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THE PIETY AND PATRIOTISM OF PRAYING FOR OUR RULERS.*

HOLDING with the Catechism, and according to the interpretation of almost all commentators, Jewish, Catholic and Protestant, ancient and modern, that the “Fifth Commandment requireth the preserving the honor and performing the duties belonging to every one in their several places and relations, as superiors, inferiors, or equals,” we design this morning to dwell on the *Christian duty and patriotism of praying for our civil rulers*. Our last discourse of this series was on the duty of children to parents. In the present one we shall confine ourselves to one branch of the duty required of us towards our superiors. The precept that requires us to obey and honor our *natural* parents is so broad and comprehensive, spiritual and dynastic in its reach, that it requires us also to honor and obey our *spiritual* fathers, and our *economical*, that is, our social and domestic fathers; and to honor and obey our *political* fathers. The duty which, however, we are now seeking to illustrate and enforce, is plainly taught by the apostles, and is specifically the duty of *praying for them*. And we take our text for this subject from Paul:

* NOTE.—This article is abridged from a discourse preached by the Editor, in 1843, in New Orleans, to the First Presbyterian Church and congregation of that city, and published by them. It was then widely circulated, but is now out of print. A few sentences referring to passing and local matters have been changed or omitted.

THE REV. DR. VAN RENSSELAER.

OUR READERS have all heard of the death of this distinguished man and eminent servant of Christ. For ourselves we must say that we have seldom thought of him for several years past without calling to mind Homer's line concerning Ulysses :

“Thou living glory of the Grecian name.”

We have only to substitute *Presbyterian* for *Grecian* in this line and we have our estimate of Dr. Van Rensselaer ; indeed it seems to us that this is the light in which the whole Church regarded him. The following tribute to his memory is from the pen of REV. DR. BURROWS of this city.—*Editor.*

It is with the heart filled with sorrow and the eye dim with tears that we record his death. The dealings of Providence with our Church during the past year, have struck deep into the hearts of all within our bounds. Yet do we look to these repeated strokes of bereaving love with mingled emotions of grief and gladness ;—grief that our brotherhood have lost such genial spirits and the cause of Jesus such generous servants,—gladness that our Church has been honored by producing such sons, and they were spared even so long to labor for the glory of Jesus Christ. Nine and thirty of our ministry have been called away during the past year ;—among them Dr. Addison Alexander, second in ability and learning to no man in the political or religious world ; Dr. James W. Alexander, combining the varied qualities and attainments of the Christian and scholar that placed him in the first rank of undershepherds of our Lord ; Hope, useful and beloved in the professor's chair ; the venerable Neill, the model of a finished Christian ; all these, and last, not least, he for whom we now mourn, have been gathered from our midst as jewels for the Redeemer's crown. That system of church doctrine and policy must certainly possess great excellence which through the grace of God could develop itself in such characters as these excellent men. That church may well look up with thankfulness in the midst of tears, which can still feel that though she has no worthier sons than these, there are many still left who are worthy to stand by their side as compeers. Well may we rejoice in our sorrow when

we feel that any church can afford to lose such men, and still stand in the glory of a heaven-born beauty and strength.

Among these names, none is written in such deep characters of affection on the heart of our Church at large, as that of Cortlandt Van Rensselaer. He was the son of the Hon. Stephen Van Rensselaer, of Albany; and was born in that city, May 25th, 1808. He graduated at Yale College in 1827. He was admitted to the bar, in New York, in 1830; but abandoned that profession for the ministry, and entered the Theological Seminary at Princeton in the fall of the same year. He was ordained to the gospel ministry in 1835; and began his labors in the ministry by preaching to the colored people in Virginia. He was for some years pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Burlington, N. J. He was appointed Secretary of the Board of Education of the Presbyterian Church in 1847; and continued in that important and laborious post till the end of his life.

