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Two Funeral Sermons.

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THE FORMER,
PREACHED IN OTIS, AT THE INTER-
MENT OF
MRS. NAOMI D'WOLF;

THE LATTER,
IN BECKET, AT THE FUNERAL OF
MISS IRENE NICHOLS.

—*—

BY JOSEPH L. MILLS,
Minister of the First Congregational Society, in Becket, Massachusetts

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STOCKBRIDGE :
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1811.

UNTIL the Author of the following Discourses had consented to their publication, and begun to revise them for that purpose, he was not aware of any peculiar similarity, even in the subjects.

For what of this still remains, the only apology is, that the immediate auditors of the two discourses were entirely distinct; and that they appear, in their present form, at the united request of the connections.

May they be the means, not of perpetuating sorrow, but of communicating divine mercies to all who may read; and to those especially, whom these Providences have called to mourn.

Becket, September 28th, 1811.

HOPE, *the consolation of the sorrowing Christian.*

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A

S E R M O N,

AT THE INTERMENT OF

MRS. NAOMI D'WOLF,

CONSORT OF CAPT. JAMES D'WOLF, OF OTIS;

WHO DECEASED, MARCH 12, 1811,

In the 45th year of her age.



“ But why more woe ? More comfort let it be.
Nothing is dead but that which wished to die ;
Nothing is dead but wretchedness and pain.”

YOUNG,

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HOPE, THE CONSOLATION OF THE SOR-
ROWING CHRISTIAN;

A

FUNERAL SERMON.



1 Thessalonians iv. 13.

I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope.

INNUMERABLE are the vicissitudes of human life. We are young—the world around us smiles—we promise to ourselves many years and much happiness. We advance in life—“the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches,” or of the means employed to acquire them, the disappointment of our most sanguine hopes; in short, the troubles of time arise from various sources, they thicken around us, on every hand; and we are soon taught to inscribe “vanity and vexation of spirit,” upon our experience of the world’s enjoyments.

Yet, while man survives, expectation of future good is cherished. Age arrives, “the keepers of the house tremble, the strong men bow themselves—man goeth to his long home: and the mourners go about the streets.”

Through all these vicissitudes and innumerable others, we find cause to reiterate the words of Job, "man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble."

What, then shall support us amid these troubles, and afford us assurance of their happy termination? The religion of the Son of God.

What shall comfort us when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death? That religion which is represented by "the rod and the staff" of the great "shepherd" of Israel.

And what consolation remains for survivors—for the sorrowing christian, the consort, the parent, or the child?

Their only sure consolation arises from the "HOPE" afforded them by the Christian religion. Such is the consolation which Paul affords to his brethren at Thessalonica: "I would not have you to be ignorant concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him."

Is it, then, forbidden surviving friends to sorrow? By no means. But we are to sorrow as christians—and over the remains of one who we believe has slept in Jesus, we may not sorrow as others which have no hope. In our text, *the sorrow permitted*, and *the hope afforded*, at the death of the pious, are the two objects which now demand attention.

I. *When the pious fall asleep we may sorrow.* Not for them; they are no longer the subjects of unhappiness. Once they experienced temporal calamities; once they, too, mourned

under spiritual trials. They have mourned, in a view of their sins, "as one mourneth for an only son," and have been "in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his first born."

But, with those who sleep in Jesus, these sorrows are no more. Trials have had their destined effect. The people of God have, at length, become effectually and eternally weaned from this world, and established in another, where temporal sorrows and spiritual trials are unknown. They are no longer the subjects of sorrow or the objects of commiseration.

But under the circumstances, to which our text alludes, we may sorrow,

1st, For ourselves. To all surviving friends, especially immediate connections, we are to conceive words addressed similar to those of the departing Saviour, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." My brethren, christianity was designed not to dissolve, but to sanctify the bonds of natural affection. We may, at times, sorrow under temporal bereavements. We have the unerring example of one who wept at the grave of his friend and who mourned over the approaching desolation of Jerusalem. We may, then, sorrow at the death of the pious. The loss is great. Their example, their instruction, their prayers have ceased. The connections, all indeed of their christian acquaintance, feel the wound, for all have unitedly received the stroke. For ourselves we mourn.

