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Prof: Turner
From his friend the Author

REV. MR. SNODGRASS'

FUNERAL DISCOURSE.

upon Rev. John M. Mason.

THE
VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN

AWAITING HIS CROWN.

A DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, JANUARY 3, 1830, OCCASIONED
BY THE DEATH OF

REV. JOHN M. MASON, D. D. S. T. P.

BY WILLIAM D. SNODGRASS,
HIS SUCCESSOR AS PASTOR OF MURRAY STREET CHURCH.

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FROM
THE BEQUEST OF
EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
1918

THE following Discourse was written in haste, and delivered in Murray Street Church, on the Sabbath evening immediately succeeding the bereavement to which it refers ;—and is now committed to the press, without alteration, in compliance with the wishes of friends, and as a feeble tribute to the memory of one whom the author had reason to respect and love.

DISCOURSE.

2 TIM. 4. 6—8. "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the Righteous Judge will give unto me at that day:—And not unto me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

THAT I should select this triumphant exclamation of Paul, as the ground of my remarks on the present occasion, will not appear surprising to those who remember the peculiar admiration in which the character of this apostle was held, by the venerable man, whose life and death we are assembled to commemorate. In retiring from the discharge of his official duties, as the Pastor of this Church, his memorable language, in relation to this subject, was, "you know that this has always been with me a *favourite* theme: that my heart has enlarged, my imagination brightened, and my steps have trodden upon almost *fairy* ground, when they have been roused and quickened by the name of Paul."

And methinks, if we could now ascertain his opinion, as he stands glorified by the side of Paul, and communes with him face to face, he would not desire that aught should be taken away from this expression of his regard. For if it

be true, in the firmament of the *upper* as well as the lower world, that "one star differeth from another star in glory," and that "every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour," we may well suppose that the highest seat among the saints in light, is occupied by him who was "not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles," and who "laboured more abundantly than they all."

From the time at which it pleased God, "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," to call him by his grace and to "reveal his son in him, that he might preach him among the heathen," we date the commencement of such a course of unwearied activity and devotion to the service of God, as was never exemplified in the case of any other friend and follower of Jesus. Turning his face towards "the mark for the prize of the high calling," and fixing his eye upon "the recompense of reward," he determined not only to make his *own* "calling and election sure," but, also, to labour "more abundantly" than all his companions in Christ, for the establishment of that kingdom which is "not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." In adhering to this determination, he was not only "in labours more abundant;" but, also, "in stripes above measure, in prisons frequent, and in deaths oft." But none of these things moved him; neither did he count his *life* dear unto himself, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus. The only interruption, to his onward and brilliant course, was an occasional "desire to depart and be with Christ." And, when the time appointed for the fulfilment of this desire arrived, his heart was warmed into such a feeling of exultation and ecstasy, that even the terrors of

approaching martyrdom could not prevent him from declaring, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." Feeling his eternal redemption drawing nigh, and beholding his vanquished enemies lying at his feet, he must needs exclaim, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." Seeing the hand of his exalted master stretched forth, to place upon his head the conqueror's crown, he must also say, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge will give unto me at that day." And then, as a final testimony to the uncircumscribed and social character of that religion which he had professed and preached, he must leave it as his dying affirmation to the Church—"And not unto *me* only, but unto *all* them also that love his appearing."

In reviewing the passage, with reference to our present profit, we shall direct your attention briefly to the *three* following particulars,

I. To the Apostle's estimation of the nature of his approaching death.

II. To his pleasing reflections upon the tenor of his past life.

III. To his "full assurance of hope" in view of the rewards and the glories of eternity.

I. In the first place, then, we direct your attention to "the Apostle's estimation of *the nature* of his approaching death," as expressed in the triumphant declaration, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand."

And in order that his estimation of this event may be properly *appreciated*, we commence by remarking, that there is a wide difference between looking any calamity

immediately *in the face*, and regarding it in the light of a future and a far distant event. In sitting down to contemplate evils and dangers which may not arrive until years of farther prosperity have passed away, we are never able to take an adequate and realizing view of their magnitude and importance. And for this reason, the judgment of that person, who is walking in the sunshine of life's prosperity, in regard to the nature and the terrors of death, is never so likely to be correct, as the judgment of him, around whom the shades of death are just gathering, and before whom the signs of death have already appeared. To show you, then, how eminently the *latter* of these was the situation of this Apostle, we now observe, that, in representing himself as "ready to be offered," he alludes to one of the sacrificial rites of the Jews, which was observed in relation to all those offerings which were of a *bloody* nature. When the victim was brought before the altar, the priest, having implored the divine favour and acceptance, poured wine upon its head; and after the performance of this solemn act, which was termed "a libation," or a pouring out, without any farther delay, it was "led forth to the slaughter." Now, in reference to this ceremony, the Apostle here presents himself to our view, as having arrived at that particular point, which thus occurred between the pouring out of the libation, and the commencement of the dying scene: for, if his language had been *literally* translated, instead of saying, "I am now ready to be offered," his phraseology would have been, "I am already *poured out*;" thereby intimating that the last rite of preparation, in regard to his body as a sacrificial victim, had been performed, and that the shedding of blood was immediately to commence.

