

*An Affectionate
Farewell Address*

to . . .

FRIENDS

of . . .

NORTH AMERICA

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By **GEORGE WITHY**

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FRIENDS'
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF
SWARTHMORE COLLEGE

AN AFFECTIONATE
FAREWELL ADDRESS

.. TO ..

FRIENDS

.. IN ..

NORTH AMERICA

BY GEORGE WITHY

Press of the
Republican, Barnesville, O

1904

AN AFFECTIONATE FAREWELL ADDRESS, &c.

DEAR FRIENDS,

BEING about to return to my native land, I believe it will contribute to my peace, if I salute you in this way, and express a little of those feelings with which I have been often seriously impressed during my sojourning amongst you. Although I have traveled about five thousand miles, and attended a great many meetings in America, there are many settlements of friends, and probably thousands who are members of our religious society, where it has not been within the limits of my concern to go, and whose faces, of course, I have never seen. Notwithstanding these circumstances, I have known no bounds to my solicitude and frequent, earnest desire, that, however my dear Brethren may be outwardly scattered over this vast continent, they may be all built on the one only true foundation, and inwardly gathered to the one Shepherd, and into the one only true sheepfold; that so, as a people, we may continue to be one in discipline, in faith, and doctrine; harmoniously labouring together, that the pure testimonies of truth maintained by our worthy predecessors, may be handed down unsullied to posterity; that so, ages to come and generations yet unborn, may be encouraged to build on the same sure foundation, Christ Jesus, the eternal rock of ages; who by the inward revelation of his power, can and will, as we are obedient, and as far as is needful for us in the way and work of salvation, unfold, from time to time, the mysterious operation of his redeeming love and power. My mind hath been often deeply tried while my lot hath been cast in this land, under the painful consideration, that there are many in our day, who are soaring with airy notions far above the simplicity of the truth as it is in Jesus, and who are endeavouring to climb up some other way than that in which the way-faring men though fools (as to this world's wisdom) shall not err. But it remains a truth, "that he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up

some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." There is no way to the Father but by the Son, nor is there any knowledge of the Father but through the Son, agreeably to our Lord's declaration—"I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me." This can never be comprehended by the carnal mind, which is enmity against God: and no marvel that those who are in this state are enquiring with one formerly "how can these things be?"

The longer I live the more I am confirmed in my belief, that if we are ever favoured to understand the mystery of the redeeming love of God in Christ Jesus, we must cease from our own works, and be brought into a teachable state, by the inward operation of the power of the Lord, and there learn the first rudiments of christian experience. These appear to me to be very simple, and it only wants simplicity on our parts to become proficient in this school. If we attend to the inwardly revealed power of him, who came to save us from the dominion of sin here, and from the guilt and punishment due to sin in an hereafter state, we shall have no need to go to man for instruction herein. If the sincere prayer of our souls be, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened," he who is full of compassion will unfold to our understanding what our state by nature is, and how we may be delivered from the hand of our souls' enemy. Here we shall be favoured to see that our "Redeemer is strong, the Lord of hosts is his name." He shall thoroughly plead our cause that he may "give rest to the land, and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon." And for want of our coming under this awakening work, which a religion of tradition and education can never accomplish, many I fear are great strangers to themselves, and to the principles of pure religion; and although they may have known enough of the anointing to enable them to see "men as trees walking," yet for want of a due submission of their wills to the divine will, they have taken up a rest short of the true rest, and so become dwarfs in religious experience, and are endeavoring to seek an easier way to the kingdom than by the cross; hence often arises vain jangling about words to no profit, and a propensity to dispute about, more than to obey, the precepts of the everlasting gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Those who have been truly awaken-