Again, under these circumstances, we sorrow in remembrance of Zion's loss. God will, indeed, protect his own cause. He will rebuild

what is demolished, "for the Lord shall comfort Zion, he will comfort all her waste places." Still his work is performed by instruments, by beings sinful and mortal like ourselves. When they fail—when these means are not found, we sorrow, for the Lord frowns, and Zion mourns the loss of her children and her friends. Accuse us not of distrusting the Providence of God. We have an eminent example, long since left for the instruction and imitation of the pious ; an example of those who mourned in Zion's captivity. "By the rivers of Babylon," said the redeemed captive, "by the rivers of Babylon there we sat down, yea we wept when we remembered Zion." They witnessed her solitary and captive state ; they had seen her children fall ; they knew not the particular designs of God in her favour ; they had cause to sorrow. Thus should we, under similar circumstances, when the friends of religion cease, when their prayers and their exertions are wanting—thus ought we to remember Zion and to mourn.

Further, at the death of the righteous we have reason to sorrow for an ungodly world.

The persons in view "are the salt of the earth." They are the means of preserving the moral world, filled as it is with evil, from certain and utter destruction.

In the devoted cities of the plain a few righteous would have averted the awful catastrophe. Thus the world remains, an habitation for the pious who dwell in its obscure retreats.

But for their example, their instruction and their prayers, the flood-gates of iniquity would, in all probability, be opened—a deluge more

dreadful than that which Noah witnessed would envelope the moral world.

The servants of God are the instruments raised up to restrain this flood, or, in other words, to repress sin and to avert the just vengeance of Heaven.

In answer to their prayers, the execution of Satan's devices is suspended, mercy still hovers o'er the sinner; and often is "the prey taken from the mighty."

When, therefore, these characters are removed, we have cause to fear and to mourn for an ungodly world.

Still, blessed be God, we do not sorrow even as others which have no hope.

We are, therefore, to consider

II. The hope afforded to pious mourners, at the death of those who sleep in Jesus.

Hope is a term, so frequently used and so commonly understood, as to render any general definition superfluous. We remark, however, as it will be of importance in reference to the observations which follow, that *hope* always implies *desire*. Here is the contrast between *hope* and *fear*. The objects of both are expected; those of *hope*, with desire; those of *fear*, with reluctance. This observation is applicable to all kinds of hope, whatever be its object or distinguishing nature.

Of hope there are various kinds and degrees. In our text, the apostle refers merely to the hope of the christian—to that which is peculiar to the people of God—to that which is mentioned as wrought by tribulation: "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and expe-

rience hope ; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." This is the hope to which Paul refers in his epistle to his Thessalonian brethren. "Faith," saith he in another place, "is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen."

Under such circumstances as we are now contemplating, the objects of hope are many. Among them are,

I. A hope for Zion.

To behold the Church, in her low estate, with no other than the eye of reason, and to form our expectation concerning her upon the grounds of human probability, a melancholy prospect, indeed, is presented. But view the same object through faith in the promises of God, and a brighter scene unfolds. God protects his Church. Zion is his care. He permits her friends to grow regardless, her children to die, and her enemies to increase and cry to the remnant of the faithful, "where now is your God?" How vain their triumph and how vain our fears! Such was the consolation of David, when in some hour of distress he thus animated the hope of God's people: "God is our refuge & strength, a very present help in trouble, therefore will we not fear. There is a river the stream whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the Tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved ; God shall help her and that right early." From this river some little streams have refreshed you. But they have failed! Repair then to their source, to a fountain inexhaustible and unfailing as the attributes of God.

2. At the departure of the pious, we have hope, also, for them.

They are *asleep*, saith an apostle, not gone or lost forever ; but still in the care, under the government and protection of God. “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.” Their dust returns to the earth as it was, there to be preserved till the resurrection of the just ; and that portion of their being, which was capable of immortality, enters upon the trial of invisible realities. We hope for them, then, yea, as far as we have evidence of their piety, we are assured that they are now blessed in the enjoyments of Heaven.

Some have doubted whether the soul of man exists in a separate state. “It slumbers,” saith one, “with the body, and with the body, it shall rise either to everlasting life or to shame and everlasting contempt.” Upon this point I shall not argue, nor attempt to introduce probabilities, but an abstract of direct scriptural authority.

Moses and Elias were sent from Heaven to hold converse with the Saviour. In the epistle to the Hebrews the Apostle very clearly ranks together “the angels,” “God the judge of all, and the spirits of just men made perfect,” as being now engaged in one work, and as inhabitants of the same Heavenly Jerusalem.

