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# FAITH AND LIFE

## SERMONS



BY

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WITH AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE sermons printed in this volume have been taken, practically at random, from the hundreds of manuscript sermons left by Dr. Purves. They are thought to represent fairly his ordinary preaching; or, as it would be better to say, his ordinary preparation for preaching. For Dr. Purves did not prepare these manuscripts to be read or verbally recited in the pulpit. His actual preaching was eminently free, resting on careful preparation, but depending much also on the mental action of the moment. Part of his preparation consisted, however, in writing out the sermon which he purposed to deliver. This writing was very rapidly done; though it resulted in putting a complete sermon on the paper, it can scarcely be said to have put it there completely. The manuscripts are rough in the extreme, crowded with abbreviations, and bear obvious marks of having been written merely to fix the preacher's thoughts. The sermons drawn from them cannot pretend to be such sermons as Dr. Purves preached. Much less can they be supposed to be such sermons as he would have been content permanently to fix in print. They represent rather Dr. Purves' sermons as they first presented

themselves to his mind,—the first impressions, which he afterwards adjusted, filled out, and enriched for their oral presentation. He would have felt it necessary very thoroughly to revise, or rather wholly to rewrite them, before they were committed to type.

A certain injustice is therefore inevitably done Dr. Purves' memory as a preacher by printing these extemporaneous first-drafts of his sermons. Neither in literary form, nor in homiletical structure, nor even, perhaps, in religious teaching (if at least our mind is set on proportion and precision of statement), can they be held to represent fairly his remarkably clear, strong, and rich preaching. Those who have been charged with the duty of deciding whether to print or not to print, have, in these circumstances, naturally felt much hesitation. But Dr. Purves is gone from us; the sermons as he preached them, or as he would have printed them, are beyond our reach. It seems a pity, however, that his voice should be wholly stilled. Even in the extemporaneous form in which they appear in the manuscripts, these sermons seem to us remarkable sermons, and if not fully representative of Dr. Purves' powers, nevertheless not unworthy of his talents, and quite capable, as vital presentations of the essentials of Christian truth, not only of embalming his memory worthily, but of serving further that Gospel to which he enthusiastically gave his life, and for the advancement of which he would have been more than willing

to sacrifice much. We give this small selection of them to the world with the conviction that there is a blessing in them, which we should be sorry to withhold from the wider circles which have not enjoyed the privilege of hearing the living preacher's voice.

It seems fitting to prefix some account of the life and work out of which these sermons came.

George Tybout Purves was born in Philadelphia on the 27th of September, 1852. As every Scotchman would know from the name itself, the family was of Berwickshire origin; and Berwick men bearing it have won a place for it both in the secular and in the religious history of Scotland. It was thence that about the middle of the eighteenth century that John Purves came, who, emigrating to America, and establishing himself as a merchant, first at Bridgeton, N. J., and then at Philadelphia, became the ancestor of Dr. Purves. He was a man of convictions, having also the courage of his convictions, for which—being unfortunately a "Tory"—he was called upon to suffer. In West Jersey he found a wife for himself in a Huguenot maiden, bearing the great name of Anne Marot. Their son, Alexander, married, in Margaret Colesberry, a descendant of Swen Colesberry, schoolmaster in the Swedish colony at Wilmington. Thus, Dr. Purves' father, William Purves, the issue of this marriage, was typically American in the complicated mixture of good strains of blood in his

veins. His mother, Anna Kennedy, was of pure North Irish descent, from County Antrim. But her Presbyterianism was no more deeply inbred than that of her husband. John Purves had identified himself from the first with the First Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, of which he was a trustee. His son, Alexander, succeeded him in that office, and also subsequently served the church in the higher duties of the eldership; and his son, William, after him adorned the latter responsible office through many years. Sprung from this Godly stock, Dr. Purves was born into an ideal Christian household, which "abounded," as one who, as its pastor, knew it well, describes it, "with the sweetest Christian amenities and sanctities."

