

A

# DISCOURSE

DELIVERED ON THE 22d OF FEBRUARY, 1797,

AT THE FUNERAL OF THE

Rev. Gilbert Tennent Snowden,

PASTOR OF THE

*PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CRANBERRY,*

IN THE STATE OF

NEW - J E R S E Y.

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REVELATION, XIV. 13.

—— “ THAT THEY MAY REST FROM  
THEIR LABOURS, AND THEIR WORKS DO FOLLOW THEM.”

**T**HIS is the benediction pronounced by the spirit of God on those who *die in the Lord*. It was probably delivered to that beloved disciple and evangelical prophet, who is generally held to be the writer of the revelations, during the rage of some of those destructive persecutions that wasted the primitive church\*. The faithful disciples of Christ, were then often called to seal with their blood, their attachment to their Lord, and to the precious truths which they had received from him. Their way thro' life was

\* It is thought to have been written during the persecution under Nero, or that under Domitian.

encompassed with enemies, they were engaged in frequent and arduous conflicts, exposed to perpetual dangers, and were daily obliged to meet death, surrounded with those circumstances that render it most terrible to the weakness of human nature. To console and to support them under so many sufferings and trials, this gracious benediction, which includes in it all the promises of the sacred writings with regard to the felicity and glory of good men after death, was pronounced by the holy spirit. But it is not confined in its application to the martyrs who glorified their Saviour by a laborious life, and by an illustrious, but painful death. As every part of the word of God is of general use, so this is applicable to every believer who dies *in the Lord*—who sincerely professes his name in the midst of a sinful world—who is educated in his school, and imbibes his spirit—and who is united to him, as a member to the head, by a vital faith. In virtue of this intimate and indissoluble relation they triumph with him over the miseries of life, over the power of sin—the source of all our other evils, over the terrors of death, and over the dominion of the grave.

The world is filled with many causes of affliction and distress to every good man, that must render the grave to him at length a desirable retreat: And the promise of eternal life, after his

labours and sufferings are terminated here, offers to his hopes a state of repose and felicity, after which he must often secretly and fervently sigh—He shall *rest from his labours*, and *his works shall follow him*. Of these expressions, both of which are figurative, the first implies a profound and eternal repose, not only from all the *fatigues* of duty, but from all the agitations, the conflicts, the griefs and the miseries, that fill this mortal state. The second points to the felicity and glory of a true believer, when he shall finally receive the reward of his good deeds, and especially of his pious and faithful labours in the service of his Redeemer. The *works* by which, through the gracious promise of Christ, he shall arrive at that celestial glory, are put for the *heavenly state* itself, in which the happiness and perfection of his nature and the splendor of rank to which he shall attain, shall be proportioned to his progress in holiness upon earth, and to the eminent, or the arduous services, he has performed to mankind.

It is with a view to illustrate, as far as, without presumption, I may attempt it, the future happiness of good men, that I have chosen the text, which I make the ground of the following discourse. The prospect will serve to console us for the loss of our *brother*, it will inspire us with

the most elevated hopes concerning his present and immortal felicity ; it may contribute to animate *us* to a holy fidelity and zeal in the discharge of every duty, from the expectation of *the glory that is to be revealed.*

*They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.*

Here is a double source of happiness to the pious,

I. R E S T, and

II. E N J O Y M E N T.

*They rest from their labours, from their toils, from their sins, from their temptations, from their services, from their sufferings in the world—their works follow them as the foundation and the measure of their eternal happiness in the kingdom of Heaven.*

I. In the first place, the felicity of the pious in the future state may be considered as a delightful rest from the necessary evils and sufferings of the present life.

The pilgrimage thro' which man has to pass upon earth, is beset with many dangers, and ex-

posed to almost continual causes of grief and pain. However we may attempt to exaggerate the enjoyments of the world, or paint them in the delusive colouring which the imagination is prone to give to the pleasures of sense; certain it is, that the most virtuous, and the most happy of men, are agitated with innumerable solitudes, and have innumerable miseries to deplore, before they fall victims to that last of human miseries upon earth. Youth, which is ever sanguine and full of hopes, may not feel—prosperity, which is too often blind and delirious, may for a moment forget, the reality of this representation; but time will verify it to all.—Has not time verified it already? Who is there who can say that he *is* happy? He only hopes *to be* so. It is hope, not possession, that forms the principal happiness of life. Were we cut off from the resource, and, may I not call it the fallacious solace of hope, the world would have little left by which to attach us to it. When we consider how much we suffer in the present state, from the errors and the weakness of the understanding—from the heart, that anxious seat of so many irregular appetites and tumultuous passions—from want—from the hatred or contempt of others—from the loss, or the afflictions of our friends—from the reverses of fortune—from disappointed expectations—from pains and diseases that prey upon the body—

