

MEMOIR
OF THE
REV. JOSEPH W. BARR,

LATE MISSIONARY

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE
WESTERN FOREIGN MISSIONARY SOCIETY,

WHO DIED AT RICHMOND, VA., OCTOBER 28, 1832, WHEN
ON THE EVE OF HIS EMBARKATION FOR
WESTERN AFRICA.

COMPILED BY E. P. SWIFT,
Corresponding Secretary of the Society.

"You have lost his life—lose not his death."
JAY, as quoted by the father of Mr. Barr.

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Special project and collection

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THE
DEAD SPEAKING.

A SERMON delivered in the Oratory of the Theological Seminary, at Princeton, New-Jersey, November 18th, 1832, on occasion of the death of the REV. JOSEPH W. BARR, Missionary to Africa. *By Samuel Miller, D.D.* Professor in said Seminary.

HEBREWS 11: 4. *He, being dead, yet speaketh.*

WHEN death has laid his cold hand upon one who was lately in health and active, one of the most striking consequences is, that the lips are sealed in silence. Those lips, which, perhaps, were seldom opened without giving pleasure and instruction; those lips, which, it may be, were devoted to the best purposes, and delighted in pleading the cause of righteousness,—when death has done his work, are closed and powerless. We may address ourselves to the departed individual, in the loudest manner,—but he hears not; he answers not; all is silent.

But, blessed be God! there is another sense in which even the dead speak. Nay, there are cases in which they not only speak, but continue to speak, thousands of years after they are gone. Thus the apostle *Paul*, who penned the words of our text, though represented by tradition as a man of small stature, and feeble bodily presence,

has been speaking for near eighteen centuries, to the whole Christian world, and will continue to speak until "time shall be no longer." And thus also *Paul* says of one who died near four thousand years before he wrote, *He, being dead, yet speaketh.*

The words of our text, you all know, are spoken of pious *Abel*. *By faith*, says the apostle, *Abel offered unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain; by which he obtained witness that he was righteous; God testifying of his gifts; and by it—that is, by his faith, and by his acceptable offering made in faith—he being dead, yet speaketh.*

Some respectable interpreters, however, have supposed that by the phrase, "by it," there is a reference to *Abel's* blood; and that its meaning is the same with that of the passage in the fourth chapter of *Genesis*, where God is represented as saying to *Cain*, *The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.* In conformity with this interpretation, they suppose the apostle means to say, that *Abel's* blood still crieth for vengeance against all murderers; and especially against those who persecute good men to death for righteousness' sake, which was the sin of the first murderer.

Others have said, that the last word in the original, in this verse, translated "speaketh," ought rather to be translated *spoken of*; and, of course, that the meaning is, that though *Abel*, when the apostle wrote, had been long since dead; yet that, on account of the remarkable circumstances attending his history, he was yet spoken

of, and would be spoken of to the end of the world.

But, I believe the best interpreters have generally agreed, that our common translation of this verse is an excellent one; and one that expresses with much accuracy, its general import;—and that its meaning is, that though *Abel* is dead, his character and works, and especially his sacrifice offered in faith, and accepted of God, “yet speak,” recommending to us repentance, humility, faith and obedience. We may consider the import of the passage, then, to be, that *Abel*, though dead, yet by his faith, and his holy obedience, taken in connection with his early death, and the circumstances of it, still addresses us, and conveys to us very important lessons.

And so *we* may say of every departed friend and neighbor—“Though dead, he yet speaketh.” For in every death there is a very solemn voice; a voice which ought to penetrate to our inmost souls, and exert a powerful and permanent influence on our hearts and lives.

But there are *some deaths* which speak with a peculiarly loud and solemn voice:—some deaths the voice of which he must be deaf indeed who does not hear, and hear effectually. For example,—

I. When a person IN THE MORNING OF LIFE—in the FLOWER OF HIS AGE, dies, we may emphatically say, that “he being dead, yet speaketh.” The aged are expected to die. When a man has done his work; or done the greater part of what he is capable of doing;—when he has

reached gray hairs and wrinkles, and has been for some time as it were tottering on the brink of the grave; we hear of his sickness and death, with regret, perhaps, but without surprise. Even though we greatly love and venerate him; yet when we see him come to the grave, like "a shock of corn fully ripe," as the holy oracle expresses it;—there is something in the case which tells us that it is natural, and which acquiesces in the will of Providence. But when the young and vigorous are cut down, like flowers in the spring; when one who is coming forth in all the strength of youth, in all the promise of youth, and in all the sanguine hopes of youth, is unexpectedly taken away, before his appropriate work is well begun, and when the expectations of those who know and love him are raised high, only to be disappointed;—there is a voice here which ought to enter and to affect the very souls of all who hear it. There is a voice here concerning which we may, with the utmost propriety, say, as our blessed Lord most emphatically said, on several occasions,—“He that hath ears to hear let him hear.”

