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T.F. Tompkins.

John Wilson
Dunse

*THE DEATH OF MINISTERS ILLUSTRATED
AND IMPROVED :*

TWO DISCOURSES,

PREACHED IN PORTSBURGH CHURCH, 23^d SEPTEMBER
1832, FIRST SABBATH AFTER THE FUNERAL OF
THE REV. ALEXANDER NISBET.

BY

THE REV. JOHN SMART, A. M.

LEITH.

“ Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.”—“ Remember
them who had the rule over you : whose faith follow.”

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THESE Discourses are published at the request of the Elders and Managers of the Church in which they were delivered. The Author thinks it necessary to state this as an excuse for a publication which had otherwise been gladly withheld. He is well aware, that beyond a plain statement of Scriptural truth, the Discourses contain nothing to recommend them to public favour. They were composed, besides, at a time of considerable personal distraction ; and the event which occasioned them produced additional agitation. The request, however, for their publication was enforced by the assurance, that, from the crowded state of a comparatively small house, many for whose benefit they were expressly prepared heard them but partially, while some heard them not at all. This representation prevailed ; and if the Author prove, in any degree, a comforter or a teacher to the sorrowing flock of his valued and lamented brother, he shall be content that no others notice his work.

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SERMON I.

JOSHUA i. 2.—“MOSES MY SERVANT IS DEAD.”

THE text records a fact which to us, in its primary sense, is neither striking nor tender. To us it is no way strange, that He who of old commanded Pharaoh to let Israel go out of his land, and who in the end led them forth, spoiling the Egyptians; who was the commander of this ancient people during their wanderings in the wilderness, and their leader to the borders of the promised land; should now be spoken of as among those who have long been dead. And, as there cannot be with us any tender recollection of his person in life or in death, or any individual impressions of his usefulness, we can peruse the record of his decease without much emotion. Moses was a man of a former age, and that age far removed from our own. He is known to us only from history, and not by actual intercourse. Though we read, therefore, that Moses is dead, we neither wonder nor grieve.

The event, however, which has required my presence among you this day, and which renders these words an appropriate source of meditation, is of a very opposite character. To human judgment it appears awfully mysterious. To your feelings, as to mine, and those of many others, it is truly sad. When I last stood in this place, I introduced

to you a young friend and brother as your future pastor. Having done so, I sat among you listening to his first pastoral discourse ; and as it proceeded, my prayers were joined with yours, that his course in the ministry might be long, and useful, and happy. But alas for the frailty of man ! alas for the uncertainty of human hopes, even when most deeply seated, and apparently most wisely formed ! Since then, and how short the interval ! his life has ended, and his ministry has closed. It cannot, then, fail to strike you, and to fill you with sadness, that we who so lately rejoiced together at his rising, should for the first time meet to weep over his grave. But so it is. Our friend sleepeth,—The servant of the Lord is dead*.

Although the death of Moses, then, may be to us neither strange nor sad, that event which the record of it may guide us rightly to contemplate and fully to improve, is, as we say, both mysterious and melancholy. A youth, amiable and talented, gifted by nature and sanctified through grace, has suddenly fallen, and his “ sun has gone down while it was yet day.” A minister, accomplished and faithful, useful from the first, and giving sure promise of increasing usefulness, has been taken from the church, and his ministry has been left to “ wither in all the leaves of its spring.” If, then, we say nothing of parental affection wounded and disappointed, and many relatives who are bereaved and afflicted, and regard only that mysterious aspect of Divine Providence presented to us by the event, and that public calamity occasioned by the sorrowful dispensation, who can treat it without feelings

* The author had preached at the introduction of Mr Nisbet on 24th November 1831, and had not till now again preached to his congregation.

of perplexity and grief? Aaron, when two young ministers fell by a wrathful judgment, "held his peace." Much more may we say, Thou didst it and we were silent.

In the prospect of meeting with you, therefore, in circumstances so peculiar and tender, it was no easy matter for me to decide on what topic I should address you. Many might have been considered seasonable. The unsearchable, yet wise and gracious character of Divine judgments seemed to me appropriate. The inheritance of the saints in light, on which our departed friend has, we believe, now entered, appeared not less so. And to good effect might we have spoken from those words of the Saviour, "If ye loved me ye would rejoice, because I said, I go to the Father." In the end, however, we chose the words now read, as admitting of the greatest variety of consolatory and useful remarks on such an occasion as this. And while I discourse from them, it is my ardent wish to refuse all worldly motives, to suppress every earthly attachment, and with all the solemn anticipations of death, and judgment, and eternity, which the incidents of this season bring so powerfully before me, to seek your spiritual comfort and edification. Your circumstances, too, are greatly advantageous for devout impressions. May our mutual profiting, then, appear to all!

The text suggests two topics of discourse. The one is the death of ministers. The other is the improvement which should be made of such an event. The first of these shall be the subject of the present discourse.

In illustration, then, of the death of ministers, we would notice, in the first place, that,

The sinfulness of ministers explains their mortality.

“In many things we offend all.” Such is the statement of an apostle respecting himself and his brethren in office. Deep and just as was their sense of the spiritual and sacred character of their work, and peculiar as were their qualifications for the performance of it, they yet acknowledged thus their infirmities and their errors. The ministry of reconciliation is yet committed to men of like passions with yourselves. And if even inspired ministers frankly and openly confess their sinfulness, who of the ministers of our day will either claim, or accept the praise of having “made their hearts clean, and of being pure from sin?”

Formal or lengthened proof on this subject is neither required nor expected. The servants of the Lord inherit, like other men, a depraved nature. The sinfulness of their nature appears in the errors of their lives. The guilt of their sin may be pardoned for His sake whom they set forth as a propitiation; but depravity yet retains, in the best of them, a part of its early dominion. Accordingly, they sin with their tongues; in personal duties they are often remiss; in official labours they frequently transgress; and those even in the least degree familiar with their persons, or observant of their habits, will soon and easily discover in the holiest of their order, many and sad demonstrations of a sinful nature. The perfection, then, of the servants of the Lord, is not so much as imagined by any save those who are ignorant, and therefore superstitious; and the profane and silly conceit is favoured by none of themselves, except such as are hypocritical and foolish.

