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S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE FUNERAL

OF

REV. JOHN E. EMERSON,

PASTOR OF THE WHITEFIELD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN NEWBURYPORT.

By

JONATHAN F. STEARNS, D.D.

PASTOR OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN NEWARK, N. J.

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NEWBURYPORT, MARCH 31, 1851.

REV. J. F. STEARNS,

DEAR SIR, — The undersigned desire to express the thanks of the Whitefield Congregational Church and Society, to you, for the appropriate and interesting Sermon preached at the funeral of our late beloved Pastor, REV. JOHN E. EMERSON, on the 27th inst., and request a copy for publication.

Yours, with Christian esteem and Fellowship,

WM. THURSTON,	} Committee of the Whitefield Congregational Church and Society.
WM. FORBES,	
ANTHONY S. JONES,	
SAM'L T. PAYSON,	
A. D. BROWN,	
GEO. R. TARBOX,	

Messrs. WM. THURSTON,	} Committee of the Whitefield Church and Society.
WM. FORBES,	
ANTHONY S. JONES,	
SAM'L T. PAYSON,	
A. D. BROWN,	
GEO. R. TARBOX,	

GENTLEMEN, — I cheerfully comply with your request, and place a copy of the discourse delivered at the interment of your late lamented Pastor, at your disposal.

Very respectfully,

Yours,

J. F. STEARNS.

Newark, N. J., April 23, 1851.

S E R M O N .

I CORINTHIANS, 15: 52. — "THE DEAD SHALL BE RAISED INCORRUPTIBLE."

It is among the most distinguishing achievements of our Blessed Lord, in his work of Redemption, that he has conquered Death — abolished it — put it under his feet — given his followers the privilege to raise over it in his name the shout of triumph. Death is sin's minister. The conqueror of sin must needs be likewise the conqueror of death. And if such a champion as this undertakes the combat, it must reasonably be supposed, the vanquishment of the foe will be as complete as it is certain and decisive; that not a fragment of spoils will be left unrecovered, for Death to exhibit as a trophy. And so we find it. Nay, as conquerors are wont not only to recover that which had been taken from them, but to make their victory the occasion of seizing higher advantages, and compelling the foe to minister to the glory of their triumph, so has the Redeemer in his victory over Death, not only rescued both the bodies and the souls of his servants, but made the King of Terrors himself, serve as his instrument to introduce them to glories unspeakable. Even the few simple, unpretending words of our text teach no less than this. "The dead shall be raised incorruptible" — raised to renewed life; but not that only — raised to a life far more perfect. Thus shall be brought to pass, when the whole process is completed, the saying which is written: "Death is *swallowed up* in victory."

The King of Terrors has been doing a fearful work, within these few months, in this community. There is no disguising it. A family of almost broken hearted relatives, — a wide

circle of sorrowing friends and associates,—a bereaved band of Christian ministers,—a disappointed church and congregation, bear witness to the fact, in sighs that indicate no formal mourning. Death has taken one of your brightest jewels and crushed the lustre out of it,—made it so valueless that you are glad to cast it into the earth and hide it there. The loved, the admired, the trusted in, is now the object only of regrets and recollections. There lies he, cold, silent, and unconscious as the work of the sculptor; and when the fond mother and sister ask for his familiar smile, it is not returned,—when the discouraged, halting Christian seeks to be guided, the voice of the counsellor is mute,—when the sinner, overcome with the heavy burden of his sins, cries, “What shall I do to be saved?” there is no heart there to throb with trembling joy, and no persuasive tongue to respond, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” The son, the brother, the companion, the accomplished preacher and pastor, is at length numbered with the dead. And with the dead, saith the holy Word, “there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom; also, their love and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished, neither have they any more a portion forever, in any thing that is done under the sun.” That beautiful clay lies there, a silent but expressive monument of rent ties, crushed affections, disappointed hopes, unsustained reliances. And we have come hither to perform for him our last office, and mingle our tears together at God’s footstool over our loss.

But is there not another aspect to this subject? Our text teaches us that there is. Jesus said to the bereaved Martha, “Thy brother shall rise again.” So here, with a difference only of time and manner, he says to us, “Thy brother, thy beloved son, thy faithful pastor and friend, shall rise again.” Death shall retain his captive only for a season; and then he shall be restored perfect and immortal.

Standing here at the special request of my departed friend, I can think of no consideration better adapted to console the bereaved, on an occasion like this, than that which is brought to view in this passage.

1. First, our text teaches us that the dead shall be raised.

There is nothing hopeless or irreparable in the condition to which death has reduced them. It is only a sleep out of which, when they have reposed long enough, they shall be awakened. It is but a temporary withdrawing, in order to make preparation for a more desirable reappearing. It is a dissolution preparatory to a reconstruction on a better plan. This aspect of the case is one for which we are indebted solely to the revelations of the gospel.

The doctrine of the continued existence of departed spirits, dimly shadowed forth in the speculations of heathen philosophers, and brought to light as an unquestionable truth, by divine revelation, is a precious doctrine, and, in the case of the Christian, full of holy incitements, and sublime consolations. We have beheld the suffering Lazarus, caught up out of the midst of his disease and poverty, and borne, by angels, to his rest in Abraham's bosom. We have marked the conflict of a holy apostle, as, standing on the verge of life, he wist not what he should choose, knowing that while he was at home in the body, he was absent from the Lord, and having a desire to depart that he might be with Christ. Ay! we have heard through an apostle, prophet, the voice from heaven, which said unto him, "Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth, yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." And we cannot doubt, relying on such assurances, that the believing dead enter at once upon the glories of the heavenly world.