And what is the language which it speaks? It proclaims with a voice solemn as eternity—*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth. Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded. Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. Be ye also ready; for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh; whether at even, or at midnight, or at cock-crowing,*

or in the morning;—watch, therefore, lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.

My dear young friends, you are prone,—yes, even pious young men are prone to forget the fact, that the young may die. There is something in human nature which continually tempts us, amidst the allurements of the present, to lose sight of the future. But however the fact may be forgotten, it is a fact still. And it is of great importance that you remember it. **THE YOUNG MAY DIE.** The word of God declares it. The voice of Providence proclaims it. Our daily experience exemplifies it. Why then, O why, are you so backward to learn the solemn lesson? You see, with your own eyes, that sixteen, or twenty, or twenty-five, is just as mortal as three-score and ten, or four-score. When you go through the church-yard, and read the inscriptions on the tombs, you perceive that a large majority of those who are deposited there, never reached old age. The fact is, not more than a third part of all that are born ever reach the age of thirty. And yet the young are ever promising themselves to “live many days and rejoice in them all.” Nay, the great means by which thousands of youthful professors of religion quiet conscience in neglecting, or postponing what they know to be their duty, from day to day, is, cherishing the fond hope that they have many years to live, and shall enjoy “a more convenient season” for attending to the duties now incumbent upon them.

When a young person dies, then, there is a voice in the event which is adapted to dispel this

deplorable delusion. It proclaims, "Young man! look upon that coffin! Survey the pallid countenance, and the lifeless frame which fill it; and which were a few days ago as blooming, and vigorous and active, as thine own. Remember, that before another year, or month be past, that situation may be thine. Calculate not on long life. Act upon the principle that thou mayest never reach even middle age. Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. Work the work of Him that sent thee while it is day. Thy sun may go down before it is noon. Therefore, redeem the time. Prepare to meet thy God."—But,

II. If the death of a young person, as such, speaks to us,—when A PIOUS YOUNG PERSON dies, we may say, with peculiar emphasis—that "by it, he, being dead, yet speaketh."

There is no doubt that, other things being equal, a *pious* young man is *more likely* to enjoy firm health, and to live to a good old age, than a youth who has no fear of God before his eyes. The whole temper, and all the habits of the former, are certainly more friendly to longevity than those of the latter. His temperance; his habits of order and diligence; his humble trust in God; his "joy and peace in believing;" his contentment; and "the good hope through grace" which animates and sustains his mind from day to day;—are all favorable to bodily as well as mental health, and increase the probability that he will "live out all his days." Yet, neither the word of God, nor the dispensations of his providence,

give us any assurance that the messenger of death shall not arrest the pious youth—and even the most pious. Nay, a sovereign God; in his infinite wisdom, may be pleased to remove such an one by death, *because* he is pious; because he is, through grace, *prepared* to be taken; and because the departure of such an one teaches lessons of the most instructive and interesting kind.

When a young person decidedly pious is removed by death, the event speaks, and tells us—that dying, though a monument of sin, is not to be regarded as an evidence of God's peculiar displeasure; that death may be transformed into a messenger of peace; and that even to one who is cut down at the very threshold of his course, death may be a happy exchange, an unspeakable and everlasting gain. While it proclaims that death is that law of our nature, that consequence of sin, from which no virtue, no piety can furnish any exemption; it, at the same time, shows, that the young, the blooming, and those before whom the world spreads its most attractive charms, can meet this enemy as a friend, and triumph, with humble confidence, over all his terrors.

I can scarcely conceive of any class of scenes more strikingly adapted at once to illustrate and confirm the power of religion; to bring to a solemn test its sustaining efficacy; and to show its value as a source of consolation, than those which attend the death-bed of one who departs in the faith and hope of the gospel. It is easy to speak in theory on this subject, and, while death is at a distance, to talk of gaining the victory

over it by faith in the adorable Redeemer. But to see the Christian not only sustained, but made to triumph, when death actually comes near, and stares him in the face; to see him, in these circumstances, willing to die; rejoicing in God, and in hope of his glory; ready to say with holy confidence, *O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!*—this is a scene which speaks more for the value of our holy religion, than thousands of those theoretical testimonies, which, however true, want that practical and touching character which finds a response in every mind, and is so apt to make its way with power to the heart. But such scenes have been often witnessed; and when they do occur, it is indeed a privilege to be admitted to the chamber in which the faith and hope of the believer thus display their triumphs. Yes, my friends, these are scenes before which even unbelief itself cannot stand. I have known a profane, infidel physician, in contemplating such a scene as this, compelled to say—“Here is something which I never saw before. Here is something which my philosophy can neither explain nor effect. Truly this is the power of God!”