Thus, also, Jude informs us that “Sodom and Gomorrah—are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” And to add no more, we are assured that the penitent malefactor was, *that day*, with Christ in paradise.

The matter is settled by divine authority—

the pious who have fallen asleep are not only the heirs, but the possessors of the happiness of Heaven. Upon this particular we have more than hope—we have assurance, and an assurance derived from the word of God. Their happiness is already perfect, because their sins are forever vanquished, and their holiness consummated. Already have they taken their stations around the throne—already does the effulgence of the Eternal beam upon them ; “and stars and suns are dust beneath his throne.” Thus, he who received the revelation, heard their song : “Thou hast redeemed us to God, by thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation”—“Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb forever and ever.”

Such is the consolation which we have respecting the present state of deceased saints. “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord ; yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labors and their works do follow them.”

3. Pious mourners may be consoled with a hope for themselves. They hope for an emancipation from all sin.

The ungodly man fears the punishment of sin, and avoids certain exhibitions of it, in his life. But, to the righteous, sin itself is the object of detestation ; and that heart, from which as the fountain, polluted streams must flow, is his burden and his woe. In sin he finds an enemy who is not only enticing him to future wretchedness, but opposing, also, his present designs, and blasting his present enjoyments. Sin, cherished, even for a moment, lays, for

that moment, the hand of death upon the most exalted exercises which man can experience, this side the happiness of Heaven.

Children of God! are not these things so? Paul, once the persecutor, and afterwards the pillar of the church; thus answers, "the good that I would that I do not, but the evil which I would not that do I—O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Thro' Christ, was Paul delivered from these bonds. Thro' the same Redeemer, shall all God's people be liberated from those remains of sin under which they groan, being in bondage.

They may expect, also, the consummation of holiness, and of conformity to the character of God. For this they here look and pray. But it is here a blessedness in reserve—a blessedness not yet possessed, but promised by eternal truth. This was the consolation of David, and should still be the support of the pious, "as for me I shall behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.

The characters, in view, may, likewise, hope to meet their friends, and all who have slept in Jesus.

There is a peculiar gratification derived from expecting to enjoy, eternally, the society of our friends, and especially, of those to whom we were intimately connected. Of such society or intercourse we can have, indeed, but obscure, perhaps very erroneous views.

Natural affection, being no longer of use, undoubtedly ceases at death. "They neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in Heaven."

It is still certain (and if the consideration affords gratification, it is at least harmless) that the spirits of those with whom, when on earth, we lived in christian love, shall be our companions in Heaven. There, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." There, no convulsing separation shall be known. There, no consort shall bend o'er the death-bed of the wife of his youth, or linger near those elods which enclose the dear remains.

In that world, to which, if christians, we are following our pious parents, companions and children, union shall be uninterrupted, and love even the love of Heaven shall be eternal.

Such is the hope which pious mourners may enjoy—such the consolation for the sorrowing christian.

Some remarks naturally follow—with some application of this subject to the solemn occasion on which we are convened.

1. We have been considering the hope of the sorrowing christian, and the consolations thence derived: it will now, perhaps, be enquired, what are the grounds—what the foundation of this hope? I answer—it rests not on man whether living or dead. Our hope for the dead is, by no means, founded on their past or present worthiness. They now acknowledge it, while they ascribe not only "glory, wisdom and power," but "thanksgiving" and "salvation," also, "to our God who sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb."

The same Being, who is now the object of adoration to saints, in glory, is the Being in whom rests the hope of God's people, in proba-

tion. Their hope rests upon the mercy of God through Christ. The law of God once condemned them—the justice of God, without a Redeemer, must destroy them.

Man saved without a Redeemer, without a propitiation? Where, then, is divine justice? On the contrary, is man universally destroyed? Where, then, is the mercy of God? No! my brethren, none of the divine attributes have slumbered; but, in the person of Messiah, “mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.”

The work of Christ is not in vain. “He shall see his seed—he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.”

Among the purposes of the Eternal, they were “chosen in Christ,” and “their names written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

They are made “willing in the day of God’s power,” to embrace the Saviour—by his covenant faithfulness they are protected. “He who has begun a good work in them will perform it.” Thus, by a hand unseen, they are conducted along this vale of tears, through death to Heaven. In the power and faithfulness of God, then, rests all the hope and all the consolation of his people.

