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DEATH AND HEAVEN:

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT NEWARK,

AT

THE INTERMENT

OF THE

REV. EDWARD D. GRIFFIN, D. D.,

ON THE

10th of November, 1837.

BY

GARDINER SPRING,

PASTOR OF THE BRICK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE CITY OF  
NEW-YORK.

JOHN S. TAYLOR,

THEOLOGICAL AND SUNDAY-SCHOOL BOOKSELLER,  
BRICK CHURCH CHAPEL. NEW-YORK.

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## A SERMON.

2 CORINTHIANS, v. 1. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

“COME,” said the celebrated Addison, just before his death, to the youthful and dissipated Earl of Warwick, “Come, see how a Christian can die.” Death is the foe of man; but it is the glory of the Gospel that it teaches us how we may meet this last enemy with triumph. When the Saviour was on his way to the grave of Lazarus, he proclaimed, *I am the resurrection and the life; if a man believe in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die!* Though not destroyed, already is death virtually abolished. The death of death was realized in the death of Christ. In the memorable hour when he hung on Calvary, he took away the strength of the law, and extracted the sting of death. And when he rose, death was *swallowed up in victory.* The believer lives under

a constitution of grace, and under that constitution he dies. To the last hour of his mortal career, the memorials of his weakness are blended with the emblems of his victory. *Sin reigns unto death; but grace reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.* The “dread passage of the tomb” is lost in the brightness of the prospect beyond it; so that all through the dark valley, with exulting confidence, he may say, *For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!*

Such was the triumph of the primitive Christians. Nor was it theirs alone to experience the power and preciousness of the Gospel in the immediate prospect of eternity. To the long and bright catalogue of names, which, like a cloud of witnesses to the hopes and consolations of the Christian in a dying hour, another is added in the name of that beloved and venerated man, whose death is the occasion of this discourse, and at whose request I now address you. Let us, preparatory to this last token of respect which we take so much pleasure in paying to his memory, turn our attention to a brief analysis of the passage of Holy Scripture selected to give some direction to our thoughts on this occasion.

*For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were DISSOLVED.* When the disciples beheld the splendour of the ancient temple, its just proportions, its massive walls, its towering height, and exclaimed with astonishment, *See what manner of stones and buildings are these ;* their Master replied to them only by a prediction of its speedy fall. *Seest thou these buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.* The earthly house of this tabernacle shall be thrown down. *The keepers of it shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves.* However fair, and beautiful, and vigorous, nothing can shield it from decay. The head that is crowned with honour must lie low. The eye that beams with sensibility and intelligence must become dim. The tongue shall become mute that moves with powerful and melting persuasion. The warm and throbbing heart shall become still and cold as marble. Wherever we cast our eyes, we see all that is excellent marked by imperfection; all that is most permanent hastening to decay. Disease springs up in every clime; death multiplies his victims under every sky, and reigns over every age of time. We sicken, and die, and moulder away in the grave. *Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.* The building is dissolved. *Man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?*

Life is a mystery from the flower that blooms on the valley, to the highest forms of conscious and intelligent existence. But what shall we say of death? Life, clothed with sensation, thought, and activity, was the last and highest act of the Creator's power. But *death*, — that mysterious change which defaces the beauty of this living creation, and breaks in pieces this most excellent monument of divine wisdom, — what is it, but one of the highest and most striking proofs of the omnipotency of God, which spares not this his noblest work? See this beautiful vase dashed and broken! The *silver cord is loosed*. The *golden bowl is broken*. The *pitcher is broken at the fountain, and the wheel broken at the cistern*. Look for that fair edifice which but now reared itself in beauty and splendour, and the eye sees nothing but its fallen ruins. Not a vestige of its fair proportions remains. The living inhabitant that once occupied it, is gone to some distant world; and the once beautified, adorned mansion is already beginning to be decomposed, and returning to its original dust. Nothing but desolation and decay are visible, and the stillness of death reigns throughout its deserted chambers.

Man has no power to ward off the stroke of death. The monuments of human enterprise are found in costly pyramids and lofty temples; in battles



that have deluged the earth with blood, and in cities and empires that have withstood the desolations of time. But there is no memorial of power and genius that have erected a barrier before the tomb. Barbarous nations have been civilized by man. The fields of science have been explored by his wisdom and industry. By his authority over the elements, he has compassed earth and ocean, and well nigh annihilated space. But with all his capacity for great and noble achievement, he has never been able to enlarge the boundaries of human life, or rescue a single victim from the King of Terrors. Death's arrows are sharp. His hand is unerring and ruthless. The giant stalks unseen, and throughout all the vast arena of his conflicts, none can resist, or evade his ravages. We may weep. We may tremble. But we cannot escape his fury.