ed to a sense of their need of a Saviour, those who have been convinced of the necessity of repentance from dead works, before they can be brought into a capacity to serve the living God, will be constrained to walk in deep humility before him, and be enabled frequently to pray, Lord, increase my faith, and the things I know not teach thou me: Here all high notions of ourselves and of our attainments will be brought low, and laid down at the feet of Jesus. When the mind is brought into this prepared state, the mystery of redeeming love will be so clearly understood, that the carnal enquiry, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses and of Juda, and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" will be heard no more; but in reverent abasement we shall be led to admire the goodness of Him, who "so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." We shall then feel and know "that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," and that beautiful description given of him by the apostle Paul in his epistle to the Philippians, will prove an unfailing source of consolation, when the poor mind may be tossed with tempest and not comforted, and is under the discouraging prospect, that there are many in our day who are endeavouring to invalidate the truths of the gospel, and who are denying the Divinity of the son of God. The apostle speaking of him, says—"Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. But made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Earnest indeed is the solicitude of of my soul that we, in an especial manner as a religious society, may remain unmoved in these ancient doctrines of the gospel, and be enabled "to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering."

I have been much exercised on account of those who are engaged amongst us in the work of the ministry, that they all may have the blessed experience of these things in themselves, avoiding all ambiguous expressions in the exercise of their gifts, "and holding fast the form of sound words," that so none may attempt to appear wise above what is written. There have been instances where individuals not abiding in the low valley of humility have soared above the preserving principle, and lost their gifts; and were these to minister from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, the church would not be edified by their labours; and however such may become vain in their imaginations or high in their conceit of superior attainments, however they may endeavour to explain the way of man's redemption, and salvation, they will only be like such who beat the air, and perhaps ultimately be found amongst those who are stumbling blocks in the way of serious enquirers. How forcible are the expressions of the apostle—First "no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." If any minister let him do it as of the ability which God giveth, that "God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ." If we speak from the ability which God giveth, we shall never contradict the outward testimony of the holy scriptures in any of the fundamental doctrines they contain.—We shall never reduce them to an allegory, so as to explain away any of the benefits intended by the coming and death of Christ Jesus, but we shall be enabled nobly to contend for the "faith which was once delivered unto the saints," and which is precious to all those who are rightly acquainted with its leavening operation. We shall not then be ashamed to acknowledge, that it is "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and by the renewing of the Holy Ghost." Then the doctrine of a crucified Saviour will be precious to ourselves, and in the overflowings of that divine love which is the spring of all right gospel ministry, the ultimate end of all our labors will be to invite others, to "behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," to inculcate, as ability is mercifully vouchsafed, that there is not salvation in any other; that

there is "none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved, but by the name of Jesus," which remains to be as ointment poured forth, and for the savour whereof the virgins love him. Thus would the ministry brighten amongst us; there would then be no divinations of our own or any cause administered for the enemies of truth to triumph, and charge us (as is now frequently the case) with holding doctrines inconsistent with the plain truths of the gospel. I would therefore tenderly recommend to all who are engaged in the work of the ministry, to be frequent in the perusal of the holy scriptures, not that they may become ministers of the letter, but that they may be enabled to understand with clearness, the many precious and corresponding testimonies in the old and new testaments concerning the coming and office of Christ Jesus our Lord; that so we may strengthen the hands one of another, to maintain the ancient doctrines of our religious society, and be firm in our testimony against the insidious inroads of infidelity in all its disguised forms—We have been often accused of allegorising away the offering of Christ; that he came only to end the Jewish dispensation, and to become an example of righteousness; when our worthy predecessors maintained, and all who are living in the principle of truth, in the present day maintain, that our blessed Lord offered himself up on Calvary's mount, an holy propitiatory sacrifice for our sins and the sins of the whole world, and that we have "redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:" and this agrees not only with the ancient prophecies concerning him, but with the testimonies of the apostles in the purest age of the christian church. The prophet Isaiah in allusion to the offering of Christ, says, "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgression, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes are we healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison

and from judgment; and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken." The apostle Paul in his epistle to the Galatians expresses himself in this feeling language, "Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins." The apostle John declares, "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."—"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree," said Peter. I might multiply examples of this kind to a length that would far exceed the limits I propose. The writings of our ancient friends are replete with similar testimonies, indeed there is scarcely one to be selected in which it may not be found. And I earnestly recommend my dear brethren and sisters of every rank, and of every age, to be more conversant with the writings of our worthy predecessors. We have many advantages, and I wish it may be our concern to improve them to our present and everlasting interest; that so the lamentation may never be taken up concerning any of us—"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."