2. The consolation, of which we have been speaking, is the portion of none but the pious.

All, indeed, have mercy offered them; but it is merely “a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom.” “He hath no heart to it,” saith Solomon. The consolations of the gospel are not the objects of his desire. His consolations, the

objects of his supreme attachment are, "earthly, sensual, devilish." He despiseth God and contemneth the blessedness which religion affords. Shall he become the heir of this happiness which he scorns—the possessor of those enjoyments which he thus profanely discards?—He *may*—a possibility remains; for Almighty power can arrest him, and divine grace *may* yet render him a vessel of mercy.

But, in his present character, the consolations of the gospel are not his. He lives and suffers without them—he dies without them.

Comfortless, dismal, dreadful, is the world to which he hurries!—A world, within whose confines; hope has never entered nor ever shall.

Great are the consolations derived from the christian's hope. Proportionably great, is the loss of him, who sorrows either for the deceased friend, or for himself without hope, without the consolations of religion.

3. What a blessed object is the religion of the scriptures?

Amid all the trials of life, it affords that consolation, "that hope which is as an anchor of the soul both sure and stedfast, which entereth into that within the vail." Far more applicable to religion, is the observation made, by a great Philosopher,* respecting science—"It cherishes our youth, it delights our age, it adorns prosperity, and affords a refuge and a solace in adversity."

But religion reserves her greater blessedness for the hour of death. At that hour, when

* Cicero.

heart and flesh shall fail, when the haughty shall faint, and when "the hope of the hypocrite shall be as the giving up of the Ghost;" then shall the blessedness of the christian religion be experienced by the saint.

Supported by the arm of his heavenly Father, he triumphs and cries, "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?" Serene as the setting sun he views the gathering shades of death, and departs to rise more glorious in a clime to us unknown.

Seldom have we more cause to appropriate this hope, and to receive the consolation which it affords, than on this occasion.

By the providence of God, one has been called hence who, we have the great satisfaction to believe, has exchanged sorrow for joy, death for life, earth for Heaven.

She was, indeed, a blessing to the world—a peculiar blessing to her family and connections, and a bright ornament to the religion of Christ.

These qualifications rendered her abode on earth an object of earnest desire and prayer—but they fitted her, also, for a better world—for the service and enjoyment of God in a nobler sphere. While, at the death of such an one, we administer and receive the consolations of the gospel, we must hear, also, for ourselves a solemn admonition from the providence of God.

Aged Parents of the deceased!

What a scene are you called to witness! Long have you travelled through this vale of tears. Many trials, doubtless, have you been called to experience. But you thought your career was almost finished, and that, ere many years, this

daughter should watch your dying bed. The circumstances, however, are reversed. You mourn the death of the most amiable, affectionate and faithful of children.

Let not mourning be your only exercise, on this occasion. To you this providence speaks, in language most powerful and solemn. While you are comforted, my aged friends, concerning the deceased, Oh live so, spend your few remaining days (for in the course of nature they must be few) in such a manner, that the hope of the righteous may be yours—that the consolations of the gospel at life and death, and the blessedness of immortality may be your inheritance.

May you descend the vale of life leaning upon your Saviour. And when your appointed labors and sufferings shall be finished, may you meet the deceased, in the world, whither we believe she has departed, in that rest which remaineth for the people of God.

Consort of the deceased,

For you we feel all, perhaps, that we ought or can ; while your sorrows demand more than our commiseration. We know that death has made gradual but ceaseless and fatal "depredations on a life dearer than that he left you."

With you we mourn. But we would do more. Is the wound deep and painful? We will apply the oil and the wine of spiritual consolation.

There is "balm in Gilead," my friend, there is "a physician there." The hope which you have of the present blessedness of your companion, is more, infinitely more than her life. The hope you have of meeting her, in that blessed-

ness, is infinitely more important than the life which is left you. Rise, then, my friend, God calls you to action and to future usefulness. Your family now demand a double portion of attention, and fidelity. Society still expects you to bear your portion of its labors and its cares. Come forward, then, and exhibit, to all around you, an evidence of the consolatory power of the religion of the Son of God. May grace be afforded you and your family—may you all be prepared for the blessedness, inherited by those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

“There dwells the wish most ardent of the wise.

Too dark the sun to see it ; highest stars

Too low to reach it ; Death, great death alone,

O'er stars and suns triumphant, lands us there.”

For this blessedness may we all be prepared,
through Christ our great Redeemer.