But does the history of man terminate in the tomb? Is death an eternal sleep? Is the grave a world of everlasting oblivion? Are the darkness and silence of the sepulchre the last traces of this once busy and active creation? Are the triumphs of the King of Terrors never to be arrested? May we conjecture nothing?—do we know nothing that relates to our final and ultimate destiny? Then are we, of all beings, the most miserable. Did the

God all-wise, all-powerful and good, frame and fit up this earthly house, and make it the residence of a thinking, living inhabitant, endued with such strong and restless desires after immortality, — such noble faculties and vast capacities of intellect, — and open to him such an unlimited range of view throughout the immensity of space and duration, — all to be extinguished in the grave? Has he invested this sensitive existence with the noblest moral powers, and inwoven in his constitution, principles and affections, which mark his dignity and grandeur, and indicate his destination to some high scene of action and enjoyment, merely to slumber under the clods of the valley? Then is man the most inexplicable phenomenon in the universe. Then is his existence an unfathomable mystery, and the end for which he was created an enigma never to be unravelled. Has the Mighty Creator imparted beauty, order, and harmony, to the material creation, and left the moral creation such a scene of disorder and anarchy? Shall the smallest seed, after dying in the earth, shoot forth its umbrageous branches? — shall the meanest reptile, after ingeniously forming its own winding-sheet, and burying itself in its own self-formed sepulchre, burst its clod, unfold its wings, and come forth the beautified inhabitant of other regions? — while man lies buried in the darkness and desolation of the

tomb? Then is every thing wrapped in obscurity in the world in which we dwell, and the conduct of the Great Being who presides over the affairs of the universe, shrouded in impenetrable darkness.

I find no such gloomy considerations as these when I look into the Bible. The confirmations and illustrations of a future state are inwoven with the whole scope and design of the divine Oracles, and comprise the sum and substance of their revelations. I turn to these sacred pages, and learn that there are those to whom death is the vestibule to heaven. There I discover a world of immortality and joy. I know that *the earthly house of this tabernacle must be dissolved*, but am assured of *a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

It is a delightful thought, when we deposit in their last earthly rest the dust of those who lived and died in Christ, that the next event in their history will be their acquittal before the throne, and their welcome to the heavenly kingdom. No sooner are their souls removed from this mouldering tenement, than they have a habitation beyond the skies. They go from earth to heaven.

*A building* is there fitted up for their residence.

They inhabit a mansion, that has a local existence as really as the earth on which we dwell. There God himself dwells more visibly and gloriously than in any other part of the universe. There is the residence of angels. Thither the Saviour ascended when he left this world, and there he lives and reigns. Enoch and Elijah occupy that glorious mansion, and thence descended on the holy mount. All the redeemed will inhabit it. In what part of the universe this great building is erected no tongue of mortals can tell. Perhaps some where beyond the regions of this solar system, the Almighty has established this *glorious high throne*,—this *third heavens*,—this *high and holy place*. Nor can we doubt that it is a scene of loveliness, of magnificence and splendour, worthy of its Divine Author, and the everlasting abode of the highest and purest spirits in the universe.

It is a *building of God*. God himself is the mighty architect. It was planned by him. By him it was finished and fitted up, to be the residence of all who love him. He presides over it; every where dispensing light, purity, and joy, in fulness and perfection. Unutterable as they are, its glories are nothing without him. The immediate and visible presence of its God and King constitutes its blessedness. *In his presence is fulness*

*of joy ; at his right hand are pleasures forevermore.* The presence and contemplation of the Great God will afford ample enjoyment to the mind forever.

It is a *house not made with hands*—a mansion far superior to any which the mind of man ever devised, and a significant monument of the power, wisdom, and love of its author. It went up silently—unheard—almost unseen. At his word, at the omnipotent expression of his will, it emerged from nothing into existence. *He spake, and it was done ; he commanded, and it stood fast.* Without the aid of any other power, without violence, or effort, without confusion and without noise, he called it into being and garnished it with all its glories. It is eminently a spiritual world. There is no Temple there ; *for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it.* The luminaries that shed their lustre on this terrestrial globe shall not shine there ; *for there shall be no need of the Sun, nor of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of the Lord shall lighten it, and the Lamb shall be the light thereof.* The verdure and fruits of this lower creation shall not be found there ; for they shall all be forgotten in the overshadowing beauty and perennial fruits of the Tree of Life. The streams which refresh and vivify this earth shall not flow there ; for

therein is *the pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb.* It is a new heaven and new earth, *wherein dwelleth righteousness. There is nothing there that defileth.* Every subject of this celestial empire is holy as its King is holy; every child in that heavenly family is perfect as its Father in heaven is perfect. Holy beings are in their element there — in a holy atmosphere — with holy associates — all constituting one immense and harmonious society; *a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.* And they will be as happy as they are holy. The highest pleasures of intellect will be combined with the purest pleasures of the heart; the sweetest pleasures of solitude with the most expanded pleasures of society, every where reciprocal, every where beaming with smiles and sparkling with joy. No heart shall be wrung with disappointment and anguish; no countenance dejected, with melancholy; no eye heavy with sorrow, or dim with tears. No wants will there remain to be supplied; no dangers to be averted; no solicitude to be relieved; *for the former things are passed away.*