And how touchingly appropriate is this idea to the fact, that the far-famed and cruel tyrant of Rome had already singled him out as the victim of his vengeance! He had called him, a second time, into his presence, under the charge of having "preached Jesus and the resurrection:" and, unwilling that such a fellow should live on the earth, he had passed upon him the sentence of death, and thrown him into prison, there to await the time and the terrors of his execution. The circumstances and solemnities of the dying hour were immediately before him: and he could *almost* say, in describing their nature and importance, "I speak that which I do *know*, and testify that which I have *seen*."

But that he was not likely to *underrate* the evils and the trials of this approaching event, is farther evident from the circumstance, that the death by which he was appointed "to glorify God," was *a violent* as well as an *ignominious* death. Instead of breathing out his life in peace,—in the circle of his own friends,—and after a gradual decay of nature, induced by the immediate hand of his covenant God,—he was suddenly called to a place of public execution, by the order of an unfeeling and unrelenting oppressor. As an object of reproach to the whole unbelieving world around him, he was compelled to ascend a scaffold, erected for the purpose, in the city of Rome; and there to have his head severed from his body, as a malefactor of the highest degree,—belonging to "the offscouring of all things,"—and unworthy of a dwelling place among the inhabitants of the earth.

Now, then, with all the shame and the torture of this approaching scene immediately before him, what is the estimation which he forms of the nature of death? Does he

place it in the catalogue of those *evils* to which human nature "is born as the sparks fly upward?" Does he apply to it the idea of pain, and distress, and tribulation, and anguish? Does he look forward to it as an event which was about to terrify his soul, as well as to torture his body? Or does he call it by a name which signifies that he was, not only willing, but even *anxious* to enter upon the experience of its reality?

And in order to answer this inquiry, by means of the very image which the Apostle himself employs, we ask you, my hearers, to bring before your minds the idea of a vessel at a foreign port, which has accomplished the end of her voyage, and taken in all her lading; and is about to weigh anchor and leave those distant climes, in the hope of soon arriving at her native shores:—Suppose the day of her departure to be, in every respect, propitious to the object she has in view;—no lowering storm, to obscure the brightness of the firmament; and no angry wave, to agitate the bosom of the sea:—Behold her sails just expanding to the favouring breeze, and see her as she begins to plough the fluid element, and speed her course to the desired haven.

And then you have before you, in a figure, the situation and the feelings of this eminent saint, as he stood on the brink of the grave, and contemplated the final separation of the soul from the body. His immortal spirit, "full of faith and of the holy ghost," possessing a plenitude of divine love, and an increase of every Christian grace, had performed its work, and had nothing more to do in these regions of mortality and sin. The end of its creation was answered; and Heaven being its native home, it was anxious to be gone: and, therefore, instead of regarding death with aversion, he

associated with it the idea of his speedy arrival at the place of his destination, and joyfully describes it under the idea of a "*departure*." At the moment of its arrival, he was to embark for Immanuel's land;—the destined port was already within the reach of his eye of faith;—and, gliding gently and peacefully over the intervening waters, he was shortly to appear in the haven of eternal rest, where the storms of adversity never blow, and where the tide of human misery is never permitted to come.—Happy spirit! thou hast now arrived at the end of thy course! thou hast weathered every storm, and braved every sea, and art safely lodged in thine own country, and in the mansions of thy Father's house! And tell me, my soul, if *this* be death, whether thou art not prepared to welcome its approach! It calls upon thee with a friendly voice to "arise and depart; for this is not thy rest:—It gives thee the signal which warns thee that thy work is done; and invites thee to retire from this unfriendly clime, to the purer atmosphere, and the higher enjoyments, of "another and a better country." "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth! Yea, saith the spirit, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

Having directed your attention to the Apostle's estimation of the nature of his approaching death, we now refer you,

II. To his pleasing reflections upon the tenor of his past life. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

If ever there was an ambassador for Christ, who acknowledged and felt his entire dependence upon the grace of God, for all his proficiency in the Christian life, as well as for all his success in the discharge of his official duties, that ambas-

sador was the great Apostle of "the uncircumcision:"—For it was his *habit*, in speaking to others of what he had done for the service of the churches and for the glory of Christ, often to insert the qualifying expression, "yet not I, but *the grace of God* which was with me." And therefore we cannot suppose, that, in looking back upon the tenor of his past life, he discovered any thing "whereof he might glory before God," or the praise of which he might justly apply to himself. On the subject of his *own deserts*, he always felt himself to be "the chief of sinners," and "less than the least of all saints:" and therefore it was, that he often exclaimed, when comparing himself with his companions in the ministry of reconciliation, "I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God."

But while he thus realized, and was humbled under, a sense of his own unworthiness:—yet, as the grace of God had been "exceeding abundant" towards him, he delighted to retrace in his recollections, *the operations* of that grace, in enabling him to glorify his Divine master on the earth, "and to perform the work which he had given him to do." And especially was it delightful to take this retrospective glance, when he arrived at *the end* of his race; and the voice of his glorious Lord was heard, calling upon him to come up to his presence, and receive his reward: because in proportion to the evidences of his past fidelity and perseverance, so was the evidence of his preparation for death, and so was his prospect of immediately receiving "an exceeding and an eternal weight of glory."

Accordingly there are *three particulars*, on which his memory dwells with pleasure, as he looks back, in this situation, and sees, that through "the power of Christ,"

which had rested upon him, he had "not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."

