

JAMES GUTHRIE

MINISTER AT STIRLING, 1649-1661

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IN a Memoir written at the command of a committee of the Free Church Assembly in 1846, Thomas Thomson says: "The memorials of many of the distinguished ministers . . . belong to history . . . their individuality is lost in those great events into which they merged their personal existence."¹ Unfortunately, Thomson tends to follow the same course, and James Guthrie the man gets lost in the controversy between Resolutioners and Protesters, the problems of the Commonwealth and the intrigues of the Restoration. One result is that labels are affixed to individuals without due regard to their accuracy; character and actions are interpreted in the light of subsequent events; and in the case of martyrs, sainthood is the universal assumption.

There is no doubt, of course, that James Guthrie was martyred at Edinburgh on 1st June, 1661, but whether he was a martyr to conscience, politics, principles, or prejudices; a victim of the Restoration, of General Middleton, or of his own ambition and psychological reaction to various incidents, is not so clear. His last words are reported as "The Covenants, the Covenants, shall yet be Scotland's reviving,"² and may be interpreted in several ways as the watchword of the persecuted, the conviction of a sincerely held belief or the word of inspired prophecy. But it does not help to see Guthrie's contribution to the cause of the Church or religious liberty to exaggerate his vision or his influence, as was done when Ebenezer Erskine published Guthrie's last sermon under the title: *A Cry from the Dead, or The Ghost of the Famous Mr. Guthrie appearing*³ (it was preached ten months before his death and is a curious interpretation of Christ's coming to the disciples in the storm) or in a pamphlet published so late as 1946 when Guthrie is said to have preached his last sermon from *Matthew xxii, 14* ("For many are called, but few chosen")⁴ an error for *Matthew xiv, 22* ("and straightway Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a ship . . .").

¹ Thomas Thomson, *Life*, p. 141.

² King Hewison, *The Covenanters*, p. 92.

³ Published 1738.

⁴ D. P. Thomson, *James Guthrie*.

I. THE EARLY YEARS.

Of Guthrie's early years and first ministry, little is known for certain, and nothing has come down to us in the form of sermons or pamphlets which might give a clue to his subsequent activities.

The *Fasti*¹ states that he was born about 1612, son of Guthrie of that ilk, graduated A.M., and taught philosophy in St. Leonards College, St. Andrews. In December 1638 the Assembly found Guthrie one of those ready to supply vacancies, and he was ordained to Lauder, Berwickshire, in 1642. In 1644 he was given "xv li for his attendance as a commissioner to the Gen. Assembly by the kirk-session of Stow 15th May"² and he was also a member of those in 1645-1649. In 1646 he was selected with three others to wait upon His Majesty (Charles I) at Newcastle with a letter from the Assembly whose purport was to press on Charles Presbyterianism and the Solemn League and Covenant. He preached before Parliament on 10th January, 1649, and was named one of the Commissioners for visiting the University of St. Andrews, and also that of Edinburgh. He was called to Stirling first charge and translated there in November 1649.

Little or nothing of Guthrie's life and work as a minister has come down to us from his Lauder days, and his writings all belong to the later ministry. But the times in which he lived were such that no one of his temperament could fail to be drawn into taking sides for or against presbyterianism, prelacy, civil authority, monarchy, nationalism, and democracy. It is in the early years that we may find the clue to the later development of this "little man who would not bow," for the clue lies in his character and temperament and the incidents and people who influenced him to enter certain paths from which his temperament would not allow him to withdraw.

Undoubtedly Guthrie's thoughts had been directed to the ministry after the episcopal fashion. It is probable that a man of his gifts looked forward to a mitre, as Thomson suggests.³ And tradition strengthens the suggestion by the story of his attachment to a daughter of the Archbishop. Whether a disappointment in love caused him to forsake episcopacy or his friendship with Samuel Rutherford (who went to St. Andrews in 1638) influenced him to forsake his episcopal company and tenets is not clear. Both views have been advocated. Archbishop Leighton was his room-mate later at the University of Edinburgh, and another acquaint-

¹ 1923 edition.

² 1870 proof copy *Fasti*.