But apart from all argumentation on such a subject, we

return to our remark, and affirm every servant of the Lord to be sinful. The best were so whom Jehovah ever gifted to the church, and in whose light the church rejoiced for a season. The treasure is yet in earthen vessels. Accordingly, the judgment of God over our fallen nature is this, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed on all men for that all have sinned. In the case, then, of even the most devout and spiritual of the servants of God, though "the spirit be life because of righteousness, the body is dead because of sin." How pertinent and affecting is the instance to which the text refers as an illustration of this truth. "Moses the servant of the Lord is dead." He had this testimony, that he pleased God. To his great and varied excellence the church of old gladly bare record. "My servant Moses, said Jehovah, is faithful in all mine house, with him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently and not in dark speeches, and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold." The Divine favour for him, too, is at the same time proclaimed, to the confusion of all his adversaries; and it is added, "Wherefore, then, were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" At his death, moreover, in token of their deep sense of the excellence of his character, and the usefulness of his life, the congregation of Israel wept for him thirty days in the plains of Moab. But great and good man as he was, he was a sinner. "He spake unadvisedly with his lips;" and, accordingly, in the Sacred Record, his death, as well as that of Aaron, another eminent and holy minister of God, is explained by their sinfulness. "Get thee up," said God, "to mount Abarim, and die in the mount

whither thou goest up, and be gathered to thy people, as was Aaron thy brother ; because ye trespassed against me at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, because ye sanctified me not among the children of Israel.”

In like manner, the sinfulness of ministers in our day explains their death. The most devout—the most esteemed of their number must pay the debt of nature. The best are “ not suffered to continue by reason of death.” Such an explanation, however, of the mortality of ministers ought not to diminish the usefulness of their lives, or to lessen the regrets occasioned by their death. If, as believers, they have washed and been made clean in the open fountain of the Saviour’s atoning blood, they may profitably serve the church, and, when faithful, claim its esteem. If united to Him who has abolished death, the infliction of it as a curse is done away, and to them death has no sting. “ It is appointed unto all men once to die. But blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.”

The servants of the Lord, then, being sinful, are mortal like other men. The voices which are for a time heard in the persuasive accents of earnest and christian benevolence, entreating sinners to be reconciled unto God, and directing saints to make their calling and election sure, must be put to silence. Their busy and elevated course, whose work it is devoutly to muse on holy things, and dispense freely instruction, and warning, and comfort, must, like that of other men, be arrested by the hand of death. They among whom ministers now go preaching the Gospel, must one day see their faces no more. The spirit shall return to God who gave it. The body shall return to the dust as it was. This

fact, melancholy if we must so call it, is illustrated by the events of every age. Moses, the servant of God, is dead. Joshua, to whom the sad event was announced in the words of our text, is also dead. Our fathers, where are they, and the prophets, do they live for ever? Every church suffers the frequent loss of its pastors. An all-wise Providence has, in close succession, removed two from among yourselves. And in a little while he who thus notices their departure, must himself follow them to the grave. "I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living."

We would further remark as to the death of ministers, that they have each an appointed time of service in the Church.

The death of Moses was in no sense fortuitous. The time of it, its scene, all its circumstances indeed, seemed to have been arranged according to the Divine decree. "From the plains of Moab he went up to the Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho; and Moses, the servant of God, died there, according to the word of the Lord." From these facts the inference is plain, that to this servant of God there was a certain extent of labour prescribed. The time was fixed at which his life should close; the period determined at which his ministry should end; and when the number of his years was complete, when his work was done, a devout saying of his own was illustrated, "Thou turnest man to destruction, thou sayest Return ye children of men," and he died.

As to the ministers of Christ in our day, they have still a specified time for labour, a required portion of work to per-

form. Indeed there is to all men an appointed time upon the earth; and it is no invidious distinction that of the servants of God this remark be made. To use the words of Job, they “accomplish as an hireling their day.” Nay, according to the Saviour’s appointment,—endowed as he graciously pleases,—assigned to that portion of the vineyard which he ordains,—labouring with that degree of success or disappointment which he may in sovereignty vouchsafe or inflict,—they occupy till Christ come, and their Master saith, “Give an account of your stewardship, for you may be no longer stewards.”

This time of ministerial service which the Head of the Church appoints to all his servants respectively, is fixed by him in absolute but gracious sovereignty. In His hands are all men as clay in the hands of the potter. In Him all men live, and move, and have their being. In His hand our life is, and His are all our ways; and he giveth none account of his matters unto any. May HE not do, then, “what he will with his own?” The sovereignty of Christ, however, is an empire as wise as it is supreme. With this matter then, as with all others, the Church and its faithful ministers gladly and confidently entrust the Saviour. “He is head over all things to the Church, which is his body,” and its members say, He doth all things well.

In the exercise of this high sovereignty, however, much may occur to human judgment perplexing and mysterious, and to human affections painful and irreparable. Divine decisions, in this respect, men may be tempted to arraign as capricious and arbitrary; and the results of them many mourners may long and loudly bewail. Indeed, in this de-

partment of providence, the Church may be favoured at times with much that is gratifying and consolatory, or tried at others with every conceivable variety of mysterious or afflicting dispensations. Some have a long and prosperous course in the ministry; others a course less extensive, and more chequered with trials; and to some a very brief period of service is appointed. So brief is the ministry of some, that it acquires little public character save for its brevity. All these varieties are to be witnessed in the course of Divine providence; and many diversities occur under these heads. Some are permitted to continue their labours without interruption to extreme age,—to bear the burden of many laborious years,—to see the aspect of their flock entirely change,—to survive all the friends of their youth,—to cherish the memory of the sires of those whom they now serve,—and, in doing so, to bring from their recollections of these, motives to persuade their “children’s children” to remember the God of their fathers, and to serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind. These may lift their voice in the church, and exclaim, We have been young and now are old. By reason of more strength their years are fourscore. The labours of others are not so protracted or continuous. They often faint and are weary; still they are allowed to survive the years of youth, and to reach mature age,—to review their youthful ministrations after greater experience has been acquired,—to lament the imperfections of these, and to resolve on greater diligence and higher aims; but just as they approach their new plans, the labours which infirmities often interrupted are terminated by death, and they rest from their labours. And there are some who

“work but one hour!” The youths faint and are weary, the young men utterly fall. “They are as a sleep: they are like the grass which groweth up; in the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and fades.” These but assure the Church of their capacity to serve it, and leave it to lament their premature removal. The congratulations which hail their rising, are soon exchanged for lamentations at their fall. The aged, who rejoiced that long after themselves they would sustain the cause of Christ, sorrowfully survive them. The young, who gladly hailed the coming of such welcome leaders, are bereaved and dejected. They are not; for Christ has taken them. Such are some of the varieties in the periods of service appointed to the service of the Lord. A few live to old age prosperous and happy: many die amid their useful labours: some die just as they begin their course. Christ appoints to all the bounds of their habitation, which they cannot pass.