And yet, concerning the condition of departed spirits, at this stage of their existence, the gospel gives us only a few very general and indistinct disclosures. There is nothing circumstantial,—nothing to gratify curiosity,—hardly any thing through which we can determine a relation between them and us. It may be that they are around and among us. It may be, that commissioned by their Lord and ours, they watch over us in our conflicts and temptations, in our sufferings and anxieties, to cheer, support, and stimulate us, with the same ministries, which they delighted in when they were of us. But of this fact, if such it be, we have no knowledge. It is a pleasant dream, and that is all we can say of it. Where they

are, how they are circumstanced, what their new faculties and powers, and what the limits and methods of their intercourse, either with one another, or with those without their ranks, we are totally ignorant.

The reason of this reserve may be found, partly, in that propensity, so often manifested in the history of the church, to pay divine honors to the spirits of the departed. Right it is, doubtless, that we should cherish their memories with affection, and be incited to holier effort and saintlier patience by the consideration of their blessedness,—right and becoming that we should thank God for their perils past and their crown won,—right that, even now, while we yet sojourn in the flesh, we should exult in the privilege of being already joined, through grace, to the general assembly and church of the First Born. The communion of all saints, visible and invisible, in one holy brotherhood, is a gospel doctrine. But, as with the absent and unknown on earth, so with the absent in the upper mansions; our communion with them is not direct and personal, but only through Christ, to whom they and we are all spiritually united. If we would lean upon them, make them our mediators, or even open our hearts to their sympathy, not the least sign is given us, whereby we may find out their presence, bring ourselves and our wants beneath their notice, or become aware that we are subject to their ministry. As to direct intercourse, the wisdom of God saw it not safe to put us into communication with them; and therefore a veil, utterly impenetrable,—a veil through which not even a sound passes that we can recognize, separates between the visible world and the invisible.

But the continued *existence* of the soul in a state of glory, is not the whole of the Christian doctrine of the resurrection. This were only a stage in a continuous progress, no *anastasis*, no restoration, no renewal of what had been for a time interrupted. The work of death includes the sundering of the soul and body, the examination and dissolution of the material part, and the withdrawing the spiritual within the unseen world or Hades—the place or state of separated spirits. By the Christian resurrection, all this work is reversed. I understand by it the restoration of the whole man, spirit, soul, and body, to his aboriginal completeness and unity.

It includes, in the first place, the re-construction and re-animation of the body, and from this it derives its name. The soul never parted with its life, and of course cannot be said to take it again ; — never fell beneath the power of mortality, and of course cannot be raised. Many who call themselves Christians, deride the doctrine, as applied to the body, after the same manner. A half Christian, half pagan, or pantheistic sentimentalism affects to regard this portion of God's workmanship as a thing of little worth. "What care I," it is said, "for this gross body, the seat of many a base passion, the subject of many a loathsome and painful disease, the clog of the soul? let it perish." But not so reasons unsophisticated nature, in the heart of the bereaved mourner. Not so reasons the fond mother, when she looks for the last time on the features of her child. Witness the indignation which we all feel when the tomb is violated. A judicious mind learns to distinguish between what is really a violation and what is not. But let the body of a friend be subjected to a manifest indignity, and, wise or unwise, the instincts of our nature rise at once in resentment.

The notion that the body is a worthless thing derives no countenance from the prevailing sentiments of the gospel. By an apostle the bodies of Christians are pronounced temples wherein the Holy Ghost dwells, — plainly implying that they are very sacred things, and have as true, if not as important a part in the work of redemption as the immortal soul. Jesus, our divine Lord, had a body, and when he had laid it down in the grave for a little while, he took it again, — he rose with it into heaven, and wears it still, and will ever wear it — the sure token of the reality of his manhood. The body of our Lord Jesus Christ has a mysterious relation to the bodies of his saints, and hence the ancient symbol of our faith, transmitted to us from our honored fathers, declares of the holy dead, "their bodies being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves until the resurrection."

I know that gross and unwarrantable notions have been ignorantly entertained by many, in regard to this subject. Indeed, a thousand questions start up in connection with it, to which we can give no intelligent and satisfactory answer. How

are the dead raised up, and with what, or what sort of body, do they come?—this the gospel has not determined. Enough that the dead in Christ shall reappear in a true body, and that the same body reconstructed, and not an original creation. Even as Christ died and rose again, no longer a spirit as his affrighted disciples once fancied, but an embodied man, proved to possess the *same* body by the wounds still visible in his hands and sides, even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God restore. Even as Jesus himself stood beside the tomb of Lazarus, and at his simple call “he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face bound about with a napkin,” so the hour cometh when “*all* that are in the graves” shall hear that same voice, and come forth to a resurrection, either of life eternal or of damnation. Nor is it only the body which is destined to participate in that wonderful renewal;—the immortal spirit, too, shall be brought forth from its temporary hiding place, and reinvested with its native garments, and the organs which are its natural and appropriate instruments.