And this building is also *eternal in the heavens.* Its walls are reared by omnipotence and truth; its vast foundations laid deep in the un-

changing purposes of God. His eye alone can compass its wonderful magnitude, for it stretches over boundless space. His mind alone can span its vast duration, for it exists for ever. Time will not impair it, for time will be no more. Eternity will not move its foundations, for they are based upon the Rock of Ages. No foe will scale its ramparts, for God himself is its defence and glory. Storms and tempests will not assail it, for they have no escape from that imprisoned world, whither, with all evil elements they have been banished. It stands, *a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* There is not a source of celestial joy, but will be everlasting; not a mind in heaven whose capacities and anticipations will not “spread and flourish to all eternity.” The inheritance is *incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away — a continuing city — an everlasting habitation.*

Paul could say, *we have* this inheritance. Already are we possessors of it. We stand upon its threshold. *We know* that it is ours. Wonderful assurance! for a man who confesses that of *sinners he is the chief.* But not more wonderful than true. There is a glorious peculiarity in the convictions that are the result of revealed truth. They are not conjecture; they are not doubt and

uncertainty ; they are not the hopes and fears of an alternately confiding and suspicious mind. Nor are they conclusions deduced from the strong preponderance of probabilities. They are truth and certainty. *For WE KNOW, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

I would be slow to affirm, that “assurance is of the essence of faith.” The trembling hope, and agitating fear of many an humble child of God may not always be the result of unbelief. And yet, where doubt and hesitation exist, they may be almost always attributed to some sinful, or unnecessary cause. The Scriptures, if I read them aright, justify, and even require of the people of God a *strong and unwavering confidence* that heaven will be their final abode. This is their duty and privilege. Not that that holy and happy world is the object of their senses ; for they have never seen it, and have no such speculative discernment of it as they have of external objects. Not that they always had the same apprehensions of it which they now have ; for their corrupt affections once rendered them blind to spiritual and holy objects, *nor could they know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* There is a stronger ground of confi-



dence than sense, or reason ; and that is the *veracity of God*. Sense and reason may deceive us. The testimony of our fellow-men may deceive us. But God cannot mistake ; God cannot lie. Whatever he declares we know must be truth. His word is the foundation of a faith that is unwavering. Faith in God gives reality and palpableness to the objects of hope, presence to what is future, and appearance and perspicuousness to what is not perceptible. It is *the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*. The believer implicitly confides in all that God has revealed, not only concerning the existence and blessedness of heaven, but concerning the method of mercy by his Son. That wonderful redemption he no more doubts it than he doubts his own existence. God *hath given HIM to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*. On this corner stone, this tried stone, this eternal Rock, he casts the anchor of his hope. *He knows whom he has believed, and is persuaded that he is able to keep that which he has committed to him against that day*. Through him, who is *Our Righteousness*, God has promised to pardon, sanctify, sustain in holiness, raise from the dead, justify before his throne, deliver from deserved wrath, and advance to heaven, all who believe in this appointed Mediator. Good men trust

in the divine faithfulness. *They behold the promises afar off, and are persuaded of them, and embrace them.* Though an ensnaring world and a faithless heart may assail and endeavour to subvert their confidence, they well know that the arm of omnipotence is made bare to execute what immutable truth has engaged. Difficulties they may see on every side; dangers they may fear from without and from within; but *no weapon formed against them shall prosper. Nothing shall separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus their Lord.* With a faith that purifies the heart and exerts a transforming, practical influence, they receive the testimony of God, and *believe to the salvation of their souls.*

And they themselves may know that they have thus believed. There is, in the nature of the case, no foundation for doubt or hesitation as to the reality of the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart. It is his province to *take of the things that are Christ's, and show them unto us.* "There is a wide difference between the knowledge of Jesus Christ and every other sort of knowledge." There is a wide difference between the fruits of the Spirit, and the works of the flesh; between the supreme love of God and the supreme love of self, and the world; between the

faith that lives, and the faith that is founded on presumption, and is dead. The grace which forms in the mind of man the character, which makes him to differ from a world that lieth in wickedness, conferred as it is in execution of an unchangeable purpose, and with the view of preparing it for the glory to be revealed, cannot fail of producing an observable effect. Where conscience is neither bribed, nor embarrassed in her judgement, men may *know* whether they have the faith of the Gospel, or the faith of devils, and whether they are alive in Christ, or dead in sin. Paul had remaining corruptions ; but they did not prove that he had no saving knowledge of Christ. Many a time was he constrained to exclaim, *O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death !* While many a time he could shout the triumph, *I thank God, who giveth me the victory through Jesus Christ my Lord !*