from secret griefs that undermine and consume the health—from the murderous weapons of avowed enmity—from the arrows shot in the dark by envy, calumny, and perfidious friendship—What a wretched habitation is the earth? What a desirable retreat is the grave? Death yields us, at last, a delightful rest from so many evils. It breaks from man the fetters by which he is enchained to his miseries,

As these miseries flow from sin as their primary cause ; so sin itself is esteemed by a good man, the greatest of his evils. From its hated and lamented tyranny, he finds in death a complete and eternal rest. He is delivered from temptations that so frequently harrassed him, that put his virtue to the most painful proofs, and often shook it to the foundation—he is freed from errors and prejudices that had covered his mind with distressing clouds, which perplexed and obscured to him the law of his duty—he is forever purified from those frailties and corruptions which, notwithstanding his sanctification, still adhered to him in this world, wounded his peace, and daily penetrated his heart with grief at the throne of grace. In the grave he puts off this body of sin and death, and his soul, admitted to its heavenly rest, has no more pains to endure, no more conflicts with the world, and its own



rebellious passions to maintain—no more imperfections to fill it with regret or to cover it with shame, no more wants to satisfy, no more evils to suffer, no more tears to shed.

No more shall he offend God, infinitely holy and good, whom he adored and loved, even in those moments when the frailties of his nature led him into sin. No more shall he be exposed to the secret snares, or the open assaults of temptation, nor to those invitations and opportunities so dangerous to the passions. Freed from the irregular impulses of the senses, of the imagination, of the heart, and delivered from an impure and imperfect nature, he shall sin no more. From an elevated point of view, looking back on all the journey of life, contemplating its evils, and its dangers, which he has just escaped,—its follies, its offences, and its falls which have so often drenched him in the waters of repentance before the footstool of divine mercy, with what unspeakable satisfaction will he see himself arrived at a state of everlasting repose from all his sufferings, his temptations, his fears, and placed, by the power and grace of God, in a happy and eternal impotence of sinning!—I add, that the believer, in dying, forsakes this wretched world, in which he had lived in submission to the will of God as in a strange land, and arrives at his proper home; that land

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of peace and rest which he had so long sought to find, and to which he was continually tending in the affections and desires of his heart. The earth, to a good man, may be considered as a state of exile, where he is banished from all that he most fervently loves and from the sources of his dearest pleasures. He is surrounded with all the fatigues, and anxieties, the distresses and wants which accompany that afflicted condition, and from them all he gains, at death, a delightful repose in the bosom of his heavenly country. The children of this world, enslaved to their appetites, whose pleasures do not rise above its sensual and corrupted sphere, cannot enter into these ideas. The present life bounds their enjoyments, and their wishes; and the earth, where they would be willing to live forever, they cannot regard as a place of exile. But those righteous souls who thirst after immortal perfection, and continually aspire after nearer access and conformity to God, feel themselves to be only *pilgrims and strangers upon earth*, and, while they pass thro' this vale of tears, they sigh for *a better, that is an heavenly country*—for that *city that hath eternal foundations, whose builder and maker is God*. Often, they resemble the exiled and disconsolate *Jews by the rivers of Babylon*, when *they hung their harps upon the willows*, and sat down and *wept when they remembered Zion*. They are in a foreign and hostile land. All

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their pleasures and their hopes are placed in the New Jerusalem, in the heavenly Zion, in the city and temple of the living God. How often, when they have been under the lively impressions of the divine word ; or when, in pious and holy retirement, they have been wrapt in the contemplation of heavenly things, launching their thoughts forward to that blessed and eternal world, have they been ready to cry, with the holy psalmist under the pressure of his troubles " Oh that I had wings like a dove ! for then would I flee away and be at rest\*."—Blessed citizens of Heaven ! banished, at present, to these regions of misery and vice, death shall furnish you with these wings. Then, taking your immortal flight, you shall enter the delightful regions of that celestial country which, unseen, you love, and take possession of your destined and everlasting home. *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord ; for they rest from their labours, from their sufferings, from their sins, from their griefs, from all the fatigues, the solitudes, and pains of this mortal exile.*