1. In the first place, he had "fought a good fight."

And the peculiar point and meaning of this phrase can be appreciated, only when we view it in the light of the ancient custom of *fighting* for a *prize*, which prevailed both in Greece and in Rome. In allusion to these combats, the Apostle often applies the idea of a *warfare* to the nature and difficulties of the Christian life. And there is a passage, in one of the ancient poets of Greece, which contains the very expression which he here employs; and which serves to show that, while he compares the believers' life to a *warfare*, his design is to communicate the idea, that this warfare is a contest of *the most honourable kind*. The passage alluded to, is contained in the works of *Euripedes*,* who lived 480 years before the birth of Christ; and is supposed to be spoken on the occasion of a wife laying down her life for her husband, after both his parents had refused to do it. After the event is supposed to have transpired, the surviving husband is represented as appealing to one of his parents, and saying: "Thou wouldest have fought '*a good fight*,' if thou hadst died for thy son:" intimating that the sacrifice of life in such a cause, would have been an *honourable* act, and worthy of everlasting remembrance.

On this very passage the eye of the Apostle may have been fixed. And, in conformity with the well-known and accepted sense of this expression, he hesitates not to say, that, the fight which he had fought in the service of his Divine Master, was an *honourable* contest, of which he had no reason to be ashamed. It was "a *good fight*;" inasmuch

* In his *Alcestis*.—Vide *Alcest.* V. 644.

as *the cause*, in which he was engaged, was the cause of God, in opposition to the empire of Satan; the cause of truth, in opposition to the prevalence of error; and the cause of grace and glory, in opposition to the dominion and the punishment of sin. It was moreover "*a good fight*:" inasmuch as *the Leader*, under whose banner he had enlisted, was worthy of all his affections and deserving of all his services; inasmuch as *his companions* in battle were "the excellent of the earth;" and inasmuch as the *reward* of victory was to be nothing less than the honour of sitting down with "the Captain of Salvation" upon his throne, even as he also "overcame and is set down with his Father upon his throne."

And having thus referred to the character and success of his spiritual contest, he changes the figure, and remarks,

2. In the second place, "I have finished my course."

Here there is an allusion to another kind of strife or contention, which was used in the Grecian games; and which consisted in the *running* of a *race*. *A day* was appointed for the contest, and *a course* was marked out for the purpose; *rules* were adopted for the government of the competitors, and *judges* were appointed to award the prize to the winner; and when all things were ready, at a *signal* given for the purpose, each one sprung forward, fired with the love of glory, and conscious that the eyes of assembled Greece were upon him, determined, if possible, to immortalize himself by reaching the goal and receiving the reward.

And what they did, "to obtain a corruptible crown," the Apostle had done, "to obtain an incorruptible." Inflamed with the prospect of honour and glory and immortality, and "encompassed by a great cloud of witnesses," he had en-

tered upon "the race set before him in the gospel." And, "forgetting the things which were behind, and reaching forth to those which were before," he had "pressed towards the mark for the prize of the high calling;" and he now presents himself to our view, as having arrived at the end of his course. The race was over; and, after receiving the prize, he was about to retire from the scene, and rest from his labours.

And, as a reason for supposing that the Judge of that race which he had been running, would not refuse him the prize when the proper time for awarding it arrived, he farther remarks,

3. In the third place, "I have kept the faith."

For in the Olympic race, already referred to, a man might strive for the mastery, and yet he could not be crowned unless he strived lawfully. If, in any respect, he violated *the rules* of the contest, all his speed in reaching the goal could avail him nothing. And in reference to this law, as applied to his spiritual course, the Apostle had unfeigned pleasure in remembering that he had not departed from "the faith once delivered to the saints:" that he had closely adhered to "the Gospel of the grace of God:" that he had lived and laboured according to the directions of "the truth as it is in Jesus." If he was called to proclaim the doctrines and the duties of this truth to others, he "kept back nothing that was profitable to them;" but testified both to Jews and Greeks, "repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." If he was called upon to defend it against the attacks and the arguments of its opposers, he reasoned both by word and epistle, at Antioch and Athens, at the hazard of all that was dear to him, even at the risk of life itself.

And, finally, if he was called upon to seal his testimony to that truth with his blood, he was ready to die, either at Jerusalem, or at Rome—either at Phillippi, or at Corinth. And having been thus “faithful unto death,” he was prepared, according to the gracious economy of the Gospel, to receive a crown of life :

Which leads me to advert

III. To his “full assurance of hope,” in view of the rewards and the glories of eternity :—“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give unto me at that day; and not unto me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

Here his language is beautifully allusive to the scene which terminated the ancient contests to which we have just referred—when the victor was brought forward, in the presence of the applauding multitude, to receive the reward of his valour, and, thereby, to have his name enrolled among the illustrious men of his country. As compared with the *fading chaplet*, which was then placed upon the head of the conqueror, the Apostle anticipated a crown of more incorruptible materials, and of more unfading lustre, even “a crown of *righteousness*,” or, as elsewhere denominated, “a crown of glory which fadeth not away :”—As opposed to *the venerable judges*, who on these occasions conferred the reward, the Apostle expected to receive his crown immediately from the hands of “the Lord the righteous Judge,” even from Jesus of Nazareth, who had met him on his way to Damascus, and converted him from the wickedness of his ways, and commissioned him to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, and at whose right hand he expected to enjoy “pleasures which are for ever more.” And as com-