I have felt much concerned as I have passed along, for those who are parents, that they may be brought into a capacity to train up their children in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord." Great indeed is the responsibility of those in this station. And should any be more concerned for their children's advancement in worldly things, than to see them attain to an establishment in the truth, what a fearful account will these have to render in a day that is approaching. I have thought that the careless manner in which part of the first day of the week is spent by many, frequently in loitering about, and in unnecessary, and very unprofitable visiting; the very great neglect of collecting families together at suitable opportunities for the purpose of reading the holy scriptures, and other useful publications, and for the mutual help and edification of each other, have had a strong tendency to produce increasing lukewarmness to our religious testimonies, and have been an incalculable injury to the rising generation; many of whom have lost the mark, that in a great many instances which have come under my notice since I have been among you, I had no apprehension

that they were under our name; and from what I have seen and felt in many places, I have no doubt but it has proceeded from the negligence of parents, in that wholesome and timely restraint of their children, that would have redounded to the peace of their own minds, and to the present and everlasting happiness of their tender offspring. Were we, who are parents, enough concerned to instruct our children in the law of the Lord, and do as they were commanded to do under a former dispensation, viz. "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thine heart all the days of thy life; but teach them thy sons, and thy son's sons,"—were we thus concerned for the everlasting salvation of our own souls, and the souls of our offspring, I believe many parents would be stirred up to greater diligence, and more would mourn over the deviations from plainness of habit and manners so obvious in their children. There may be instances of rebellious children who will not take counsel, but I have no doubt, from my own experience, that much may be done to "prepare the way of the Lord," in the youthful mind; and by neglecting the proper opportunity, parents are instrumental to prepare the way of the enemy and the destroyer. What concern can those parents have in these things, or what hope of exercising any proper restraint upon their children in a future day, who deck and adorn them even in infancy, with apparel wholly inconsistent with our profession of plainness and simplicity? If we wish to train up our children in the way they should walk, it must be done by early and diligent care, by timely subjecting their will to prudent and christian restraint in divers respects. I believe there have been few more fruitful sources of the deviation of our youth, than that of parents suffering them to associate with improper company, and to be too frequently from under their notice. The propensity of many who are the heads of families, to visiting, and being visited, very often to the neglect and obstruction of their own domestic concerns, and the scattering of their minds from all that is serious, has produced similar habits in their children, and which I have no doubt in many instances have been a fruitful source of pain to both at a season when their habits have been so confirmed that

it was difficult to find a retreat. By this habit of what is called visiting, much precious time is wasted, frequently many things neglected at home, and an inducement excited to much nicety and sometimes great extravagance in dress, &c. Hereby many unprofitable acquaintances have been formed with persons accidentally met with where they visit, and in some instances ruin to families or to the unguarded youth has ensued. I have no wish to prevent a profitable and friendly intercourse and interchange of sentiments one with another, but I do believe, that were we living under the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, we should be more willing to submit to its restraints, and our conduct and countenances would more evince that we had been with him. Time at most is very short to us all, for the great and important business of our day, and those who have large families committed to their care, had need to husband their time well to discharge their duty in all its branches, so that they may feel clear of the blood of their tender offspring in the awful day of account. I greatly long that our "sons may be as plants grown up in their youth, and our daughters as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace," that so there may be a succession of standard bearers in our society, and that the cause of truth may prosper in their day. As a father, and as a friend, I affectionately intreat the youth to enter early into covenant with God, to serve him all their days; the Lord loveth an early sacrifice, and has graciously promised, that "those that seek me early shall find me." I much desire that the minds of our youth may be early imbued with the christian principles of our religious society; that so they may become proof against the antichristian doctrines so prevalent in the world. I remember the apostle's advice to the Colossians, and it may be very suitable counsel for us in the present day; "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." And if the rising generation could be encouraged to enlist under his holy banner, I have no doubt but that judges would be raised up as at the first and counselors as at the beginning, and so the waist places in our borders