I have spoken of the departed spirits as in a state of utter separation from their surviving fellow men. For aught we know, this may be one of God’s merciful provisions towards them. This world is a stormy, agitated scene, and the righteous souls of God’s children are often vexed with its tumultuous and unholy ways. They could not bear it long. Therefore God takes them out of it when the purposes of his discipline are completed,—sequesters them from its influence, and brings them where the troubled waves of the fall may roll on to the final catastrophe, without disturbing them. Job represents death and the invisible world as a shelter, where God *hides* his people till he had done pouring out his indignation on the guilty. Because the new heaven and the new earth are not yet ready, he lays the body down in unconsciousness, and takes the spirit in within the veil. The structure is taken apart, if I may so express myself, that it may be more suitably and effectually housed, each part in its proper place, until the storm is over. As if the Divine protector of his faithful ones had thus addressed them: “Come, my people, enter into thy chamber and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself for a little season till the indig-

nation be overpast." It may be, too, that this temporary sequestration has relations and uses to the final perfection of our whole nature, as important as they are beyond our present comprehension. Perhaps the ties of earth, strong and overmastering as they are, need to be, for a while, totally sundered, till the ties of heaven shall be strong enough to overbalance and subordinate them. Perhaps the soul needs to be drawn apart from the body, and from all earthly relations, in order to bear the first effulgence of divine glory bursting suddenly upon it. Perhaps there is a knowledge, an experience, we know not how important to our eternal destiny, which may be obtained best, if not only, in the state of separate spirits. The soul must be divested of its fleshly garments, and taken within the veil, that there, with purely spiritual eye, it may behold purely spiritual things, and be introduced to an altogether peculiar class of scenes and relations. The period between death and the resurrection may be a school where lessons of inestimable value to our whole subsequent progress may be learned once for all, and with inconceivable rapidity.

What re-union there may be between surviving and departed friends, when the former shall have finished their earthly course and become themselves disembodied spirits,—what recognitions, what mutual congratulations, what sweet intercourse of saintly love, we cannot tell. Reasons there are for the indulgence of the hope, that there will be, even at once, a joyful meeting. However that may be, certain it is, that at the resurrection, when at length the great company of the redeemed shall be completed, the whole church will be given back to each other, and have opportunity to renew old friendships in a fellowship of bliss and perfection. Our blessed Lord claims to hold the keys of the invisible world,—that Hades where the dead repose,—and at his voice we are assured there will be a mighty congregating. The sea will give up the dead that are in it, and death and hell deliver up the dead that are in them. And then the risen saints, with those that shall have never died, in one visible company, will share together Christ's glorious appearing, and "together be caught up into the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air."

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Nor is there reason for a moment's questioning, that the restored dead who will then make their appearance will be, in every essential point, the same persons who took leave of earth and earthly associates, at the crisis of their dissolution.

We are apt to entertain confused notions on this subject. The condition of the world to come must be so different, and the change which will have taken place in us so great, that we are apt to suppose the risen saints will scarcely recognize themselves, still less each other. But such is not the tenor of the gospel doctrine. It lies upon the very face of it, that the same body will be restored, with all its organs and susceptibilities, and the same heart and soul, with all their faculties and powers. The myriads of individuals who, from age to age, have adorned the church and gone out of it, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, holy men and women, will not stand confused and undistinguishable in a promiscuous mass, but each in his own rank, expressed by his own name, and wearing the distinct marks of his own individuality. Imperfections removed, every lovely feature and expression of countenance, every desirable quality, habit, or attainment, every worthy affection,—all that belonged to the living man which could be made to take the polish of eternal glory, and reflect after its own manner Christ's image, will be preserved and restored. The links of consciousness and memory, linking the past to the present, through a thousand generations, will be unbroken; and why should we suppose the links of love—Christian love—the most sacred of all ties, to form an exception?

Look not then for some unknown spirit, some cherub or seraph whom you never saw, and whose attributes you never conceived of,—a strange face with a strange heart, and gazing upon you with a look as strange as it may be awfully glorious; look to see your own loved and familiar friend,—the child that hung in infancy on your bosom, the brother or sister that trod with you, hand in hand, the paths of childhood and youth,—the mother that bore and nurtured you,—the pastor on whose lips you ever hung till the last sound of earth ceased, and the music of heaven, inaudible to human sense, took its place, given back to your recognition and affection, with all his old

memories and all his new attainments and experiences,—a complete man,—and without the slightest taint or soil of mortality and the grave.

II. But some may say, after all, this is not much to be desired. I have wept, it is true, over my friend's departure,—this was nature's weakness,—but then, when I have soberly reflected on the change accomplished for him,—when I think of the weakness, the sufferings, and the sinful tendencies of this world of sense, and then in contrast contemplate him as a freed spirit, I have learned to say, and must still say in the sincerity of my soul, "I would not, if I could, call him back."

Let me proceed, then, to observe, in the second place, that it is the chief glory of the Christian resurrection, that it restores the dead in a state no more subject to imperfections. Our text asserts, "the dead shall be raised incorruptible."

The human body, as it now is, is liable, unquestionably, to all the disparaging epithets which even pagan philosophy heaped upon its vileness. The taint of death is upon it, even while it lives; and has ever been since the day when man's fall incurred the curse, "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." We need not go to the tomb to see the tokens of its corruption. The sick room, and even the daily experience of life, in its most healthy seasons, prove it conclusively. Were this the only gift of the resurrection, we might be tempted to renounce its promises, and becoming philosophers instead of Christians, say with Plato, "the soul of a philosopher despises and avoids the body, and wants to be by itself." For verily this body is, as he perceived it to be, a hindrance to the soul. It cramps and cumbers it in its search for truth; it deceives it by illusions of sense; it calls the mind away from higher contemplations to minister to the wants of its inferior nature; interrupts our best meditations by its clamorous appetites; is the source of many base desires, and by its oft recurring diseases and pains, dims the mental perception, and compels us to desist from our noblest mental pursuits. If this were the body to be recovered, rather would we be unclothed than bound and fettered with so offensive a garment.

But the gospel does not teach us that the restored body will

be liable to the same evils which we feel at present. The restoration of the same body is indeed, as I have said, a most characteristic part of the Christian doctrine of the resurrection. But does it follow that all the grossness, all the disarrangement consequent on the fall, — the abnormal imperfections of what the apostle, speaking on this very subject, has not hesitated to denominate “this vile body,” must be renewed and perpetuated? Then would sin still retain its prey. Death would still triumph, and that in a more refined species of victory. Such is that living death to which the bodies of the wicked are consigned; but far different is the divine life, with which the mortal bodies of the saints are to be quickened, by the power of that Spirit which even now dwelleth within them.