It was one of the felicities of his life that he was not compelled to leave the goodly and Godly fellowship of this home to obtain his education. His primary schooling was received in the "classical institute" of a notable schoolmaster, the Rev. Dr. John Wylie Faires, "the last in the long succession of Scotch-Irish schoolmasters to whom Philadelphia and the commonwealth owe so much." He is described by one of his teachers of this period as small and quiet, little aggressive in his work, and perhaps not revealing his full ability as it was afterward called forth by circumstances, fond withal of outdoor sports, especially of cricket, in which he was proficient. "I remember well," this teacher adds, "his striking face, his modest

demeanor, his correct recitations, his eagerness to learn." At the age of sixteen he entered the University of Pennsylvania, whence he was graduated in 1872. His career in the university was a distinguished one. He seems to have won nearly all the prizes in oratory offered; he was also a prize-man in philosophy, and, in his freshman year, in Greek, though after that the classical prizes went to others. When his university course was over, he devoted an additional year to the diligent study of languages and general literature. Dr. Herrick Johnson, his pastor at this time, describes him as already "giving sign and token of all the characteristics that marked his subsequent career: ready, nimble, versatile, scholarly, genial, and gentle,—a winsome fellow."

He had made a public profession of his faith just after completing his fourteenth year (October 5, 1866); and soon after graduating from the university, he reached the conviction (autumn of 1872) that he should give himself to the work of the ministry. In the autumn of 1873, therefore, he entered the Theological Seminary at Princeton, and thus came into relations with an institution with which, as student, director, professor, and then director again, he retained a close connection for the rest of his life. It is safe to say that no more faithful pupil ever sat upon the hard benches of the "Old Seminary" class-rooms. He neglected nothing. He accomplished with distinction every task that was set him. His easy mastery of the

subjects embraced in the curriculum was, however, only one of the ways in which he exhibited a vigor and a richness of mental life that won from the first the respect of his preceptors and the admiration of his comrades. He was by common consent pronounced the best preacher in his class ; and none will contest his claim to have been the best of good companions. The somewhat meagre opportunities for extra-curriculum work then afforded by the seminary, he took, of course, full advantage of. These included rather extended studies in Shemitic Philology, under the instruction of Dr. J. F. McCurdy, then John C. Green Instructor in Hebrew. But they particularly embraced continuous and loving study of the New Testament, under the instruction of Dr. C. W. Hodge. He was graduated from the seminary in 1876, but remained in connection with it an additional year, engaged in advanced work in Biblical Literature and Biblical Theology under the direction of Drs. Caspar Wistar Hodge and William Henry Green.

He profited, of course, from all the instruction he received in the seminary, as only a mind like his, at once docile and independent, receptive and fertile, could profit. But the formative influence that was exerted on him came from Dr. Caspar Wistar Hodge. What he felt he owed to the inspiring personality and the impressive teaching of this wide-minded scholar, and the affectionate gratitude with which he bore him in



life-long memory, he himself has told us, only last spring, in the eulogy he pronounced, at the unveiling of a tablet erected to the memory of his revered instructor, in the chapel of Princeton Seminary. Probably no other of his teachers exercised so moulding an influence upon him ; although he always acknowledged a debt also to the Rev. Dr. Charles Porterfield Krauth, who had imbued his youthful mind with his philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania. He gradually drifted away from Dr. Krauth's characteristic tenets, however, whereas Dr. Hodge's method and spirit became ever more and more his own.

In the meantime Mr. Purves had been licensed by the Presbytery of Philadelphia to preach the Gospel (May 2, 1876), and immediately on completing his graduate studies in the seminary, he was ordained by the Presbytery of Chester (April 27, 1877), and installed pastor of the little church at Wayne. Even in that somewhat retired parish he quickly drew attention, and accordingly, when the ~~Broadway~~ Avenue Church in Baltimore was established (1880), it was he who was called to put the new enterprise on its feet. This he thoroughly did, growing meanwhile himself steadily in pulpit power. After six years of labor in that fruitful field he was fixed upon by the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh—whose pastor, the Rev. Sylvester F. Scovel, had been taken from it, in 1883, to become President of Wooster University—as the

*Baltimore*

man it needed to carry forward its high traditions and compact its energies. In this pastorate, as one of the closest and most sympathetic observers of his work has put it, he achieved "one of the triumphs of the modern ministry." He "showed that even in a 'down-town' church scholarship can do more than sensationalism, and that unfeigned devotion to the simple Gospel is the only true basis for genuine pulpit power. He gathered into his audience all classes and conditions, gentle and simple, wise and unwise, who sat at his feet and heard his words with delight, and were moved to holy living by the vital power of the Word as he preached it."