The road of virtue was said by the ancients to be up-hill, and to rise along the side of a mountain, every where filled with craggs and precipices of steep and laborious ascent, and encompassed with

\* Psalm 55. 6.

dangers that require the greatest vigilance and fortitude to escape, or overcome. This representation has so much truth that the faithful discharge of the duties that lie upon us as men, as citizens, and as christians, requires the most vigilant attentions, and frequently the most arduous and painful labours. And the difficulties and oppositions with which we meet from our own hearts, from our infirmities, and from the world, will never suffer us to intermit our attentions, or to cease our exertions.

Some labours, and solitudes there are peculiar to the ministers of the gospel, or, if not peculiar, which affect them in a higher degree than other men, arising from the hostilities of the world against religion which they are called to combat—from the crimes of sinners against which they have at once to remonstrate and to pray—from the errors or the coldness of the visible disciples of Christ, over which they are obliged in secret to weep—from the pride and insolence of power and wealth which are ready to trample with contempt on an humble and mortified profession—from the infirmities and sins of their own hearts which afflict them so much the more as their calling is more holy, and as, ministering at the altar they approach nearer to God than other men—in a word, from the arduous functions in

which they are incessantly engaged. Altho' many consolations accompany the duties of a pious minister of religion, when he considers that all the sacrifices he makes and the pains he endures are for the glory of his Redeemer and the highest interests of mankind, yet, are they often attended by fatigues that exhaust the body, and cares that harass and distress the mind, and often are they embittered by many secret causes of affliction and grief. From all these evils he obtains at death an everlasting release in that blessed region, where "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain\*." "And the ransomed of the Lord shall come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; and they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away†." Oh! how desirable to retreat from all these griefs, these conflicts, these wearisome toils, these anxious cares to an eternal rest! A rest where the service of the Redeemer, which forms the glory and felicity of the pious soul, shall never be intermitted; and where it shall be forever free from all the imperfections that mar, and from all the sufferings that afflict it, in this mortal state.

\* Rev. 21. 3.

† Isaiah 35. 10.

As the first subject of consideration concerning the future happiness of good men, suggested in the text, is Rest,

II. The second is Enjoyment—"their works do follow them."

This figurative language evidently points to that high and *positive* state of felicity which the saints shall enjoy in heaven, which is the consequence and reward of their works. It conveys to us also, in the mode of expression, two other truths of the highest importance—the first, that the habits of a holy life are necessary to qualify men for the possession of Heaven; because, without them, they neither could desire it as their abode, nor could they enjoy the pure and spiritual pleasures that constitute to the pious the happiness of the place.—The second, that their rewards there shall be proportioned to the advances they have made in the divine life, and to the labours they have endured, the dangers they have encountered, and the services they have performed for the benefit, and above all, for the salvation of mankind, which is the service of Christ Jesus, their master and their Lord. On this subject, the apostle Paul hath taught us—"He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly, and he that soweth bountifully, shall also reap boun-

“tifully\*.” “There is one glory of the Sun,  
 “and another glory of the Moon, and another  
 “glory of the stars, and one star differeth from  
 “another in glory ; so also shall it be in the re-  
 “surrection of the dead†.” The most pious,  
 faithful, and successful servants of Jēsus Christ,  
 shall shine with the highest lustre and enjoy the  
 most consummate happiness in his eternal king-  
 dom. What an animating motive was this to  
 the fortitude of the primitive martyrs ! What  
 an illustrious, what a divine encouragement is it  
 to the duty of every believer in Christ, and espe-  
 cially, to the fidelity of every diligent and labo-  
 rious minister of his holy religion ! If he does  
 not reap his reward in this world, he shall re-  
 ceive one proportionably more rich and glorious  
 in the world to come ; where “the wise shall  
 “shine as the brightness of the firmament, and  
 “they that turn many to righteousness, as the  
 “stars for ever and ever‡.” Let us, my brethren,  
 remember, however, the great and fundamental  
 doctrine, laid by the apostles at the foundation of  
 our hopes, that “it is not by *works of righteous-*  
*ness* which we have done,” but that “by *grace*  
 we are saved.” Those works cannot be present-  
 ed at the throne of divine justice, as forming any  
 absolute claim to the rewards of heaven ; but,

2 Cor. 9. 6.

† 1 Cor. 15. 41, 42.