JAIRUS' DAUGHTER SLEEPING—

AN EXPOSITION AND APPLICATION OF THE PASSAGE;

CONTAINING

THE SUBSTANCE OF

A DISCOURSE,

AT THE INTERMENT OF

MISS IRENE NICHOLS,

DAUGHTER OF

Mr. STEPHEN & Mrs. PHEBE NICHOLS,

Who deceased, at *Becket*, May 6th, 1811.

Aged 15 years.



————— “His power must fail.
Then shalt thou burst his bands, and wake
To sleep no more.”

BLACKMORE

H. WILLARD, PRINTER, STOCKBRIDGE.



JAIRUS' DAUGHTER SLEEPING;

A

Funeral Discourse.

Matt. ix. 24.

Give place, for the maid is not dead but sleepeth.

THE occasion, which introduced these words, was highly interesting and worthy of attention.

Some interesting details respecting this incident, which are omitted by Matthew are related by the other Evangelists; so that in this, as well as every other important portion of the history of Christ, a clear and sufficient narration is afforded us. From the connection, therefore, of the whole, we learn that one Jairus, who, it appears, was a distinguished character in one of their synagogues, came to Jesus in a state of the most poignant distress. Though a Jew, both by education and profession, he was among the few who had confidence in the character and work of the Saviour. Perhaps he had been one of the hearers of Christ's discourses—perhaps, the eye witness to the stupendous works which

he had already performed. Whether previously affected or not, he was now brought to seek relief from him who alone could bestow it—from him who relieves all wants, who is anointed, and sent to bind up the broken hearted—to comfort all that mourn.”

To this Saviour was the application of Jairus made, and made with reverence and humility, and probably in faith. Sensible, as it seems, of his own unworthiness, yet deeply sensible of his necessity, he prostrated himself at the feet of Jesus, “and besought him greatly,” that is, earnestly, importunately, for that relief which none else could give.

He prefers his request, with that simple and affecting language, which leads us, at once, to witness all the sincerity and urgency of the father for a beloved daughter.—“My little daughter,” saith he to the Saviour, “My little daughter lieth at the point of death ; I pray thee come and lay thy hand upon her that she may be healed, and she shall live.” Real distress and earnest supplication for immediate relief, do not, naturally, abound in words. Such was the occasion here in view.

The request was briefly expressed, but it was, in the highest degree, interesting and urgent. It was, also, reasonable, and, whatever may have been the views of the father, his petition was in perfect accordance with the eternal purposes of God.

Influenced by his native benevolence, which led him, both to relieve distress and to perform the will of his Father, Christ followed the ruler to his habitation. While upon the way, he w

detained by another labor of love ; in the midst of which, a message arrived, that the damsel was dead, and that any further intercession with Christ was, of course, unavailing.

Still, the Saviour knowing the work to be performed, warned the ruler, struck as he must have been with these tidings, against despondency and distrust. *Be not afraid, only believe,* were the conditions on which a beloved daughter should be restored to his arms.

Jesus “ cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly and the minstrels and people making a noise.” Reference is here had to the custom of the times and people, which sanctioned, and, probably, seemed to require such expressions of lamentation as a funeral solemnity. It was not, however, commendable, else it would not have received the reproof which follows, “ why make ye this ado and weep ?”—Yet if lamentation is ever to be indulged it might here be warranted. Before them lay the remains of one, who, but a few days since, was blooming into youth—the hope doubtless, and probably, the pride of her parents. Beheld with all the fond partiality of a father, “ tender and only beloved in the sight of her mother,” caressed by her friends and flattered by her enemies ; what life could be more interesting and promising ? What death more solemn and affecting ? Yet their manner of sorrowing, their tumult, their minstrels and their lamentations, were both improper, in themselves, and opposed, as our conduct often is, to the purposes of divine mercy.

Hence are introduced these words, "give place, for the maid is not dead but sleepeth." The sequel is expressed in few words. All were put out of the room but the parents of the damsel and the three attendants of the Saviour, Peter, James and John. The hour to recall a departed spirit arrived—Jesus took the damsel by the hand—"TALITHA CUMI," said he, who shall one day awaken the slumbers of the tomb; "and straightway the damsel arose and walked."

And what application can be hence made? And what relation does this bear to the present occasion? The resemblance is in some particulars, striking. The age, the interest excited, the consolation needed, the use to be made—all lead our minds to contemplate the one, in the representation of the other.

But, in our text, a preternatural resurrection was witnessed; and can we expect this?