pared with the *earthly pomp and circumstance* of the days on which these corruptible crowns were conferred, his coronation was to take place on what the Scriptures emphatically denominated "*that day*:"—that eventful and magnificent day, on which the trumpet of God will sound, and the voice of the archangel will be heard calling upon all who are in their graves to arise and come forth:—that day, on which the Saviour, who expired on Mount Calvary, will descend from Heaven, in all the terrible glories of "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," "walking on the wings of the wind," and surrounded by "an innumerable company of angels:"—that day, on which the sun will be veiled in darkness, and the moon will be changed into blood, and the stars will fall from their places and "the earth and all things that are therein shall be burnt up:"—that day, on which "all nations both small and great," will stand before God, and a line of eternal separation will be drawn between the righteous and the wicked:—And that day, on which, as the consummating act of the mediatorial reign of the eternal son, "the kingdom will be delivered up into the hands of the Father, that God may be all in all."

In view of all the grandeur of this scene, he is to take his seat, in company with the assembled saints of the Most High, on the right hand of the Judge. Around him, will be the patriarchs and prophets of former ages, as well as his own companions in the ministry of reconciliation, and the martyrs and followers of the faith of Jesus in succeeding ages of the world. Even *we* shall be present to witness the exhibition, either as partakers of the glory which is to be revealed in him, or as companions of those who are to "be-

hold and wonder and perish." And, thus situated, the righteous judge will approach him, and, with his own hand, will place the victor's crown upon his head. With "a mixture of majesty and grace beaming from his countenance," his lips will pronounce, in soft and solemn accents, the joyful sentence, "He has fought a good fight, he has finished his course, he has kept the faith!" Let his be the reward of victory! "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

And in order to express his *full assurance* of this approaching coronation, the Apostle employs the language of entire *conviction* and *confidence*. He does not say there *may* be a reward prepared for me in Heaven, but he affirms, in the terms of one who speaks from absolute *knowledge*, "There *is* laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

Nor was this feeling of assurance either *a recent* or *a transient* emotion in the heart of this servant of God:—For we hear him exclaiming, even before the terrors of death were thus brought immediately to his view, "We *know* that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens:" "We are *confident*, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord:" "For I am *persuaded*, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor heighth, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus." And, while the blessings of this persuasion were thus effectually lodged in the chambers of *his* heart, they have also been enjoyed by others, and are

still offered to the followers of Christ, “without money and without price.” For when we hear one remarking, “*I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin, worms shall destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall behold for myself, and not for another.*”—When we hear another affirming, “*Thou wilt guide me by thy counsel and afterwards receive me to glory.*”—And when we hear a third exclaiming, while standing on the very verge of eternity, “*Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation; we can no longer doubt, that, throughout all the ages of inspiration, it was common for those who believed to “have the witness in themselves.*”

And *why* should this witness be denied to the followers of Christ now? Is not the fountain from which it comes, as *full* now as it was in the days of Patriarchs, and Prophets, and Apostles? Is not *the source* from which they drank, still sending forth the waters of salvation in all their abundance and life-giving power? Is not the same spirit which dictated the language of their assurance, still promising to “bear testimony with our spirits, that we are the children of God?” Alas! my Christian Brethren, it is not because we are straitened in God, or, in the economy of his grace, that we live at this dying and doubtful rate. If, like this Apostle, we could live by faith upon the Son of God, “who loved us and gave himself for us:”—if, like him, we could “lay aside every weight,” and “follow on to know the Lord,” from one degree of spirituality and communion with God to another, we should then be enabled to approach the confines of eternity,

uniting with him in the exclamation : “ I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give unto me at that day : and not unto me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

Such, then, was Paul’s estimation of *the nature* of his approaching death ; such were his *pleasing reflections* upon the tenor of his past life ; and such was “ *the full assurance*” of his “ hope,” in view of the rewards and the glories of eternity.

And from this view of his life and death, and approaching coronation, we may remark, among the other lessons of instruction which it is calculated to afford, that

When true Christians, and especially when faithful ministers of Christ, are called away from the midst of us by death, the idea of that happiness which they enjoy, in the heavenly world, should reconcile us to the loss which we sustain by means of their dissolution. To us, the separation may be the source of a severe trial ; and, in reflecting upon it, the tear of deep regret may often start in our eyes, and the feelings of sore bereavement may take possession of our hearts. But to them it is a departure, from all that is polluting and perishing, to all that is “ undefiled and that fadeth not away :” it is a transition from a dwelling-place in the wilderness, to “ a City which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God :” it is a retirement from the business of sowing in tears ; and an entrance upon the higher and more delightful employment of reaping in joy. Instead

of being harassed by the appetites and sufferings of the body, "they hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither doth the sun light on them, nor any heat:" and instead of being cast down, under the trials and tribulations of the soul, they lift up their heads and rejoice; for their redemption is nigh.

And inasmuch as their *gain* is thus greater than our *loss*, by as much as *heaven* with all its felicity, is better than *earth* with all its troubles, we are loudly admonished, to wipe away our tears and to acquiesce, without a murmur, in that disruption of the social tie which, for the present, "is not joyous, but grievous."