This view of Christ’s sovereignty is intimately connected with the edification of the church, and the comfort of its ministers. It is well that He who gives to his Church pastors and teachers, and who endows them with their peculiar gifts, and supports them in their various spheres, should determine the period of service to be required from each; and how secure and regular shall be the prosperity of the church, in so far as that depends on the lives of its ministers, since He who “walks amid the seven golden candlesticks, holds also the seven stars in his right hand?” It contributes, besides, greatly to the comfort of Christ’s servants, that in every respect they do his will. The thought of Christ’s sovereignty cheers

a long and laborious life in the ministry, the comforts of which are not very abundant, the successes of which are not very apparent, and the reward of which is long delayed. The same thought is fitted to reconcile the servant of God to a brief course in the ministry, even though he should need to part with many comforts, and to die when an abundant harvest promises to repay his care. “Christ casteth one down, and raiseth another up. Our God is in the heavens, and doeth what pleaseth him.”

We further remark, That ministers often die when their life is most desired, and apparently needful.

The time of Moses' death was very peculiar. Had the judgment of man appointed it, it had been fixed either much earlier, or somewhat later, than the time at which it did actually occur. This decision might have been defended by many considerations; some affecting Moses personally, and many equally weighty, affecting the congregation of Israel. That illustrious enterprise, on which, if we may not say he spent his strength, since, even at death, his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated, yet in which his life had passed,—with which his desires and hopes had been so long identified,—the difficulties of which, many and serious as they were, had been met with firmness, and were now nearly terminated,—the accomplishment of which was so faithfully expected, even when its progress was most seriously impeded;—that enterprise was on the very eve of its consummation. And must Moses die now? must he die here? Now! when the labour of his life was so near its earthly recompense? Here! while Israel lay encamped on the very borders of the

promised land? The congregation, too, at this time, we may suppose, must have ardently desired his life, and greatly needed his continuance with them. Rebellious as they had often been against his authority, and ungrateful as they had often been for his kind and faithful services, yet we must regard them attached to his person. Who, then, would they desire to lead them to triumph, more than he, who had so long shared their trials, endured their provocations, and relieved their cares? Their entrance, too, into the rest of Canaan, they might fear, would be delayed by his removal: and they might even dread internal anarchy and confusion, or some foreign attacks, which might turn them aside for ever from the inheritance they had so nearly possessed. But, truly, God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways. When his life was most desired, and apparently needful, it was said, "Moses my servant is dead."

This view of Divine Providence is still frequently presented. It is connected often with the events of private life. That head of a family, who, as fond affection speaks, is its idol—its kind and faithful support—its pride and its distinction—is in a moment withdrawn; and another is spared, who to his family is a burden, a reproach, and whose death, in itself, would be a less heavy calamity than the many afflictions of his life. That member of a family, too, most amiable and promising, on whom a parent's affection most readily fixes, and most confidently depends for personal support and sympathy in declining life, and to whom he waits to entrust all his worldly cares when himself is infirm or old, is cut down in an hour; and he survives, who is a foolish son, a heaviness to her who bare him, and who is

bringing down a parent's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. In general society, too, how often do we see the wise, and benevolent, and patriotic, dying, as we say, prematurely; while they live, who corrupt, and injure, and impoverish the community. If we advert, then, to the history of the Christian church, we may expect to find both its ministers and its members occasionally, or even often, treated in accordance with a similar rule. Therefore it is that pastors who are best qualified, and most useful, die; while they survive whose powers are inferior, and their success more limited. Therefore it is that those in whom the affections of a numerous congregation centre, and from whose labours there are general and enlarged expectations of increasing benefit, are at times removed; while they survive, who, as man judges, have outlived their usefulness. But, alas! We do not need to search for instances. Our remark is sadly illustrated in that melancholy event on which we now condole with you, and which it is our wish to improve among you. The servant of the Lord so lately set over you, in circumstances so pleasing, is dead. As you ponder the fact, are you not tempted to say that his death has been premature? You knew his amiable manners, and his fitness to adorn and to improve society; and did you not greatly desire his life, that he might be long and widely known as its ornament and instructor? You knew his vast acquirements, his fair prospect of high personal distinction, and his power to shed lustre on the association whose interests he so purely loved, or the flock he so affectionately tended; and did you not ardently desire his life, that his praise might be in all the churches? Nay, you knew how dear he was to your own hearts, and as

you dreaded his removal, were not your hopes sustained by the belief that his continuance was more needful for you? How needful might you have said was his life! None will say that God's work depends on human instruments, but it is connected with them. And to you it must appear that you now are exposed to losses and to dangers which the life of my departed brother might have averted. To your spiritual interests he wisely and faithfully ministered. To your temporal interests, as a congregation, he was a security. Neither shall suffer, we trust, ultimately; now, however, you must feel as if both were endangered. But from you he is taken whom you thus loved, and on whom, in some sense, you depended. He is taken when your affections were resting on him with all the freshness and vigour of young attachment; and he has died when his labours were most esteemed, and the success of them most promising: Still we must ask you to say that all is well. So hath the Lord ordained. Say, then, in faith, though you should say it with many tears, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

But, once more, we remark that—

Faithful ministers die to receive the reward of their service.

Moses received at death the reward of his service. We allude not to the peculiar honours, whatever these might be, which are associated with the interment of his body. Our reference is to his reception into heaven, and his entrance into the joy of his Lord. Of his personal expectation of this issue of his life, we cannot speak positively, as we know

not the exact state of his knowledge as to the future existence. It may have been that his view of Canaan from the top of Pisgah, his last enjoyment on earth, was accompanied with a spiritual anticipation of the rewards and the glories of the heavenly rest. At all events, thither has he gone. Our information of this is most certain : he was one of the celestial assistants in the glories of the transfiguration, and, with Elias, appeared talking with Christ upon Mount Tabor. But without "tasting of death" this reward could not be reached. His Divine Master had, of his grace, prepared for him a reward for his faithful service, far, far exceeding that of which his mourning friends probably regarded it as a hardship that he should be deprived. But it was prepared in another world, not in this. The river of death intervened between him and heaven, as Jordan now intercepted Israel's passage to the Land of Promise. Moses died, then, to reach his reward ; and, on dying, he received it. The good and faithful servant this day entered into the joy of his Lord.

So is it with the faithful ministers of our time ; so is it indeed with all the faithful in Christ Jesus. If they see not in death, Stephen's inspiring vision, Jesus standing at the right hand of God ready to receive them, on death at least they are for ever with the Lord. The death of ministers, however, who are in an especial sense the servants of God, is emphatically an entering into rest. We read that "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." In the faith of this, you remember Paul's triumphant discourse in view of his own death, which the Spirit taught him to frame in application to the death of all like himself. "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 me on that day, and not to me only, but to all those who like me love the appearing of his Son." Death, however, must precede the enjoyment of this reward. The way to it lies through the dark valley of the shadow of death. Those for whom it is prepared, therefore, have, with a few exceptions—so very few as to be known to all—approached it in this way. The servants of the Lord die to receive their reward.