‡ Dan. 12. 3.

they become, by the gracious promise of God, the title of a believer to a recompence that infinitely transcends any claim that can be grounded on the merit of human obedience. They follow him, not as a meritorious measure ; but as measuring, so to speak, the infinite proportions of divine grace and of heavenly glory.

The gradations of rank, of splendor and felicity, among the redeemed in heaven, are but faintly and obscurely marked to us in holy scripture. It is more easy to impart to minds like ours some general apprehensions of the glory and perfection of the state of Heaven, than nicely to mark its degrees. A scale of this kind requires a knowledge of the subject more accurate and just than our limited faculties are able to receive even from the holy spirit of inspiration. Such a *scale* was not necessary to the end for which this revelation was made to the divine St. John, which was to encourage the martyrs in their mortal and dreadful conflicts. Their cruel sufferings and their unshaken firmness, would indeed, procure for them a *higher rank* in the order of the heavenly state, than others should attain, who had not been called to give the same heroic proofs of their fidelity to their Lord. But, it is the *glory and felicity* of that state, that sustains the courage of a christian, and enables him to triumph over the most formidable pains of death.



This felicity and glory is the subject chiefly pointed at in the text, and that to which, without entering into any representation that must at best be fanciful concerning the economy or gradations of rank that may take place in the kingdom of God, I shall limit my view in the remaining part of this discourse.—But how shall we describe that which *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard*, and of which it hath not *entered into the heart of man* to conceive! It would require the colours of heaven and a divine pencil to represent that celestial “city which hath no need of  
 “the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for  
 “the glory of the Lord doth lighten it, and the  
 “Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of  
 “them that are saved shall walk in the light of  
 “it, and there shall in no wise enter into it any  
 “thing that defileth, neither whatsoever work-  
 “eth abomination, or maketh a lie; but they  
 “who are written in the Lamb’s book of life\*.”

The improvements and the sublime perfection of human nature shall be correspondent to the glory of its habitation. But both perhaps are equally out of the reach of our conceptions at present. We must actually have attained, before we can fully comprehend, those immortal pow-

\* Rev. 21. 23, 24, 27.

ers with which the *body* shall be raised from the grave, and re-united to the soul, purified and exalted by a nearer approach to God. It is raised, saith the apostle, in *incorruption*—in *glory*—in *power*.—It is raised a *spiritual body*\*!—Mark that bold and extraordinary figure. It is allied in its essence to the immortal spirit—composed of the most pure and active principles of matter that resemble the purity and activity of the soul—incorruptible in its organization like the diamond—splendid in its appearance like the sun—rapid and powerful in its movements like the lightning, that bears, in its course, an image of the omnipotence of the Creator.

The *soul*, purged from the dregs of sin, shall bear a higher resemblance of the perfection of God, in whose image it was at first created. Its intellect shall be boundlessly enlarged—its affections shall be directed with immortal and unceasing ardor to the eternal source of love—and we have reason to believe that it shall enjoy the power of unlimited excursion into the works, and, if I may speak so, into the essence of the Deity,

On a subject of which it is so far beyond the present powers of the human mind adequately to

\* 1 Cor. 15. 42, 43, 44.

conceive, it becomes us to speak with modesty and caution. In judging of it, reason affords no lights to guide us—the fires of the imagination will only mislead us—we must take our ideas solely from the scriptures of truth. And when we collect together all that those sublime oracles of wisdom have said upon this subject, and take from the whole, those general views which they give of the state and the felicity of Heaven, we may range them under the heads of its *glory*—its *immutability*—and its *eternity*.

Its glory—“It doth not, indeed, yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is\*.”—There the redeemed dwell in the presence of God, who alone can fill the unlimited extent of their desires—There they live in the delightful exercise of an eternal love, and in the full possession of all that can render them supremely blessed—for, “in his presence is fullness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore†.”—There they cease not celebrating in songs of extacy, the infinite perfections of God, and the boundless riches of redeeming love. “Halleluiah! Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power unto the Lord our

\* 1 John, 3. 2.

† Ps. 16. 11.

