with young people, one might especially think in terms of McCheyne's positive approach. Illness may become a time of opportunity if youth advisers are aware of how they may use this circumstance in counseling.

The counselor should help those whose illnesses are severe or lengthy to develop both purpose in life and recognition of the unique part they themselves can have in the Kingdom's work in spite of and even as a result of physical handicap.

#### 4. The Problems of Social Pressure and Other Temptations

McCheyne, although often dogmatic, nevertheless expressed sympathy toward Christian young people facing ridicule. In a tract entitled "Revival Truth" he spoke of the believer's dilemma in the following way,

All around him are taking thought what they shall eat, and what they shall drink. The name of the Savior is not once mentioned. To introduce it would be like bringing in a poisonous serpent, from which every one would shrink back in horror. The believer sits silent and is half ashamed of Christ. He is ashamed to shew that he is a Christian. And when he comes home at night, what wonder if

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1. Ibid., p. 60
2. Hamilton: Gems, p. 191

prayer and the Word be all distasteful to him, and he has lost all sense of safety.<sup>1</sup>

This description seems especially true of the Christian facing present-day trends of secularism and materialism. It is essential, therefore, that this difficult problem of young people's satisfactory adjustment to the world about them be dealt with sympathetically and yet emphatically from a Christian standpoint.<sup>2</sup>

One of the answers to social pressure which McCheyne suggested is simply that of cutting oneself off from any influences of a questionable nature.<sup>3</sup> In one letter his exhortation was not to fear ridicule, nor even to resent it, and he gave the following illustration:

When a blind man comes against you in the street, you are not angry with him; you say he is blind, poor man, or he would not have hurt me. So you may say of the poor world, when they speak evil of Christians - they are blind.<sup>4</sup>

Thus there seems to have been an effort on his part to help young people develop a concern for those who ridicule them. Perhaps, however, one may wonder if such an illustration might possibly foster a condescending and sanctimonious attitude.

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1. McCheyne: Revival Truth, p. 99
2. One notes again how many materials are being circulated today for young people on this problem. For a discussion of some of the social pressures Christian youth are experiencing today, compare Nevin C. Harner's "Youth Work in the Church", Chapter 1, especially pp. 17-20
3. McCheyne: Revival Truth, p. 104
4. McCheyne: Works of McCheyne, Vol. I. Letters, p. 243

Judging from what has been brought out about McCheyne previously, it is probably not surprising that he expressed the following, "In this world, almost everything we see, or hear, or handle, may lead the soul to sin."<sup>1</sup> As a result of this outlook on the world there are a few suggestions which may be of value to Christian young people in facing temptation. The first is to expect temptation simply because one is a Christian. McCheyne felt that the unconverted are not tempted to the extent that Christians are.<sup>2</sup> This being the case, one should be alert to Satan's subtle dealings with men. "It is not open sin that he first invites us to...but he invites you to secret sin."<sup>3</sup> Having recognized a specific desire to be really a temptation, one should beware of "going as far as you can in dallying with temptation".<sup>4</sup> "This is fearful", he points out, "tempting God and grieving the Holy Spirit. It is a deep-laid plot of Satan".<sup>5</sup> It is possible that in pointing out the inevitability and the subtle nature of temptation, Christians might be better prepared for it.

A further reminder made by McCheyne to help Christians overcome temptation was an appeal to remember

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1. McCheyne: Revival Truth, p. 104
2. McCheyne: Works of McCheyne, Vol. II, p. 59
3. McCheyne: Works, Vol. I, Letters, p. 439
4. Ibid., p. 234
5. Bonar: op. cit., p. 139

that his "...body is dwelt in by the Third Person of the Godhead".<sup>1</sup> Thus it seems that the highest motivation a young person or any Christian can possess for victorious and consistent Christian living is his love for the In-dwelling Christ.