What the point, or principle of identity, between the body as it is before death and after the resurrection may be, is a question not lying within the compass of philosophy, and not resolved by divine revelation. That it does not necessarily consist in a sameness of material particles, appears from the fact that these are, even in life, the subject of continual fluctuation. Something beyond these there must be, which gives them their form, their organization, their individual unity, — something which, in the case of animals, makes the individual of to-day the same animal with that of yesterday; and, in the case of vegetables, the same vegetable. Whether it be this principle, remaining dormant till the spirit of life, acting in the resurrection, quickens it anew; and whether and how far the same material particles will be reorganized, we cannot tell. Leave that with God. Enough that there will be a true identity. The body that fell is truly the same body as shall rise again.

And yet no truth is more plainly written on the face of the gospel, than that the risen body of the saint shall be another thing in respect to dignity and excellence, from this corruptible and dying flesh; — the same, yet not the same; — as the gold, when first raked up from its sandy bed, full of impurities, and only sparkling, here and there a particle, amidst quantities of base earth, is not the same in beauty and worth with the refined metal, wrought and polished by the skill of the artist; —

as the diamond, trodden in the dust, and scarcely discernible in the darkness of night, differs from the same brilliant, filled with living light in the noonday sun, and flashing on the brow of a monarch. The apostle, in the chapter before us, has given us a most glaring and exciting description of the destiny of man's body through divine grace. These infirmities, these sufferings, this liability to decay and accidents, this loathsomeness he would have us understand, are but the foreshadowings and attendant circumstances of death. In conquering death Christ has redeemed the bodies of his saints from all death's wounds. It is sown in corruption, but it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. Hitherto, we have all borne the image of the earthy man, our fallen father, on whom the curse went forth, "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." But now henceforth the image of the heavenly man, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, is the type by which his people are to be fashioned. "According to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself;" "Christ will change our vile body, that it might be fashioned like unto his glorious body;" a change which we would scarcely have thought it capable of, were not the truth revealed; but which the working of his mighty power, we cannot, dare not doubt, is able to perform. So is it, as we learn, that this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality.

But it is not the body alone that needs to be purified and perfected; the corruption of sin, whose wages death is, has not fallen only or chiefly on this material organization. The immaterial, the spiritual nature of man, died as truly as the body, in the fall of our race. The vital principle of holiness having become extinct, all our powers, faculties, and dispositions, have become so deteriorated that we neither see, feel, nor act, after a healthful manner. The best knowledge lies hid from us; for "the natural man perceiveth not the things that be of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The best efforts, the highest, holiest aspirations of which man is capable, are not

put forth by us ; for our proclivity to evil makes us choose lower aims, and mind earthly rather than heavenly things. The best enjoyments are shut out from us ; for since the love of God reigns not in the heart, there is no communion with him, and consequently no access to the full fountain of his perfect blessedness. On the contrary, all sorts of moral corruptions, growing with greater or less rapidity and rankness, according to circumstances, — in some taking the form of sensuality, in some of covetousness, in some of anger and malice, in some of envy and jealousy, in some of vanity or pride, in all of self seeking, in some one or more of its manifestations, have deformed the character of individuals, and made our social intercourse a scene of discord and a source of numberless vexations. All these are but fruits and manifestations of that one, mysterious, all-comprehensive and most appalling curse of fallen man, — *death*. It is death as taking effect on man's spiritual nature, and although, in the regeneration, when the new principle of life in Christ is imparted to us, there begins to work a constantly counteracting influence, yet, even in the regenerate, the blight, the palsy, the corruption is still manifest ; and during all our stay on earth, death struggles with life and life with death, extorting from us at times the almost despairing cry, "O wretched man ! who shall deliver me." The re-union of the soul with the body, if its effect were to renew this fearful struggle, would be no blessing.

But the apostle says, "the dead shall be raised incorruptible," and though the reference of his language is doubtless primarily to the state of the restored body, the intimate connexion of this with the power by which souls are purified from sin, seems abundantly to warrant the extension of the same words to the destiny of the latter. It is a point worthy of careful notice, though it is involved in much mystery beyond the power of man to unfold, that the resurrection of the body is not only taught in immediate connection with the perfection of the soul, but that the former is distinctly represented in the gospel as the result of the very same principle by which the latter is accomplished. Witness one remarkable passage in the eighth chapter of the epistle to the Romans : "If the spirit of him that raised

up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his spirit which dwelleth in you." Many other passages might be cited, which, if less explicit than this, are in perfect harmony with the sentiment, and not to be explained without it. Hence some, fancying doubtless that the implantation of the divine principle of holiness by the Spirit of God can have nothing to do with the body, have been led to take a purely spiritual or moral view of the whole matter, and regard the allusion to what the ancient church was wont to call the resurrection of the flesh, as merely metaphors. The truth is, that the gospel represents *both* as the result of our vital union, through the power of God's Spirit, with the Lord Jesus, the incarnate Word. Call it mysticism, or call it what you will, I cannot rid my mind of the belief that the gospel teaches us there is and must be such a union between Christ and his followers, as that in virtue of it a new and divine nature is imparted to the believers' soul, a principle of life, which beginning with the simple conversion of the heart to God, and restoration of communion with him, works on under the power of the same spirit that introduced it, till it shall have transformed the whole man, spirit, soul, and body, into the divine likeness. This principle will reanimate and perfect the body and be found to pervade and predominate in every faculty of the soul at the resurrection of the just. So that the inference is not doubtful that body and soul will then be in perfect harmony, both pervaded and actuated by one and the same life of the spirit. The predominance of this life of the spirit throughout the whole man, is a result reserved in the wisdom of God, for the time of the resurrection. The believer has indeed already been born again of an incorruptible seed, but then that seed will have put forth all its hidden power. The Christian will not only have become a new creature, but be wholly and nothing but a new creature. The last particle of the old man will have been cast off, and so spiritual death will have left no traces of its power, no ruins not restored, but all will be life, divine life, and secured forever from the hazard of mortality. Then will the restored and perfected man start forth on a destiny as glorious as it is incomprehensible.