“ God\* !” Worthy is the Lamb that was “ slain  
 “ to receive power, and riches; and wisdom, and  
 “ strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing† !”  
 —There, according to the emblematical language  
 of the revelations, they are seated on thrones,  
 and receive from his hands celestial diadems—  
 for, saith the spirit, “ they shall *reign* with him  
 forever and ever‡.”

If human nature, notwithstanding all its present imperfections, is destined to such improvement and such felicity, much more is it reasonable to believe that the eternal habitations of the pious, and the temple of the immediate presence of God, are infinitely superior in splendor and glory to all that we now behold in the sublimest or the most beautiful works of nature. When this veil of sense shall be withdrawn, what an unutterable scene of wonders shall be disclosed ! Imagination cannot picture them, language cannot describe them, we have no powers, at present, capable of admitting, or sustaining the view. Could we suppose a mole that grovels in the earth, enveloped in absolute darkness, and circumscribed to a few inches, to be endued with the powers of vision and reason, and suddenly admitted to contemplate, with the eye of Galileo, or the mind of Newton, the splendors and

\* Rev. 19. 1.    † Rev. 5. 12.    ‡ Rev. 22. 5.

the boundless extent of the universe, its ravishment, its transports, its extacies would afford but a faint image of the raptures of the soul opening her immortal view on the glories of that celestial world.

But the glory of the heavenly state consists not only in the augmented powers of human nature, and the external magnificence that adorns it, but in the holy and devout, and, may I not add, the benevolent and social pleasures that reign there.

There “the pure in heart see God\*”—there they “know even as also they are known†”—there they love without sin him whom it was their supreme delight to contemplate and to love on earth.—And if, with the divine philosopher of Greece, I may venture to speak so, there they mingle themselves with God.—But this is a subject which I dare not touch. I fear to profane it by the imperfect colouring, or the misguided fervors of sense.—Sometimes the humble and devout believer, in the communion of his soul with God, or in the celebration of the precious mysteries of his grace in his temples here below, has enjoyed such discoveries of his infinite goodness and mercy as were almost too powerful for the

\* Mat. 5. 8.

† 1. Cor. 13. 12.

feeble frame of flesh and blood—Ah ! what then will be the manifestations of heaven ! My beloved brethren, an Almighty power, a celestial regeneration will be necessary to enable you to sustain the unutterable bliss !

I have ventured to mention also the social and benevolent pleasures of that state. And it will not, perhaps, be the smallest part of the felicity of pious souls to enter into the society, to participate the joys, and to receive the congratulations of those perfect spirits who have never fallen from their rectitude, and of the saints redeemed from among men, who have gone before them to take possession of their promised rest. “ There is joy in Heaven, saith Christ, over one sinner that repenteth\*”—how much greater will be their joy when he has escaped the dangers of the world, when he has no more cause of repentance, when he has kept the faith, when all his conflicts and temptations are finished, and he has arrived at the end of his course where nothing shall ever be able again to shake the security of his state, or to impair the plenitude of his happiness ? What high enjoyment will it be to meet there his fellow travellers thro’ the dangerous pilgrimage of life, escaped from its pollutions and its snares. To

\* Luke 15. 7.

meet there with " Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets," with all the holy apostles and martyrs of Christ ! To meet there the friends who were most dear to him on earth, whose souls were mingled with his ! To meet there his fellow christians out of every denomination, on whom, perhaps, he had been accustomed to look with distrust and jealousy ! Nay more, to meet there, devout men like Cornelius from every nation under heaven ; and to see the grace of God infinitely more extended than those narrow limits which, probably, his prejudices had prescribed to it ! What immortal consolations must fill the breasts of those who " are come unto Mount Zion, unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly of the church of the first-born, who are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect\* !"

The immutability of the happiness of Heaven is another character of it, that deserves our consideration. The power of God will place the redeemed beyond the influence of temptation and of sin, and the perfection of the heavenly state will forever exempt them from all those causes of

\* Heb. 12. 22, 23.

frailty and change that exist upon earth. It knows no change except that of continual progression. The principal value of all our sources of enjoyment in this world is destroyed by their instability. Every object here is mutable, and disappoints those who expect permanent felicity from it, and *pierces thro' with many sorrows* those who attempt to lean upon it. Even the comforts that flow from religion in the present life are variable and uncertain, because the sanctification of the believer is still partial and imperfect. But, in Heaven, being perfectly holy, he shall be completely and immutably happy.