#### E. Summary

This chapter has pointed out McCheyne's conception of the basic needs of young people. The first concerned their readiness for conversion and noted some hindrances to their becoming Christians. Then some aspects relating to spiritual growth were cited, and it was discovered that, while there are obstacles here also, Christian young people must be led to understand the meanings behind prayer, Bible study and personal evangelism and to practice these. Finally, this chapter dealt with the need to express the Christian experience in everyday life in terms of one's personality traits, one's concepts of such things as marriage, the intellect, and illness. It was noted that these facets should be accepted as opportunities of Christian growth. While many of these insights from McCheyne were not meant by him especially for young people, they were found to be valuable aids for an understanding approach to the youth of today.

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1. Ibid., p. 138



CHAPTER III  
McCHEYNE'S APPROACH TO YOUNG PEOPLE  
AND THEIR PROBLEMS

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A. Introduction

Probably the various quotations from McHeyne's sermons, letters, tracts and memoirs have given sufficient evidence of the reality and scope of his interest in young people and his concern that they receive guidance in all areas of life. Having considered, therefore, some aspects of his insights into the basic needs of young people, this chapter will attempt to note some of the channels through which he sought to answer these needs.

After noting these areas through which he worked, which include the Sabbath School and Communicants' Classes, the chapter will endeavor next to examine the nature of his approach. By this is meant McHeyne's characteristic methods of appeal, such as his use of dogmatic and imperative statements, interrogation and challenging exhortations. It will also include a study of his personality traits for the purpose of determining what qualities he may have possessed which would influence his appeal to young people. The chapter differs from the study of Chapter I, which dealt with his character.

Following this, the chapter will look briefly at evidence relating to the results of McCheyne's ministry, especially as it relates to young people.

It will be evident that some of this material deals chiefly with children; at the same time, however, the information seems to contribute sufficiently to one's understanding of McCheyne's approach to the problems of youth so as to make the study worthwhile.

#### B. Efforts in Christian Education

As discovered in Chapter II<sup>1</sup>, McCheyne believed that after converting young people to Christianity it is necessary to help them grow into fuller understanding and richer experience. He sought to accomplish this in part through the Sabbath School and "by means of Communicants' classes. It is interesting that he saw in these two channels opportunity to combat any heretical and over-enthusiastic tendencies in his church.<sup>2</sup> While the specific situation in the following quotation is not clear, McCheyne's statement of solution is significant to note:

I trust it will end in good...I think...I will try, in name of the Lord Jesus, to catechise through my parish...I am persuaded it would tend to ground them more deeply in Divine things.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ante, p. 30.

2. Cf. McCheyne: Works of McCheyne, Vol. I, Letters, p. 217.

3 Ibid.

Thus it is apparent that McCheyne placed great value on knowledge as the proper foundation for meaningful Christian living, and he hoped that a program of Christian Education within the church would help meet this basic requisite for the young. Again, it is important to remember that McCheyne's message and objectives were the same for all ages.

### 1. Sabbath Schools

There is not much one can learn from available materials about the actual functioning of St. Peter's Sabbath School program, and most of what is available pertains to children. In reporting to his Presbytery about revivals under his ministry, for instance, McCheyne mentioned a few special services, such as children's prayer meetings. It was also his custom to give a special communion sermon for children. These indicate his interest in all ages.<sup>1</sup>

However, some of the letters included in "The Works of McCheyne" were written to Sabbath School teachers and indicate that McCheyne maintained a close contact with them. In one letter he mentioned the advisability of using pictures for teaching purposes.<sup>2</sup> He also suggested that it would be helpful for teachers to share the stories

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1. Cf. Ibid., Evidence on Revivals, p. 286.
2. Cf. Ibid., Letters, p. 268.

of their conversions with their classes, although he added that this should be done "cautiously and wisely."<sup>1</sup> Paul was the Biblical example he used in this case.