But I have already spoken of the disembodied spirit as entering at once into glory, being freed at death from all its corruptions and deriving special advantages from the experience of its unembodied condition ; and some may ask what need we more, and why this long space intervening before we reach the final goal of our hopes ? Must the pure spirits of the patriarchs, who have been these thousands of years gazing on the unutterable brightness, quit their stations and suspend their progress and come back to recover from the earth these material bodies, from which they sprang loose with such unutterable exultation in the hour of their departure ? I answer, first, the disembodied soul, pure and glorious as it is, is not a *complete man*. The body is an essential part of man's nature ; it marks his peculiar place in the scale of being ; and God has doubtless riches of glory and blessedness in store for him, which can be received and enjoyed only as a spirit incarnate. Man must forever forego his peculiar birthright, were he to remain forever separated from the body. The patriarchs and prophets occupied and absorbed by the divine glories around them, do not "groan" doubtless as do we on earth, who have received but the "first fruits of the spirit ;" but even they, I doubt not, equally with us, are "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Death, the minister of sin, laid his strongest and most successful grasp upon this part of our nature ; and it behoved Christ, as the conqueror of Death, if he would make the work complete, to make him loose that grasp and give back the body as well as the soul to its primeval excellence and immortality. As to the time that intervenes, I have already spoken of its probable uses. Who can tell what priceless treasures may be gathered during it ? But it is enough to reply : God is wise. His works are all performed by steps, with intervals. So did he in creation ; so does he in providence and redemption. And if he chooses in restoring man to his primitive destiny, or even raising him above it, to take the organization apart, and, laying one part down for a time, perfect the other first, and introduce it to the glories of heaven, till it has become separately familiar with them and learned the peculiar lessons of that separate state, and then

resuming that which had been laid aside, perfect that, and bid the whole, re-united and complete, enter as one perfect man, with all the redeemed of Christ, in one company, on the joy of the Lord, is this so strange that we must turn sceptics about it—so strange that we must halt and rest satisfied in our contemplations with the lower stage, refusing to go forward, guided by his word, to anticipate and rejoice in the more glorious consummation?

On that lower stage in this wonderful process, our departed Christian friends have already entered. And what a joy mingles with our grief, as we contemplate their blessedness! The sensitive, suffering, often anguished body, is now perfectly quiet; disease cannot reach it; accident cannot mar it—the ungenial influences of the outer world cannot discompose its quietness. It feels no hunger or thirst—it takes no chill from the damp and cold air—it suffers no fatigue. And the spirit—the living spirit—immortal by its very essence—that has gone to be with God, with Christ, with the other “spirits of the just made perfect.” Its sins, its imperfections, its liability to error, and all the conflicts of its earthly life, are forever ended. This, if no more, the scripture teaches us concerning the spirits of our departed Christian friends: that they are happy, that they are in the heavenly world, that they are with Christ. Death has performed on them his last work, exhausted his power, and from henceforth, in every sense of the words, they cannot die any more. This should fill us with thankfulness.

And yet, from this most desirable consummation we are permitted to follow them on to one far more perfect and glorious. “Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints.” The day of his last appearing is drawing on. And “when Christ who is their life shall appear, then shall they also appear with him in glory.” “Behold,” says the inspired apostle, “I show you a mystery, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” Then! O then! as our Divine Lord himself told us, “the righteous shall shine

forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father." Yea, "we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him," — not the same with him, not undistinguishable from him, — the very thought were profane, — nay, not equal to him, for in his glorious manhood are combined all those human excellences which are distributed in various forms and degrees among all the ten thousand times ten thousand of his redeemed followers; but each reflecting some peculiar features of his perfect image, and nothing contrary, all like him, after their own individual manner and degree.

In the cheerful hope of that divine consummation we lay our dead calmly down in their dark bed. There Jesus slept! Precious grave! Sweet rest for weary frames! Thence Jesus rose! Blest forerunner of his people's rising! They too shall rise ere long, when they have rested long enough and the Lord who bought them shall think fit to bring them to their house in heaven. So lay we down to-day the precious remains of our dear honored EMERSON. He sleeps in Jesus; let his dust rest, till his Lord calls for it, in the same mansion which for a while held his beloved Master's.

Meanwhile it is a privilege for us to look back and mark the incipient manifestations of those Christian excellences which shall form the basis of his eternal glory, and trace the steps by which our Divine Master has hitherto led him in the ways of discipline and service.

The REV. JOHN EDWARDS EMERSON, was born in Newburyport, Sept. 27, 1823. He was the son of Mr. Charles L. and Mrs. Rhoda Emerson, and the grandson of the Rev. John Emerson, more than fifty years a highly respected minister of the gospel, in Conway, Mass.