Such a view of the death of ministers should never be omitted by themselves, when they anticipate the event; or by their sorrowful friends and people, when it has occurred. To such as are faithful death is an entering into rest,—it is a receiving of the recompense of the reward. In the case of a believer, it is only when death is viewed apart from the light in which Revelation places it, that it is either to himself an appalling prospect, or to his friends an irreparable loss, and a source of inconsolable distress. It is very terrible to think of our going down into the darkness, and confinement, and rottenness of the grave; and it is very terrible to think that a dear friend, lately our honoured companion or beloved relative, has said "to corruption Thou art my father, and to the worm Thou art my mother and my sister;" and if we look at death only in this aspect, all its hideous terrors are disclosed and aggravated. But there is One who has "abolished death, and who has brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel;" and faith in Him makes death a blessing, and the grave a bed of rest. Let us, then, anticipate our death, and meditate on the death of friends, with such

Christian views of the event as these. We can—we will—do so, if we and they are Christ's. So meditate therefore, my beloved brethren, on that bereavement which the eternal gain of your departed pastor has caused to you. He has attained, and is perfect. Free, for ever free, from all pain and sorrow, sickness or death—and for ever confirmed in the life, and holiness, and joy of heaven—arrived, after a very short delay, at that home which he longed to reach, and conformed, after little but successful discipline, to that celestial society to which he laboured to be assimilated—rejoicing with Christ, where he is, and casting his golden crown at His feet whose atoning blood made him what he is, and whose availing intercession brought him where he is—had he a voice for other discourse than the new song, and present affinity to any save those who join their unwearying voices with his in praise of grace—he would require his dearest friend, who grieves that his place is empty, whom he has left toiling and suffering in this weary sinful world, to rejoice that he has gone to the Father. Such is the joy of him whom we mourn. Such is the reward of all the faithful. While we describe its glory, however, let us be careful to record its grace. It shall be given to those for whom it is prepared. It is gifted, and cannot be purchased by man. The Saviour purchased it by his blood, and He bestows it on his servants. The longest and most faithful, the most active and most successful, ministry, cannot merit it: that which is most brief and least successful, if faithful, shall not come short of it. “God is not unrighteous to forget our work and labour of love, in that we have ministered to the saints, and do minister; and we desire that every one of us may shew the same diligence, to the full as-

urance of hope unto the end ; that we be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

Such are the views of death which we would have you to combine with your lamentations, under that heavy trial which in common with yourselves we deplore, and which all as well as you need to improve. Your loss is no common one, even as he who has been taken from you was no ordinary man. You cannot but feel the heavy bereavement. If you did not, we should pity you even more than we do ; and we should be ready to blame you. You cannot but feel, and that keenly. The character of my deceased friend, and all the circumstances of his death, were such as to fill you with sadness. This is no place for fulsome eulogy ; nor must I here indulge even in the encomiums of partial friendship. But as the righteous shall be held in everlasting remembrance, I must do what I can to embalm the memory of departed worth. My lamented friend was naturally endowed with mental faculties of great vigour, and a temper most amiable and affectionate. His acquirements were vast and singular ; his devotional habits pure and uniform ; his public ministrations sincere and impressive ; his life consistent, and his death peaceful and happy.

As to his natural endowments, the most striking and the most attractive feature in his character was his child-like simplicity, and the total absence of malice or guile. Infantine simplicity, at times found conjoined with genius of a high order, was peculiarly his, in union with the higher endowments of wisdom, and judgment, and prudence. His

very aspect, and his outward manners, suggested all this even to strangers; his conversation and his habits certified it to his friends. The meekness of Moses was truly his. Never did he rudely, or from vanity, obtrude his own claims on respect or distinction; indeed he did not know how many and how great they were: and, ever forward to admit the claims of others, he gave honour to whom honour was due. He distrusted his own merit, and, far happier in praising others than in being praised himself, he exaggerated rather than depreciated their merits; while the slightest personal kindness was remembered and esteemed. So amiable, artless, and affectionate was he, that the feeling which all expressed toward him amounted to a positive attachment, and how many say Our Friend sleepeth!

His acquirements, however, always appeared to me as the most singular portion of his history. Dying in his 26th year, these truly deserve to be called prodigious. His information was general, yet accurate and well arranged. There was scarcely a corner in the wide and attractive field of learning into which he had not looked, as if in anticipation of a short life; and I know not the subject on which he had not read wisely and freely, and on which he could not speak with some credit to himself and profit to others. His professional acquirements were his most valuable accomplishments; but to the learning of his profession his attention was by no means confined. My first relation to him led me to know his tastes and habits as a student; and observing, as I did even then, an acquaintance with authors and systems comparatively unknown to other students of his standing, I safely predicted his early distinction, and

could set no limits to that improvement which time and study would effect. To all his studies, too, his mind intensely applied itself. His work was his delight; and if, in conversation, any new view of truth, or any peculiar application of its principles, was suggested to him—especially if some new and engaging labour was proposed—his very aspect betrayed his emotion,—he rejoiced in the tidings of the hidden treasure, and hastened to possess himself of it. Indeed, so fond was he of knowledge, and so ardent in the pursuit of it, that he might be supposed unhappy even in heaven, if there were not new and higher fields of information to traverse and to enjoy.

Of his gracious attainments, I must not be silent. He was a firm and enlightened believer. No man had clearer and juster conceptions of God's way of justifying the ungodly, and no man more humbly, but more confidently, trusted in its wisdom and gracious efficacy. As to the sincerity of his piety, the author having ventured to soothe his fears in death by the mention of it, he may well include it in a rude sketch of his character. In simplicity and godly sincerity he had his conversation in the world. A stranger to guile among men, his heart was right with God. His daily habits as a Christian, I did not minutely know;—still he may be safely affirmed to have been a man of regular and fervent prayer.