The disciples of the Saviour have an earnest of heaven already within them. They enjoy it by anticipation. God has given to them his Spirit as a *pledge* of their future felicity and glory. They have a *part* already, and expressly given as a seal and security that in due time they shall be put in complete and entire possession of the whole. Holiness is es-

entially the same thing on earth that it is in heaven. The fruits of the Spirit, so often gathered on this vale of tears, are the same with those which grow in richer and riper clusters on Mount Sion above. Every gracious affection is the germ of heaven. As it came from heaven, so it conducts to heaven. The Spirit of God has left an impression on the minds of his people, never to be obliterated; an impression as deep and varied as the image of their Heavenly Father. The rough features of the old man, with its affections and lusts, are gradually worn away, and the growing lineaments of the new man are marked with unwonted distinctness, and clothed with unearthly beauty. *The kingdom of God is within them.* They have a heaven-directed, as well as heaven-born mind. Their thoughts and affections are heaven-ward. They maintain, though not an invariable, yet an habitually upward tendency. They are heavenly in their temper, and spirit, and aims. Their treasure is in heaven, and their hearts are there. As they look around upon this desert world, they see nothing worthy of an anxious wish. It is a soothing reflection to them, that *here they have no continuing city*, and that this barren earth is not the place where the heirs of glory should dwell. Habitually do they *hunger and thirst after righteousness*. Often is it their privi-

lege to enjoy peculiar nearness to God ; and as their path draws nearer to the promised land, and their views become insensibly blended with the scarcely brighter visions of the heavenly world, you may hear them say, *For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

Do you wonder then, while we say, *Come see how a Christian can die!* Listen to that song of triumph. Hear that holy man, when earth and earthly things are sinking around him, and he has every thing to fear from the fury of his persecutors, calmly exclaim, *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 at that day, and not to me only, but to all them that love his appearing!* Go to the dying couch of Payson. Hear him say, “The battle’s fought, and the victory’s won — won forever ! God is literally now my all in all. I have no tears to shed but those of love, joy, and thankfulness !” The noblest and the weakest believer rest on the same foundation, and have but one hope. “I cannot say,” said a child of God, as he was ad-

dressing himself to the dark valley," that I have *so lived* as not to be afraid to die ; but I can say, that I have *so known Christ* as not to be afraid to die." Such is the hope of the believer. And with such a hope he can plunge into eternity. And nothing, beloved hearers, but such a hope can sustain you in a dying hour. To know what death is, and yet meet it with composure, is the privilege only of the Christian. He only connects a distinct view of death in all its portentous consequences, with a fearless anticipation of its approach. The thoughtless worldling may not always die in despair. But his hopes are suspicious ; they are blind ; they are groundless ; and they *perish when God takes away his soul.*

Hope, to be full of consolation, must be intelligent and firm. It must be the sweet composure of a child of God, who speaks of his approaching dissolution, as he would speak of going home. Death is a dark day to the vanquished sinner ; but it is the bright moment of the Christian conqueror's triumph. While every thing that is mortal within him shrinks and perishes at the approach of this terrific foe, here the power of the destroyer ends. Over that which is immortal, he has no control. This body is his to unnerve and paralyze, and deliver over to his hideous attendant,

dark corruption; but the soul is beyond his reach. His cheek is pale. His lips tremble; but not with despair, not with fear. Death and sin are making their assault upon his outward form, his covering of clay, and with furious outrage, for it is their last. But within all is peace. Hope is there enthroned strong and steadfast, unshaken and unmoved, till it give place to a full, perfect, and present certainty of holiness and joy.

From the design of this discourse, it is no doubt expected that I should inform you how the Redeemer honoured and supported in the last conflict, his once afflicted, but now glorified servant, whose lifeless body lies here before us. You will expect, too, on an occasion like the present, that I should furnish you with some brief notices of a life so endeared to us all, and so faithfully and actively devoted to his Master's service. Edward Dorr Griffin was born at East-Haddam, in the State of Connecticut, on the 6th day of January, 1770. He was educated at Yale-College, where he graduated in 1790. He excelled in every department of study, and attained the first station in his class. Upon leaving college, he superintended, for a few months, an academy at Derby, a pleasant village not far from the college. There he was attacked by a severe illness, which con-

fined him several weeks. This was an important era in his life. During these weeks of illness, his character underwent a change. His early religious education, and his serious reflections and prayers during his sickness, were made *the power of God to his salvation*. Then it was, as we have reason to believe, that *he passed from death unto life*.