Mr. Emerson was the elder of two sons of his mother, and like Augustine and St. Louis in the ancient church, and numberless others, both in ancient and modern times, was indebted for his Christian excellences, instrumentally to maternal influence. Baptized in infancy by the Rev. Samuel P. Williams, then pastor of the first Presbyterian church, in Newburyport, of which both his parents were members, he was carefully trained,

both in the sabbath school and at the parental fireside, in the principles and sentiments of the gospel. At a very early age he exhibited marked tokens of a religious disposition; and it may serve as one, among many illustrations of the power of the pulpit over such youthful minds, that from his infancy, the character of a Christian minister was his ideal of excellence, and preaching the gospel one of his favorite childish imitations.

At the age of ten years he became, as he believed, the subject of renewing grace, though it was not till two years subsequent that he ventured to present himself as a candidate for full communion in the church. The circumstances of that step were thus briefly narrated by himself, in conversation with a friend a few days before his decease: "My mother thought I was too young, my sabbath school teacher did not recommend it, but a sermon from my dear pastor, condemned me for my neglect. I went forward, was accepted, and have never regretted it." In an interview with his pastor, preliminary to his appearing before the session, the following statement and inquiry were presented to him: "John, you have occasion to thank God, that almost all your near friends are Christians,—they have longed to see you one, and nothing could delight them more, than to learn that you have determined to follow Christ. But suppose the case reversed. Suppose your friends were all enemies of religion, and even your father and mother were disposed to reproach or deride you for becoming a Christian. Do you think you would still adhere to the same determination?" He hung his head and remained silent. It was very evident that a conflict was going on in his young bosom, for the probe had been inserted just where his heart was most sensitive. At length he said timidly, "I do n't know, I think Christ would keep me." Yes, he would keep you, was the reply; and he will keep you in all trials, if you continue to trust in him. On Friday evening, February 12, 1836, he made a public profession of his faith, and on the following sabbath, partook for the first time of the Lord's supper, being then twelve years of age.

Mr. Emerson's ideal of a Christian life, was from the beginning, highly active and objective. Though modest in all his

deportment, fond of private devotion, and familiar with all that constitutes the Christian's hidden life, — a docile pupil, and a watchful practicer of self-discipline, — he was never satisfied unless he could be doing something for the spiritual good of others ; and, from a child, was in the habit of gathering his young playmates round him, leading them in social devotion, and exhorting them to repentance and a life of piety. And it is a fact worthy of notice, that so blameless and consistent was his whole deportment, that, notwithstanding the prominence thus given to his Christian professions, his school-mates always bore their testimony to the genuineness of his piety. They did not doubt, they said, "that John Emerson was a Christian," though they had no faith in the pretensions of many others.

His trials, at this period of his Christian course, were not inconsiderable. There is a martyrdom which makes no show, and yet its pangs are as keen, and its fragrance, I doubt not, as sweet in God's estimate, as that of the burning stake. The thoughtless lads of his acquaintance, much as they loved him, thought themselves at liberty to try his patience and steadfastness, by many a boyish jest upon his Christian relations. He bore it manfully, and yet it cut him to the heart. "Men," he said in his childish way, "had more politeness, but boys had nothing to restrain them." There still exists a short correspondence between him and a noble-hearted boy, a few years older than himself, who, indignant that his young friend should be molested, generously volunteered his protection and sympathy — a correspondence which at once does honor to the head and heart of both the youthful parties, and forcibly illustrates the peculiar trials of a Christian child.

But if the trials of the young confessor were great, so were his new-found enjoyments. It was his custom at this period, as he once said privately to his mother, to retire to his bedroom, for devotion, regularly three times in a day ; and so pleasant were his exercises of communion with God, that he used to hasten with all speed from the school-room that they might not be prevented or curtailed. A simple verse, the parts of which he used to sing or repeat aloud as he entered his lit-

the sanctuary, serves to show the alacrity with which the place and the season were welcomed, —

“By morning light I’ll seek his face,
At noon repeat my cry;—
The night shall hear me ask his grace,
Nor will he long deny.”

Mr. Emerson was fitted for college in the excellent classical High School of his native town, and chiefly under the instruction of that accomplished teacher of youth and exemplary Christian, Roger S. Howard, Esq. In the autumn of 1840, he entered Amherst College, where he won for himself the love and respect, both of teachers and fellow-students, and was graduated with honor in 1844. Having spent about a year and nine months, as a teacher, in Conway, Mass., he entered the Theological Seminary, in Princeton, N. J., and with occasional interruptions, on account of ill health, completed his course and received the customary testimonials in 1849.

His manner of life, at the seminary, and the estimation in which he was held by his teachers, a brief extract of a letter from the venerable Dr. Miller, will suffice to show: “Mr. Emerson,” says he, “made a very pleasant impression upon us from the beginning of our acquaintance with him, and he has been constantly growing in our esteem ever since. In highly respectable talents, in exemplary Christian deportment, in prudence, in diligent attention to all his duties, and in amiable, pleasant manners, he stands among *our very first pupils*. I thank you from my heart for sending such a man to us, and do sincerely hope and believe, he will be likely to do honor to our institution, and to all his religious connections.

“My dear brother, for every such young man that you can send us, we shall feel ourselves much your debtors.”

Mr. Emerson was licensed to preach the gospel, by the Presbytery of Londonderry, at its stated meeting, in April, 1847, having been transferred to the care of that body from the Presbytery of New Brunswick, by which his examination had been commenced and his trial pieces assigned. How well he acquitted himself on that occasion is well remembered, by many

now present; and it was the testimony of some of our most experienced pastors, that they had seldom witnessed an examination, in which the candidate appeared in all respects more satisfactory. He preached his first sermon in this pulpit* on the Sabbath following his licensure, from the 131 Psalm: "Lord, my heart is not haughty," &c., — a discourse distinguished for beauty of thought and expression, impressive sentiment, and touching allusions, to the occasion and the circumstances.