Eternity is the idea that crowns and enriches the whole. “There shall be no more *death*”, saith the *amen*, the faithful and true *witness*. The felicity of the saints, like the being of God, shall be interminable. Glorious, and consolatory truth! I would willingly assist your minds to frame some measure of an immortal existence, but how shall we measure a subject that so far surpasses our feeble conceptions? Number the stars that fill the sky—reckon the sands upon the sea shore—count the drops in the immeasurable ocean—compute the atoms that compose the globe—multiply them by millions of years, and when this amazing succession of duration shall have been finished, and repeated as many times as are equal to its own



units, eternity will be but beginning—Beginning? It cannot be said to be begun. It is wrong to apply any term which measures progression to that which has no period. In this astonishing and boundless idea the mind is overwhelmed! What a glory does it shed over *the inheritance of the saints in light!* How strongly is it calculated to awaken the desires of a believer after the *rest that remaineth for the people of God!* I may add, how well is it fitted to console those who mourn over their friends who sleep in Jesus! If, at any time, the mind is ready to sink under the weight of its sufferings in the present life, and to repine at the will of God, will it not become patient, and even thankful again, when it looks forward to that immortal blessedness to which every calamity that tends to crush this frail tenement of clay is only hastening our passage? “For, our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look, not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal\*.”

*Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord! yea saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their la-*

\* 2 Cor. 4. 17, 18.

*bours, and their works do follow them!* What a consolatory, what a sublime and glorious object is here presented to the faith and hope of good men, and confirmed by the faithful asseveration of the eternal Spirit of truth! All the sufferings, induced by sin in the present life, there come to an everlasting period—All the joys that human nature, exalted and improved with immortal powers, can sustain shall be possessed by the redeemed, and shall continually increase in an endless progression—There you behold them in the midst of their heavenly country from which they shall be no more exiled—There they contemplate; without a veil, in the clear, unclouded vision of Heaven, the adorable perfections of God—They behold him enthroned in glory ineffable, from whence he dispenses happiness to countless myriads of blessed spirits—Rivers of pleasures issue from the foot of the eternal throne—They bathe themselves—allow me the image—in those pure and celestial streams—They are absorbed in the extasies of a divine and immortal love.

The preceding reflections, my brethren, while they may serve to console us under the griefs and pressures of life, and to animate us in our christian course, are, I trust, peculiarly applicable to the state of our beloved brother who has finished his course, and gone to his rest. Let me, there-

fore, for a few moments, call your attention more immediately to the interesting and afflicting occasion of our present meeting.

Your pastor has been removed from you, by a sudden and unexpected stroke of Providence, almost in the morning of his life, and the beginning of his usefulness. Young, active, and diligent in the duties of his holy calling, I am persuaded he, has created a deep and tender interest in each of your hearts. And I perceive that, in this event, you mourn the loss, not only of an excellent man, and a worthy and respectable minister of the gospel, but of a monitor, a comforter, a friend, and, may I not add notwithstanding his age? even of a father in Christ Jesus.

I would here pay a tribute to the deep and reasonable griefs of his bereaved family, and, while I justified their sorrow, suggest some topics of consolation drawn from the preceding discourse; but the subject is too tender.—Oh! that our piety could adopt the language of that venerable prophet and priest of the Most High God!—"It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good\*." Or of that patient and afflicted patriarch whose griefs have hardly had a parallel among men—

\* 1 Sam. 3. 18.

“ The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away,  
 “ and blessed be the name of the Lord†!”

The best eulogy of Mr. Gilbert Snowden would be a faithful history of himself. I cannot here attempt minutely to trace it. A few only of the prominent features of his character I shall endeavour to sketch. And I shall study to do it with that simplicity and plainness that becomes a narration of truth.—Early in life, in the studies both of the school and of the college, he discovered a promptness of parts, and ardor of mind that presaged, under a prudent and wise direction, great respectability and usefulness in riper age. Blessed with a pious domestic education, the principles of religion made an early impression on his mind. And notwithstanding the great vivacity of his natural disposition, which so often proves a snare to youth, the restraints of principle, of reason and of conscience, still retained their influence. The same happy principles, under the direction of divine grace, led him eventually to the justest sentiments of his duty to God, and to mankind. His deep and earnest concern for the things that belonged to his eternal peace issued in a calm and settled hope in the divine mercy thro’ Jesus Christ. His religion rested upon the rock

† Job. 1. 21.

of ages. And a fervent spirit of piety animated all his private virtues, and his public duties.