Like the apostle of the Gentiles, he was *a chosen vessel unto God*, to bear the unsearchable riches of his grace to a dying world. Drawn by the cords of love to the cross of the Redeemer, he arose from this bed of sickness an altered man; and from that memorable period, the prayer of his heart was, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* The study of the law, which had been his favourite object, was abandoned. His aspirations were directed to a higher pursuit.

Shortly after this, in the spring of 1792, he united himself with the church in Derby, and publicly avowed himself the disciple of the meek and lowly Jesus. He pursued the study of theology under the care of the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Edwards, then the distinguished pastor of a church in New-Haven, and was licensed to preach on the first of November, about six months after he had united himself with God's visible people.



No man in our country ever entered on the work of the ministry under brighter auspices. It was the commencement of the age of American revivals, in which he felt an absorbing interest, and was an early and efficient agent. I have heard some of his seniors in the ministry say, that the services of no young man were ever more eagerly sought by the churches. He was first settled in the ministry in New-Hartford, in his native State, where he continued for several years, and where his name still lives in cherished remembrance. Here he was associated with such men as Mills, Hallock, Strong, and Gillet, and many others of a kindred mind, whose example and piety had no small influence in forming his character, and promoting his usefulness.

I remarked that he commenced his career at the beginning of the age of American revivals. I have heard him say, that he could stand at his own door, at New-Hartford, and count more than forty contiguous congregations, which were at one time enjoying the refreshing and abundant influences of the Holy Spirit.

About the time of his settlement at New Hartford, Mr. Griffin was married to Frances Huntington, the niece and adopted daughter of Samuel

Huntington, then Governor of Connecticut, with whom he lived in great harmony, and whom he followed to the grave only about three months before his own death. They are now, we trust, a happy pair, reunited in heaven.

The air of New-Hartford being found too keen and piercing for the delicate frame of his wife, Mr. Griffin was induced to seek a more genial climate. In the fall of the year eighteen hundred, he removed to Orange, in the State of New-Jersey, where he spent about six months; had about fifty souls given him as the seals of his ministry, and where his name has always been honoured. In the spring following, he received a call from the first Presbyterian Church in Newark, in the same State, where he was settled for several years as colleague Pastor with the venerable Dr. McWhorter, with whom he lived in undisturbed fellowship, and to whom he paid the last sad offices of respect and love, as to his departed father. Here he laboured amidst many a scene of wonders, and was every where surrounded with his spiritual children whom he loved as his own soul. These scenes will never be forgotton. They were scenes of triumph, where *one had chased a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight.* Many a time did the Spirit of Jesus, here in this

house of God, where that tongue is now silent in death, move the great assembly *as the trees of the wood are moved by a mighty wind.*

In the year eighteen hundred and eight, Dr. Griffin, for he had then received this title from one of the distinguished colleges in our country, was removed to a wider sphere of usefulness. The Theological Institution at Andover had just been established, and the evangelical church in Park-street, in Boston, had been newly erected. Dr. Griffin, with great unanimity was solicited to fill at once the pulpit of the church, and the chair of Professor of Sacred Rhetoric in the Theological School. It would be hard to name the man so well qualified for this important trust. There was but one sentiment in the minds of the students, and the churches in relation to his unequalled qualifications for this responsible office. He occupied a wide place at Andover, and when he left the Seminary, there was a chasm which all who knew him felt that no living man could fill. It was no common trial to his pupils that he vacated the professor's chair. To his unchanging friend and patron, who nominated him to that office, it was one of the severest trials of his life. The individual who addresses you, was one of a class of about thirty, who first en-

joyed the benefit of his instructions ; and though many of them have fallen asleep, those who remain, feel I am persuaded a deep and filial interest on this mournful occasion. Many are the tears they will shed over his grave ; while with one accord, they bear testimony to the ability and success with which he fulfilled the duties of his office. For myself, I feel that I have lost a second father. It was owing to his instrumentality, that I occupy the sphere of usefulness which I have been permitted so long to occupy. Nor shall I ever forget the tender and affectionate interest he has uniformly taken in all my course, both as a man, and a minister of the gospel.

After his removal from the Seminary, which was in July, eighteen hundred and eleven, he remained several years in connexion with the church in Boston. Here he preached and published the "Park-street Lectures," and rendered himself conspicuous as the bold, able, and uncompromising advocate of the great doctrines of the Geneva School, in opposition to the Unitarianism and Arminianism of Massachusetts. Here he performed a most acceptable service in the preparation of a small manual, which is in very extensive use, as a form of admission to membership in the church. By this impressive and touching

document, which has so often thrown hundreds of congregations into tears, *he, being dead, yet speaketh*, and to thousands and tens of thousands in the American churches. Montgomery remarks, that "*Bishop Kenn* has laid the Church of Christ under lasting obligations by his *three hymns*, Morning, Evening, and Midnight." Had the venerated author of this formula never written another line, he would have left an unperishable inheritance to the people of God.