And if ever there is a case, in which the hearts of surviving friends should be fully open to the weight of this consideration, methinks it is such a case as is to be found *in the death of him whose departure we now mourn*. In consequence of bodily infirmity, he had long been debarred from his loved employment of preaching "Jesus Christ, and him crucified:" and the same interposition which thus called him aside from his duties and consolations of the ministry, also became the means of diminishing the enjoyments and multiplying the distresses of his life. Retired in a great measure not only from public view, but also from the intercourse and pleasures of the social state, his days were spent in languor of body, as well as in feebleness of mind:—no prospect of returning health presented itself to his view; and no anticipation of again preaching "the unsearchable riches of Christ" to his fellow men, ever animated and cheered his heart. And thus it must have been, from one year of his enfeebled and suffering existence, to another. "But God,

who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved him," has sent down a messenger from heaven, to call him up thither :—and, methinks, if we could now hear him speak, as he stands in the place of his exaltation, his address to every mourning and weeping friend, would be similar to that of the departing Saviour to his disciples: "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I have gone unto the Father:"—"I am now delivered from all the infirmities and frailties of the flesh, and have taken my station among 'the spirits of just men made perfect:'—my sufferings are ended, my trials are over, and my robes are 'washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb.' And therefore, as you regard my happiness, you ought to give thanks to him who has granted me a sweet release from all the pains which I once felt, to all the blessedness which I now enjoy."

But, although it is our duty to acquiesce in the loss of departed saints; yet we are not forbidden to cherish the remembrance of what they were, during the time of their connexion with us. On the other hand, we are commanded to be "*followers* of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises:" and, in order that this command may be reduced to practice, we must treasure up in our memories the *history* of their *lives*, and often reflect upon what they have *done* or *suffered*.

Under the sanction of this principle, then, we invite your further attention to a brief survey of some of the principal points connected with the *life* and *character* of that departed saint in memory of whom the ensigns of death are now to be seen around us.

Dr. John Mason, the father of the deceased, was a native of the town of Mid-Calder in the county of Linlithgow in

Scotland. He was connected with that body of the seceders from the church of Scotland, which was usually known by the name of Antiburghers. Not long after his licensure by a Presbytery in that connexion, he was ordained with a particular view to a pastoral charge in this city: and leaving his native country, he arrived in the year 1761, became the pastor of the Scotch Presbyterian Church in Cedar Street, and resided among them, greatly respected and eminently useful, until his death which occurred in the year 1792. He was a man of sound and vigorous mind—of extensive learning—and of fervent piety. In regard to his scholarship, it is recorded of him, that at the age of 20 years, he spoke the Latin language with as much ease, and even with greater elegance than his mother tongue; and that at the age of 24 he taught Logic, and Moral Philosophy with reputation, in the Theological Seminary of the Antiburghers, at Abernethy, in Scotland. As a preacher, he was uncommonly judicious and instructive; as a pastor, he was faithful and diligent; and as a friend and companion, amiable, benevolent, and generous.

As the son of a parent, thus eminent and honoured, Dr. John Mitchell Mason was born in the city of New York, on the 19th of March, 1770. In his early days he was a sprightly youth, full of vivacity, but never vicious—fond of application to study—and always, in every respect, in the foremost rank among his associates.

His elementary education he received under the general superintendance of his father in New York, and at New Brunswick, in New Jersey. And such was the wisdom and faithfulness of this superintendance, that he always acknow-

ledged himself indebted to it for the discipline of mind to which he attained in after life.

Having thus laid a good foundation for future eminence as a scholar, he entered Columbia College in this city, and was graduated in the month of May, in the year 1789. He was then a little more than 19 years of age, and is remembered by some of his class-mates, who still survive him, as having been a peculiarly fine *classical* scholar—distinguished also for his powers of declamation, and his talent for *disquisition*. He delivered *the valedictory* address to his preceptors and fellow-students, and retired from his collegiate life, loved and respected by all who knew him.

There is no particular information in my possession as to the time at which he made a *public profession* of his faith in Jesus Christ:—Or as to *the circumstances* which led to this open avowal of the Master, whom he afterwards served with so much cheerfulness and success.

It appears however, that, very soon after the time of his graduation, his views were directed to “*the ministry of reconciliation*.”—And that his course of preparation for this office was commenced and continued for a while under the advice and direction of his venerated parent. During this period he devoted himself, with an uncommon degree of application, to the study of the Greek language:—And thereby obtained that accurate knowledge of its idiom and structure, which was afterwards turned to such a useful account, *in expounding* the writings of the New Testament. At the same time, he did not neglect the original language of the Old Testament; and was careful, as opportunity served, to enlarge his acquaintance with all those collateral branches of

study which had a direct bearing upon his qualifications for the sacred office.

In the year 1791, which was nearly one year after the commencement of these preparatory studies, he left his native country for the land of his fathers, in order to perfect his education at the University of Edinburgh. He there attended the lectures of those professors who were immediately connected with the study of theology: And to all of them he was greatly endeared, as well on account of the Christian character which he exhibited, as on account of his respectable attainments in literature and science. Among these the Rev. Dr. Hunter regarded him with peculiar affection, and treated him with peculiar marks of attention; as did also, the Rev. Dr. John Erskine, whom he always remembered as one of his kindest and most disinterested friends.

