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W. W. Phillips



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FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
FIFTH AVENUE, N. Y.

MEMORIAL

OF

REV. WILLIAM W. PHILLIPS, D. D.

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OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

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[From the New York Evening Post, March 25th, 1865.]

FUNERAL OF THE LATE DR. PHILLIPS.

THE funeral services of the late WILLIAM W. PHILLIPS, D. D., were held in the First Presbyterian Church, Fifth Avenue, on Thursday, 23d inst., at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and were attended by a large concourse of friends—hundreds being unable to obtain admission to the church.

A striking feature of the occasion was the presence of so large a number of clergymen, of all evangelical denominations, who came from far and near to evince their respect and affection for the memory of their departed brother in the ministry.

The services were conducted by

REV. DR. SPRING,
“ “ PLUMER,
“ “ FERRIS,

REV. DR. KREBS,
“ “ DICKINSON,
“ “ THOMPSON.

The pall-bearers were

REV. DR. VINTON,
“ “ SHEDD,
“ “ SOMERS,
“ “ VERMILYE,

REV. DR. DEWITT,
“ “ ADAMS,
“ “ RICE,
“ “ CAMPBELL.

Dr. KREBS delivered the address, giving a sketch of the life and character of the deceased ; and was followed by Dr. PLUMER in a few touching remarks.

The impressive services, the sombre drapery, the manifest sorrow of those

who were taking their final leave of the remains of him who had baptized their infants, married their young men and maidens, visited their sick, and buried their dead; the beautiful rendering of the hymns (favorites of the deceased) commencing

“There is a fountain filled with blood,”

and

“How blest the righteous when he dies;”

the tolling of the bell as the mournful procession passed from the late residence of the deceased to the church; presented a scene so truly solemn and affecting as will scarcely be effaced from the memory of any of its observers.

“Thus passed forever from our view
The noble, faithful, pious, true;
But from our hearts and mem'ries never
Can we his name or virtues sever.”

ADDRESSES

DELIVERED AT THE FUNERAL OF

REV. DR. PHILLIPS,

MARCH 23d, 1865,

BY

REV. JOHN M. KREBS, D. D.,

AND

REV. WILLIAM S. PLUMER, D. D.

ADDRESS OF REV. DR. KREBS.

THERE is a stricken household—there is a stricken church. There are many hearts bleeding this day—and many anxieties and sympathies awakened by the blow which has prostrated a standard-bearer on the high places of the field, and bereaved so large a portion of the church of God in this city and this land. And I too—may I not say it?—have lost a friend, a counsellor, a brother—one in whom I trusted with unbounded confidence—whose kind and almost parental regard and unobtrusive condescensions I have enjoyed during my whole ministry—in experiences and trials, in intimacies and confidences in eventful times, and in personal concerns of the heart and soul.

I have hardly dared to trust myself to speak on the present occasion. It is not so difficult to speak in eulogy of the honored dead: nor is it unmeet that I should fulfil the office that grows out of official and personal relations,—while as the last of his co-presbyters who conversed with him or saw him living, there is some fitness in my compliance with the request which for such a service has the force of a command.

But I cannot help feeling—as amid other and similar and recent solemnities—which have crowded upon the tenderest recollections and affections of these churches and ministers—that God Himself is speaking to us with the voice of His providence—and of His rod—with a startling and almost appalling eloquence—that bids us “be still and know that He is God.” The occasion itself is more affecting and impressive to the hearts that gather here to the burial of a man of God than any words of man can be. When that majestic form, which now lies prostrate here, moved among you, and appeared in this pulpit, you felt the power of His *presence*—the force of all his excellent natural endowments of person, as well as of mind—that seemed to make his words more imposing, while these endowments were really aided and employed, as they were sanctified by all those excellent gifts and graces, which the Spirit of God superinduced upon them, to make him a minister, a witness, and an example of that grace and truth which are in Jesus: and you felt that his words were weighty and powerful. But was there ever aught of solemn admonition that spoke from those eloquent lips like this, his last and most impressive sermon—these mute appeals of these sombre draperies, this gathering of mourners, these bowed hearts—and amid all and above all—this eloquent majesty of death? May it not be said, with no inappropriate application, that “he being dead yet speaketh”—and now once more, most solemnly of all, to

bid you remember the word which he spake while he was yet with you?