Christ, too, had counted him faithful, putting him into the ministry. The sense which his ecclesiastical judges expressed of his qualifications for the sacred office is well known. Never did one pass the period of preparatory study with a reputation for talent and diligence, more regularly rising as he proceeded; and none were ever given to the

church more fully certified as a workman who needed not to be ashamed. The public expectation when he was sent abroad as a probationer was high. Many churches coveted his gifts. This church hastened to possess him, and rejoiced in their success ; and his brief ministrations among you, I do not need to describe. Ye are witnesses how wisely, and affectionately, and purely, he preached Christ. Ye know his diligence and impartiality in his visitations from house to house, and in his attentions to the sick and mournful. But your tears tell the story of his worth. This theme, therefore, rich and grateful as it is, it is time to close. Yet it were to offend against his memory, and to profane his pulpit, if I stop ere I have added, that “ by the grace of God he was what he was.” Still I cannot but notice, though I may not minutely detail, the circumstances of his death. A disease of the heart, existing probably from early life, and aggravated by an ardent temperament, and the duties of an exciting profession, preyed on a frame never robust. This, with his abundant labours, soon told on his weak constitution. Some weeks, however, of his last illness past away, ere, in his own emphatic language, he felt himself “ brought to the dust of death.” When first aware of his approaching dissolution, he expressed to a venerable Father in our church some spiritual fears and anxieties. These were treated by him with characteristic judgment, and happily with success. When the author first saw him at this stage of his illness, he was relieved, and spake of his soul’s welfare with hope—calm, but firm. His disease was of such a kind as forbade frequent or lengthened conversation with him. All he did say, however, marked the peaceful end of the upright. On

one occasion, with a look of anxiety which I shall not soon forget, he asked me, how I could distinguish his ministry from theirs who in the end shall say, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and whom Christ shall, notwithstanding, in the end deny? The answer made by me was from the Saviour's saying, By their fruits ye shall know them. It did not satisfy him, however; and he replied, Are not their fruits often seemingly abundant, and fair? A Christian friend—one of yourselves, who, like many others, rejoiced to minister to his wants,—having noticed a reference made by him a little before to Christ as the foundation, reminded him of this, and noticed, that a desire to build there was a good symptom of feeling renewed by grace; and asked,—Do you not desire to rest on that foundation? With characteristic ardour he answered, “On its very summit; that though the earth be removed I may not be afraid.” During the last two days of his life he was silent, and, at the last, he fell asleep, and died without a struggle. But on such evidences of faith as these, all who sorrow for his death may find their belief of his eternal welfare. “The Lord Jesus Christ died for us, that, whether we sleep or wake, we may live together with him.”

SERMON II.

JOSHUA, i. 2.—“ MOSES MY SERVANT IS DEAD.”

IN the former Discourse the death of Ministers has been illustrated. In this we shall endeavour to shew how such an event should be improved. The death of a fellow creature—and his death in any circumstances—is an occurrence which must always appear solemn and impressive to a serious mind. The character of uncertainty and vanity which the approach of such an event stamps on all worldly possessions, even on those which men do most ardently desire and most fondly cherish,—the eternal separation from all these, occasioned by its occurrence—and the immediate entrance thereupon into a state of endless enjoyment or irremediable suffering,—such considerations as these, necessarily associated in the serious mind with death, must render the event, in any view of it, capable of general and direct improvement. The living will lay it to heart. The text, however, refers us to the death of the servants of the Lord; and if the death of any fellow creature should impress and instruct us, the death of ministers should be regarded with peculiar interest, and should be most anxiously improved. When they die, their office and its duties give special force to all such considerations as are naturally associated with the decease of other men. In their death there is a forcible illustration of

much of the doctrine which they taught, and of the motives from which they recommended it. They teach, that all earthly benefits are uncertain and vain, and on this account they would persuade men to seek the things which are above; when they die the truth is realized—the wisdom of the counsel proved in their own case. They announced the approach of an eternal state, during which all men should inherit unmeasured evil, or matchless happiness; and therefore they implore men to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on eternal life; when they die, they too go to their place. Besides, the relation in which ministers stand to the church should render their death an event especially admonitory to survivors. They preach—if they be faithful—not themselves, but Jesus Christ the Lord, and are your servants for Jesus' sake. Even when dead, therefore, they should yet speak; and, as their very sufferings should fall out to the furtherance of the Gospel, their death should be as their last sermon.

If these remarks be just, never did an event occur more loudly demanding devout consideration, and better fitted to impress the lessons of heavenly wisdom, than that bereavement which you this day lament. How short is life! How vain are human hopes! How certain is death! How valuable, how inexpressibly dear, the prospects and the consolations of religion! These, with many more akin to them, are the solemn reflections which the sad event awakens. Let me endeavour, then, under the influence of them myself, to persuade you rightly and fully to improve the loss of my departed friend.

And, in the first place, the death of ministers should be improved as a motive to increased diligence in the work of life.

Joshua was divinely directed thus to improve the death of Moses: "The Lord spake to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people." That Joshua would feel the animating call, we may not doubt. The sad event of his master's removal imposed on him weightier duties than he had hitherto sustained, and these required from him increased exertion. Whether we regard Joshua, then, in his personal or official duties, he was bound to cherish the exciting considerations which would intrude on him even during his sorrows at the death of Moses. As the servant of Jehovah, and as the leader of the people, he was admonished to be more diligent since Moses was dead, and since he, too, could not live always.

The death of ministers should be still improved thus. The remark is just, whether we refer to their brethren in office, or to Christians in private station. The event is a loud call to official diligence, addressed to surviving pastors. The work with which they are entrusted is of the most arduous and most responsible character. The many statements of Scripture on this subject are memorable and impressive. The pastor is a minister of reconciliation—an ambassador of Christ—an ensample to the flock. To him is instrumentally entrusted the work of explaining and commending that propitiation which God hath set forth, and in which all must believe who would be saved from the guilt and the power of sin. To him is committed, in some sense,

the honour of the Saviour ; and with zeal and fervour, and sincerity like his, should the pastor beseech men to be reconciled to God, and to walk worthy of the Lord unto all well-pleasing. With him, as a sacred trust, is left the credit of religion ; for according to his doctrine and practice will men judge ill or favourably of the cause which he advocates. He is sent to guide the living in the way of duty, on the way to heaven ; to sustain the afflicted with the consolations of religion ; and to refer the dying to the inheritance which faith expects. Such is the work of the ministry, and a hasty notice of its difficulties and responsibilities. If such it be, then, what need of fidelity and diligence, of incessant and laborious application on the part of those who discharge it ? And if, with all its difficulties, and all its sacredness, some are invested with the office who are destitute of all right sense of its importance, — if many come short of strong and uniform impressions of its magnitude,—and if all, even those who are most faithful and laborious, need to be provoked to love and to good works ; what call should come more quick and welcome on the waiting ear of living ministers than the warning that proceeds from the chamber of their dead or dying brethren ? Let the admonition come in any circumstances, it should be welcome and useful. Let it come from some venerable Father who, after many prosperous years of successful labour, retires from the field which he has occupied so long, the voice cries “The night cometh when no man can work.” Let it come from a servant of God cut down in mid time of his days, when his plans are most lofty and his labours most promising, still the voice cries “All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass ;

the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away." Or let it come, as we this day hear the warning, from a servant of God dying in extreme youth, amid the blessings of a grateful people, while his work is but begun—Oh, then, surely, the voice comes in more piercing accents, and should be heard with more still and wakeful attention, as it cries, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might, as there is neither knowledge, nor device, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest." To increased faithfulness and diligence, therefore, in their official duties, the death of ministers should excite their surviving brethren. When thus improved, too, the event will have a salutary effect on the work of personal religion in their own souls. Those who are made the keepers of the vineyard of others ought not to neglect their own. The same motives, accordingly, which the brevity of time, the expectation of death, and the prospects of eternity, supply to the increase of official diligence, will be supplied to the enlargement of their anxieties for personal growth in grace. Ministers should "watch, therefore, as they know not what hour their Lord shall come."