But the force,—the sublimity of this scene is greatly augmented, when exhibited by a **YOUTHFUL BELIEVER**. When we see such an one—in all the buoyancy of life and hope—respected—beloved—just beginning to enter on the scenes of this dazzling and tempting world—having a thousand inducements to desire to live;—when

we see him calmly overcoming them all; willing to resign the world and all its allurements for infinitely higher objects;—nay, perhaps, rejoicing in hope, “with joy unspeakable and full of glory;”—this is indeed the triumph of Christian faith. This, we may say with emphasis, is being *a conqueror, and more than a conqueror through Him that hath loved us*. When many read of such scenes having been witnessed, they almost feel as if it were too much to be true; too much to be attained by poor human nature in this low state of gloom and conflict. They are apt to consider this experience as an attainment rather to be wished for, than expected; and if expected at all, only in the departure of aged, experienced, and far-advanced believers, who have begun to be weary of the world, or, at least, somewhat satiated with its transient pleasures. But, blessed be God! I am authorized to say, that such a picture as I have drawn is no fiction. It has been witnessed a thousand times, to the joy and edification of beholders. We have sometimes been permitted to see it with our own eyes, and to find mourning thereby turned into joy.* It has been strikingly exemplified, within a very short time, by one who recently stood in the midst of us; whose life we knew; whose person we loved; and whose happy end, while it has filled our institution with mourning,

* The author had been called, five days before this discourse was delivered, to take leave of a beloved and promising son, in the nineteenth year of his age, who departed in all the joy and triumph of gospel hope.

has also filled our hearts with thanksgiving, and our lips with praise. Yes, though we were not permitted with our own eyes to witness the closing triumphs of that young brother; yet others, qualified to appreciate it, were spectators of the scene. They saw him looking the king of terrors in the face without dismay. They saw him bidding farewell to all that is attractive here below, and even giving up his favorite mission to the benighted heathen, without a sigh or a murmur. O how powerfully and solemnly does such an event speak! Draw near, in imagination, my young friends, and see how a young Christian can die! See his composure; his elevating hope; his joy in God his Saviour! See him willing to leave the world, and all its tenderest attractions, and his countenance beaming with the hope of anticipated glory! See him evidently wishing the continuance of life for no other purpose than to have an opportunity of glorifying God in promoting the salvation of perishing men!—Surely scenes of this kind distinctly and strongly speak. They proclaim, that there is a precious reality and glory in religion. They proclaim that there is a richness and a power in its consolations which no language can express. They tell us the infinite importance of beginning early in life to imbibe its blessed spirit, and to secure its blessed support. They pronounce happy, thrice happy, the wise youth who, in the commencement of his course, secures that “anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast,” which alone can hold him safely on the troubled ocean of life; which alone can effectually guard him from

being dashed upon its rocks, or swallowed up in its merciless waves.

III. But further; when we not only witness the death of a YOUTH, and a PIOUS YOUTH, but of a youth ENDOWED WITH THOSE EXCELLENT TALENTS, AND HIGH PRACTICAL QUALITIES WHICH PROMISE EMINENT USEFULNESS;—there is a voice in the event, which speaks still more loudly and instructively to all.

I know of nothing, my friends, more adapted to try the faith and the submission of a reflecting spiritual mind, than the premature, (as we are wont to call it—and as, in one sense, we may with propriety call it)—the premature departure of such an interesting individual as I have described. When we see a young person, with much of the spirit of Jesus Christ; after laboring, it may be, for years, to prepare himself for active service in the Redeemer's kingdom; promising to be a distinguished ornament and blessing to that kingdom; and just, perhaps, on the point of being ready to go forth to the field of sacred service, amidst the raised hopes, and fervent prayers of the pious:—when we see him suddenly and unexpectedly cut down, and all the hopes concerning him apparently destroyed;—while, at the same time, the aged, the decrepid, the indolent, and the cumberer of the ground, are permitted to drag out a protracted, and, to all appearance, a useless, perhaps injurious existence;—we are apt to be perplexed, if not to murmur. We are apt to say, with a doubting, though sincere believer of old—*If the Lord be with us, how is it that this evil hath fallen upon us?*

As if He were bound to take nothing from us that we were not willing to give up; though it be his own, far more than it is ours. As if He were not at liberty to thwart any of our plans, though his own are always infinitely the best. This is an old difficulty in Providence, my friends. One that has employed the minds, disturbed the thoughts, and staggered the faith of God's people from generation to generation. But, though it be a mysterious fact, it is an instructive one. It speaks. Yes, every such case speaks in most solemn and impressive language:—language to which it is our privilege and our duty to listen with the deepest attention.