The rapid changes since my own accession to the ministry in this city have removed the fathers who received and inducted me when I came among them in the dew of my youth. The most of those venerable men are dead. In the Presbytery *one* only survives in the pastoral office; in our Presbyterian churches here, only *two*; and in all the denominations only *three*. Within the last ten months the Presbytery has lost from these conspicuous places *six* of its members—*four* of them among the most eminent and of prolonged usefulness—men of mark—men revered—and we who stand here are admonished to-day that we too are going the way of all the earth. Well may we exclaim—“The *fathers*, where are they? and the *prophets*, do they live forever?”

But the memory of their ministrations remains, and of the oppositions of unbelief, and the fruits of repentance and faith, and the word of God which liveth and abideth forever. And all the effects of their ministry survive—both in them to whom they were the savor of death unto death, and in them to whom they were the savor of life unto life. But they are gone—to meet with their hearers again at the bar of God, and to give in their account—of some with joy—of others with grief—and all of them to test the truth of what these prophets believed and preached.

The treasure was put into earthen vessels—the waters of life were put into earthen pitchers. And these are broken—although the treasures and the waters were not lost. But the season is short—for us—and for you also who hear us.

If this truth were felt, as its solemnity and impressiveness ought to be felt—what preachers should we be—what hearers would you be! What an influence and force would be conveyed by every sermon! What scenes of spiritual interest would our worshipping assemblies present! What pains of conviction—what anxiety to be saved—what holy travailing of the new birth—what joy and peace in believing—what thronging crowds in the sanctuary—what hopes of salvation—what fitness for living, and fitness for dying too—what comforts and consolations abounding by Christ—and what looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God—and what praises and services of the glory of our God and of His Christ!

And if for the moment we weep and mourn, because His servants do not continue by reason of death, and are taken away from our fond hearts and longing hopes for the church of God and her wide field in a dying world wherein her prayer and service for Christ and souls are to be employed—we are not to forget all that God accomplished by them—nor that Jesus Christ is still Head over all things for the church—and that He will be with her alway to the end of the world. He is the same

yesterday, to-day, and forever—His glorious person, and covenant, and atoning blood—His power and love and faithfulness—His compassion and care—His mediation and intercession—His promises and His truth. He has the residue of the Spirit—He will not leave you comfortless—He will raise up laborers for the harvest—and in their generations He shall have a seed to serve Him—and other ministers and martyrdoms, it may be, to testify to the ages to come the glorious gospel of the blessed God—to comfort His people—and to build up His church. Zion is engraved on the palms of His hands: her walls continually rise before Him.

But it becomes the occasion to attempt, yet with no particular care to be methodical, some humble and merely suggestive memorial of the life and character of our departed friend and brother and father. We are commanded to remember those who have had the rule over us, who have spoken to us the word of God—and to follow their faith, considering the end of their conversation.

WILLIAM WIRT PHILLIPS was born in Montgomery County, in this state, on September 23d, 1796. From his early childhood he was of a thoughtful and religious turn of mind, and he grew up in singular purity and uprightness. Often, in after years, he adverted, with pious thankfulness, to the goodness of God in preserving him from the sins of youth. Early led to

recognize Christ and embrace Him as his Saviour, he confessed Him before men in claiming union with His church, shortly after graduating as a Bachelor of Arts of Union College, and while he was yet under twenty years of age. Entering the Theological Seminary of the Associate Reformed Church in this city, under the care of the late Dr. John M. Mason, and afterward the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Dutch Church at New Brunswick, he was contemporary in his studies under that distinguished teacher and preacher, with many who have become eminent ministers of the gospel. After prosecuting a very full course of study, he was, in April, 1818, ordained as pastor of the church then in Pearl street, but now merged in the Central Church in Broome street; and in that church he continued a most acceptable and useful ministry for about eight years, when he was translated to the First Presbyterian Church, then worshipping in Wall street: and therein, and, after the removal of the church edifice and the erection of this church, in this place, he exercised his pastoral office for thirty-nine years—his whole ministerial life occupying a period of forty-seven years—until now he has finished his course with joy, and the ministry which he received from the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And ye are witnesses how holily and unblameably he behaved himself among you, and exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye

would walk worthy of God who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