But to Christians in private station, also, the death of ministers should be most useful. They too should on this account increase their diligence in the work of life. By the phrase, we do not immediately describe those worldly avocations, of which many may be ready to think as we allude to the work of life. We must provide for our own and those of our own house, if we would not deny the faith; and the labours by which we effect this provision devolve on Christians, and should be prosecuted with greater alacrity, when the death of others reminds them of their own. By

the work of life, however, as we have alluded to it, we seek to describe the duties of religion. "This is the work of God, that we believe in the name of his Son, whom he has sent, and that believing we may have life through his name." For the accomplishment of this work of faith is life chiefly given, and on it, life with its chief anxieties should be dutifully bestowed. The importance of it cannot be exaggerated. There is connected with it, even now, the glory of God, and the peace of our own mind; and through Eternity we shall adore and enjoy God, or blaspheme and suffer, as it shall be perfected or unfinished. Still, with all its importance, man naturally despises this work; and even those who most purely venerate it have need to be stirred up. How exciting, then, the tidings of death, especially of the death of ministers! They whose calls may have been disregarded,—whose warnings may have been slighted,—whose encouragement may have been despised, are dead; yet they shall be seen again, either to receive the pious of their flock as their crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ, or to testify against the impenitent in that day of final trial. These results occur however short the life may be, and however brief that ministry may have been, of which death deprives us. One offer of Christ may, with his blessing, convert a soul: one offer of Him, if rejected, is enough to ensure and to aggravate the condemnation of many. The servant of the Lord, then, whom you so lately received in the Lord with all gladness, is dead. Arise, therefore, and call on your God. Retain the memory of his affectionate counsels, and "give all diligence that ye be found of Christ, at last without spot, and blameless." Plead that his ministry may not

be to some condemnation; and that as you now mourn when you think how brief but how pleasant it has been, you may remember, through eternity, its faithful course, and its affecting termination, as means which God enabled you to improve in making your calling and election sure. “He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

The death of ministers should be further improved, as a call to anxious preparation for the day of death.

The announcement made in the text would remind Joshua of an event expected by himself. When it was said to him, “Moses my servant is dead,” he would not need to inquire what the melancholy tidings denoted, or to learn what change that was which was expressed by death. He had seen others die, ere he wept for his dead master: and as he mourned for Moses, others lamented the loss of friends as dear to them. The death of Moses, then, would admonish Joshua of his own. All the circumstances of it would shew him the uncertainty of life; and the event would bring directly to his mind a fact which the living, amid the cares or pleasures of life, are apt to forget, that they must die. If now, then, Joshua, as a devout man, “so numbered his days as to apply his heart to wisdom,” he wisely improved the removal of his master.

In the same manner should the death of ministers be improved in our day. Surviving ministers—surviving Christians—the living generally, who know of the event, should thus improve it. The obligations to this duty lie alike on

each, and the advantages of the exercise are equal to all. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after death the judgment. There is no man who liveth here, and shall not see death. Here we have no continuing city. The grave is the house appointed for all living." The fact of his mortality, no man ever doubts. For this event, however, of which all are apprized, few are fully prepared. Even because of its certainty, indeed, men generally desire to forget it; nay good men allow themselves to be less familiar with it than is wise or dutiful. "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." "Skin for skin, nay, all that a man hath will he give for his life." So strong, accordingly, is our desire of life, and so passionate our love of it, that we delay all express preparation for death, as if this would quicken its approach; and how many live as if there were no such thing in prospect with them! 'Tis no poet's fiction, that "all men think all men mortal but themselves." Death is thought of, and death is spoken about, among us; but if we observe the form either of our reflections or our discourse, we find it treated in both, rather as a change passed on others, than one about to pass on ourselves,—a reality in their case, rather than in our own. Most of us are made unhappy by a direct expectation of death in our own persons. We know that we must die; but we dislike, and therefore avoid the prospect. The men of the world invariably feel and act thus; and even in Christians, there is much sentiment in this respect akin to theirs. What, then, is the consequence of this forgetfulness of death? As might be expected, they are in every case injurious, in some cases fatal. To many this most decisive event comes when they

are unprepared. On many this final change passes ere they have made their peace with God: some it startles in blameable sloth and security, which, if not like the carelessness of the men of the world, is not the watchfulness of the servant who expects the coming of his Lord; and blessed is that servant who is ever ready to rejoice because of his coming, and always prepared to go forth to meet him. In very few cases, however, is there that state of full and mature preparation for death, that the nature of the event, and the uncertainty of its season, so imperatively demand. The apostle's admonition to die daily, and his example to the same effect, are not venerated as they ought to be. Refer we to those who are foolish, or to those who are wise, and as in the parable, so in fact, while the bridegroom tarries we all slumber and sleep.

Of what account, then, should we hold the death of others, as rebuking such folly, and disclosing its perilous results? Who ever saw a deathbed, and apprehended its spiritual lessons,—who ever heard of death, and piously weighed the solemn tidings,—and failed to perceive the express call addressed to him, Be ye also ready? The fall of sinners amid their joyous, thoughtless course of vice,—the death of the worldly amid their anxious and covetous efforts to make rich,—and, as happens at times, the sudden smiting down of the profane or the lewd amid the abominations of their respective excesses, call aloud to men that they watch and be sober. The voice of the faithful, on the other hand, as it is able amid the agonies or the weakness of death, is often raised to bewail their own remissness, and to convey the anxious counsel to the living, Prepare to meet thy God.