Its language is—*Be still and know that I am God. Should it be according to thy mind? Shall not I do my will and pleasure in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth? And shall any stay my hand, or say unto me, What doest thou? Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? Such knowledge is too wonderful for thee; it is high; thou canst not attain unto it. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways are past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?*

When we see the great Head of the church laying aside instruments which appear to us eminently adapted to promote his cause, can we fail to learn, that he is able to carry on his work without any of us; that if we were all laid in the

grave, He could still raise up other instruments, and accomplish his work as well as ever? And O, who would not desire to have it so? Who would not, with his whole heart, rejoice to live under the government of such a God? Let us learn, then, from such dispensations, to *cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils*; to think less of the under shepherds, and more of “the Chief Shepherd;” to have our eyes, our hearts, and our confidence, more firmly placed on the Master himself, who alone is able to work effectually, and in whose hands the most able and diligent ministers are but instruments, feeble and helpless in themselves, and indebted for all they accomplish to Him who sent them. O, my friends, it is good to lie in the dust before God, and to ascribe all the glory to Him; and every dispensation which teaches this lesson, and leads to this result, is so far a salutary one.

The death of such an one, further, calls upon us all to strive and pray, that we may live and die in such a manner, as that our life and our death may most effectually “speak” to those who come after us. The great mass of mankind are on equally mean and sinful extremes concerning posthumous remembrance. Some appear to be perfectly regardless,—so that they may have their pleasures here,—how they are thought of by those who come after them. They seem to be willing to live unblest, and to die forgotten, like the beasts that perish. While others, almost equally sordid, make posthumous fame their supreme idol. The first is to be worse than brutes; because it is degrading talents higher

than theirs, to a level with brutality. The second is a poor, sordid idolatry, which even the wiser pagans saw to be miserable folly. Behold, my beloved young friends, the death of a truly wise and useful person speaks to us a more excellent way! It calls upon us to aim at living and dying in such a manner as to DO GOOD—GREAT GOOD—BY BOTH:—to be so unreservedly devoted to the cause of God, of holiness, and of human happiness—that every hour we live, our example shall be edifying to our fellow men; and that all who survive us shall have reason to rise up and call us blessed. Accordingly the psalmist speaks of it as a blessing to be desired, that “the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance;” and as one of the curses of the wicked, that “their name shall rot.”

My hearers have doubtless perceived, that in the train of remark to which their attention has been called, I had a reference all along to the unexpected and mournful departure of that beloved young brother, who was, a few weeks ago, in the midst of us, in perfect health and strength; with a heart burning with love to his Master, and with a desire to go forth to benighted Africa, that he might, by the divine blessing, win her sons and daughters to the kingdom of Christ:—who possessed also, as we believe, eminent qualifications for that arduous and self-denying service;—but whom it has pleased an infinitely wise and sovereign God to snatch, as it were, in a moment, from all our fond affections and hopes, and to translate, as we doubt not, to a better world.

What shall we say to this solemn mysterious dispensation? Far from us be a word or a thought like murmuring! It is all right. However unable we may be to explain it, we know there is goodness, as well as wisdom in it all. He who has done it loves the church infinitely more than we love it, and understands its interests infinitely better than the wisest of us understand them. But this dispensation says much to us. O that we may hear the voice which it addresses to us, and learn the momentous lessons which it evidently conveys!

The Reverend JOSEPH W. BARR was a son of the Reverend *Thomas Barr*, a venerable minister of the Presbyterian church, in the state of Ohio. With the time of his birth, and the circumstances of his early life and education, I am not particularly informed. He was, however, one of a large family of brothers and sisters, greatly endeared to each other; and among whom it would, no doubt, have been highly gratifying to all his natural feelings to have lived and died. After having been for some time, in his early youth, trained to a mechanical employment, it pleased God to visit him with his grace, and to give him a taste for higher objects than this world affords. He then sought an education with a view to the holy ministry. After graduating with reputation in the Western Reserve College, he entered the Theological Seminary at *Andover*, where he spent one year, and where he left a sweet savor of piety and zeal which will not soon be forgotten. From that institution he came to this seminary, in the fall