While as a pastor he devoted himself to the edification of his especial charge, he was called to the performance of other public trusts, to the duties of which he attended with great fidelity and skill, and with great acceptance. *Ex officio*, he was, by the terms of their respective foundations, a trustee of the Leake and Watts Orphan Asylum and of the Sailor's Snug Harbor—posts requiring no little time and labor. He was also a trustee of the College of New Jersey (Nassau Hall), at Princeton, and a member of the Council of the New York University; and he was both a trustee and a director of the Theological Seminary at Princeton, and President of the latter Board: and always in his place. Besides being repeatedly elected a member of the several other Boards of the Presbyterian Church, he was, from its organization in 1837, the chairman of the executive committee of the Board of Foreign Missions, and, for several years past, President of the Board also. Every week found him in his place in that committee, wherein he made himself thoroughly familiar with its operations, the condition of its missions, and the name, character, and work of every missionary; and in every way he showed himself an earnest and sagacious friend and promoter of that great cause. He was frequently a member of the General Assembly, and in 1835 was its Moderator. These positions

evinced in what repute he was, in the church at large and with his brethren. And thus was laid upon him in a measure the care of all the churches, involving an amount of service of which few men are capable. These were not barren honors, but severe labors. Nor was this service any detriment to his parochial charge. Neither he nor his people regarded it with churlish jealousy or narrow and selfish regard to its isolated interests; but by his public spirit, which was shared by his people, was illustrated the duty of looking not upon their own things, but also upon the things of others, and the advantage to be gained by enlarged views and all the reflex influence and reciprocal benefit which a pastor and man of public spirit confers at once upon the whole church and upon the particular field from whence he dates his enlarged enterprise.

The degree of D.D. was conferred upon him by Columbia College, when he was yet under thirty years of age.

None would shrink more than he from the eulogy or mention of himself. But shall *we* not bear testimony to the grace of God which was with him?

He was a good man, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith. He walked with God daily. Eminently a man of prayer, his household knew why his resort in the early morning was to his study; and when, under the pains of his last sickness, he stood

leaning over his study-desk, or sat in his chair with closed eyes and barely moving lips, they knew that he was communing with God. And herein lay in part the secret of that remarkable ability, copiousness, and unction of his public prayers in the sanctuary—so full, so appropriate, so fervent, that one of another preference said that if all ministers prayed like him there would be no need of a liturgy—and that might be said of him which the late Dr. James W. Alexander once remarked to me concerning Dr. Milledoler, that “he was given to the church to teach ministers how to pray.” He *was* a good man. Men felt it, and “how awful goodness is;” as one said, who mingled much with public men and great men in political circles, that he was always unusually moved with “a certain awe,” when he was in the presence and company of this true man of God.

For the past two years he was more evidently ripening for heaven. The finer points of his character were *more* apparent: his patience, meekness, tenderness, love, spirituality, upward affection, the characteristics of his pure and lovely life, were brought out more and more.

With that great strong form—so firmly knit, and framed for endurance—he was, nevertheless, the subject of great bodily suffering, which was not generally known; but he complained not—nor murmured, nor proclaimed it abroad; but he bore it with sustained spirit—and its influence was observable upon him

as it helped to purify his character, and even helped him in his work. Obligated to write standing—unable to sit down—he would sometimes say: “Oh, if my people knew what suffering it costs me to prepare for their instruction, they would surely appreciate more this painful labor for them, and make a better improvement of the truth.” And it was to him a regret that his infirmity rendered him unable to visit them at their own houses as often as he would. So excruciating was this anguish at times, especially toward the last, that after a severe paroxysm, he said: “I thought I had endured all that poor human nature could bear: but God has shown me that there are greater extremes:—and I am a wonder to myself, to suffer as I do, and yet live.” And yet, with all this, under complicated agony, there was no impeachment of God—no bitter outcry. “It was all right: God had a good purpose in it: His will be done.”