Shall a voice be heard to awaken the sleeping damsel before us? Shall this precious dust be reanimated by that same spirit which has fled? Such a voice shall be heard—this dust shall be reanimated—the spirit shall return. But not now. For that event we look forward to a future day. 'Till that time—'till that morn shall arise, we commit the dust to the earth, assured that it shall then arise. No preternatural resurrection—no miracle is here expected. No! The account with her is sealed, forever sealed. She has gone to that world, where probation has ceased and immortality commenced. Still, give your attention, and perhaps you may find the subject appropriate and the application useful.

I. In the passage before us, a fact is asserted, *the maid is not dead but sleepeth.*

How could this assertion be warranted? Were a similar circumstance now to occur—were a person, whatever might be his character, to approach this room directing us all to retire, and assuring us, that the damsel, before us, is not dead but only sleeping; he would probably meet the same reception, as the Saviour, in our text, when the attendants on the deceased “laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead.”

Some have explained this assertion by supposing that the state, in which the damsel lay, was such a crisis as sometimes attends acute diseases, which carries the appearance of death, and from which the patient recovers. This, we know, has been true in certain cases; but we have not sufficient evidence to believe that this was the state of Jairus' daughter. The reason we have to believe that she was actually dead, arises from the history itself, and from the fact, that this interpretation renders more illustrious the work of Christ. Upon the other supposition, indeed, it cannot bear the name of a miracle. She had lain in a state of apparent death, so long, that the people were collected, from the vicinity; and the musicians employed, on such occasions, were arrived, and had begun their work. Unquestionably the maid was really dead—her spirit had departed as truly and entirely, as that of the damsel, whose remains are before us.

Like her she was cut off as the morning flower—ere night or noon arrived, she was not. Mourning friends prepared to convey the body to the tomb, in assurance that the spirit had returned to the God who gave it. But, *the maid*

is not dead, saith Christ, *but sleepeth*—that is, “not to me. To your view, indeed, she has gone—she has slept the sleep of death. But I know when and how she shall be raised.”* This interpretation of the text is equally applicable, in the present case, as in the one, to which it was first applied.

Death, therefore, is fitly represented by a *sleep*.

The scriptural examples of this kind are many. How numerous are the characters of the old Testament, who, we are informed, *slept* with their fathers.

Thus Lazarus *slept*. The disciples, misapprehending the design of Christ in this expression, were undeceived by the explicit declaration, “Lazarus is dead.”

This expression is used with reference, also, to the separate state even of the ungodly—“and many of them that *sleep* in the dust of the earth, shall awake,” saith Daniel, “some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” Our text affords another instance, wherein death is manifestly represented by the term *sleep*; and an instance wherein the moral character of the person is left undecided. The idea, naturally and, I believe, generally received, is that the subject of the narration was not only a beloved, but, also, a pious youth. This is probable, but not ascertained, nor ever can be, ’till the great day, when “God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing.”

* *Burkitt.*

Moreover, *sleep* is a striking representation of natural death in two particulars ;

1st, As it supposes the interruption of the usual communication between the body and the spirit. If this communication is not entirely broken off, in sleep, still, the interruption is sufficiently obvious to render the representation clear and solemn.

In *sleep*, the mind wanders unrestrained. Neither the boundaries of empires or of oceans confine it ; not can the limits of creation, nor of possibility, restrain its flight. Still the body slumbers, ignorant, as it should seem, of the souls excursion and regardless of her return.

Thus slumbers the tenant of the tomb. The soul has left the body, earth, sun and creation, to extend its flight, through that void, where the voice of the Creator has never said, " Let there be light."

While this immortal part of man explores the regions of the blessed, or the domains of darkness, the body slumbers, insensible alike to the joy or to the woe of its companion. But,

2dly. The representation, of which we speak, has reference also, to the future union of the soul and body. There is such an union approaching—an hour, when matter and mind shall be united, to separate no more—" when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality." To inhabit a tenement capable of immortality, shall the soul be called, from near the throne of God, or from the abyss beneath.

That the dust shall be again collected, and organised to a perfect structure, and that the

soul shall return, and reanimate such a structure, are equally *incomprehensible* because to men they are *impossible* ; but not *incredible*, because, with God, nothing is *impossible*.