In eighteen hundred and fifteen, Dr. Griffin again removed to Newark, having been called to be the pastor of the second Presbyterian Church in that town. Here he was once more distinguished not only as a devoted and successful preacher of the gospel, but as an assistant founder, and active, zealous friend of our great benevolent and religious institutions. While at Andover, the incipient measures were taken in his study, that resulted in the formation of the *American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*. After he removed to Newark, the *United Foreign Missionary Society* sprung up under his fostering care. Next to the lamented *Mills*, he did more to give it form and features than any other man. And he introduced it to the world by an appeal to the church that deserves to be trea-

sured up in her archives, as long as she loves the heathen. But for no institution did he undergo more fatigue, or make more vigorous efforts of mind and heart than the cause of suffering, bleeding *Africa*. The *American Colonization Society and the African School for the Education of Preachers and Teachers for the Negro Race*, so long as he was a resident in the middle states constituted his chief care. His "Plea for Africa" evinces the solicitude he felt for the elevation and sanctification of a race that had been so long crushed, broken, and deserted.

In the year eighteen hundred and twenty-one, he was elected to fill the office of President of Williams College in the State of Massachusetts, and in the autumn of that year, assumed the duties of his new station. The institution was then at a low ebb. There was a great deficiency in its funds; and few men would have been equal to the undertaking of raising it except Dr. Griffin. But his energy and influence overcame all obstacles, revived the resources of the college, and established it on a basis that has made it one of the safest and most useful institutions in the land. In his official capacity as president of this institution, his name will always be dear to those who received his instructions. He was ever found the

watchful guardian of its interests, the vigorous and successful teacher, and the prayerful, laborious pastor of the youthful flock committed to his charge. There he remained for fifteen years, greatly venerated and beloved, and until the sickness which eventuated in his death, compelled him to resign his office.

He sought and found a last earthly home, where of all other places he desired to seek and find it, in Newark. Here he had lived in the remembrance and prayers of two beloved congregations, and here he wished to die. He spent the year preceding his death at the house of his son-in-law, Dr. Linden A. Smith, where he was nurtured by the care and soothed with the kind attentions of his two daughters, who had the consolation of witnessing the triumphs of faith, displayed by the dying saint, and of watching his upward progress to the very gate of heaven.

In point of talents the deceased might have claimed brotherhood with the first class that our country has produced. His intellect was profound and discriminating. His imagination was discursive and brilliant. It is but seldom that these two attributes of mind are so happily blended in the same individual. Sometimes the reasoning

faculty claims exclusive sway, seeming to disdain and reject from its service the lesser and more graceful aids of the fancy. Sometimes the imaginative faculty reigns with dangerous supremacy, loosening itself from the safe and sure ballast of the understanding. But in the deceased, the reasoning and imaginative faculties were harmoniously and conspicuously united. Both were created by God, and blended in the structure of man; and were intended to form one consistent and harmonious whole. To these two attributes, the deceased joined an *enthusiasm of purpose*, which seldom failed, or faltered, until its object was obtained. This enthusiasm, forming as it were the *steam* of the mind, and impelling onward the reasoning and imaginative faculties, constituted Dr. Griffin, what in truth he was, *one of the master spirits of the age in which he lived*.

As a preacher of the gospel, our beloved and venerated friend possessed distinguished excellencies. His mind was amply furnished with sacred knowledge, and he excelled both as a doctrinal and practical preacher. His sermons were rich in thought, and designed to exhibit, explain and enforce the great fundamental doctrines of the gospel. He aimed, in the composition of his sermons, to enlighten the understanding, rouse the



conscience, and reach the heart. When he found his audience impervious to such impressions, he would endeavour to interest their imagination, and move their passions; and when he had gained their attention, and melted their obduracy, he would "fix the seal of truth." In his argumentative, as well as his ethical and hortatory discourses, there was a vivacity of impression which never failed to interest. He was indeed unequal as a preacher. Sometimes he would descend to the level of ordinary men; sometimes he would indulge himself in declamation; but habitually *he spoke with demonstration of the Spirit, and with power.* He often preached the *terroures of the law*, and with a force of thought that made his hearers tremble. And often, too, he did it with tenderness and tears. But his chosen theme was the *love of God.* The cross of Christ was with him the glory of every sermon. In what melting and persuasive accents have I heard him speak of *the love of God.* Never shall I forget his tones, his accents, his manner, when with his erected form, and a heart of irrepressible tenderness, he would pour forth streams of love to God and man, as though he himself were at the fountain head.