³ Thomas Thomson, p. 112.

tance was Sharp, whom Guthrie regarded with a shudder as one destined for a terrible career,¹ and whom, after an interview, Cromwell regarded as an atheist.²

Apart from the direct influence of personalities, we are justified in assuming that the events of those days must have loomed large in the mind of a teacher of philosophy in the University, a character destined to forge ahead and make himself noticed, an expectant for the ministry, and a man who so impressed Johnston of Wariston that he is said to have prayed for Guthrie lying ill in these words: "Lord, Thou knowest this Church cannot want him!"³ 1638 saw the Glasgow Assembly and the National Covenant and 1639 saw the abolition of Episcopacy and the enforcement of the Covenant. The Covenant, as has been pointed out by Principal Watt,⁴ was called forth by a crisis that was primarily a religious issue. It was on the Church that the King's heaviest hand was laid, but the point about the Covenant was that while it upheld the liberty of the Scottish Church, it also upheld the throne in defence of the religion, liberties, and laws of the kingdom.⁵ And while the town of St. Andrews, under the influence of the Archbishop (Spottiswoode) kept back from the general movement,⁶ Guthrie found his way to Greyfriars and signed it, saying to those around him: "I know that I shall die for what I have done this day, but I cannot die in a better cause."⁷

In 1642, Guthrie was ordained to Lauder, where he was apparently acceptable to the people and an impressive preacher. He seems to have made good use of his time in the affairs of the Assembly, however, for in 1646, along with Henderson, Douglas, and Cant, he was commissioned to go to Newcastle, as we have seen, to "discuss with the King" the question of prelacy, prebyterianism, and the Covenants, according to Thomson, but, according to King Hewison, a much more reliable guide, "with papers" from the General Assembly. Charles had had conversations and correspondence with Henderson, all to no purpose, for he was firmly convinced that presbytery meant anti-monarchy, in spite of all the Covenants in existence. Guthrie did not succeed where Henderson had failed, but two months later he was appointed Chaplain in Munro's regiment.

In 1649, Guthrie was translated to Stirling, where he succeeded Henry Guthrie, A.M., later Bishop of Dunkeld, a man who had been in

¹ Thomas Thomson, p. 143.

² E. A. Knox, *Robt. Leighton*, p. 151.

³ Paul, Wariston's *Diary*, intro., p. 17.

⁴ Watt, *Recalling the Scottish Covenants*, p. 20.

⁵ Cunningham, *Church History of Scotland*, vol. i, p. 526.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 528.

⁷ Thomas Thomson, p. 144.

Stirling for 17 years and had been presented to the living by Charles I and been a member of the Court of High Commission. It is very probable in these circumstances that James reacted strongly to his predecessor's views. So far, everything tended to make James Guthrie take up an anti-episcopal stand, and to support a monarchy only in so far as it was limited, and not absolute; divinely appointed, maybe, but with the divine voice heard through the Assembly. Whether it be that by chance Guthrie had been given a sense of his own importance and powers, or whether he was destined to push himself forward to a leading place in the business of the Church, in those days largely political, the fact is he was no diplomat, and he seemed to love the warfare of words and the fierce denunciations of the political theologian.

II. THE ECCLESIASTICAL DIPLOMAT.

This was probably Guthrie's greatest misfortune—that he attempted the task of diplomacy without the temperament or the aptitude for it. But he was probably driven to it. For in September 1650 Cromwell had been victorious at Dunbar, and had captured Edinburgh and Leith; a proposal on the part of the Royalist party, including the King, to join the diverse parties in Church and State had been discussed by leaders of both Estates met at Stirling; the only result had been the formation of two opposing parties to what was known later as The Public Resolutions; and in Stirling too, the Commission of the Assembly met. King Hewison¹ states that Guthrie was minister at Stirling by this time, i.e., he follows the 1869 edition of the *Fasti*, wherein² Guthrie was admitted to Stirling in 1649, and not 1650. This earlier date would certainly be necessary to explain calling Guthrie the "minister at Stirling" so early as September of that year. He, with Patrick Gillespie, Samuel Rutherford, and Johnston of Wariston, persuaded the Commission to issue "a short Declaratione and Warninge" to all congregations, and this was issued on September 12th. It was this document which formed the basis for Guthrie's "Causes of God's Wrath" (published 1653). Both documents see the hand of God in the evils of the times, fallen on Scotland because of her iniquities, and they call on the King to consider his hypocritical acceptance of the Covenant in order to gain the crown. The Church at large, however, did not accept the document, nor the call to public humiliation on the defeat of the army.