For a short time after receiving his first degree in the arts, he applied himself to the study of the laws of his country. But, inflamed with the love of doing good, and the desire of consecrating his talents to his Saviour, he relinquished the pursuit of that honorable and useful profession, for one that attracted him still more, as being more immediately connected with the glory of his Redeemer, and the immortal interests of his fellow men. An anecdote, relative to this subject, which he sometimes repeated to his friends, is, perhaps, not unworthy of being mentioned in this place. His mind being naturally ardent and aspiring, he entered on the studies of jurisprudence and politics with elevated and ambitious views. He pursued them with indefatigable application, and was making such proficiency as promised success to his wishes. At this period, the death of an eminent attorney who enjoyed great reputation at the bar, and had risen to some of the first honors in his country, struck his mind with one of those trains of reflection which sometimes spring from particular events, and have a great influence on the character and pursuits of life, and which can hardly be accounted for except by a secret agency of divine providence. He

asked himself, what now is fame, or wealth, or all the honors and splendors of this world to him who can enjoy them no more? In a few days, all the boasted distinctions among mankind, which too often foster vanity and pride, shall be laid in the dust. All that they *have been* is then nothing, that only is real which they *shall be* forever. My *earthly* ambition I see is vain. I will look to *higher* objects, and give it scope in a *boundless* and *eternal* scene—I will seek an *inheritance* that is *uncorrupted, undefiled, and that fadeth not away*—I will aspire to glory only in that heavenly kingdom where *they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever*.—From that moment he devoted his whole attention to the ministry of the gospel.

To embrace the office of the ministry is, in our country, to abandon the road of civil honors and emoluments. It is, when we consider merely the splendors and dignities of the present world, to confine genius and talents to an humble sphere from which they can never hope to emerge. It is to embrace a voluntary poverty\*, and, by two contradictory caprices of public

\* I mean in comparison with the fortunes which men of talents acquire in other lawful professions.

opinion, to be obliged to maintain the appearance of a certain rank and fortune, and yet, be rigidly precluded, except at the risk of reputation and usefulness, from the means of attaining or improving either. It is one, and no inconsiderable proof, of a sincere and zealous piety in your departed pastor, that he renounced the prospects to which he was invited in pursuing the first profession he had chosen—and that he devoted to the service of Christ his master a genteel and easy patrimony, derived from a parent whose industry had procured for him an honorable affluence.—But you, my brethren, had other proofs of his sincerity and piety. *You were witnesses how holily, how diligently and unblameably he behaved himself among you who believe*—with what faithfulness and zeal he preached the gospel—with what firmness he reprov'd the disorderly—with what tenderness he consoled the afflicted—with what paternal assiduity he visited your families, and taught you, according to the apostolic example, from house to house. The affectionate attachment which you manifested to him in life—this numerous assembly that attends his remains to the dust—and the grief that is settled on every countenance, strongly attest the fidelity and prudence with which he discharged his pastoral functions in the midst of you. He recommended himself to every man's judgment, and to every man's heart.

Mr. Snowden's piety to God was united with the most amiable and benevolent attentions to mankind. His charities were liberal. His social dispositions warmly attached the affections of the people of this charge, and gained a ready access to their hearts, for those pious reflections which he was prone to mingle with the cheerfulness of conversation. Religion in him bore nothing gloomy or austere in its aspect, or allied to superstition in its practice. If in the first moments of his religious zeal, the native ardor of his mind seizing on objects so great, and so new to him as those of the eternal world, led him to form ideas of piety above the present standard and condition of human nature, reflection, judgment and acquaintance with the holy scriptures soon enabled him to correct them, and to frame to himself a system of virtue and practical holiness, highly rational and just. His pious affections seemed to be habitually in *act*, and to mingle themselves with every domestic, social and public engagement. His conversation was always cheerful and animated, his dispositions to society warm and affectionate, his spirit candid and liberal, and along with the great principles of piety, justice, and charity, he considered it as incumbent on a christian, according to the apostolic direction to cultivate "whatsoever things are *lovely*, whatsoever things are of *good report* ; and, if there



" is any *virtue*, if there is any *praise*, to think of  
 " these things\*."