One, even of our fellow men was admitted, by immediate revelation, to behold this wondrous scene as already passing. When the earth fled away from the face of him who sat upon the throne, she resigned the dust of her children, committed to her care. "The sea" also, and even "death and hell, delivered up the dead which were in them." For almost six thousand years, the earth has been one great golgotha, an universal sepulchre. The creatures, which arose from her dust, she has supported, a few days, upon her surface—then received them again, to her bosom. Vast are the numbers which shall, at last, arise ; and could we, like John, be mere spectators of the scene, we should doubtless be disposed to exclaim, "where is the dust which has not been alive."

In reference, therefore, to the omniscience of the Saviour, with peculiar force and solemnity, was that said of the damsel at Jerusalem, which may, also, be applied to her before us, "the maid is not dead but sleepeth."

The propriety and solemnity of the assertion receive additional elucidation, from the clear resemblance between sleep and death ; and more than all, from the certainty that neither is to be eternal—that, as certainly as we expect to leave our beds, when the shades of night shall retire, yea, with infinitely more certainty, do we know, "that the hour is coming when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth."

II. Our text contains, also, an injunction, or more properly an exhortation with the mourners; "Why make ye this ado and weep? *give place.*"—*Give place*, said Christ to the mourners in the family of the ruler.

Give place, saith he, to those who mourn on this occasion. "Why weep ye," if we may be permitted to paraphrase on the words, "Why do ye mourn as those who expect no resurrection. The maid is not gone from existence. She still lives in the unseen world, and shall again live in the perfect union of soul and body."

On such an occasion, therefore, we are exhorted to give place to Christ, by banishing excessive grief, and by endeavoring to cultivate calmness and serenity.

The custom of employing minstrels, merely to increase the lamentation, and other means to aggravate the sorrow of survivors, was, we have seen, censured by Christ. This, however, is extremely natural. What else, or what essentially different from this, do we, when we indulge useless grief—when we permit the recollection of past endearments, and the imagination, of what might have been now present or future, to engross the whole man? While thus indulging the natural passions unrestrained, reason and conscience are refused an opportunity for the performance of their respective duties.

That calmness, then, without which afflictions will never have the desired effect—that serenity, without which temporal trials will terrify, but not wean us from the world; these must be cultivated, by him who would give place to Jesus, to the instructions of his word and providence.

Further, "*give place*," on this occasion, to reflection and solemnity. Full well do we know, that we are dying creatures. We know, for experience, as well as scripture assures us, that we have, in this world, "no continuing city," consequently we are bound to "seek one to come," to consider ourselves as "pilgrims and strangers here upon the earth," to seek "a better country that is an heavenly." These things are not disputed nor even doubted. They are objects, not merely of speculation and revelation, but, for the most part, of sense and of intuition. All this notwithstanding, it is certain that man is found, preparing for his abode, on earth, and forgetful of his future destiny. Without reflection, without solemnity, the different occupations of the different portions of life, all conspire to banish death and a future world from the mind. From this state he must be roused. These delusions must vanish. Solemnity, and reflection upon realities, must succeed. You may, now, refuse these objects admission; but they will intrude, "your leave unasked," at the hour of death, "a solemn hour and faithful to her trust."

Come, then, "*give place*" to solemnity—pause and reflect, or your reflection and solemnity will come too late. Recall, for a moment, the experience and the misimprovement of past mercies. Ask the hours "what account they bore to Heaven?"—what God has revealed concerning the use here made of time? *Give place, for a moment*, to these reflections, and *that moment* will be solemn.

Again, "*give place*" to Jesus, and, if his

children, you are entitled to the consolations of the gospel.

Great is the consolation afforded, in the assurance that the deceased have not slept eternally. This is an object, made sure only by the Christian religion. The light of reason and of nature, as it has been called, renders a future state probable; but the matter can never be fully ascertained, merely by such information. What, therefore, appears reasonable, upon this subject, is rendered certain, by the word of God. Over the future state of man, or the separate state of the soul, the light of reason casts an impenetrable gloom; while the christian religion shines through the veil, which conceals the other world; a veil, not yet removed, but permitting us to enjoy a faint view of the scenes which lie beyond.

Here we can behold, "as through a glass darkly," the state of that human soul which the eye of reason, unassisted by revelation, has forever lost. Here we learn, that the soul slumbers not, and that the dust, though concealed from us, is not lost forever. We here receive assurance, that a world either of happiness or misery, immediately, opens on the departed spirit—that the soul has no Papal purgatory to experience, no Heathen river, on whose banks fruitless ages must be spent. The world on which so many meditations have been employed, which has been, so long, the contemplation of the good man, and the object of the ungodly man's contempt; all shall open, either glorious or dreadful, upon the hovering spirit. To the unprepared the darkened deep must dis-

close its horrors "hedious and gloomy"—horrors which language was not made to express nor earth's inhabitants to conceive.