And it was during his residence in this University, that his *mind* and *manner* began to assume that peculiar mould, which they afterwards took; and that the foundation was laid for that easy and manly eloquence for which he afterwards became so conspicuous. To illustrate this remark, it is worthy of being recorded, that he then became associated with *three* young men, who, like himself, have since risen to distinction in the Christian Church; and with whom he contracted an intimacy, which afterwards ripened into friendship. They possessed kindred minds—were prosecuting similar studies—and were actuated by one spirit. They were Mr. Greville Ewing, now of Glasgow, Mr. W. Inness, formerly of Dundee, and subsequently of Edinburgh, and Mr. John Dick, author of the well known and excellent essay on “the Inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures.” Supported by these companions in study, he often came forward in such a manner

as greatly to signalize the clearness, and strength, and comprehensiveness of his mind ; and, at the same time, to exhibit his decided and determined adherence to the doctrines of divine grace, as opposed to every other Gospel which was falsely so called. As affording one conspicuous opportunity for this, it was required, of every student of divinity, to deliver, in the progress of his course, *five exercises*—a *lecture*, a *homily*, an *exegesis*, in the Latin language, a *critical dissertation*, and a *popular sermon*. And, the better to accustom them to public speaking, and critical investigation, they were called upon at the delivery of these exercises, to canvass the merits of each other's discourse. In this department of duty, he was as faithful and fearless, as he was active and conspicuous. It sometimes happened that a lamentable deficiency of evangelical matter was found in the performances which were submitted to their remarks. And, when this was the case, he always stood forth as the bold and uncompromising defender of those doctrines which he believed to be emphatically “the way, and the truth, and the life.”

Firmly established in the belief and experience of these doctrines himself, he felt indignant at any attempt to lessen their importance or to conceal their glory. And, in acting out the feelings of his heart in relation to such attempts, he often overwhelmed the object of his censure with conscious shame and confusion of face. On one occasion, especially, it is related of him, that, after the delivery of the discourse appointed for the day, he was observed to remain silent much longer than was usual for him at such times, apparently absorbed in profound thought, and hesitating whether to express his opinion of the performance or not. At length he was appealed to, by the presiding professor, and asked, whe-

ther he had any remarks to make. He arose and said, "I admired the sermon for the beauty of its style—for the splendour of its imagery—for the correctness of its sentiments—and for the point of its argument :—But, Sir, it wanted *one* thing ;" and then, pausing, until the eyes of all were fixed upon him, he added, "It needed to be *baptized* in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to entitle it to the name of a *Christian* sermon."

In addition to the part which he bore in those exercises, he was also conspicuous, as a member of a Theological Society, composed of students in the institution to which he belonged, who met together once a week for their mutual improvement. At these meetings an essay was sometimes read, on some subject connected with natural or revealed religion ; at other times, a systematic discourse was delivered on such a theme as the party himself might choose :—And this was followed by *a debate*, on some moral or religious topic. Two persons were appointed, on either side, to manage the discussion, and after arguing the matter at length, any other member present was at liberty to deliver his sentiments, and to assign his reasons for the views which he entertained. In this institution, he and his three associates became distinguished speakers :—And to the training, which they there received, may, in a great measure, be attributed that natural and forcible style of address for which they all became remarkable, after their entrance upon the active duties of the ministry.

While proceeding in this course of intellectual and moral training, however, a severe dispensation of Divine Providence occurred, which rendered it necessary that these chosen companions should separate, and that Mason should return to the country of his birth. Towards the close of the

year 1792, he received the distressing intelligence of his father's death. And the Church in New York having directed their attention towards him, as a fit successor to their lamented Pastor, he was soon recalled and placed over them as their "overseer." His licensure took place towards the close of 1792, and he was ordained and installed in the month of April following. In this situation, he continued to discharge his public and pastoral duties, with industry and faithfulness, and also with great success, confining his attention almost entirely to the benefit of his own immediate charge, until the year 1798, when he resolved upon appealing, through the medium of the press, to the Associate Reformed Churches of North America, on the subject of greater *frequency*, as well as greater *simplicity*, in the celebration of the Lord's supper. Until then, it had been the practice of this denomination, as it still is of many of the Presbyterian Churches in this country, and in Scotland generally, to commemorate the Redeemer's death only *twice*, and in some places only *once* in each year. And when the season of this commemoration returned, it was always preceded by a day of fasting, and followed by a day of thanksgiving. Believing these arrangements to have no express warrant from Scripture, and regarding them as not conducive to the best interests of the Churches, he wrote and published his "*Letters on Frequent Communion*;"* in which he advocates the importance of a more frequent attention to this ordinance—

* His principal other works are, "A Plea for Sacramental Communion on Catholic Principles," published in 1816; *Essays, Reviews, &c.* which are to be found in "The Christian's Magazine;" together with a number of Sermons, Orations, &c. published at different times in pamphlet form.

endeavours to disprove the expediency of days of fasting and thanksgiving, and answers the objections which were likely to impede the progress of his argument over the minds of others. The effect of this appeal is best understood from the fact, that most of the Churches belonging to this denomination soon began to relinquish their ancient practice, and have since been in the habit of celebrating the Lord's supper *four* times, and in other cases, *six* times, in each year.

Rising thus in influence and usefulness, until the beginning of the 19th century, he proposed to himself the idea of a public Theological Seminary, to be established by the authority, and to continue under the superintendance of the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Church. And, after digesting and maturing a plan, he finally carried it into operation, under his own immediate agency and influence, in the year 1801. This was the first institution of the kind ever established in the United States of America:—And, for its prosperity, he laboured and sacrificed much, and persevered in his successful endeavours to uphold and extend it as long as the health of his body and the vigour of his mind enabled him to continue the work. At its commencement, he was appointed by the synod, as their Professor:—Under their sanction he visited Europe for the purpose of procuring a library—returned after an absence of a little more than one year—and continued to discharge the duties of this office until his health became so much impaired as to admonish him that his Master's business in this respect was accomplished.