It is not surprising that McCheyne held very high moral standards for teachers in his school. In his own words, "Far above all, she should be a Christian woman, not in name only, but in deed and in truth".<sup>2</sup> However, he also thought love to be a necessary quality of the teacher, and expressed this by saying,

Any teacher who wanted this last qualification (love), I would look upon as a curse rather than a blessing - a centre of blasting, and coldness, and death, instead of a centre from which life, and warmth, and heavenly influence might emanate.<sup>3</sup>

These statements suggest that McCheyne had very strong convictions relative to the quality of teachers in the Sabbath School of his church, and one gathers that he would not tolerate a teacher who did not meet his standards.

In considering these personal advices that McCheyne gave to teachers, it appears evident that he believed it his duty to be familiar with the manner in which the school was being conducted. Still another suggestion he made to teachers in this respect was that they visit in the homes of their pupils. This he wrote in a letter to the St.

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1. Ibid., p. 250.
2. Bonar, op. cit., p. 59.
3. Ibid.

Peter's Sabbath School teachers, expressing the belief that home visitation would prove to parents their sincerity and earnestness as teachers. According to Bonar's superscription to the letter, it accompanied notes that McCheyne had written for the teachers relevant to the lessons being taught that week in the school.<sup>1</sup>

This affords an additional insight into McCheyne's awareness of the influence of the teacher. It seems significant too that he, as pastor of the church, was so familiar with the curricula of the church school that he was able to make suggestions to the teachers.

Possibly the greatest value arising out of these insights lies in the role of the pastor in relation to the church school. McCheyne was apparently familiar with all areas of activity and seems to have taken part in them as well. In this way he was probably able to establish a good rapport between himself and the young people; he also was making himself available for those who might wish to confer with him. While pastors may not always know the best teaching techniques, it does seem important, nevertheless, that they prove their interest in the church school in a friendly manner.

## 2. Communicants' Classes

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1. Cf. McCheyne: Works of McCheyne, Vol. I, p. 221.

Bonar relates in his "Memoirs of McCheyne" that, while McCheyne always prepared himself carefully for his evening Bible class of young people, it "was his class for young communicants that engaged his deepest care, and wherein he saw most success".<sup>1</sup> These classes were begun several weeks before Communion Services and apparently met two nights each week.<sup>2</sup> As far as the class procedure is concerned, there is very little information upon which to build, but the following excerpts from McCheyne's Journal of the year 1840 are interesting to note:

Jan. 12. - Intimated a concert for prayer, that unworthy communicants might be kept back..

March 31. - Met with young communicants on Wednesday and Friday. On the latter night especially, very deep feeling, manifested in sobbings..

April 5. - Sabbath evening. - Spoke to 24 young persons, one by one; almost all affected about their souls..

April 13. - Spoke in private to nearly 30 young communicants, all in one room, going round each, and advising for the benefit of all..<sup>3</sup>

While these accounts recorded by McCheyne himself seem to be inadequate for a total conception of his manner of procedure, one is aware that he acknowledged the value of letting young people take part in the class session by submitting questions. There does not, however, seem to be any indication of their having opportunity to discuss their problems among themselves.

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1. Bonar, op. cit., p. 57.

2. Cf. Ibid., p. 57, 114.

3. Ibid., p. 114.

One seemingly important procedure of these classes is McCheyne's private notations of impressions given by class members. His first observations were compared with later ones so that he was able to analyze specific needs and to ascertain the degree of spiritual growth in each individual.<sup>1</sup>

It seems that from time to time communicants were restrained from church membership,<sup>2</sup> although there is nothing explicit as to the determining bases for these refusals. The following questions apparently were given to each member of the class before the communion service and were "to be answered in secret to God;"

1. Is it to please your father or mother, or any one on earth that you think of coming to the Lord's table?
2. Is it because it is the custom, and your friends and companions are coming?
3. Is it because you have come to a certain time of life?
4. What are your real motives for wishing to come to the Lord's table? Is it to thank God for saving your soul? Psalm cxvi.12,13; to remember Jesus? Luke xxii.19; to get near to Christ? John xiii.23; or is it for worldly character? to gain a name? to gain money? Matt. xxvi.15.
5. Who do you think should come to the Lord's table? who should stay away?
6. Do you think any should come but those who are truly converted? and what is it to be converted?
7. Would you come if you knew yourself to be unconverted?
8. Should those come who have had deep concern about their soul, but are not come to Christ?
9. Do you think you have been awakened by the Holy

. . . . .