Thus to the last, so meekly bore he his Master's will. As the end drew nigh, he did not fail to apprehend its approach. Methodically exact, he had set his house in order, in his temporal as well as in his spiritual concerns. He spoke of the probable event—not as terminating his life, but as closing up his work. He was simply, beautifully calm. He knew whom he had believed. His mind, unclouded till the last few hours, showed its unfaltering trust. Without speaking of himself, his conversation was in heaven, and implied more than he said. When told of

a certain person who was suffering much from excessive bodily pain, and was, at the same time, oppressed with spiritual doubts and fears, he said: "I pity him, to have to bear that double burden—anguish of body and a wounded spirit too, troubled with the temptations of the adversary taking advantage of his weakness." When, in my last interview with him, while he could still converse, I spoke with a grateful remembrance of his kind counsels in times of trouble, and especially of the comfort I had derived from his last sermon in my hearing,—as if to ward off any seeming tribute to himself, he replied: "Give God the praise: it is He who makes use of us; and all our fitness to aid one another is from Him."

He showed piety at home. His household fondly revered and loved him. To his children he was more like their elder brother. He made them his companions,—talked with them and taught them, while he counselled with them, and shared their studies and plans and recreations, and governed them with the power of his loving sympathies.

He was very much attached to his own people, and they in turn to him. They were kept together against the adverse influences of changing population by the force of their love for his person and ministry. To the poor he relieved—the children he instructed—the afflicted he comforted, he was greatly endeared. His people had all confidence in his integrity and sound judgment,

and they coöperated with him without question or reluctance in the plans he formed for developing the energies of the church and promoting its prosperity and usefulness, and the widest influence of his ministry among them; so that they were singularly accordant, peaceful, and happy in each other. His church was indeed his family. There he spoke with all freedom and simplicity; adverse to the advertisement of his sermons, or reports of them, because he would not have that free, familiar discourse as with his own household impaired by the thought of the press, or by mingling with it an ambitious style and sensational themes, or by truckling for celebrity and the applause of the platform. In early life, he had, according to the custom of some, kept a journal—which, however, he destroyed, because he feared the record which might fall under the eyes of others, should extenuate or exaggerate the truth of his own experiences for posthumous admiration.

An humble-minded, modest man was he—simple and sincere and confiding, cheerful of temper, but grave and dignified. His retiring, unobtrusive disposition caused some persons to charge him with being cold, reserved, unsocial, and proud. They knew him not. None cherished profounder views of his own unworthiness and obligations to grace: none more tender, affectionate, and sympathizing. He was ever ready to help his brethren,—to take pains to help them, never excusing himself from the

service. Ever ready too to welcome them, to counsel them, to comfort them, to judge their weaknesses charitably, and pity them; but never with proud and oppressive condescensions. A friend more in unmistakable acts than professions, he was always real and reliable; a lover of good men; and given to hospitality.

With his strong mind and cultivation, he might at all times, without arrogance, have assumed commanding position and leadership in the church and be forward in utterance. But his voice was not heard in the streets and in the chief places of concourse. He abstained from clamorous pretension. He waited till call and occasion drew him to conspicuous post and service beyond the sphere of daily labor where he dwelt among his own people. He courted not association with the great, nor sought worldly preëminence. He disdained sycophantic obsequiousness to win the smiles of the wealthy and powerful. He could not crook the pregnant hinges of the knee that thrift might follow fawning. He held no man's person in admiration because of advantage. His prayer was to be kept from the fear of man that bringeth a snare. And thus was he independent in his judgments, firm to his convictions, undaunted for truth and principle; and no mere human expediences could sway or swerve him.