of 1831. From the first, we marked in our dear young brother, a good sense; a gravity and dignity of deportment; a uniformity and steadiness of character; a fervor of piety; and a sort of consecrated decision of purpose, which convinced us that he was not only a Christian man, but an eminently judicious and practical one; well adapted, under the divine blessing, to be extensively useful in the Church of God. I know not that we ever had in this seminary a youth more lovely and beloved; more adapted to command respect, and inspire confidence. We knew, before he came to us, by a communication from his venerable father, that his mind was distinctly directed toward a foreign mission. And he had not been long in the seminary before it became apparent that this desire was strong and decided to a very uncommon degree. At the same time, all his disclosures, on this subject, to his teachers, were made with a modesty, humility, and a practical wisdom, which gave a double charm to the sanctified firmness of determination by which he appeared to be governed.

But it was some time after he manifested a fixed desire to be employed in the field of foreign missions, before he ventured to express a preference, in favor of any particular department of that field. Provided he could be employed in proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ to the perishing heathen, he seemed willing to go to any part of the world where the Head of the church might send him. And he continued in this state of mind, so far as I am informed, until the plan of sending our beloved brother *Pinney*

to the interior of *Africa*, by the "Western Foreign Missionary Society," was matured and announced. Then, for the first time, a specific object was held up to his view;—an object great, deeply interesting, and even, in some of its aspects, sublime; but, under other aspects, in no small degree perilous, and even appalling. He calmly looked at the object; and with a promptness and decision which became a Christian hero, he responded to the proposal—"Here am I, send me."

I need not tell this assembly how much Christian courage, how much disinterested zeal for the salvation of immortal souls were manifested in this determination. Think, for a moment, of the dangers to be encountered amidst the burning heats, the arid plains, and the pestilential vapors of the torrid zone! Think of the terrors presented by the malignant climate, and unbridled ferocity of the men and the governments of those barbarous regions! Think how many robust men—enterprising men—men of the utmost skill, self-possession, and courage, have, one after another, fallen victims either to the deadly atmosphere, or the barbarous people whom they were called to encounter! Think of these things; and then say, whether it must not have been an extraordinary degree of confidence in God, and of entire, self-sacrificing devotedness to the work of doing good, which could prompt two comparatively inexperienced young men;—so beloved at home;—so capable of being acceptably employed at home;—with a distinct knowledge how many had fallen on that field;—O was it not extraordi-

nary Christian heroism which prompted them still, with a steady purpose, to say—"We are desirous of going. Hinder us not. We are willing to go to prison and to death, if we may thereby be the means of introducing the glorious gospel into the midst of benighted, miserable *Africa*."

In a few days after our brother Barr had determined to share the labors and the dangers of this great enterprise with his no less heroic companion, they both, by appointment, repaired to the city of *Philadelphia*, where they were solemnly set apart to the work of the holy ministry, by the Presbytery of *Philadelphia*, on the 12th day of October last, with a particular view to this service. I know not how many of those who now hear me were present on that occasion. Whoever they may be, they can testify, what solemn and yet cheerful steadiness of purpose on the part of the candidates;—what a weighty sense of responsibility on the part of the presbytery; and what deep apparent feeling in a crowded Christian assembly, appeared to attend the designation of the first Christian missionaries ever destined by the church of God, in our land, to *Central Africa*.

"How did our hearts burn within us" on that memorable evening! How did we rejoice in the prospect of having two such peculiarly adapted young men, engaged in an enterprise so peculiarly fitted to interest the feelings of every American Christian! Yet, with all the tenderness and solemnity of that evening, I fear we all looked much more than a holy God saw was

right, on the fitness, the eminent apparent qualifications of our candidates; and too little to the power and grace of that almighty King of Zion, who can make the feeblest to triumph. And who can tell but that this sin may have cost us the life of our brother? However this may be, we “prayed, and laid our hands upon them, and sent them away;”—and hoped, in a few short months, to be told, that they had reached the field of their labor, and that the gospel of Christ had begun its glorious conquests, by their instrumentality, in the centre of *Africa*.

But the great King of Zion “moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform.” Truly *clouds and darkness are round about him. His path is in the deep waters, and his footsteps are not known.* Scarcely had this pair of heroic brothers reached the place of their intended embarkation for *Africa*, before it appeared that *the Lord’s ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts.* The angel of death was sent, in a most extraordinary manner, to “part them asunder;” and, while our beloved brother *Pinney* was left alone,—our no less beloved brother *Barr*, was taken from his side, and, as it were, borne on the wings of pestilence to heaven.

Such was the rapid and prostrating power of the appalling disease to which our brother fell a victim, that he had little opportunity of conversing with those around him on the great subjects which were nearest his heart. Both his strength and his speech were, in a great measure, taken away at a very early period after the first attack.