1. Ibid., p. 58.  
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 75.



Spirit? brought to Christ? born again? What makes you think so?

10. What is the meaning of the broken bread and poured out wine?

11. What is the meaning of taking the bread and wine into your hand? Have you as truly received the Lord Jesus Christ?

12. What is the meaning of feeding upon them? Are you as truly living upon Christ?

13. What is the meaning of giving the bread and wine to those at the same table with you? Do you as truly love the brethren?<sup>1</sup>

These questions help to point out the overall content and purpose of the classes, and Bonar says that the tract "This Do in Remembrance of Me" may be considered as illustrative of McCheyne's talks during these classes.<sup>2</sup>

### C. Nature of McCheyne's Approach

The message and motives of McCheyne have been made apparent, as has the specific areas in which he worked. It will be interesting now to note how he succeeded in clarifying his purposes and in making them appear both desirable and salient for all of life.

#### 1. Use of Illustration

McCheyne's frequent use of illustrations is perhaps already quite evident from the quotations in the preceding materials. However, it will be helpful to examine

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1. McCheyne: Works of McCheyne, Vol. I, p. 308.
2. Bonar, op. cit., p. 57; the tract is found on pp. 302-309 of "The Works of McCheyne" and is strongly evangelistic in character.

it further and to note certain impressions during the course of study.

It seems to be very evident that McCheyne's visit in the lands of the Bible had a decided influence on his choice of descriptive materials. As one would naturally expect, the letters he wrote during the trip contain lengthy descriptions of scenery and general impressions of famous locales.<sup>1</sup> The influence seems to have permeated his later lectures, such as "Bethany" and "Capernaum", and his sermons contain many examples of his having used his knowledge of customs and terrain in the Bible lands. These are used sometimes as introductory remarks, sometimes to help explain the meaning of a passage.

According to Bonar, McCheyne was fond of the out-of-doors and of natural beauty.<sup>2</sup> This is clearly seen even in his choice of Biblical texts for sermons. Many of his sermon topics are picturesque and are drawn from passages which are both imaginative and colorful. Five of the sermons included in Vol. 2 of the "Works of McCheyne", for example, have texts from the Song of Solomon, and bear such graphic titles as "The Believer is Christ's Garden", "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters", and "The Voice of my beloved".<sup>3</sup>

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1. Outstanding letters in this respect are found on pp. 195, 200, 484 and 492.
2. Cf. Bonar, op. cit., p. 8.
3. Texts for these sermons are respectively, Song of Solomon 4:12; Song of Solomon 2:2,3; Song of Solomon 2:8-17.

There are further indications of McCheyne's familiarity with nature in the following illustrations: "The smallest twinkling star is as much a servant of God as the midday sun."<sup>1</sup> "The corn in harvest sometimes ripens more in one day than in weeks before. So some Christians gain more in grace in one day than for months before."<sup>2</sup>

Some other illustrations McCheyne used were drawn from occasional events in human life, such as these: In considering the nature of temptation, he remarked that a fisherman uses bait to conceal the hook and to attract the fish, "so when Satan catches men, he does not show the hook. He shows you nothing but what is sweet and pleasant."<sup>3</sup>

Regarding spiritual growth as a natural consequence of the rebirth, McCheyne said, "If a nobleman were to adopt a begger boy, he would not only feed and clothe him, but educate him, and fit him to move in the sphere into which he was afterwards to be brought."<sup>4</sup>

Finally, he emphasized the believer's prayer-life by saying,

In a mill where the machinery is all driven by water, the working of the whole machinery depends upon the supply of water. Cut off that supply, and the machinery becomes useless...Just so in the believer.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Hamilton: Gems, p. 193.
2. Ibid., p. 139.
3. McCheyne: Works of McCheyne, Vol. I, Lecture XIV, "Folly's House", p. 439.
4. Ibid., Letters, p. 215.
5. McCheyne: Works of McCheyne, Vol. II, p. 272.