¹ King Hewison, vol ii, p. 17.

² *Fasti*, 1869 edit., p. 673.

Guthrie's next public action was the one which was to hang him eleven years later. General Middleton sent a copy of the Forfar Bond (October 1650) to David Lesley with a covering letter stating that the aim of the signatories was simply to avoid bloodshed among brother Scots. On the face of it, the Bond is reasonable, promising to maintain the established religion, the King's person and throne, the privileges of parliament and the freedom of the subjects. But the Commission, led by Guthrie, felt that the operative phrase was "the King's Majesties persone, prerogatiue, gratnes and authoritie"¹ rather than the true religion as it is established in Scotland, and resolved on the excommunication of General Middleton. Two days later, the King and the Committee of Estates published an Act of Indemnity, and although Guthrie was informed of this changed situation, he went ahead and pronounced sentence of excommunication in his church at Stirling. Had Guthrie been either statesman or diplomat, he would have stayed his hand, or rather his tongue, and had he been of a different temperament, he would have seen to it that the Church's authority was upheld without driving a wedge between justice and mercy. If Charles and the Estates could forgive, then here was a case for Guthrie, so fond of quoting texts, to apply the one which reads: "If ye, then being evil, know how to give . . ."

The story of these months have been told in full many times, and mention need be made only of the main events which lead up to Guthrie's next conflict with authority.

On 17th October, 1650, the Western Remonstrance was ready for presentation to the Committee of Estates. All troubles were laid at the door of those who failed to enforce the Covenant by neglecting to fill public offices with Covenanters, by tolerating Malignants, and admitting Charles to the Covenant without full proof of his sincerity. The Committee of Estates finally voted the Remonstrance to be scandalous and asked the Assembly to condemn it and impeach its promoters, Guthrie and Gillespie. The Commission on 28th November showed some trace of diplomacy, and while they did not wholly approve or condemn it, decided to withhold judgment till the "godlie men" who framed it, and whom they loved, had been given an opportunity to explain their intentions. Guthrie, Gillespie and others protested against this finding, naturally. Two days earlier, Charles, in his speech to Parliament at Perth, acknowledged himself to be Sovereign of three Covenanted kingdoms. The Estates agreed to the Coronation of Charles, authorised that outward compliance with the Covenants should be the right of entrance to Royalist ranks, and ordered a Commission of Assembly to meet in Perth on 12th

¹ King Hewison, vol. ii, p. 21, quotes the Bond in full.

December—forgetting the old question of jurisdiction. The Commission, consisting chiefly of ministers from Fife, met, and they passed, by a majority, two resolutions, (1) that all except excommunicates were eligible for defence of the country against Sectaries; (2) that those formerly debarred should now be admitted to the Committee of Estates once they had satisfied the Covenant. Those who agreed with these resolutions were henceforth known as Resolutioners, and those who disagreed were known as Protesters. The Presbytery of Stirling drew up a strong protest against the “present conjunction with the Malignant party.”¹

Guthrie, along with David Bennett, his colleague in Stirling, was summoned to Perth on 19th February, 1651, to answer for their preaching against the public Resolutions agreed to by Church and State. They declined to submit to the authority of the King and the Estates in such a matter, however, and on 28th of the same month they subscribed their reasons in firm yet respectful language. The point at issue was clear, of course, but its answer was not so clear. The King and civil authority called on Guthrie to answer for speaking against actions of the King and civil authority. Guthrie maintained that he spoke as minister and that the civil authorities had no jurisdiction over his pulpit utterances. Guthrie failed to see, or was unwilling to admit, that all pulpit utterances are not *ipso facto* inspired by God, and that if a minister enters the realm of politics, he must take the consequences and abide by the results. Their solemn protest, given in full by Thomas Thomson,² which states firmly their willingness to obey the command to remain at Dundee, without “prejudice to our consciences,” not in obedience to the command so much as to show general respect for civil authority (almost, it may be said, to humour the King), fails to make clear how it was that the “solemn bonds and obligations that lie upon us to preach the Gospel” allowed them to remain in Dundee (where they had gone from Perth) and not return to their respective charges in Stirling, unless, indeed, their lengthy protest was a protracted way of saying “without prejudice.”