But he enjoyed the perfect exercise of his reason to the last; and was enabled to say enough to satisfy all who witnessed the closing scene, that his confidence was built "on the foundation of the Apostles and the Prophets;" that he enjoyed the "full assurance of hope firm unto the end;" and that he was entirely willing that himself and his fondest plans should be disposed of as seemed best to infinite Wisdom.

So far as my recollection reaches, this case is a unique in the history of modern missions. We have many times heard of missionaries being cut down soon after entering on their field of labor and of peril. We have heard of their speedily sinking under the exhaustion of severe and protracted labor, or under the power of malignant and rapid disease. But I know not that the history of modern missionary enterprise furnishes an example, in all respects, like that over which we now mourn. An example of a missionary in robust health, being arrested by acute disease, and cut down, before he so much as embarked for the scene of his anticipated labor. Over such an event we mourn. Mourn we may. *For devout men carried Stephen, the first martyr, to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.* But while we mourn, what are the sentiments which we ought to cherish in the believing retrospect of what God has done?

Ought we to be *discouraged*, as though the cause in the entrance on which our dear brother died, is a hopeless cause? Far from it! Was that a hopeless cause in which the blessed Master himself was arrested and crucified? Was

that a hopeless cause in which almost all the inspired apostles were cut off by the sword or the fires of martyrdom? Was that a hopeless cause in the defence of which *Stephen* and many others encountered death in its most appalling forms? No; far from it! Amidst all the violence of persecution, the word of God grew and multiplied. Nay, these very events, in the adorable providence of Zion's King, were among the means which caused it to grow and multiply. While one after another of the most zealous and successful ministers were cut down, by Jewish or Pagan violence, the great cause in which they fell gathered strength, and triumphed over all opposition. And those very events, I repeat, which appeared, at first sight, highly unfavorable, if not fatal to the Saviour's cause, became, contrary to all human calculation, the means of building up that cause in strength and glory. God, in the midst of what appeared to be untoward circumstances, was marching to the attainment of his purpose, by a course far above the range of man's wisdom, or man's calculation.

What, then, are the lessons which the dispensation before us teaches? What is the language which it speaks? I reply,

1. It speaks A LESSON OF HUMILITY. It teaches us how short-sighted we are;—how little we know or can see of Jehovah's plans. O, at what a vast height above our utmost vision is God carrying into effect the plans of his most blessed kingdom! He, doubtless, intends to teach us, that we are altogether incompetent to judge of his works and ways:—and also to teach

us of how little importance we are in his sight. That he stands in no need of our services; that he can do without any of us. Humbling, yet necessary and useful lesson! He teaches us by this providence to lie low in the dust of humility before him, and to submit ourselves entirely and unreservedly to his holy will. Yes, from the grave of our departed friend and brother methinks I hear a voice, as from the mouth of Him who removed him—*What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter. Be still, and know that I am God. Have I not a right to do what I will with mine own?* A large part of religion, beloved friends, consists in simple, unreserved, humble trust in God;—trusting when we cannot see what he is doing;—nay, when every thing appears not only dark, but most distressing and disastrous in its aspect, and in all its probable consequences. How unspeakable the happiness of reposing in our Heavenly Father, even when he hides himself in clouds and darkness: to be able to say, from the heart;—*Though he slay me;—though he strike dead my fondest hopes, yet will I trust in him. Though the fig-tree do not blossom, neither fruit shall be in the vine; the labor of the olives shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.*—God is solemnly saying to us—“You were scarcely willing to trust the life of my young servant with me in Africa; behold, it is equally at my disposal here and there! Behold

how easy it is for me to preserve alive, or to kill wherever my servants may be!"

2. The early removal of our beloved brother teaches us, most solemnly, **A LESSON OF HOLY DILIGENCE**. It teaches us whatever we have to do, to do it with our might. Our beloved brother *Barr* always appeared to me to be indefatigably diligent in his appropriate work, for the time being, whatever it was. I know not that we ever had within these walls, a candidate for the ministry less disposed to waste time than he. Yet, O how much more intensely diligent would even *he* have been, if he had known how short his career was to be! How peculiarly precious would every moment have appeared! O, to a young man who is here trying to make the most of himself for his Master's use, and who wishes to get ready to do his Master's work in the best manner, how precious is time! how immeasurably important are opportunities of either doing good, or getting good! How covetous, how parsimonious of every hour ought he to be, in the light of what has lately happened! How diligent! How anxious to improve every talent in such a manner as to make it productive of the best fruits for himself, and for immortal souls!