While this is in no way a complete study of the imagery and figurative language McCheyne used, it indicates his imaginative portrayal of truth in ways that seem consistent with life and therefore meaningful. Although such concrete presentation of truth might appeal to all ages, it seems especially helpful for young people.

## 2. Manner of Appeal

It has been noted elsewhere<sup>1</sup> that many of McCheyne's instructions are ostensibly dogmatic, and it will be remembered that he himself expressed his intention to "speak plainly"<sup>2</sup>. His determination was carried out through concise, yet searching applications, such as "Sin rages in you, and you have no power against it",<sup>3</sup> and in the same sermon, "...you think it a small thing to be Christless this day; you can talk lightly of it, and jeer and jest about it; you can sleep soundly withal; but there is a day coming..."<sup>4</sup> This seems to be characteristic of McCheyne's appeals, and suggests that they were often based on fear.

On the other hand, as Bonar says, these appeals often carried with them a personal concern and affection which were distinctive of McCheyne.<sup>5</sup> Such is true in the

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1. Ante, p. 45.

2. Ante, p. 15.

3. McCheyne: Works of McCheyne, Vol. II, p. 238.

4. Ibid., p. 239.

5. Bonar; op.cit, p. 61.

sermons from which the above quotations are taken and is especially seen in his letters, in which one finds many rich and moving promptings. In these also one notices salutations similar to Paul's such as one from his seventh pastoral letter which reads:

To all of you who are my brethren and my companions in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of our Lord Jesus Christ, your pastor wishes, grace, mercy, and peace.<sup>1</sup>

While it may seem simply natural for a pastor to address his own congregation in such a way, it is important to note that the same spirit was manifest in letters to non-Christians, as in the following, written, according to Bonar, to "a soul inquiring after Jesus". The first sentence reads, "I do not and cannot forget you, and, though it is very late, I have to write you a few lines to say, follow on to know Jesus".<sup>2</sup>

From these few statements one surmises that McChesney's manner of approach was on a basis of good will and amenity, while at the same time appearing somewhat caustic and authoritative. Perhaps youth workers should attempt to adapt these traits to the needs of their particular groups and to their own personalities as well. Young people may respect a positive stand on matters of faith and living; moreover, they may respond more freely to ear-

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1. McChesney: Works of McChesney, Vol. I, p. 176.
2. Ibid., p. 242.

nest expressions of concern over their welfare.

### 3. Personal Christian testimony

Throughout this paper many suggestions have been gathered pertaining to matters such as the importance of knowledge as the basis of Christian experience and the importance of Christian workers' intelligent approach to young people. However, there has also been the inherent suggestion that a life lived consistently on a Christian basis can be a means of reaching youth for Christ. This reflection was well-stated by S.F. Smith when writing about McCheyne in The Christian Review in December, 1848.

He said,

Theories of the religious life are not to be despised; but when we see them carried out in the gentle spirit, the savory conversation, and the holy demeanor of a human being like ourselves, we feel their truth and acknowledge their power.<sup>1</sup>

In considering McCheyne under the light of this observation it becomes evident that humility and agreeableness are outstanding traits.

Concerning humility, one is reminded that McCheyne detested spiritual pride in himself and others and that he was self-effacing in regard to his own spiritual attainments.<sup>2</sup> Bonar asserts,

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1. S.F. Smith: "Memoirs of McCheyne" (a book review), The Christian Review, LII, December, 1848, p. 581.
2. Ante, pp. 33, 34.