Such is the admonition which death, in all circumstances, addresses to the living, and the counsel, though more impressive in its form, is of a similar character in the death of faithful ministers. If they die in comfort and in triumph, how is wisdom justified of her children! If they die in doubt or darkness, how impressive is the fact, and how loud the call, in the day of health to provide for the time of death! “Neglected means, lost opportunities,” said your departed minister, in such ejaculatory sayings as indicated the jealous and anxious review of life which he took at its close. If, then, one so diligent and so useful as he was, bemoaned himself thus, how express and touching the counsel to us, that we give all diligence to make our calling and election sure! His case censures bitterly the common, yet most absurd feeling, that in the outset of life it does not concern us to prepare for its close. Had he been left to such delusion, death had found him unprepared, and come on him unawares. As it was, his anxieties about eternity were most impressive. Who, then, is a wise servant? Would any desire, and evince such spiritual distinction, let them “die daily.” Under the deep impression that life is short, and this world transient, let them moderate every earthly attachment: while expecting eternity, and all its realities, they have their loins girded about, and their lamps burning. “Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” “There is but a step between us and death.”

We may further notice, that the death of ministers should be improved by a grateful imitation of their example.

Joshua and the Congregation of Israel had both enjoyed the ministrations of Moses : at his death, therefore, each was under obligation to follow his faith. Joshua, as his minister, must have enjoyed many facilities for studying his character, and observing his habits as the leader of the people. Was not he, then, bound to improve the removal of his master, and, as his successor in office, to imitate his meekness and discretion—his zeal and enterprize—his patience and generosity—with every other quality characterizing and adorning the faithful and honoured servant of God? As subject to his ministry, too, the people had many opportunities of witnessing his devout attachments, the meekness of his temper, the prudence of his plans, and the pure patriotism of his motives. How much might they have learned, therefore, from the history of his life ; and how impressive such lessons after his decease ?

The Church of Christ should yet remember thus, “ those who have had the rule over them, and be followers of their faith, considering the end of their conversation, who is Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” In speaking, however, of such a subject as this, we would use caution. We do so neither to gratify nor to sanction that presumptuous and captious spirit, which delights to notice and to proclaim the infirmities of ministers ; and which will devise faults rather than be cheated of its enjoyment. We do so, because there is no man who liveth here, and who sinneth not ; and because, if there were no other and higher pattern, we should not refer to this. But blessed be God, there are those among the pastors of the church, who may at least be quoted by others, and whom the church may be directed

to follow, even as they followed Christ. In speaking thus, we do not err. Even in life, and during their whole active course, ministers are required to be “an example of the believer in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” When dead, therefore, is it not the duty of all who knew them, especially of such as acknowledged their ministry, to be followers of their faith? To this effect, accordingly, is the admonition of an apostle to one church: “Be followers of those who through faith and patience do now inherit the promises.” For if in life the pastor should be copied, in so far as he resembles Christ; with what additional interest should his flock recount his excellencies, and imitate his virtues, when they bewail his removal, and grieve for his death?

In this way let this church improve the death of their pastor. Such counsel, however, some may consider as less important and impressive than that which has been tendered. The brief sojourn among you which my departed friend has made,—the *few* opportunities (if all have had *some*) which you have enjoyed of observing his excellence—and the few short months during which he went out and in among you, may seem to lessen the force of any reference to his example, and to excuse those who may not be careful to follow it. But such deceive themselves. There were some, and these very prominent, features in his character which all may have observed,—some, and these most important attachments of his, which all may have discovered; and since his light hath shined even for a little time among you, having seen it, you should be led from it “to glorify your Father who is in heaven.” He

owned himself a sinner, and, for aught that he could do to save himself, for ever lost. He acknowledged Christ as a Saviour, and, "counting all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, he sought to be found in him, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." He venerated the Bible, and anxiously studied it, that he might teach its pure doctrines to you, and himself apprehend its wise lessons and its blessed hopes. He loved the cause and the Church of Christ, and devoted himself to their service. He loved the brethren, and in lowliness of mind esteemed others better than himself. He feared God and kept his commandments, seeking to have a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward man. These features in his character you could not but discern, if you ever studied it. These rules of conduct you could not but discover, if ever you observed the manner of his life. And now since, in addition to the endearments of his life, the peculiar and tender circumstances of his death make your minds more alive to his excellence, and your hearts more impressed with his virtues, be ye like minded—"go ye and do likewise," and let his presence in heaven animate you in preparing for its joys.

To the young among you especially, we recommend the imitation of his virtues. You, perhaps, are the greatest sufferers by his removal. The aged expected soon to leave him; and few but yourselves looked forward to a long series of years during which they should enjoy his friendship, and profit from his ministry. You, however, hoped to grow old with him,—to watch his rising excellence,—to help him in

all his labours,—and to make his improvement and diligence the standard of your own. But alas! your hopes have withered in a day,—your youthful pastor is dead. As you admired and loved him then,—as his amiable and engaging manners endeared him to your heart,—and as the affecting circumstances of his early death make every recollection of him so tender,—oh, remember his virtues and imitate them. And, in pressing such counsel, we know not where we can find a better model for the young than that to which we refer. How gentle, modest, and affectionate was his temper! How great his love of truth! How ardent his thirst for knowledge! How diligent and temperate his habits! How sincere his piety! How faithful his friendships! How liberal his sentiments! How conscientious his practice! In every domestic relation, how many were his virtues! How dutiful as a son! How true and affectionate as a brother! —We flatter not the living in such sayings, nor inconsiderately extoll the dead. Safely may we appeal to all who knew our departed friend, and ask if he was not such as we describe him? Let all, then, who have witnessed his example, improve his death by an imitation of his virtues; and let the young, in an especial manner, venerate an example so appropriate, and be followers of him as he was of Christ.

In the last place, the death of ministers should be improved in humble dependence upon God for the supply of their place.

Moses, according to the statement made in the text, was the servant of God: Whatever excellence, therefore, the congregation of Israel might associate with their recollections

of his character, and whatever advantages might have accrued to them from his faithful ministrations, it became them in all to acknowledge the goodness of Jehovah. He had endowed, and appointed, and upheld his servant. And now, when the servant of the Lord was dead, and the people left without a leader, what lesson was more plainly inculcated, than dependence on Him who appointed Moses to office, and owned him as his servant. If such was their exercise, the faith of the people, as you know, was rewarded. Joshua, the son of Nun, was full of the spirit of wisdom: as he had been with Moses, so God promised to be with him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him.

The same dependence upon God should be cherished and expressed by the Christian Church, when its pastors are removed by death. It is of the highest importance that these be ever regarded as the gifts of Christ, and be received in the Lord with all gladness. We attach importance to this fact, not to arrogate to our office a dignity which does not belong to it; nor do we state it as a fact which we value only as it may minister to human vanity. We esteem it, and we bid you receive it, that the glory of all that is prosperous and promising in the Church, though connected with the services of its pastors, may be directly referred to Jesus Christ, whose servants they are. There is no greater indignity which can be offered to the Saviour, than preferring his servants to himself; and while esteeming them, to forget our obligations to him.