would be repaired: and however gloomy things may appear in some places, I have no doubt in my mind but that the Lord will in his own time bless the dust of Sion and satisfy all her poor with bread: That he will give his church, the heathen for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession. I have sometimes believed that the Lord will raise up from among the rising generation, those who may be gifted for the promotion of this great and good work. I feel very tenderly for the youth among us, and know that in many places there are neither, "nursing fathers," nor "nursing mothers," but if they are in good earnest concerned to "seek the Lord and his strength, he will supply all their need, and fulfil his promise, "I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Come then ye dear young people, and enter into covenant with the God of our fathers. Remember the advice David gave unto his son Solomon—"Thou Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind; if thou seek him, he will be found of thee, but if thou forsake him he will cast thee off forever." By your thus seeking you will be favoured to find, for the gracious promise remains in full force, "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find: knock and it shall be opened unto you." The retrospect of early dedication to the Lord's service will afford more consolation in a dying hour, than all the possessions of the perishing things of time. I have secretly mourned many times, and in many places, since my lot hath been cast in this land, to see so many lovely young people giving an unworthy preference to the things of time, and so much carried away by the follies of a deluded age, that thus the simplicity truth leads into in dress and behavior is wholly departed from; and though, in many instances, this is more chargeable to the negligent parent than to the inexperienced youth, my desire is, that both parents and children may let the time past suffice, and that all ranks and ages among us may heartily enter into the work of individual reformation, that so every man may be engaged to repair the breach in the wall before his own house; and if we are thus engaged, I have no doubt but that our society will again put on her beautiful garments and become the admiration of surround-

ing beholders. The principles we hold are the principles of Truth, they have long stood the test of investigation: our worship and discipline are evidently not the product of the contrivance of man, and there is nothing wanting but consistency on our part, to enable us to hold up, to others the inviting and encouraging language of the prophet Isaiah, "Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities; thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any cords thereof be broken. But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our law-giver, the Lord is our King, he will save us." And in order that these precious experiences may be yours, I affectionately salute all ranks among you, and in gospel love fervently desire that you mind your calling, brethren; for as we are all engaged to mind our calling and to be faithful to what is committed to our trust, we shall be enabled to fill our ranks in righteousness, to the praise of his grace who hath called us unto glory and virtue. A diligent attendance of religious meetings, patient reverent waiting therein for the renewal of strength, frequent retirement at home, and frequent perusing the holy scriptures, are duties within our reach; and as we are found in the exercise of them, I have no doubt but that He who is rich in mercy to all that call upon him, will in his own time (which no man can hasten) favour us with a renewed evidence that we are not forsaken. And that although we are weak, he remains to be strong, and as we are obedient to the manifestations of his grace, we shall, through his power, obtain the victory over the "world, the flesh and the devil," and be bound together in the bundle of love, and be thereby strengthened, "to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace;" till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive: but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things,

which is the head, even Christ.”

Thus, my dear friends, if our eye be kept single in our holy Head, we shall come to know an establishment on the ancient foundation that standeth sure; be preserved amidst all the changing scenes of the present life, and through the adorable goodness of God in Christ Jesus, be favoured to finish our course with joy.

Thus it was with the primitive believers, who counted all things but as dross and as dung, that they might thus win Christ and be found in him. This experience can never be attained by any empty speculations in religion, nor without our passing through the inward work of sanctification, which work can only be begun, carried on, and completed by the power of him who has all power in heaven and in earth.

And when this blessed experience becomes ours, we shall be willing to lay all at the feet of Jesus, and thank God for his “unspeakable gift,” and be enabled to adopt the expressions of the apostle Peter, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness, through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith even the salvation of your souls.”

I rejoice, while I am penning this fruit of my unfeigned love to the brethren, in believing that there are many preserved amongst us who are no strangers to these things, but who can, in and under all the discouragements of the present day, set to their seals that these things are true. May these be encouraged to leave the things that are behind, and to press forward towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus our Lord, that so they may be found in a state of readiness to join the just of all generations, when the conflicts of the present life may terminate, and be favoured through all eternity, to join in singing the song of “Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb, saying, great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints.”

Manhattanville, 10th of 9th month, 1822.

G. W.