His elocution and manner in the pulpit were somewhat peculiar. He was never cold and indif-

ferent — always impressive and solemn, and very often highly impassioned. His prominent characteristics were simplicity, tenderness and power. To one that did not know him, his manner seemed sometimes to aim at *effect*. But if it ever was so, the few instances were exceptions to his general character. It will be recollected that Dr. Griffin lived in an age when the ministers of the gospel stood upon an eminence, which they have never since occupied. Nor was he inferior to any of them. If he excelled them, it was in the richness and variety, the tenderness and power of his appeals to the conscience. Take him all in all, he was the prince of preachers. There was a charm about his preaching, which I have never known equalled. It will be long before his character as a preacher, will be forgotten by the American churches. Wherever he preached, crowds followed him. The learned and the ignorant, the exalted and the debased, the humble believer and the bold infidel, seemed to hang upon his lips with equal interest. Proud blasphemers

“ Came to hear him ; hated ; but came again,  
And learned to love — for God was with the man.”

I never heard a more fearless preacher, nor one more melting and tender. He was greatly blessed of God as the means of converting men. I doubt

whether the minister can be named, since the days of Edwards and Whitfield, to whom God has given more seals of his ministry. God had eminently fitted him for usefulness in revivals, and preserved him from evil. Though susceptible of strong excitement, he was remarkably free from the indiscretions, to which ministers are too often liable at such seasons. His mind and heart were so well balanced, that he had no tendency to extremes. Nor do I know of any man who felt more deeply the wound given to the cause of the Redeemer, by the unhallowed fire which has of late years burned over so many portions of his fair heritage.

As a Christian, it was an object of the deceased to cultivate the habit of cheerful piety, submissively and gratefully referring every thing to the will of God. And therefore he habitually enjoyed religion. He used to say, "Some men have just religion enough to make them wretched; enough to spoil the world, but not enough to draw comfort from God." He had a *forgiving spirit*. I have known him a greatly injured man; but I have never known him cherish a retaliating, or revengeful disposition. I have seen him weep under injuries; but I never heard him utter an angry sentence against those who reviled him. There was a kindness, a generosity, a nobleness

of heart about him, which his enemies never knew how to appreciate. Of his *spirituality*, his preaching, and prayers, and conversation, bore ample testimony. Who, that has heard him pray, does not recollect with what sweetness and fervour he used to wrestle with God? When he rose in prayer, it seemed as though he felt as a dying man, surrounded by dying men, privileged to ask infinite blessings in the name of the atoning, interceding Saviour. He was greatly favoured in spirituality of mind, during a few of the closing years of his life. He seemed eminently to live above the world, and to walk with God. The storms of life had driven him to this loved refuge. During the protracted debility which terminated his earthly career, he appeared to make rapid advances toward heaven. There was a tenderness, a meekness, a submission, a gratitude, a love, which evinced that he was not long to be an inhabitant of earth. And when from this protracted debility, there began to be an obvious breaking down of his outward man, he possessed a peace, a joy, which "like the spring tide, overflowed its banks."

He died in the full assurance of hope. His holy and heavenly conversation; his solicitude for the honour of God, and the salvation of men; his affectionate counsels and admonitions; and his de-

lightful testimony to the divine faithfulness, during the last few weeks, will not be forgotten. *I wish, he would say, for the honour of God, and for your own comfort, for you have yet to die, to tell you of his merciful and faithful provisions for a poor, wretched sinner, so needful for an old man going down into the grave. Not an anxious thought is left for me, from day to day, about the event, or manner of my death. That he should select this time to do for me what he never did before,—to remove every concern and fill me with peace, and to make that most solemn event, and all the dreaded means, no longer dreadful but delightful,—is a proof of mercy and faithfulness beyond the power of language to express. And you may expect that he will do the same for you.* One who stood near him replied, “If I were as faithful as you have been”—This remark evidently gave him pain. *Don’t say that again!* he rejoined, *It is not because I am good, but because Christ has died.* He received every intimation of the probable approach of death with exclamations, and often tears of gratitude. It was not that he was impatient to be relieved from suffering. He often said, that *the thought that infinite wisdom and love ordered it all, made it delightful.* For every provision for his comfort, his heart overflowed with gratitude to his Heavenly Father. He would say, *Your love to your sick and dying child is hatred,*