Yet how common is such an error as this! How many neglect the Sabbath, and desert the sanctuary when their favourite pastor is absent for the time, and act as if the pre-

sence of Christ in his ordinances, and the efficacy of these gracious means, depended on the "pleasant voice," and other fancied or real attractions in the object of their misplaced attachment. If this sin obtain, need we wonder that the offended Master does at times, by most perplexing judgments, recall his servants from the church, and proclaim, "Cease ye, from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?" Christ will not give his glory to another; and if the church has not yet learned, it must be taught, that the success of the Gospel in individuals, and in the world at large, is "not by might, nor by power, but by his Spirit." In noticing these things, we are far from insinuating that you put our departed fellow-labourer in the room of his Master, or that you may this day read your sin in your punishment. Your attachment to him, as we well know, was strong and general, yet we believe it was subordinate. Your admiration of his talents and his gifts was, we know, fervent and universal, yet we hope you regarded them but as the means of your edification, and looked beyond him who planted and who watered, to Him who alone giveth the increase. At the same time, we conceive, that even in your presence, we may advert to Christ as asserting his title to supreme homage in the removal of his servant. You expected, and many joined with you in fond, perhaps extravagant, anticipations of great results from the life and labours of our deceased friend. May we not think of Christ recalling him to certify, in the peculiar circumstances of his death, that even through inferior agents, and at least without those which men esteem the most proper, and whose removal they deprecate, he can cause his work to prosper and to prevail.

At all events, my brethren, ascribe it to the Saviour's grace, that you ever enjoyed your departed minister; submit to that Saviour's sovereignty, in the exercise of which he has been recalled, and confide in the Saviour's faithfulness for the supply of his place. Indeed! and may we hazard such counsel as contemplates the occupation of that place, which has scarcely ceased to know our lamented friend; and can we, without further wounding your feelings, direct you to such a duty as this. From such matter, in other circumstances, we should have thought it proper to refrain. But the relation of a pastor is peculiar; and, when dissolved, if order and decency be observed, it cannot too soon be renewed. Christ's name shall endure for ever, and last so long as the sun; and while many of his servants are cut off in mid time of their days, if faithful, they will themselves rejoice, that Christ's years are through all generations, and that by the living he shall be praised when they have gone down to the silent grave. How striking is the fact, that we may defend our doctrine even from that scripture, with a discourse on a part of which your pastor closed his ministrations among you? "All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass; the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever, and this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." Then accept the advice we offer, in reference to the supply of that place which is this day empty; and look to Christ, that he may yet give you a pastor after his own heart, to feed you with knowledge. A deep debt of gratitude is due from you to that "goodness which swelled your store." On

reviewing, then, what manner of person your late pastor was, and what benefits resulted to you even from his short course in the ministry, ascribe, as is most meet, all the glory to that Divine Master whom he served, and regard it but as an honourable tribute to his memory, a devout respect to his counsel, and, above all, a dutiful and devout confidence in the living Head of the Church, to pray that he would establish you after your former sort, and that He would be better to you than at the beginning. This is among the lessons which your trial should teach. Formerly ye looked to Jesus for gifts, and your faces were not ashamed. He that hath been mindful of you will bless you still. From what you have enjoyed, learn what you may expect. "Wait on the Lord, and be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your hearts; wait, I say, on the Lord." Joshua succeeded Moses; and as God was with Moses, so was he with Joshua. Moses led Israel to the borders of the promised land; Joshua conducted them to its full possession. In like manner, Christ may give you another pastor as faithful and diligent as he whom he has recalled; and, through his instrumentality, even higher benefits than formerly may be vouchsafed to you. The time to favour this Zion will come, the set time; and though ye now mourn as among its rubbish and its stones, the Lord will appear in his glory to build and to repair it.

And now, my beloved brethren, having spoken to you so much, in sympathy for your afflictions, and in anxiety for your edification, we only wish that we could add, ere we close, a few such admonitions as may assist you to bear the heavy

bereavement which has come on you, and in continued prosperity as a congregation to survive it. Ten short months comprised your history under the care of my honoured friend. The interval is so brief, that we can with ease recall your conduct as a vacancy; and, remembering this, we may regard your behaviour, then, as a guide to yourselves and a pledge to us—that now, as formerly, ye will seek in union and harmony to improve the visitations of Divine Providence. Let the elders among you resume the charge of the flock, now that he with whom they sat in the government of it is dead. Your duty is indeed at once melancholy and difficult; but ye know who is the Comforter and the Teacher. Pray for this Spirit: confide in his guidance. Resume among yourselves; and conduct among your people those meetings at which such prayers may be made, and such faith cherished. Let brotherly love, too, continue among you; and, by harmonious counsel and united efforts, since the servant of God set over you is dead, arise and lead the people. And though, like the elders of Ephesus, ye weep that ye shall see his face no more, rejoice that Christ liveth, and is alive for evermore.

To those who are members of this church, let us be permitted to recommend a steady attachment to the cause of Christ in connexion with it. The same reasons, you may think, do not now exist to attach you to its interest, or to invite you to its assemblies; but in this ye do err. It is true that death, inexorable death, has suddenly changed the external aspect of your affairs. Your young, talented, eloquent pastor is dead. But Christ ever lives, die who may;

and his blessing makes ordinances effectual, whoever may administer them. Be faithful, then, in the support you owe to this church—punctual in attendance on ordinances as they are here dispensed—be at peace among yourselves; and, oh! beware of shewing that your present trial is unsanctified, and of provoking more by disunion or animosities. Public attention has been awakened by your trials, and the public sympathy moved on account of them; then be careful that you seek to edify others by a meek endurance of affliction, and an anxious improvement of divine judgments. “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. He who is strong to smite, is also strong to save.”

In one word, let me address the young, whom the death of their minister should, in an especial manner, instruct and impress. Be ye warned against procrastination in religion, and be excited to diligence in its duties, by that sad event which your tender hearts feel so keenly. Above all, part with that profane and foolish notion, which so generally possesses the young, that religion is a matter of gloom and restriction, fatal to the cheerfulness and vivacity of youth, and an enemy to all enjoyment. We remind you of him whom you have lost. Where was one more cheerful in life, more calm in death? Religion does impose self-denial, regulate the affections, and purify the life; but “Wisdom’s ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.” One thing being needful, then, let the young, even while they desire and cultivate such accomplishments as adorn and enrich their age, prefer, like him who, amid all his other attainments, preferred the wisdom which cometh from above, that like him

at the last they may rejoice in that "better part, which shall never be taken from them." "And now we commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them who are sanctified."

THE END.