Although naturally ambitious, grace so wrought in him, that he never sought to bring himself into view; and most cheerfully would he observe and take notice of the graces and gifts of others.<sup>1</sup>

From such a statement one may be led to consider that leadership may involve willingness to work quietly and unassumingly, and it also may import the desirability of encouraging others to develop their potentialities. This seems most important for workers with young people, for according to this principle young people should be given opportunities to be creative; the adult advisor should be willing to work unobtrusively and without ostentation. One proof of McCheyne's modesty is seen in his belief that a minister's manse should be plain and simple.<sup>2</sup> It is also significant to reiterate his rejoicing at another's success in preaching during his absence from St. Peter's.<sup>3</sup>

Along with such a marked degree of humility it appears that McCheyne did not attempt to impress others with his spirituality, or as Bonar says, his was "a natural and unaffected holiness".<sup>4</sup> Since pretension and hypocrisy are qualities generally disliked by all ages, it follows that sincerity may be a significant and necessary attri-

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1. Bonar, op. cit., p. 118.

2. Cf. Ibid., p. 38.

3. Ante, p. 17. Immediately after his return to Scotland, McCheyne wrote to Mr. Burns expressing his thanksgiving and also expressing concern and doubt as to the sufficiency of Mr. Burns' salary.

McCheyne: Works of McCheyne, Letters, p. 203.

4. Bonar, op. cit., p. 86.

bute of one who is attempting to set an example of Christian devotion for young people.

Aside from the seemingly grave aspect of McCheyne's personality, the group of letters Bonar has designated as "familiar letters" presents a more complete picture of his total make-up. In these less formal letters one frequently notices a trace of wit and an ability to find delight in the ordinary as well as in the difficult. He could find amusement, for instance, in the sight of scrambling sailors during a storm at sea, while at the same time expressing concern for everyone's welfare.<sup>1</sup> Struck by the unusual sight he and his friends made in their desert clothing he remarked to his father, "I think you would hardly recognize the venerable deputation"<sup>2</sup> He expressed delight also at the thought of his bed in the desert as a "capital rug when I get home"<sup>3</sup> Perhaps one remark is outstanding, because McCheyne seems to have purposely built up the story that it might appear amusing.

When you find yourself exalted on the hunch of a camel, it is somewhat of the feeling of an aeronaut, as if you were bidding farewell to sublunary things; but when he begins to move with solemn pace and slow, you are reminded of your terrestrial origin, and that a wrong balance or turn to the side will soon bring you down from your giddy height.<sup>4</sup>

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1. McCheyne: Works of McCheyne, Vol. I, Familiar Letters, p. 466.
2. Ibid., p. 473.
3. Ibid., p. 484.
4. Ibid., p. 487.



In addition to these remarks Bonar reports that McCheyne sent a sportive poem to his doctor along with his payment for medical treatment.<sup>1</sup>

While these instances do not appear hilarious by any means, they seem to establish a more wholesome and winsome personality for McCheyne. He is perhaps seen at the least as willing to be amused by simple occurrences; moreover, it seems that he took the initiative in sharing informal witticisms with those whom he knew especially well. One can only wonder to what extent this sense of humor was manifest in meetings and private conferences. It would seem, however, that a full expression of the whole man would be inevitable and that it would enhance his over-all appeal to young people.

#### D. Results

There is very little explicit information relative to McCheyne's effectual work with young people. From the evidence on revivals which he submitted to the Presbytery of Aberdeen one learns that "Many children, from ten years old and upwards, have given full evidence of their being born again."<sup>2</sup> Since his success among adults and children

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1. Bonar, op. cit., p. 119.
2. McCheyne: Works of McCheyne, Vol. I, Evidence on Revival, p. 286.

has been established beyond a doubt, one may conclude that he achieved equal gains in his ministry to those of adolescent age.

#### E. Summary

This chapter has examined the channels through which McCheyne sought to win young people for Christ. It was found that he himself assumed active interest in the Sabbath School of St. Peter's Church, as manifested in his high standards for teachers and his helpful advice to them. He especially felt an opportunity for evangelism in the communicants' classes he held for the youth of the church. The chapter also explored McCheyne's characteristic methods of appeal as a part of his sermons, and it became evident that he made frequent use of illustrations and other figures of speech; these were chosen largely from his knowledge of Bible lands and from his love of natural beauty. It was then seen that his style also included the use of drastic statements combined with a spirit of personal concern and love. The chapter then dealt with two particular aspects of McCheyne's personality which seemed to be outstanding traits; these were humility and humor. Both appeared to be evident and helped to establish a more complete picture of the man McCheyne. While there was not much evidence relating to results with young people specifically, it

appeared from these indications that probably he had as great an influence with adolescents as with children and adults.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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### A. Restatement of the Problem