In the courts of the church he spoke but seldom; but al

ways with authority—so wisely and honestly that all listened and trusted his clear, sound speech and discriminating judgment.

So honest and incorruptible was he—so prudent, consistent, and Christ-like—that none distrusted his sincerity—and all gave him reverence and respect. A living epistle of the truth, he rendered the religion he taught by his example, amiable, and, if I may use the expression, respectable in the eyes of the world; and with a power beyond the suffrages or testimonies of men, he repelled and withered whatsoever scheme or disposition bold bad men might have manifested at any time to impeach his integrity or calumniate his gospel.

He was faithful to the gospel. He believed it. He loved it. His soul's trust was in the cross of Christ. That cross was the theme of his preaching. Unmindful of the sneers and clamors which would exclude the preaching of *the* gospel as obsolete, and substitute for it their own devices, he felt that the *cross* was Christianity—that Christ alone was the wisdom and power of God unto salvation—that *to save men's souls* was first in importance, and that to heal them was to abate all the ills of life; that all moral and sanitary reform must be the fruit of evangelical regeneration,—and to make the tree good would insure that the fruit should be good also. And he so preached, and with such a purpose, that if perchance there should be among his hearers

one soul that needed to be taught the way of salvation, he should not go away untaught, lest perchance he might never hear it again. It was a maxim of his that "prayers and sermons are not intended for admiration, but to edify;" and if ministers would but keep themselves out of view, and their reputation for learning and eloquence, and simply hold up Christ and His cross, how much more effectively they would preach the gospel and save men.

He was no showy man—in the pulpit, or out of it. He was something better. Without pretension—without ambition of style—solid—clear—instructive—scriptural—he was mighty in the Scriptures—and his eloquence was that which the word of God inspired. It was said of him that his lectures were his best preaching—so thoroughly were they imbued with the Bible—so well expounded—yet so free and unrestrained by scholastic rule, or aim at popularity. In a day of glare and tinsel and self-seeking—all honor to the man who was true to the glorious gospel—who never preached himself—and never pandered to itching ears, and ill-informed, conceited minds and unsanctified hearts.

And thus was he faithful unto death. And now he comes to his grave, as a shock of corn fully ripe that cometh in his season: not worn out, not imbecile; but in the maturity of his powers, his eye hardly dimmed or his natural force abated; still vigorous, untiring, bravely laboring on to the last, even amid

trials and pains. While he laid upon his death-bed, panting and gasping, you might look through the open door into his study, where on his desk was still lying the unfinished sermon arrested by the accession of those complicated diseases which paralyzed his strength and interrupted all his work on earth forever. He had prayed that he might not outlive his usefulness, that he might not be laid aside to become a burden. In this he was exempted—as he was exempted from all the bitterness of death.

But precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. He guards their lives: He watches over their end. Precious in His sight is the death of His faithful ministers. He formed their character, and prepared them for their reward. They had fought the good fight; they had finished their course; they had kept the faith; and the crown of righteousness awaits them. Let us not weep and break our hearts because they have entered into rest. Let us be grateful for their godly lives, and pious service, and be followers of them who through faith and patience have inherited the promises. Their death is a legacy to the church and to survivors: it illustrates God's faithfulness to them to the end, in their fidelity to Him, and in their departure in peace and blessed assurance of everlasting life.

Moses is commanded to go up to Nebo and die, just on the threshold of the promised land into which he was leading

Israel. It seemed hard. But he is active; he is submissive; he is willing; and he is favored too. God kisses away his breath—hides his servant from the strife of tongues—hides his sepulchre,—but his memory is blessed forever.

How shall it be with us? Such a command will soon fall on our hearts. Do we keep the fact in view? Are we ready for the summons? Shall it find us still doing the Master's will?

And all of us, beloved, shall have to take this step. Will it be by the side of your faithful ministers, to be their crown and rejoicing in that day? Ah! if it be not so? Have the life and labor of your pastors hitherto been lost upon you? See to it, that you lose not their death also.