We next find Guthrie protesting not against secular authority, but against ecclesiastical, and one is forced to wonder whether he has (1) fallen out of favour with his brethren in the Assembly; (2) shown himself to be of little real use as a diplomat or as a statesman in dealing with the civil authorities in these times; or (3) found himself acceptable only to such extremists as expressed their faith mainly in protests. It is probable that Guthrie found himself more at home with such people than with others of broader views and greater patience and wider vision.

¹ Row, *Blair*, p. 256.

² Thomas Thomson, pp. 146-150.

The Resolutioners were now in the ascendancy, numerically and politically, and they summoned an Assembly to meet in July, 1651, at St. Andrews, whence it was later transferred to Dundee. Before the business began, Guthrie protested against certain members taking their seats, and Rutherford and others protested against the meeting as unconstitutional. The Resolutioners were in the majority, and when the Assembly moved to Dundee, Guthrie, Gillespie, and Simson were cited, failed to appear, and were deposed in their absence. The actual protest itself is brief, and maintains that as ministers were not freely elected by the presbyteries, the Assembly is not free, and therefore illegal. But the short protest led to a great deal of writing, and a work was published entitled "A Vindication of the Freedom and Lawfulness of the late Assembly," which attempted to answer the protest and also a paper issued by some persons entitled "Reasons proving that the late meeting at St. Andrews is not a Lawful Free General Assembly." With this, and interspersed, section by section, is a Review of the aforesaid Vindication, showing the unlawfulness of the meeting, and Answers supporting the Reasons given in the original protest. The Vindication is by James Wood, the Review by James Guthrie. The position now was that both sections of the Protesting party agreed that Sin—national, regal, ministerial and personal—was the reason of God's wrath on Scotland, and it was time it should be stated clearly.¹ In September 1651 the Commission of Assembly adjourned to meet in Edinburgh in October, and the Protesters were summoned thither, and one result was the issuing of a manifesto entitled, "Causes of the Lord's Wrath against Scotland, etc.," to which was appended a paper holding forth "The Sins of the Ministry." Guthrie at his trial claimed that he was not the sole compiler, but only one of them, and one who enlarged the Heads. In fact, Guthrie never acknowledged any writing on his sole responsibility until 1660. Always he was one of several signatories. It must be noted here, of course, that the Commission of Assembly either ignored, or removed in some way, the ban of deposition on Guthrie, unless the confusion of the times have resulted in similar confusion in the minds of historians. The *Fasti* are consistent in this point—from which it follows that "The Causes of the Lord's Wrath" was not issued by the Commission of Assembly, or else was not Guthrie's work at all, or by some means it represented both sides in the division which has never quite been healed in Scotland—for the *Fasti* reads thus:—

"Mr. G. and those holding similar views with him continued in exercising the duties of the ministry, formed presbyteries for

¹ King Hewison, vol. ii, p. 36.

themselves, and ordained pastors for such as adhered to them in other parishes, under the protection of Cromwell, the Protector, whose Council, 8th Aug., 1664, nominated him one of those for visiting the Universities, and taking care that none but godly and able men be authorised to enjoy the livings appointed for the ministry in Scotland."¹

Guthrie had been the chief spokesman of the Scottish ministers who accepted Cromwell's invitation to chaplains to come to Glasgow and discuss the relative merits of Presbyterianism and Independency, and so well had he spoken that his fellow-ministers did not conceal their pride. Cromwell summed up his character in the words: "a short man that would not bow." One almost feels Guthrie overheard Cromwell's remark, and one cannot but wonder if it made Guthrie take a pride in being unyielding.