Dr. Van Rensselaer always appeared a remarkable instance of the sovereignty of God, and of the ease with which divine love can, at will, depart from the ordinary modes of operation in the method of grace. "Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." *Matt.* 19: 23. Yet born of one of the wealthiest families, reared among the influences which only ruin so many youth, and himself heir to a large fortune, he became a true and humble Christian, and consecrated all he possessed to the service of his adored Lord. His natural endowments were of a high order. There are men who may surpass him in some particular speciality. Few have equaled him in that aggregate of substantial abilities which, combined, constitute the most enviable of God's gifts to man. He was a faithful and able preacher;—few so instructive and suggestive. A sound and sober judgment; a strong and vigorous grasp of mind; a mental constitution pitched in unison with evangelical truth and assimilating it almost without a struggle or a doubt, free from proclivity towards utopian metaphysical fancies, and gravitating naturally to the common sense level of views and things; a heart of the greatest natural benevolence, filled with the overflowing influences of the spirit of holiness and love;—all these besides the gifts of fortune and position, and the education they supply, fitted him for building up a character and wielding an influence that few can hope to attain. He could be no common man who, in a church like ours, distinguished for the culture and learning of her sons, could take the position and exert the control held by our lamented friend. In their letter to the dying man, our General As-

sembly say : "We cannot accept your resignation of the important office you have just relinquished, without bearing our formal and grateful testimony to the manner in which its duties have been performed. With devout thankfulness to God, and under him, beloved brother, to you, we record our sense of the eminent wisdom, fidelity and efficiency, and the noble, disinterested liberality with which you have for fourteen years conducted the affairs of our 'Board of Education.' Under your administration it has arisen from a condition of comparative feebleness, to strength and power. Its plans have been matured and systematized. Its sphere has been greatly enlarged. It has assumed new and most beneficent functions. Your luminous pen has vindicated the principles which lie at the basis of true christian education. And by your numerous publications, your sermons and addresses, your extended correspondence, and your self-denying activity in visiting every part of the church, you have, by God's blessing, accomplished a great work in elevating this sacred cause to its just position, and gathering around it the sympathies of our whole communion. Nor may we forbear to add, that in prosecuting these manifold official labors, you have greatly endeared yourself personally to the ministry and membership of the church."

Any man who would grow up into his character amid the influences that surrounded him, must possess great natural excellences and receive rich communications of divine grace. He enjoyed both. His natural disposition was lovely, generous, self-renouncing, and winning. These traits were developed by high culture ; and to them was added, when education had done its utmost, the crowning influence of the Holy Spirit. He was all the accomplished gentleman can be in the best use of independent means ; and he was all the humble Christian can become in the enjoyment of the grace of God's Holy Spirit. Such a combination of influences makes the noblest type of man. We use no other than the language of unexaggerated truth when we say that such was Dr. Van Rensselaer. He was a model of a rich man and a Christian. Starting from the same point, and the same influences, where he started, how many have, even at the best, spent lives of fashionable selfishness, and died the worldling's death. He too could have lived a life of Sybarite ease, and have lavished his wealth on splendid villas and specious though corroding pleasures.

He chose a different part. No man in the Church lived a life of more laborious toil in the service of the Lord Jesus. In the duties of his office he was indefatigable. I have seen him in the coldest

weather of mid-winter encountering the discomfort of long stage rides when cold and storms made the exposure trying to the best constitution. All was cheerfully endured. He did not seem to think he was making any sacrifice, or was doing anything unusual. On the steamboat his portfolio was with him, and he gave no rest even there to his pen. His annual reports, so carefully written and possessing a permanent value, the annual volume issued on topics of education, the matter contributed to his magazine, together with various addresses and the correspondence inseparable from his office,—all entailed a great amount of labor. He has placed our Board of Education in a position it never before occupied. His weight of character and influence made him invaluable in the position he occupied among our candidates for the ministry, at the head of our Board of Education. His simple presence in that post, the unspoken influence going forth among those young men from a controlling heart like his, exerted an imperceptible but real power in elevating the whole tone of piety and feeling in those brought into the sacred office under his pastoral care. One of the things we always valued highly in Dr. Van Rensselaer in this position, was the power he silently exerted, and which is so eminently needed, of leavening our rising ministry with a spirit of courtesy, no less than piety, kindred with his own. The aim of this Board, when he assumed its duties, was the education of candidates for the ministry. He greatly increased his labors by including the care of schools, academies, and colleges under ecclesiastical control. Up to the last, even when unable himself to hold the pen, in the sick-room, on the sick-bed, did this good servant continue his unwearied exertions in the cause of Christ. Still a gentleman of independent means, he gave all these services gratuitously, and largely of his own means to the great interests of the Redeemer's Kingdom.