In connexion with the duties of this office, he still retained the pastoral charge of the Scotch Presbyterian Church in Cedar Street, until the spring of 1810; when, in consequence

of the too limited size of the building, as well as various other circumstances which had been preparing the way for this result, he resolved upon the enterprise of forming a new congregation. And in view of this enterprise, the Presbytery to which he belonged, dissolved his pastoral relation on the 25th day of May, 1810. The site of the building, in which we are now assembled, was then selected and procured. During the time of its erection, the infant congregation, which he had formed, held their assemblies in the Presbyterian Church in Cedar Street, then under the pastoral care of the Rev. Dr. Romeyn:—And finally, after all convenient expedition had been employed, the Murray Street Church was opened in the summer of 1812, and a dedication sermon, preceded by the reading of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the first temple, was delivered from the passage, "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than the glory of the former saith the Lord of Hosts."

Not satisfied, however, with the labours of this enterprise, as connected with the duties of his Professorship in the Theological Seminary, he, in the month of July, 1811, received and accepted an appointment, conferring upon him the office of Provost of Columbia College, in this City. In this situation, which he retained for a period of five years, he underwent such a degree of severe mental exertion, as few men could have endured for the same length of time.

During *five* days in every week, he was in the constant habit of attending to his classes in College, from twelve o'clock until half past one;—then meeting his Theological students at two, and remaining with them until half past three;—and, besides this, employing a part of every Saturday in hearing and correcting the discourses which they were appointed to deliver.

These duties, however, connected as they were with his unceasing preparations for the Pulpit, even *his* vigour of body and strength of mind, could not long sustain. And, accordingly, in the year 1816, he found it necessary to resign the last office which he had assumed, and to make immediate arrangements for a visit to Europe, for the restoration of his health. Preparatory to his departure, on this occasion, to which he was reluctantly compelled, he delivered his farewell discourse on the evening of the 7th day of July, from the passage, "Hold fast that which thou hast that no man take thy crown." From this visit he returned, with his health much improved, on Saturday, the 1st of November, 1817; and the next day, being the Sabbath, after the morning service, which had been conducted by another, he entered the pulpit and addressed the congregation in a peculiarly tender and appropriate manner. He expressed his sense of their firm attachment to him, and his gratitude to God, for sparing him to return to those scenes and employments, after which his heart had so long and so ardently panted,—contrasting the light and joy of the present scene, with the hour of his separation from them, and praying that his future labours among them might be abundantly blessed. In the evening of the same day, he preached to a crowded and attentive audience, from the declaration of his Divine Master, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."

After returning, on this occasion, to the bosom of his family and friends, he entered afresh upon the discharge of his Professional, as well as Pastoral duties. But it was not long before he began to feel, while they began to perceive with anxiety, the symptoms of returning exhaustion and

weakness. Early in the summer of 1819, he was the subject of what he supposed to be a slight *paralytic* affection, which, however, soon passed away, and left him in the enjoyment of his usual health. This affection was repeated, in the month of September, of the same year. And, in consequence of these attacks, he was advised by his physicians to discontinue his public services for some time. In conformity with this advice, he allowed an interval of six weeks to elapse before preaching again; and then, resuming his place, he continued to “feed the flock of God, over which he had been appointed overseer,” without interruption, until *the memorable event* which occurred on the 27th day of February, in the year 1820. On the Sabbath previous to this, his morning discourse had been peculiarly excellent and tender;—a large amount of *feeling*, as well as of *mind*, had been expended upon it;—and, in the course of the subsequent week, he was observed by all the members of his family, to be in a state of uncommon depression, both of body and of mind. A general lassitude appeared to have overtaken his frame; and efforts were made in vain to interest and arouse him. And when the returning Sabbath arrived, he commenced the services of the sanctuary, under an obvious depression of spirits, as well as of bodily weakness. After the introductory exercises, he read the twenty-seventh chapter of the Gospel by Matthew, on which he was then lecturing in course:—He entered upon the exposition of the passage: but soon finding himself unable to proceed, he raised his hand to his head, and, bursting into tears, he informed the congregation that the disorder under which he had been labouring, had so impaired the powers of his mind, that he could not command them. He then made a very

short prayer—gave out three verses of the fifty-sixth Psalm, —and dismissed the congregation, by pronouncing the benediction.

After this event it became obvious to his congregation, as well as to all around him that his health was effectually impaired :—And unwilling that *this*, or any other circumstance should induce him to seek a dissolution of his pastoral connexion with them, several attempts were made to procure a collegiate pastor to assist him in his labours.

These attempts however were not successful ; and, in the mean time, his strength had so far revived, that, on the first Sabbath of the ensuing October, he again resumed his pulpit duties, by entering upon an exposition of the First Epistle of Peter :—And this exposition he continued, with but few interruptions until he finally resigned his charge into the hands of the Presbytery, on the 25th day of October, 1821.