No doubt Cromwell admired a man who knew his own mind and beliefs, but when in 1657 Guthrie and others went as delegates to London to settle the differences, Cromwell, who was inclined to favour the Protesters, had another glimpse of the short man who would not bow. For with a little yielding, much might have been gained, but Guthrie not only stood up for the Covenants, but also for the king's right. Here again, we must notice Guthrie's inability to distinguish between right and expedient, and between his own "principles" and the other side's "prejudices." The fact is he was enmeshed in the difficulties of absolute authority (which he seemed to hold as belonging to the Church via the General Assembly, so long as that Assembly was properly called and constituted) of the people (as represented by true Covenanters, as represented by himself and his company) and the absolute authority claimed by the King's party. In short, it was not absolute authority that was wrong, but only absolute authority claimed by a party other than his own. That is a common failing. But had he been willing to apply that same rule to England, he could not have been so outspoken and dogmatic on the question of king *versus* protector. It was not diplomatic; it was not even logical; and that is granting the fact that it may have been Guthrie's misfortune to be so embroiled in the tortuous ways of religious politics, royalist feelings and nationalistic emotions.

1660 saw the Restoration, with General Middleton as Commissioner to Parliament—Middleton, whom Guthrie had been the means of having excommunicated ten years before. Guthrie and the other Protesters, having tried in vain to induce the Resolutioners to join them in an

¹ *Fasti*, edit. 1869, p. 673.

address of congratulation to Charles II, resolved to proceed themselves, and met in Edinburgh for the purpose. The Privy Council, not unnaturally, were suspicious of the meeting, and three times ordered the gathering to disperse. Finally, soldiers were sent to seize them and their papers, and although the Supplication found among their papers testifies to the innocence of their intention, their meeting was ill-advised. This became more apparent when victims were singled out for punishment. Guthrie, after all, must have known that Middleton, now a power in the land, would hardly love him as a brother, and, if he were all Guthrie himself had said ten years earlier, could scarcely expect gentle treatment. Gillespie and Guthrie were carried off to Stirling Castle for safe custody. This was in August. In September, Rutherford's "Lex Rex" and Guthrie's "Causes of God's Wrath" were pronounced poisonous and treasonable.

1661 saw some four hundred enactments under Middleton's leadership, the very first making Charles to all intents the Pope of Scotland—with no vestige of religion. The Covenants were officially repudiated in January, and in March Episcopacy was restored, but the "present administration by sessions, presbyteries, and synods" was meantime allowed. Argyll was the first victim of the reign of terror and Guthrie the second. That both were the victims of a miscarriage of justice cannot be doubted; that both were victims of Middleton's hatred and ungovernable temper and drunken rages is also certain.

Guthrie's defence at his trial was brilliant indeed, and need not be repeated here. The trouble was that the real accusation was not mentioned, which was that he had been the moving spirit in the excommunication of Middleton years before. On 1st June Guthrie was hanged at the Cross of Edinburgh.

III. THE MINISTER OF STIRLING.

It is not easy to remember that during these years Guthrie was minister of the first charge at Stirling, and we may be able to see him in a truer light as a minister than is possible in the more confused atmosphere of public remonstrances and protests and political intrigues. Here we have three beams to shed light. First there is his relations with his colleagues; second, his position in the matter of the settlement of Mr. Rule; and, fortunately, two sermons whose subject matter is not connected with contemporary politics.

He had two colleagues during the Stirling decade. The first was the Rev. David Bennett, A.M., who graduated at St. Andrews in 1644 and was admitted to Kirkintilloch in 1646, being translated to the second

charge of Stirling before October 1650. He was 13 years junior to Guthrie, and no doubt shared some of the St. Andrews traditions and influence, and as a young man in his twenties perhaps naturally followed his senior colleague. In 1651 he was summoned with Guthrie to answer charges of preaching against the Public Resolutions, and he shared with Guthrie the protest against the lawfulness of the King's summons, and like Guthrie was imprisoned, but he was not deposed. His name does not appear in the list of Remonstrants in "The Nullity," only Guthrie's appearing for Stirling. As it was only in 1656 that the Church at Stirling was divided into two parts for public worship, Bennett may have had to occupy the position of an ordained assistant in practice. Certainly there is no hint but that he and Guthrie worked together amicably, and had he been on the other side in the controversy, Guthrie was not the man to keep silent on the subject.