3. The sudden and remarkable removal of our young brother teaches us **A LESSON OF HOLY COURAGE**, as well as of deep humility and diligence. Among worldly soldiers, and especially among those who claim a character for bravery, it is a point of honor, nay of ambition, when one has fallen at a post of danger, instantly to step forward, to take his place, and stand in the

breach. The worldly soldier can even covet, and solicit the place of peculiar exposure, and has done so a thousand times. And even among the enterprising votaries of commercial gain, the ardent young aspirant after wealth, is willing to go to the deadliest climates, and to brave the most awful perils for the sake of accumulating silver and gold. And shall "the good soldier of Jesus Christ," who ought to be willing every day to face danger and death in the service of his Master; shall *he* shrink or be discouraged when one has fallen by his side? Rather might we not—ought we not to expect to see—when *one* has fallen—*five, ten, twenty*, springing promptly forward, and offering to take his place, and to bear the standard fearlessly and gloriously onward to victory? Surely those scenes which have been, as I said, a thousand times exhibited, when there was no better impulse than that of carnal ambition, ought to be much more conspicuously manifested, when the warfare is infinitely nobler, and the reward of victory infinitely more precious. Alas! "the children of this world are wiser in their generation," and more true to their principles "than the children of light." Suppose several, nay, half a dozen, or a dozen chosen missionaries to fall before the standard of the cross is fairly established in *Central Africa*—what then? Military leaders are willing, on a deliberate previous calculation, to sacrifice a thousand, perhaps many thousand lives for the purpose of taking a single town. But what is the real state of the case in the instances of mortality among missionaries that I

have now supposed? Why, it is, that half a dozen, or a dozen missionaries, are simply taken earlier than they expected, to eternal blessedness. But is this such a dreadful calamity as ought to strike survivors with a panic, and prevent them from undertaking the Master's work? Courage, then, my young friends! This event powerfully speaks it. Be not afraid to die in the missionary field. Do not exhibit "good soldiers of Jesus Christ," as more dastardly than thousands of military heroes are daily seen to be, with no higher motive than to get a name among men.

4. Finally; our departed brother speaks to us, and exhorts us to be **MORE DEVOTED THAN EVER TO THE GREAT CAUSE OF MISSIONS.** I have no more doubt my beloved friends, than I have of my own existence, that if our dear departed brother could now come back, and, standing, as he did on a certain memorable evening, not long since, on that spot—tell us all his present feelings and views in regard to the conversion of the world, it would be in language far more pungent and powerful than even the strong and striking language which he addressed to us on that occasion;—language which would thrill through our souls with unutterable emotion. He would tell us—but in words and tones which no inhabitant of earth can imitate—"Beloved companions! I now see an infinite importance in this subject which I did not see while I was with you. I see a glory in Christ which I never saw on earth, and which ought to make you all willing to spend and be spent in his service. I see a value

in immortal souls, of which I often attempted to speak while I mingled in your counsels and prayers; but the thousandth part of their preciousness I never uttered. O let your prayers and your efforts in this great cause be an hundred fold increased; and even then they will fall far, far short of the unspeakable magnitude of the enterprise." He has not literally uttered these words since he was translated; but his death does practically address us in language still more solemn and powerful.

The **MISSIONARY CAUSE**, my young friends,—by which I mean the system of means and efforts for the conversion of the world to Christ, by means of the glorious gospel, is the **GREAT CAUSE** which, in one form or another, ought literally, to engross the heart, and hands, and prayers of every Christian under heaven. It is the grand cause, for the sake of promoting which every candidate for the ministry ought to be willing to live and to die. The American Church ought to be roused—*must* be roused, to this great enterprise. And by what instrumentality, think you, must this rousing be effected? Not by miracle, but by human means, by the labors of the holy ministry—God's own ordinance. Ministers must have a new spirit given to them. But if ministers are to be the instruments; and if their new agency is to be the result of a new and hallowed spirit excited in them—where is there so natural, and so proper a place for beginning to excite this spirit, as **WITHIN THESE WALLS**? O, if we could see 120, or 130 heroic youths here assembled, all of them burning with the

same love and zeal that burned in the bosom of the beloved *Barr*, what impression, under God, might not be expected speedily to be made on this community; and ultimately on the world? Every session in our seminary would be a season for accumulating light, and heat, and strength in reference to this great subject; and every vacation would pour forth into every part of the country, a flood of light and of feeling, marking, in every direction, the footsteps of some member of this institution, so peculiarly devoted to the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom.