On leaving Princeton, Mr. Emerson was earnestly solicited to take the charge of gathering and establishing a new congregation, in his native town. In yielding to this solicitation, which was not till after much deliberation, he acted contrary to the advice of some of his most approved counsellors and friends. His teachers, at the seminary, urged him to seek a southern climate, as the most hopeful means of prolonging his life and usefulness; but he loved New England, — its staunch free Puritan ways had a peculiar charm for him; he even fancied that its cold rough airs were congenial to his constitution, and would serve to invigorate his feeble lungs. Some of his friends here did not regard the enterprise itself with favor, and others, among whom was he, whom, to the last, he was accustomed to call affectionately, "my pastor," and whose counsel he never, but in this instance, set aside, regarded his engaging in it as an experiment of doubtful issue. It was not that we doubted his ability to carry the work through, or had the least fear that his eminent good judgment and Christian honor, would not amply avail him in the delicate relations into which he would be brought by it. Had he lived, and had it been my own lot to continue in the station I then occupied, I have no question, that "as a son with a father," he would have "labored with me in the gospel." But we feared for the result upon his own health and life. He had been delicately trained; had, naturally, a feeble constitution; and his mental characteristics seemed rather to fit him to preside over and instruct some established and well organized society, than to encounter the

* This discourse was delivered in the house of worship of the First Presbyterian Church, in Newburyport, of which the writer was formerly pastor.

obstacles and go through with the rough work of laying a new foundation. But I have the fullest confidence, and that, I think, founded upon a thorough knowledge of his views, that in undertaking this enterprise, he acted from the purest principles, and the most decided convictions of duty. He saw, as did many of us, a large population here who were not accustomed to avail themselves of religious instruction. Many of them were strangers, brought into the place by its manufactures, and in a great degree isolated from the old population. Others were his old playmates,—young men who had hitherto taken little interest in religion, but who loved and had the fullest confidence in their old school-fellow, whose manner of life they had so well known from the beginning, and were now ready to avail themselves of his services, and showed an earnest desire that he would try to promote their religious benefit. It was not strange that, under these circumstances, he should have regarded it as his special mission—the work specially marked out for him by Providence, to seek to gather the wandering, and extend the bounds of the Redeemer's kingdom, in his native town.

The new church, taking the name of the Whitefield Congregational Church, was organized in this house, and our lamented friend ordained as its first pastor, on the first day of January, 1850. His success since then, has far surpassed the most sanguine expectations of his associates. The congregation has increased rapidly,—the church doubled its numbers and not a few, who once seemed very far from the Kingdom of God, have been led to bow in subjection at the feet of Jesus.

But the career of our young brother, as a Christian minister, was destined to be short. Already, even before he had completed his studies, disease had, in the estimation of many of his acquaintance, fastened strongly upon his vitals. Hope, and earnest desire to accomplish something in his new field of labor, bore him on for a time, even beyond his strength. But gradually his strength failed,—one accustomed service after another was given up, and he closed his public labors by the reception of an infant child, bearing his own name, into the visible fold of Christ, by baptism, just three weeks before his decease. During the period which followed, most of the mem-

bers of his flock, especially the young men, between whom and their young pastor, there subsisted a most devoted attachment, came to his dying chamber; heard his testimony to the power of the gospel; saw its manifestations in his serene and hopeful spirit, and were exhorted, as from one standing on the very verge of the eternal world, to set their hearts wholly on God. Then and there, did all the virtues of his lovely character shine forth in a bright constellation,—his fervent devotion, his zeal for the spiritual good of others, his filial and fraternal love, his tenderness, his gentleness, his unfailing confidence in the goodness of God, and his firm attachment to the doctrines which he had learned in childhood, and preached in the ripeness of his youth.

He often spoke with lively gratitude of the goodness of God, in ordering the circumstances of his last illness. The truth had been let in upon him so gradually, and the ties which bound him to earth sundered one by one, with such gentle methods, that he had hardly experienced a shock during the whole process. Death, he said, appeared at first a very broad river, but as he approached it, it had narrowed to a very little rill, easy to be crossed, while on the other hand the comforts of his lot, which had been at first the little rill, had widened till they became the broad deep river. One trial, he said, had cost him a severe conflict. He had a strong desire to prolong his labors for the good of his beloved church, but he hoped he was not unsubmitive to God's will. Said one who was beside him: "Why, you have done a great work for your church already. You have founded it, and instructed it, and gathered many into it, and if you leave it now, your name will be precious in it as long as it exists." My name, said he, as if catching a new thought, from the mention of the word:

"My name is written on his breast,
His Book of Life contains *my* name;
I'd *rather* have it there impressed,
Than on the brightest rolls of fame."

In the fond speculations about heaven, in which many indulge, he found little satisfaction. That he should glorify God there, seemed, he said, its chief attraction. On being reminded

of dear friends departed whom he might hope to meet, he said with energy, "I want to see Christ." Occasionally, during his illness, a cloud came over his spiritual vision, but it was soon dispersed. The day before his death, he was overheard, by his attendants, in a strain of fervent devotion, which continued more than half an hour, renewing his consecration of himself to Christ. "O! I can trust him," said he, with an emphasis almost vehement, "I do trust him, I have trusted him, I will trust him."

On Sabbath evening, March 23, 1851, he departed this life. He had been praying audibly, and especially for his church, when a friend who was watching by his side, suggested that he should now try to sleep. He slept! but his sleep grew continually deeper and deeper, his breath failed, and in a few moments, he slept his last, sweetest sleep, from which only the glorious resurrection of the just will wake him up.