His second colleague was Rev. Robert Rule, M.A., again a young man, eleven years junior to Guthrie. He had a somewhat varied career¹ after being admitted to Tannadice in 1651, for he was called to the second charge at Stirling in 1655 and admitted by the Protesters in opposition to the inhabitants of the Town² on 12th July. On 15th July, the Synod declared the admission null and void. Guthrie's relationship to the parishioners of Stirling may be seen from this incident, for he led the Protesters in the ceremony in spite of opposition, in which there was "much tumult, shouting and crying, for which three score of the chief burgesses were summoned before the Criminal Court of the English authorities at Edinburgh, tried by an assize, and absolved."³ In spite of the decision of the Synod, Rule, with Guthrie's backing, continued as colleague, but without securing the benefice, and receiving only a pension of £100 out of vacant stipends. Rule subsequently returned to the second charge at Stirling in 1693 and was called to the first charge in 1694.

Guthrie extended his interests and help not only to his colleagues, but also to his Kirk Session, as may be seen in the controversy between the Session and the Town Council of Stirling in the settlement of Mr. Rule.⁴ The Council apparently refused to have a joint meeting with the Session, and Guthrie is amazed at this, claiming they are thereby refusing to recognise the Session, whose elders are chosen "in an orderly way" and "publicly admitted and sworn unto their office by that pious and godly man Mr. David Bennet, late Minister . . ." The Covenant is dragged in here also, and Guthrie denies an allegation made by the Council

¹ *Fasti*, 1869 edit., p. 678.

² *Fasti*, 1923 edit., p. 320.

³ *Fasti*, 1869 edit., p. 678.

⁴ Paper by Guthrie, "A Discovery of the State of difference . . ."

that he, Guthrie, had sent an Act of Session to the Council desiring that they may in all things condescend to him, but bearing no condescension on his part! Guthrie dismisses this in five lines, although he takes five pages to answer the other difficulties. Guthrie was undoubtedly a "bonnie fechter" for the rights of his own session and presbytery and party, but it was apparent that his actions and unyielding character was capable of other interpretations, and that the Town Council did not hesitate to interpret his actions along other lines.

The two sermons by which he may be judged as a minister rather than a controversialist were preached at Airth, the first in July 1658, preparatory to the Communion on the text, "Come with me from Lebanon . . ." (Song of Solomon iv, 8). It occupies 16 pages in print, and covers a good deal of doctrine. There is no word of politics or covenants therein, but only scriptural illustrations and a direct call to obey the invitation of Christ to come unto Him, for so the Song was interpreted. The communion sermon itself is shorter, only 12 printed pages, on the text: "And when the hour was come, He sat down . . ." (Luke xxii, 14). It is mainly expository, although after the text is dealt with a wider field is covered. But again it is a scriptural field, and not a political one. So that if these sermons are typical of Guthrie's preaching—and it is right to judge a man by his best rather than his worst—the impression left is that he was a better preacher than controversialist; that he was more suited to Gospel than to law, and his interest in justifying himself—probably an interest bequeathed him from his early experiences in the change of direction from episcopacy to presbyterianism—made the Scottish pulpit poorer without in any real way enriching ecclesiastical law and procedure.

IV. THE MAN AND THE MARTYR.

The other sermons of James Guthrie are in a different class. They hardly differ from his "Causes of God's Wrath" except that they abound more in Scripture quotations. In truth it might be said of him in this respect that "ten thousand thousand were his texts, but all his sermons one." That one was the sin of not keeping the Covenant. There were other sins, no doubt, but that was the sum of Guthrie's decalogue. Let him get going on this subject, and he could produce text after text, and he was good at choosing the text from which to start off. For example, in a sermon preached to the Sectaries in April 1651, the text is from Isaiah lvii, 13, 14, and includes the words: "Take up the stumbling block out of the way of my people." Guthrie made the most of the opportunity of such words, but it can be claimed that he simply yielded to the

temptation facing every minister on a "special occasion," viz., to be pointedly topical rather than to expound the Scriptures.

