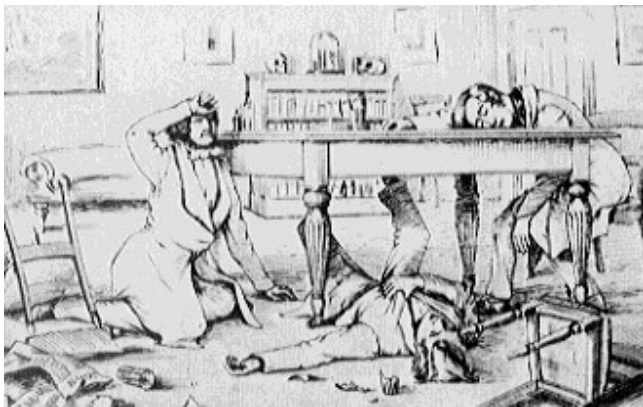


Sir James Young Simpson

Imagine this scenario: You are scheduled for surgery – an appendectomy. You arrive at the hospital on time and are prepped for the operation. The nurse wheels you, still conscious, into the operating room where you are greeted by a smiling surgeon holding a razor-sharp scalpel. He explains the incision he is about to make, asks you how you do with pain, and explains that it will hurt – greatly – when he begins. However, with a note of encouragement in his voice he explains that there are ways of dealing with the pain. He says, “Would you prefer this stick of wood or piece of leather to clamp between your teeth while we operate?” (There actually is not a lot of documentation about this brand of pain “reliever.”)

If that sequence of events is unpleasant to you, then you should be *very* thankful for the Christian whose life we are looking at tonight. Professor James Young Simpson – later **Sir** James Y. Simpson – discovered chloroform’s use as an anesthetic and successfully introduced it to the field of medicine. How he “discovered” chloroform and tested it is more than a little intriguing as the picture below shows!



Simpson and his colleagues experiment on themselves with Chloroform.

He was born in Bathgate, Scotland, on June 7, 1811, the seventh son of David Simpson, the village baker. His mother, Mary Jervay, came by direct descent from a Huguenot family which had fled from Guienne (France) to Scotland after the religious freedom of Protestants (the Edict of Nantes) was revoked. As a child, James was impressed by his mother’s prayerfulness and manner of life. He always remembered that, somehow, she was different from other friends and relatives he had. He never forgot her example.

James went to Edinburgh University at the age of 14. During his college years, he was very studious. Aware that the family had sacrificed greatly to put him through college, he was determined to do well. Completing his medical course, he was made senior president of the Royal Medical Society at Edinburgh at 24 and, at the age of 28, was appointed Professor of Midwifery (which would now be called Obstetrics) and physician to Queen Victoria. That was also the year he proposed to a young woman named Jessie Grindlay and they were married.

His mother’s prayers and godly example did have an impact on his life and he had come to be regarded by many as a Christian. His biographer wrote: “The title ‘Christian physician’ was freely given to him. Yet he afterwards spoke of this period, as a time when he was *living without God in the world.*” He began to think seriously about his spiritual condition. Describing his conversion, he said: “When I was a boy I saw a sight I can never forget - a man tied to a cart & dragged before the people’s eyes through the streets of my town, his back torn and bleeding from the lash. It was a shameful punishment. For many offences? No; for one offence. Did any townsmen offer to divide the lashes with him? No; he who committed the offence bore the penalty. When I was a student at the University, I saw another sight I can never forget – a man brought out to die, his arms tied behind his back and standing on the scaffold. For many offences? No: for one offence. Did any man ask to die in his place? Did any friend come and loose the rope, and say ‘Put it round my neck and I will die in his stead?’ No; he underwent the sentence of the law alone. **I saw another sight – it matters not when – myself a sinner, standing on the brink of ruin, deserving nothing but hell’s destruction. For one sin? No; for many. Many sins committed against the unchanging laws of God. But again I looked, and saw Jesus my Substitute, whipped in my**

place, and dying on the cross for me. I looked and I wept. I claimed Him as my Savior and was forgiven."

His discovery of chloroform catapulted him to world renown. He became the first person to be knighted for services to medicine in 1866. The inscription of his coat of arms is "Victo Dolore" (pain conquered). The plaque on the left is in St Giles in Edinburgh.



As a believer, Dr. Simpson had an interest in the spiritual as well as the physical welfare of others. Here is an excerpt of a letter he wrote in December 1866 to his dear friend Dr. Joseph Robertson, who was ill: "... To-day or to-morrow I have to sign a new will, for this Baronetcy of mine (which looks such a bauble in sickness, even more than in health) necessitates a variety of new arrangements, and I have tried to make all things straight and right in a worldly point of view. After what I have said, I know that I need not add to you that it will only be proper for you to place your affairs, papers, etc., in such order as you deem best. And now, my

dear Mr. Robertson, pardon me if I add one paragraph more. You and I are **too good antiquaries not to know that He—the second Person in the Trinity—by whose hands all this grand and beautiful physical world of ours was made (John 1:3), was foreordained before the creation of it (1 Peter 1:20) to have those very hands nailed upon the cross to purify the foul moral world and save the human race, whom the earth bare, from the punishment of their own dire sins and guilt.** That sacrifice in our stead, and to 'cleanse away all our sins,' is archaeologically a fact that occurred some eighteen centuries ago, and is past and done as certainly as the battle of Marathon or Hastings or Bannockburn are past and done. **And the wondrous fact remains, that 'whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'** We can do nothing to wash away our guilt before God, but Christ HAS done all that is required to wash away your guilt and my guilt in God's own eyes, and according to God's own declared will and law, if simply you and I believe in the work of His Son and accept the blood of Jesus as our Substitute and our Saviour. 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou SHALT be saved.' No secondary conditions are attached; Jesus has suffered all for us, and done all, if we only trust Him in all.

'Bear not a single care thyself, one is too much for thee;

The work is *Mine*, and Mine alone, *thy* work is—Rest in Me.'

"I know that you and I place all hopes and certainties indeed upon the same immutable foundation, and I know you will kindly bear with me in these remarks, and allow me to sign myself your ever sincere friend, J. Y. SIMPSON."

Sir James Y. Simpson died at his home in Edinburgh on May 6, 1870, at the age of fifty-eight. Some of his last words were: "*When I think, it is of the words 'Jesus only' and really that is all that is needed, is it not?*" A burial spot in Westminster Abbey was offered to his family, but they declined and instead buried him closer to home in Warriston Cemetery, Edinburgh. However, a memorial bust can be found in a niche at Westminster Abbey in London. His statue on the right is in Princes Street Gardens in Edinburgh. On the day of Simpson's funeral, a Scottish holiday was declared, including the banks and stock markets, with over 100,000 citizens lining the funeral cortege on its way to the cemetery, while over 1,700 colleagues and business leaders took part in the procession itself.



His biographer said he is still remembered in Scotland as a very great doctor, a very great gentleman and a very great Christian. Simpson once said, "*My greatest discovery, which I made one Christmas Day, is that Christ is able to save to the uttermost any man who implicitly trusts Him.*"