I repeat, my young friends, the American Churches **MUST** be roused to the importance of this great object. And it is the duty of **THOSE WHO ARE NOW PRESENT**, to take an immediate and an active part in rousing it. Our Master requires it at our hands. And is it not practicable? In our own strength it is not; but with God all things are possible. My thoughts, while looking on this little assembly of six score candidates for the holy ministry, have traveled back with deep interest, to a much larger assembly, convened more than seven centuries ago, on the plains of *Clermont*, in *France*, when "Peter the hermit," as well as his master, the deluded pontiff, is said to have addressed a multitude of more than three hundred thousand souls, and to have roused them by their fanatical eloquence, to that wonderful point of excitement which prepared them to enter with enthusiasm on the Crusades. I have asked myself,—Did an ignorant fanatic, by the fire of his misguided zeal electrify Europe; and, going from place to place, persuade millions

to devote their time, their property, and even their lives, to an insane project, which deranged the order of society, corrupted public morals, prostrated the interests of education, destroyed millions of lives, and covered almost the whole Christian world with badges of mourning?—And shall ministers of the gospel, who call their hearers to a rational service; who go forth, “not to destroy men’s lives but to save them;” not to corrupt or degrade their fellow men, but to promote their temporal and eternal happiness;—shall *they* labor in vain;—plead in vain;—and be scarcely able to excite one feeling of generous enthusiasm, in the noblest of all causes, in the bosom of more than one in fifty or a hundred of those whom they address? So it has hitherto been:—but let us hope that the opening of a better day is beginning to appear. Let us hope that we may yet witness a feeling, and hear a voice breaking forth on every side in some degree analogous to that which, you remember, rent the air from the large and fanatical assembly before alluded to, when the multitude cried out, by way of response to the exhortation—“God wills it! God wills it! Let us march and plant the cross on that territory which belongs to Christ.” I trust we shall speedily see, what I am sure will be ultimately seen—that God does intend to accomplish much in this holy enterprise by the young men of the present generation; and, I fondly hope, by many of the young men who now listen to my voice.

There is one thought which has struck me repeatedly since I first heard of the decease of

our dear brother. I can conceive of one way in which more good may be accomplished by his death, than may be ordinarily anticipated from the successful ministry of an individual during a long life. Suppose the impression made by his death to be such as that this whole seminary shall be deeply and permanently the better for it? Suppose the whole devoted band in this institution to be, from this time, as from a blessed epoch, animated with a spirit of inextinguishable zeal, ardor, and heroism in the cause of Christ—double—tenfold greater than ever before known; and not only to be thus animated themselves, but also to be the means, under God, of imparting the same spirit to millions of American Christians? Would not the event be instrumental in producing more good, humanly speaking, than almost any single minister does by the labors of a long and diligent life.

And, on the great subject of missions, let no jealousy or controversy arise respecting the society or board which shall be employed in prosecuting the interesting, the infinitely important object. Let the object be,—without a single party feeling,—to rouse the whole Presbyterian Church to the *missionary spirit*. Let those who prefer the “American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions,” which we know has been long dear to the intelligent and pious of this land, come with all their hearts, and with a liberality worthy of Christian principle, and give their patronage and their prayers to that board, and bear it forward, with their utmost ability, in its wise, extended, and successful efforts. And let

those who prefer a Presbyterian board, that youthful, but highly promising and vigorous institution, in the service of which our brother fell—go and do likewise. “The Western Foreign Missionary Society,” I am happy to know, is dear, and is becoming dearer to many hearts. We trust it is destined to occupy a large and glorious space in the great efforts of the day for the conversion of the world. Let there be no feeling of hostility, or even of rivalry, between her and her noble sister institution. Nor need there be any feelings of opposition or rivalry between the friends or patrons of these boards. We may love both, and pray for both, and help both, and, after all, there will be room for even more, in this wide world of darkness, pollution, and misery.

Better times, I trust, are dawning, in reference to the precious missionary cause. God, indeed, seems to be arising to “shake terribly the earth;” but am I deceived in supposing, that, amidst these commotions, the spirit of missions is extending on every side? Methinks I see the darkness beginning to break away even from benighted *Africa*. Yes, if I mistake not, the thick clouds which have so long hung over her in gloomy sadness, begin to break away; the wonderful mystery of her wrongs and her desolation, seems to be solving. Even out of the slave-trade, and its deplorable fruits, He who “sits as Governor among the nations,” is able, in the end, to bring great good. There is “a wheel within a wheel;” but whether the wheels of Providence move backward or forward,

whether to the right hand or the left, they are "full of eyes," and manifest that He who impels them is able to bring good out of evil, and light out of darkness, and to make them all work together for the ultimate advancement of his truth and glory. Amen!