The sermon popularised by Ebenezer Erskine under the title, "A Cry from the Dead," happened to be the last sermon Guthrie preached in Stirling, for he was arrested the following Thursday. It was on 19th August, 1660, and is a fairly good exposition of verses 22, 23, 24 of Matthew, chapter xiv, with not unfair references to the times in which Guthrie lived. Towards the end, he does indicate that the storm is a political one, and that to question the "Cause" is to act the part of Judas. It may be that Guthrie recognised that he himself was about to be caught by a storm, for more than once he expressed the belief that he would suffer for his faith, and used expressions which suggested that he expected martyrdom. Yet the sermon does not close with that note, but with the note of hope and faith in Christ the Pilot. Indeed, his speech in defence at his trial, when, shorn of his Ministry, his living, his dwelling place, and his family dependent on charity, he comes forth in deepest sincerity, and says: My Lord, my conscience I cannot submit, but this old crazy body and mortal flesh I do submit to do with it whatsoever ye will—suggests imprisonment or banishment was what he hoped for rather than death—though he mentions all three.

By this time, Guthrie was not just the little man who would not bow, he was the man who could not bow. He definitely held fast to the covenants and his own application of them as binding principles, and the speech in his defence leaves no doubt that here is the true spirit of the Covenanter. His last speech from the scaffold follows the customary run of such speeches, and there is no way of judging how a man in any age will react to the knowledge that he is about to be hanged. Guthrie reiterates his standpoint, his loyalty to the King, the Covenant, the rightness of his protest against the St. Andrews Assembly, the reasons for God's wrath, and, perhaps naturally, repeats himself somewhat in the document.

The fashions of the times may excuse it, but his letter to his wife reads rather like a testimonial to a faithful servant than a last word to a lady of the manse. But apparently she shared with him his conviction that he would be martyred for his firm stand for the covenanted religion.

Guthrie the man was a curious mixture. He has been hailed as the first and most far-sighted of the covenanting prophets, ever eager to steady the Ark of God; the victim of Middleton's spite and political intrigue. Burton calls him an active, troublesome priest turned into a martyr. The most vehement, active and implacable of all the Remon-

strants . . . he had persistently and forcefully made a nuisance of himself.

It is quite possible that Guthrie made a nuisance of himself, but it was a thing he would never have understood. It is also possible that he was martyred not because of a principle, but merely to get rid of him because he was a nuisance. His death settled nothing, for Middleton's character was already known, and the issues involved were also known. If the events of the times can be set aside, it may be possible to get a glimpse of James Guthrie the man and the minister. As man and as minister, he shared the experiences of humanity. He was influenced not a little by his friends at the university and by those with whom he came in contact later. These influences, especially Rutherford's on one side and Leighton's on the other, had a distinct effect on his life and his life's work. His early experience of the other sex had more influence than his later marriage so far as we can judge. He shows that he was able to preach well and expound Scripture clearly. He also was capable of getting on with his Kirk Session and other congregations.

But once let him taste the sweets of public recognition in an Assembly or Commission of Assembly, and he became a different individual. It was only after each failure in diplomacy that he comes out with some violent protest or denunciation, and that fact is suggestive of the possibility that Guthrie—subconsciously, of course—sought compensation. Was it the early dreams of a mitre? And was it this which lay behind his statement: "I would not exchange this scaffold with the palace or mitre of the greatest prelate in Britain"?¹

Guthrie was the earliest martyr of the Covenant, no doubt, but had he been of a different temperament, he might have served the Church and the Covenant for many years. At the inaugural address on the unveiling of the statue at the Guthrie Monument in Stirling (not till 1857 did this occur!) it was said that the charges against Guthrie amounted to Freedom of the Press, freedom to hold public meetings, to defend constitutions, to defend conscience and to have a free church. But these are all beside the point if the real charge was that he had offended Middleton ten years earlier by insisting on the excommunication, and that unhappy circumstance was due to Guthrie's personal feelings and character and temperament. Hence the query: Guthrie was a martyr—but was he a martyr to his own peculiar temper and experience, or was he the victim of the Cause?

¹ *Tracts of the Martyrs*, No. 4.