*compared with the care of my Heavenly Father toward me.*

On the last Lord's day, new symptoms presented themselves, and he was told his disease was approaching a crisis. The announcement drew forth expressions of gratitude. A friend who came in on Monday evening said, "Your journey is almost over." He replied, *Blessed be God!* On Tuesday morning, at 4 o'clock, his family were called up to see him die. One of them inquired, if he suffered any pain? To which he answered, *None*: and in his own emphatic manner, though scarcely able to articulate, he added, *My Heavenly Father — my dear Redeemer's mercy and faithfulness — I pray you to give him glory forever!* Being asked, if he dreaded the dying struggle — *No*, said he, *I leave it all with God. I refer it all to his will.* To one of his brethren in the ministry, who visited him in the course of the day, he said, *You see me just going home.* His friend replied, "It has often been your privilege to administer consolation to the dying; I trust you now experience all those consolations you have offered to others." *More — more — much more*, was his emphatic reply. On the afternoon of this day, after bathing his feet, he said, *I never expect to bathe my feet again. My soul I hope to wash in*

*the blood of the Lamb.* To his own brother, who inquired if his mind was yet unclouded, he replied, *Without a doubt—without a doubt!* During the evening he remarked, *The Saviour never so manifested his preciousness to me before.* He repeated this thought, till his emotions checked his utterance. The pangs of death he *escaped.* Early in the evening he fell asleep, and continued to sleep quietly till 4 o'clock, on Wednesday morning, when he ceased to breathe, and awoke in heaven.

His age was sixty seven years and ten months. He served the Saviour in the ministry of reconciliation forty five years. He was the first death among a family of eight children.

*Mercy and faithfulness* were his constant theme. They are the closing words of his Diary; and who can doubt that they burst from his enraptured tongue, as he entered the Heavenly City! He was exquisitely fond of sacred music. Among the last earthly sounds that fell upon his ear were the sweet hymns to which he loved daily to listen. How suddenly exchanged for strains of celestial harmony and transporting praise to God and the Lamb!

But I retire from this scene. Death, who strikes with unsparing and indiscriminate hand, seems

here to have watched with the most searching scrutiny, where he might inflict a deep, and irremediable wound. Neither commanding talent and energy, nor kindness of spirit, nor form and features in which these so happily shine forth; nor piety, nor usefulness could divert him from his stern purpose. He has stamped his cold signet upon that brow. He has clothed with his pale colours that cheek. He has bowed the mighty to the earth. He has crushed one of the noblest pillars of the Temple in the dust.

And yet, may we not sing of mercy in the midst of judgement? If our departed friend and father did not live till the late evening of a summer's day, his sun went down at his appointed hour, and set without a cloud. If life be estimated by what life accomplishes, how few live so long? Religion, my mourning friends, makes no provision for insensibility under trials; but it does provide a solace under them. It is a day when we know not how to spare such a man. *But the Lord liveth, and blessed be our Rock, and let the God of our salvation be exalted!* The Saviour will not leave you comfortless. You will not refuse to be comforted, when you call to mind that one you loved so tenderly is gone to join the general assembly and church of the first born. *If you*



*loved him, you will rejoice because he said, I go to the Father.*

How affecting is the voice of this providence to those of us who minister in holy things! My respected and beloved fathers and brethren in the ministry, shall we not cultivate a more heavenly mind? Do we not greatly need larger measures of piety? From this hour, shall not our light shine with a purer lustre? I love to stand by the grave of a faithful minister of the gospel. My murmuring heart receives here the rebuke it needs. Are we not sometimes tempted to be weary of our work? And when we are in the midst of its toil; when we feel its responsibilities; when storms beat upon our unprotected head; when the ark of God trembles, and we fear to touch it, lest with unhallowed hands; are we not, in some sad and sinning hour, tempted to repent our purpose, and say, Why was I born for a minister? But one such scene as this breaks the snare, and dispels the gloom. I look at that sweet corps, and love to think of death and the grave. Courage, my brethren! Jesus is faithful. He will comfort us when we come to die. *Be you faithful unto death, and he will give you a crown of life.*

How affecting also is this admonition to the members of these beloved churches, and to the

inhabitants of this favoured city. No place was so endeared to our departed friend, by so many tender recollections, as this. It is an event I have regarded with delighted interest, that this beloved man was called to spend his last days among a people where he had beheld such signal displays of the divine mercy; and that in the latter, as well as in the early harvest, he should have had some precious fruit of his labours. You have never treated him with unkindness. You have shielded and loved him to the end. And you shall have your reward. He little thought a few years ago, that this last office would be performed by this beloved people. Mysterious are the ways of providence, and kind as they are mysterious. This precious dust is embalmed by your own hands, and you who have so often carried this man of God in your arms to the throne of grace, now bear him to his last rest.

The thought lay heavy on his bosom in his dying hour, that some of you listened to his voice in vain. You have heard his last sermon. You have listened to his last prayer. He will never call you to repentance again. And yet he can never be forgotten. His very *name* is a memorial of the truths he uttered. O! eternity will show how fearful the responsibility of having enjoyed the ministry of such a man.

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