Previous to this event, he had received an invitation from the Trustees of Dickinson College, in Carlisle, Penn. to take the charge of their Institution—the exercises of which had been suspended for a number of years, but which they were then about to revive. And supposing that such a situation might employ him usefully, while its demands would not be more than equal to his strength :—supposing at the same time, that a removal from the eastern damp, of the ocean to the interior, would be beneficial to his health ; he resolved upon accepting this appointment. Farther experience, however, soon convinced him that even to the duties of this station, his health was inadequate. And, in the fall of 1824, he returned to this city, where he has since been residing among his own immediate friends. During much of the time which has since elapsed, he enjoyed a comfortable state

of bodily health :—But, for the greater part of the last year, the remainder of his strength was obviously, though gradually wasting away. On the Friday preceding his death, a returning paralytic affection, admonished his attending physician, as well as his surrounding friends, that the time of his “departure” was near at hand. And, from that time, his difficulty of articulation was so far increased, that little was said by him which could be understood by others; *enough*, however, to show where the anchor of his hope was fixed; and to convince those around him that the rod and the staff of the Chief Shepherd were comforting him as he entered the valley of the shadow of death. In reply to a remark which was made by one of his friends, that there was but *one* source of consolation in that trying situation in which he was placed, he answered emphatically, “*Yes*, there is but one source of consolation, *but that’s enough*.” And, in answer to the question whether Jesus, the Saviour, was still precious to him, he replied, “*He is, He is*.” These it is believed were among the last intelligible words which he uttered; and, having thus finished his course, “he took his departure for the heavenly world, at half-past 8 o’clock on the morning of the last Sabbath, and in the 60th year of his age. In the twinkling of an eye, he was withdrawn from all the sorrows and sins of this mortal life, and invited by “the Righteous Judge,” to take his seat “with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God.”

Even if your time and patience would permit, my hearers, I should not feel disposed to attempt a description of the *transcendant talents*, and the *impressive eloquence*, of this departed servant of Christ. To those who enjoyed the opportunity of *hearing* him proclaim the wonderful works of

God, such a description would be unnecessary—and to those who have not heard him, no description which I could give, could possibly convey an adequate idea of the reality.

He was such a man, as this world seldom sees, in the prominent characteristics of his mind, as well as in the peculiar qualities of his heart. He was altogether of a more *princely* mould, than even the majority of great men who were brought into competition with him upon the theatre of action. Bold and animated in his manner;—and keen and comprehensive in all his views, he was qualified to subserve the interests of the kingdom of Christ upon a large scale.

And at the same time, in the more retired walks of social and domestic life, there was no kinder and more sympathising friend—no more agreeable and instructive companion—no more tender and affectionate husband—and especially no more fond and anxious parent.

As to the predominant character of his *public ministrations*, they were eminently formed upon the model of “Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” Speaking out of “the abundance of the heart,” he always advocated the doctrines of grace, as if he was clinging to them, as his own hope for immortality, while he recommended them to the faith and acceptance of others.

“What *holy boldness* did possess the man!
 When speaking on redemption’s glorious plan
 His soul would *flame*
 For all the doctrines that he taught, he knew,
 And from experience he could *pledge* them true
 In Jesus’ name.”

As to the character of his own individual *piety*, it was eminently lively, tender, and affectionate; marked by strong

faith in the promises of God ; and, at the same time, by deep feeling, in relation to every thing which was calculated to excite the emotions of the heart. In this respect, it often appeared conspicuously in his public ministrations ; but was seen and felt, still more frequently and forcibly, by those who were more immediately around his person, in the intercourse and relations of social and domestic life.

And, for the purpose of illustrating this idea, I may be allowed to refer to an interesting incident, which occurred immediately before his departure for Europe, in the year 1816, when he was brought to the trying moment of taking leave of his family, and committing them to the care of Divine Providence, until the time of his expected return. It was on the evening of the Sabbath after he had preached his farewell discourse to his people, to which we have already referred. About the time at which the shades of the evening were beginning to fall, while walking up and down, in one of the rooms of his own house, in company with a friend, to whom he was accustomed sometimes to impart his feelings, he remarked, "I have often thought and preached of the character of Jesus Christ, as the Lord, *the Keeper* ; but now that I am about to leave my family, I can realize the meaning, and feel the full value, of the title." In a few minutes afterwards, he took leave of his family, one by one : and then, gathering them together, he took his seat beside the partner of his life and his aged mother, and invited them to unite with him in singing the hymn, entitled, "*The Lord will provide.*" He raised the tune, and

continued to sing with a steady and unflinching voice, until he arrived at the closing verse,

“When life sinks apace,
And death is in view,
This word of his grace
Will comfort us through:
No fearing or doubting,
With Christ on our side,
We hope to die shouting,
‘The Lord will provide.’”

At this moment his lip quivered, and the tears of affection began to start from his eyes:—He clasped his hands together, and dropped his head upon them; as if engaged in mental prayer;—and then, rising from his chair, with his hands still clasped, he lifted his face upward, and exclaimed, “*God! the God of my fathers! my own God! and the God of my seed! bless my family.*”

And, having said this, without uttering another word, he moved towards the door of his dwelling, and departed.

I am admonished, however, by the lapse of time, that I must detain you no longer. He is gone!—and “the places that once knew him, shall know him no more.” And it remains for us all, whether his immediate friends or not, to “rise with him to those things which are above;”—and so to live, that we may “die the death of the righteous,” and that our “last end” may be “like his.” Amen!

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