But this, you will say, is no part of the consolation promised. Turn, then, and behold the reverse. Permit the eye of faith to catch a glimpse of that brighter world. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

There is a region, to which innumerable souls have passed, where youth is perennial and blessedness unceasing. Seek it not here, in the wilderness, nor this side the Jordan of death, for it lies beyond.

"So, to the Jews, old Canaan stood,
While Jordan roll'd between."

We have all, then, ground for consolation, from the possibility that we may arrive there—from the certainty, that our deceased friends are gone to the immediate disposal of a merciful God—a God, at whose pleasure is the distribution of Heaven's favors. Parents ! behold, for in that blessedness are those children, who were, also, the children of God. Children ! behold, for there are those pious parents, who cherished your infancy, who guided your youth, and often carried you, in the prayer of faith, to the arms of Jesus.

Would you again enjoy their society ? Like them live devoted to God, and you shall "die the death of the righteous, and your latter end shall be like his."

"Give place," then, ye who thus live, give

place amid your trials to the consolations of religion.

Such is the assertion in our text ; and such the exhortation or exhortation of the Saviour.

Now, my friends, in a more particular and personal application of this subject, let us all *give place* to the solemn admonition, administered by the Providence which has, this day, called us to assemble.

Mourning Parents ! Hearken—for your calamities first deserve our attention. The most trying providence, perhaps, which you could have experienced, has fallen upon you. It was a lovely flower, which has fallen—lovely in life, pleasant in sickness, precious in death. You had cause to hope, to love, and to expect much satisfaction from her, in future years. Her affection, not only in all the gaiety of youth, but even in the hour of distress and approaching death, you will not soon forget—you never can.

We saw her struggling with approaching dissolution, but calm in distress, while yet,

“ In smiles, she sunk her grief to lessen yours.”

We heard her express a consciousness that nature was yielding and dissolving, and, with her departing breath, a hope in the Saviour of the guilty world.....

More I add not, respecting her ; for the Lord has not revealed it. His designs for her are accomplished.—Our concern is with the living.

Lately, this child was yours—therefore, a subject of your instruction and of your prayers. These opportunities have ceased, and she now accounts, to God, your fidelity and her own im-

provement. And what account has she carried ? What relation concerning your faithfulness ? That, indeed, I know not. Nor can it be of use to enquire, except to animate or influence us to more and greater fidelity.

For you have not lost all. God has not yet written you childless. There still remain other branches of your family—susceptible of instruction ; capable, if spared, of usefulness in the world, and certain heirs of immortality.

For them, and for your own souls, be diligent and faithful ; and *give place* to the solemn admonition which calleth upon you to “be also ready.”

My friends, of this assembly, and particularly those of you who are in the morning of your days ! Receive the exhortation of the Saviour ; and *give place* to a solemn impression, from what you hear and from what you see. Again, you see that death spares no age or sex. The young, as well as the old, fall equally his prey. Here was one, who came forward like the vernal flower—but, suddenly cut down by death, and translated to another clime.

You, also, have beheld a man in his strength, armed with vigor and activity. Again you beheld him, emaciated, pale and helpless, waiting the approach of death. You have seen the aged descending gradually to the grave, because man is mortal. They came to the grave, laden with infirmities, indeed, and, we trust, “like a shock of corn in his season.” Thus death calls impartially on the sons of men.

As yet *you* are tenants of the earth ; but, shortly, must you be tenants of the tomb. Still,

then, one more admonition is afforded you. You have been, often, called ; but, as often have you disregarded. You have deserved the stroke here fallen ; but another has received it—one, probably, far less guilty than yourselves. The thunder has rolled near you ; but its direful effect is yet averted. Who shall next receive the shock ? Who ? Young men and maidens ! Who shall next be summoned ? This I will not anxiously enquire ; for these interrogations are silenced by Him, who saith, “ shall I not do what I will with mine own ? ”

To conclude ; hearken to the voice of death, that voice so often heard around us, and amid us. “ The voice said, cry. And I said what shall I cry ? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field—The grass withereth, and the flower fadeth ; but the word of our God shall stand forever.”

AMEN.

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