

## Concise church biographies

# WC Burns

William Chalmers Burns [1815-1868] was a powerful evangelist and a pioneer Scottish missionary to China.

He was the son of a minister in Kilsyth, Forfarshire and educated at Aberdeen University before becoming a Church of Scotland minister in 1839. Despite wanting to be a foreign missionary he engaged in evangelism in Scotland, Ireland and Canada for some time where he was remarkably fruitful.

When Robert Murray M'Cheyne went to Palestine, Burns, then only 24, took his place in Dundee. Under his preaching on 23 July 1839 a great revival at Kilsyth occurred that shook all of Scotland. As soon as Burns resumed his ministry in Dundee early in August, the same effects occurred there also. Many were reduced to tears and groans on account of conviction of sin. For many weeks church services were held every night lasting until late. Many were converted. M'Cheyne, who had been delayed by illness, returned to St. Peter's in November and saw the glorious effects upon the people who had a deep concern for God and greatly rejoiced. This continued under his own ministry and his open air preaching.

Burns eventually went to China in 1846 as an agent of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland where he adopted Chinese clothes and learned the language. Despite years of labour he saw little obvious success but he laid the foundations for a Presbyterian mission work in the south around Amoy and in Manchuria. In the 1850s he was an inspiration to the young Hudson Taylor, who went on to found the China Inland Mission. Burns also translated Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* into Chinese.

He died in a remote place that he had visited because of its poverty.