Since Robert McChesney is regarded as one of the great preachers of Scotland and since he is known to have achieved success in evangelism among all ages of people, this study undertook to discover an approach to the spiritual problems of young people today. The over-all purpose was to study not only his sermons and letters, as well as other published works, but also to examine the problems and attainments of his own Christian experience which might lead to significant insights into the problems of youth. It was believed that McChesney would be especially suitable for this study because his entire ministry was limited to a youthful career; McChesney was only twenty-nine when he died.

### B. Summary of Procedure

Chapter one was a character sketch of McChesney and included a biographical account as well as a review of his spiritual development and his predominant characteristics as a Christian minister. His spiritual development was found to be of special import for the problem of this paper. Briefly, this experience began at the time of his

brother's death and led into a restless period of searching due to a profound sense of sin. This he overcame through a gradual conversion. As a Christian minister he is especially remembered for his devotion to Christ and the Gospel and for his selfless exertion in the cause of evangelism.

Chapter two examined McCheyne's perceptions of the problems of young people with respect to their basic needs for (1) conversion, (2) guidance in spiritual growth and (3) guidance in ways of expressing their faith through everyday living experiences. In this discussion it became evident that McCheyne's comprehension of obstacles young people face in the course of life are valuable for the study of this paper. Significant insights are seen relating to prayer, to lay evangelism, and to certain personal problems such as marriage, study, self-assertion and problems of social pressure for the Christian.

The concluding chapter brought to light some discernments regarding McCheyne's encouragement of Sabbath School and communicants' classes. The material also dealt with McCheyne's efforts to popularize his sermons through illustrations and to apply the truths in as persuasive a manner as possible. Finally, evidence was found leading to a consideration of humility and humor as two prominent traits of his personality.

### C. Summary of Significant Findings

While this study has afforded enlightenment into many aspects of the spiritual problems of young people, some of these seem to be especially helpful.

#### 1. Conversion

It was noted that McCheyne's own conversion experience colored his theories and practices regarding the manner of conversion. He believed a sudden experience to be most desirable; he felt that young people were hindered from becoming Christians by misconceptions of the nature of the Christian experience such as its seeming gloomy aspect and its supposedly assertive nature as opposed to submission. He also believed that many young people are not approached and won for Christ because they give a deceiving appearance of being Christian, while not really experiencing it within.

#### 2. Christian Growth

The spiritual growth of a Christian is a necessary part of his life in Christ. While Satan produces many hindrances to this such as hurried living, indecision relative to God's will and spiritual pride, the Christian experience becomes meaningful through prayer and Bible study. Knowledge is an important foundation for growth to proceed properly. Sabbath School and communicants'

classes are primary channels for imparting the great facts of the Christian faith.

### 3. Prayer

According to McCheyne a knowledge of the functioning of prayer is necessary for its becoming a meaningful experience. The Christian should attempt to understand the activity of the Triune God during prayer. He needs to realize the relation of the Bible to prayer, as well as the importance of approaching God sincerely and submissively.

### 4. Development of the Intellect

McCheyne exhorted young people to regard the purpose of all learning as the building of character. They should study conscientiously and prayerfully. Since Christ is the Truth, He must be at the center of all learning or confusion will result instead of understanding.

### D. Conclusion

Does Robert McCheyne have a contribution to make to an approach to the spiritual problems of young people today? This study of his life and works has unveiled many significant insights for the successful development of Christian personality in young people. It has revealed, furthermore, a number of practical suggestions and illus-



trations that may be applied to specific real-life situations that may arise from time to time. Finally, the unfolding of McChayne's unique attainments in the Christian experience has brought about a challenging example both to young people and to their leaders.

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