You will agree with me, I am sure, Christian friends, that in his death, this community has lost one of its brightest ornaments. It has been a blessing to parents to have such a boy as John Emerson, growing up among their children, and a blessing to you all, to have conversant among you such a specimen of a consistent, saint-like man.

In his social character, he was amiable, warm-hearted, generous, and always affable. With a high sense of honor, and a delicate regard to the feelings of others, — seldom giving offence and always easily reconciled, — he has left behind him many friends and no enemies, and the attachment of his friends has been growing stronger with every year of their acquaintance.

Intellectually his mind was rather beautiful than brilliant; rather fertile, than original or profound. His thoughts flowed freely in a gentle yet never-failing current, making green and glad all around it, and reflecting in a brightness borrowed from itself every object which came near its margin. A good scholar, both in sacred and secular learning, he was particularly distinguished for a kind of intellectual tact, which seized at once upon the true spirit of an occasion and enabled him always to say just the right thing at the right time.

As a pulpit orator, he was graceful, animated, earnest, seldom vehement. His style was free, easy, perspicuous, and moderately ornamental. The strain of his discourses was tender, affectionate, impressive, and evangelical. He laid, as the basis of all his preaching, the same doctrines on which he rested his personal hopes — the doctrine of salvation by grace alone, and the kindred truths which cluster round that grand centre. His public prayers were distinguished for their particularity and comprehensiveness. Nothing seemed to escape his notice. He prayed like one who had been accustomed, not to recite prayers, but to bring all that interested his own heart with childlike simplicity to the throne of grace.

As a pastor, he was assiduous and faithful, conversing freely with individuals in respect to their religious condition, entering with ready sympathy into all the trials of his people, and anxious to make the events of their daily experience a means of their spiritual benefit.

As a Christian, he was distinguished, as I have already intimated, for the purity, blamelessness, and consistency of all his deportment. Yet few have had a livelier sense of personal unworthiness, or been disposed to humble themselves more deeply, before the justice and holiness of God. His whole reliance for salvation, was on the merits of the atoning Saviour.

The career of our lamented friend has been short; but it has been bright and beautiful. Through all the track, from childhood to this hour, there is not a spot on which the heart of his acquaintance does not rest with pleasant remembrances.

The sorrowing relatives, — the bereaved church and congregation, will suffer me to ask a place in their ranks to-day, as a personal mourner. Dear, very dear, to a Christian pastor, is the memory of one such plant of righteousness, matured under his ministry. Among the members of that church, I see one here whose emotions are peculiarly deep on this tender occasion. It is he whom our deceased brother never ceased to call "my sabbath school teacher," who for many long years watched and prayed, with all a father's fondness, over his childhood; and then, changing places with his once dutiful pupil, sat in turn at his feet for instruction, and received from his

hands the tokens of the Saviour's sacrifice. Ah! faithful one, God has given thee thy prayer. Through his grace, thou hast at length got him safe in among the church of the first-born. Nor is it only the church to which he ministered, who suffer by this bereavement. The church in which his infancy was consecrated, and his youth nurtured, where he first gave his heart to the Lord, and partook of the memorials of the Saviour's dying love, in whose pulpit he first preached the gospel, and in whose house of worship he was set apart, by ordination to the sacred office, and placed over his new gathered flock as their first pastor,—whose members had from time to time aided him in his preparations for the ministry, and of which he once said, in the ardor of his attachment, "Its people, I call my people, its pastor, my pastor, and its God, my God," is parting with one of whom she will esteem it among her highest honors to hear it said, "This man was born in her." Fit it is that we should pay his precious dust this last tribute in this place, full of so many hallowed associations.

Afflicted parents, you have now a son in heaven. You educated him expressly for that exalted privilege, and now he is admitted to its joys. Brothers and sisters, seek to follow the bright path of that sainted spirit. One of your number has led the way to glory, may the rest follow him when their work is completed. Bereaved people,—ye especially, whose privilege it was to stand by his death-bed, and hear him tell of the faithfulness of death's conqueror, forget not how he exhorted and entreated you to serve the Lord, and prepare to welcome the last summons. Commend yourselves to God,—seek his grace, and may he soon give you another pastor who shall follow in the footsteps, and enter into the unfinished labors of him who now ministers clad in white robes before the eternal throne.

Fifteen years ago, that dear hallowed name was first enrolled among Christ's visible disciples. Now it is enrolled in the general assembly and church of the first-born; and the same lips that then welcomed him, a timid child to the Lord's table, must now pronounce in the name of this sorrowing assembly, the last, the heart-breaking farewell. Pardon me if I revert, on this oc-

oasion, to the words of that welcome, " Shall the poor lamb be kept out of the fold because he is but a lamb ? when without are dogs and wolves, yea, and the roaring lion, shall we refuse admission to the timid, feeble lamb ? We welcome to the fold to-day, one ransomed lamb of Jesus' flock. May the good shepherd who has brought him in, defend and shelter him, till the tempests of the world are over, and the wild beasts are driven to their dens." And now the tempests of the world *are* over, the lamb is safe, — safe in the fold above ! Farewell, dear sacred relics, of our loved and honored brother. Farewell, till Jesus comes and calls you to the great assembling of the just. There we shall meet you, not as now, cold, lifeless, and corruptible, but vital in every part. And thou, immortal spirit ! death has but taken thee aside and unrobed thee, that being washed and sanctified, and justified, being initiated by the Divine Spirit, into the mysteries of the spirit-world, grace may robe thee anew and get thee ready to join with us the glorious retinue of Christ in his day of triumph. Farewell till God restores thee to us. If we are faithful in our day as thou wast faithful, we shall soon meet thee, every defect obliterated, every lovely trait made heavenly, every seed of excellence ripened into some perfect and immortal virtue.

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