He gave more than this. He gave his own life also to the service of Jesus. He died in the fulness of his prime, worn out by his great and unremitting labors. Had he taken more rest he would have lived longer. His death was a fitting close to such a life. Among his last acts was the starting of our educational enterprise on this Pacific coast. His strong mind, his far-seeing sagacity, and his large heart had long inclined him to do something for this new State. He was enabled to give the first impulse and see the work successfully begun. In his death, the cause of education in California has lost a devoted and efficient friend.

The Church he had served so faithfully, had a just appreciation

of his labors. With one soul, amid deep emotion and many tears, our last General Assembly,—a body of men unsurpassed for talent and excellence by any on earth,—paid to this dying brother, worn out in their service, honors which our Church have never paid to any other man. A letter to him from this body, thanking him for his services, was read amid a silence unbroken save by sobs and tears,—the whole body rising to their feet, and the patriarch pastor, Dr. Spring, leading in prayer. And not only every one of the three hundred members of that body, but every one of the three thousand ministers and hundreds of thousands of church members they represented from every State in this Union, felt that this act, so richly merited by the dying, conferred no less honor on themselves.

Here, on this far Pacific coast, thousands of miles away from their old homes and the churches of their childhood beyond the distant mountains, on these frontiers of civilization the news of his illness filled many hearts with sorrow; earnest prayers were offered for the good servant of our Lord far away on the bed of suffering; and when at last the tidings of his death, though long expected, came, there fell at the memory of the departed many heavy tears.

As we turn away from his grave to the labors and duties of life, we do so with deep thankfulness for such a gift of God as this good man to our Church; for all that he was spared to accomplish; for the legacy of his example and his influence long to endure. We cannot take up the spirit of the Spartan's epitaph and say,—The Church has many a worthier son than he. The Church has no worthier son than he. And we shall feel it the greatest of blessings, will the same Holy Spirit who made him what he was, raise up and endow for our bereaved brotherhood and the Church of Christ, another who may possess his endowments of nature and grace, and fill the sphere he occupied, with the same energy and influence of love.

“When faith and love, which parted from thee never,
Had ripen'd thy just soul to dwell with God,
Meekly thou didst resign this earthly load,
Of death, called life; which us from life doth sever.
Thy works, and alms, and all thy good endeavor,
Stay'd not behind, nor in the grave were trod;
But, as Faith pointed with her golden rod,
Follow'd thee up to joy and bliss for ever.
Love led them on, and Faith, who knew them best
Thy handmaids, clad them o'er with purple beams
And azure wings, that up they flew so drest,
And spake the truth of thee on glorious themes
Before the Judge, who thenceforth bid thee rest
And drink thy fill of pure immortal streams.”

those that love God. He said his work was done on earth, and he was ready to go and receive the crown awaiting him."

Dr. Butler left written directions as to his burial. He wished to be dressed in white linen as the Saviour was, and to be laid in a plain wooden coffin, and that the following texts of Holy Scripture, should be written in a plain hand, and laid on his breast in the coffin: "Remember the words of our Lord and Saviour." "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven." He retained his senses to the last, and often repeated during his sickness with great clearness and comfort texts of Scripture, and favorite passages from the Psalms and verses of hymns. His death was particularly calm and peaceful. His last words to each of his children and neighbors were the words of a dying patriarch. He was also comforted by receiving promises on his death bed from several of his unconverted neighbors, that they would live for Christ, and try to meet him in heaven. A physician, just before he died, asked him: "Dr. Butler, are you willing to go? Can you see your way clear?" "Oh, yes," said he, "all is bright before me." His last words were, "rest—rest." Such was the going home of a faithful servant of Christ, a great and good man.

A HOME TO REST IN.

BY HENRY MORFORD.

THE world, dear John, as the old folks told us,
Is a world of trouble and care;
Many a cloud of grief will enfold us,
And the sunshine of joy is but rare.
But there's something yet to be bright and blest in,
No matter how humble the lot;
The world still gives us a home to rest in,
Its holiest, happiest spot.

Sweet home! dear home! on the northern heather—
On the sunniest southern plain—
The Lapland hut in its wintry weather—
The tent of the Indian main;—
Be it gorgeous wealth that our temple is dressed in,
Be it poor, and of little worth,
Oh home—our home—a home to rest in,
Is the dearest thing on earth.

But time, dear John, is using us badly,
Our homes crumble day by day,
And we're laying our dear ones swiftly and sadly,
In the dust of the valley away.
There's a death-robe soon for us both to be dressed in,
A place for us under the sod;
Be heaven at last the home we shall rest in—
The rest of the people of God!

—*Selected.*