Your deceased minister and friend is to be considered; not only as a faithful *pastor*, but as an useful *man*. He was growing into great importance and respectability in the judicatories of the church. And the flourishing circumstances of this congregation—the decency of its public worship—the order of its finances—the regularity of its discipline—the accuracy of its records—and the readiness and pleasure with which the reciprocal duties which a people owe to their pastor have been discharged, are all so many monuments to his praise. His counsel and example promoted industry. He was forward in advancing every scheme of improvement among the people. An excellent citizen himself, he inculcated the duties of good citizenship, as being among the essential virtues of christianity. Vigilant for the public *liberty*, he knew that liberty itself could not exist without *subordination to the laws*. An enemy to faction and sedition—abhorring those intrigues, cabals, and flanders that tend to disturb the peace of the state, he ever taught it to be as much the duty of a good man to submit to the higher powers in the execution of their

\* Phil. 4. 8.

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lawful functions, as to be prudent and circumspect in the use of that portion of sovereignty that each citizen enjoys, by which those powers themselves are appointed.—But what shall I say? As a citizen—as a neighbour—as a friend—as an active, useful, amiable member of society, you were witnesses of his virtues, and, I am persuaded, you will long hold the memory of them dear.—As a pastor you loved him. You now follow him with your tears and sighs to his grave. Every family thinks it has lost in him a brother, or a father. He has left, I trust, in your houses and in your hearts, those precious seeds of piety and truth which will spring up, and bear fruit to the glory of God when he has received his reward.

My brethren, he has often called you by his living voice to repentance. He has illustrated and urged your duty. By his death he calls you in a voice still louder and more solemn. He speaks to you from the eternal world, where he sees in everlasting colours the importance of the truths he has so often preached—from that tribunal where *he* has rendered his account, and where *you* must also shortly appear to answer for your improvement of the blessings of the gospel.—Sometimes the removal of a faithful minister is the most tremendous warning a people can receive. When God saith in his displeasure, “my

“ spirit shall not always strive with man\*,” he often begins the execution of a threatening so awful by taking from them the means of grace. Let the young and thoughtless, let the impenitent and presumptuous, let the old and hardened, let those who are *without God and without Christ in the world*, seriously consider this alarming truth.

But many of you, my brethren, cherish in your hearts, along with his memory, the precious lessons you have heard from his lips. Let them now become more precious by recollection. Demonstrate your value for them by your zeal to replace among you the ordinances of Christ, and to have *his* instructions repeated, confirmed, and extended to you and to your children.

For himself, tho’ just in the freshness and vigor of life, and in the midst of prospects of usefulness and reputation that were daily enlarging, it has pleased a sovereign Providence to call him away from a young and tender family—from a bereaved congregation—and from his labours in the church of Christ.—Obscure, often, and mysterious are thy dispensations infinite God! But tho’ clouds and “ darkness appear to be round

about thee," we believe and confess that "justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne, mercy and truth forever go before thy face\*!" *He rests from his labours, and his works do follow him.* Let this be the consolation of surviving mourners. Tho' the stroke is painful—tho' the bereavement is severe, and grief, for a moment, may overwhelm the weakness of human nature; yet a pious man will not murmur against the will of God—a good man would not wish to call him away from the felicity that he enjoys. Our own self-love must yield to the considerations of his superior happiness and glory.

My brethren in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ†! This mournful event addresses a serious and important admonition to us. *The harvest is great, and the labourers are few*; and when we see our fellow labourers called by the master from the midst of the field, how should it increase our diligence, and re-animate our zeal to fulfil the additional task which he seems to be laying on our hands!—We are liable to be too forgetful both of our work, and our account, as well as those to whom we so frequently address these remonstrances in the name of God. Ours is an

\* Ps. 97. 2. and 89. 14.

† The clergy who were present.

interesting work—ours will be a most solemn account. O Lord of the harvest! when we come to the close of our day, may we have to lived and laboured that our works shall follow us to a blessed reward!

My beloved brethren of every class! There lies before us an instructive object—From the tomb it calls to us, *be ye also ready!*—“Stand, “therefore with your loins girded, and your “lamps burning, waiting for the coming of the “bridegroom, that, when he shall appear, ye “may be ready to go in with him,” and to celebrate with him, in his father’s house, the everlasting festival of love and joy.

To this end, O most merciful God! ever impart to us the gracious aids of thy holy spirit, for the sake of Jesus Christ thine only son, who is the Lord our righteousness, and who is over all, God blessed forever! AMEN!