"Meanwhile," continues the same writer, "he was busy in his study, ever the secret spring that fed his pulpit." During all these years of successful pulpit work he had, in fact, never intermitted his enthusiastic study of the New Testament and related branches of theological investigation. A specimen of his scholarly attainments was now given to the world in his course of "Stone Lectures," delivered at Princeton Seminary in the autumn of 1888, and shortly afterward published in a goodly volume. Other publications followed in the Reviews, and it soon became quite clear that a light of learning had been lifted up whose shining could not be hid. The seminaries began to turn longing eyes toward him. He was sought by more than one of them for more than one

chair of instruction. Princeton Seminary endeavored in vain to secure him for its chair of Church History. During a vacancy in the chair of Dogmatic Theology at the Western Seminary at Allegheny, he actually taught that branch of theology throughout a whole session to delighted classes; and both that seminary and McCormick Seminary would fain have secured him for that chair. But his heart was fixed in its devotion to the critical study of the New Testament. And at length, in 1892, on the death of his beloved instructor in this department, he was prevailed upon to take up the work that had fallen from Dr. Hodge's hands. Thus he became Professor of New Testament Literature and Exegesis in Princeton Seminary.

To the work of this chair he brought not only eminent general abilities and a remarkable and special aptitude, but a trained exegetical tact and a large store of accumulated knowledge. He brought also an unbounded energy and zeal, and a depth of religious sentiment which rendered every word of the New Testament precious to him, and made its exposition and enforcement his greatest delight. It is using wholly inadequate language to speak of his eight years of instruction in this chair as successful. His instruction was enthusiastically given and enthusiastically received. He impressed his pupils profoundly. For many years to come the Church will be richer in men who know and love the New Testament for these years

of his work in the seminary. In these pupils he will live anew as they expound the Scriptures in the spirit which they have learned from him.

His class-room work, however, did not suffice him. His burning zeal in the communication of his treasures of divine knowledge led him ever to seek and to find other channels of expression. He wrote much for the religious press; he even became for a time a regular contributor to one of our church papers. He was in great demand as a public lecturer, and made frequent and long journeys to deliver either a single address or a course of lectures. Even this was not enough. He was soon found preaching regularly every Sabbath evening in one of the Princeton churches, with an especial view to the needs of the unevangelized classes, and particularly of the young men gathered so numerously in this university town. Just as while he was in the pastorate he was besieged by the seminaries, seeking to obtain his gifts and learning for their chairs of instruction; so, now, when he was at last in the seminary, he was besieged by the churches, seeking to obtain his demonstrated ability and tried skill for their pulpits. Numerous calls came to him from the outstanding churches of the land; back to Pittsburgh, to Baltimore, to Philadelphia, to New York. Every one of them tempted him. He loved to preach and was conscious of the power that went out from him. But he contented himself for the time with becoming

stated-supply to the First Presbyterian Church of Princeton (1897), though this soon ripened into his settlement as regular pastor of that church (1899).

He put his shoulders under his double burden with an enthusiasm that knew no measure. An assistant was given him in the church; an assistant was given him in the seminary. But he appeared to be concerned not so much to shift some of his work to them, as to invent enough additional work in the congregation and seminary to keep them also busy. He himself responded to the demands made on him, and expanded to ever greater power. It was during his Princeton pastorate, for example, that he developed his full gifts as a pastor. Perhaps at the outset of his career it was the intellectual side of his work that was most prominent; it was especially in the pulpit that he made full proof of his ministry. As his ministry ripened to its close, however, he had become a model pastor, absolutely tireless, and remarkably effective in his infinitely sympathetic personal intercourse with his people. These superabounding labors proved, of course, too much for his strength, sapped, as it now proved to be, by the inroads of a fatal disease. So, in the spring of 1900, he laid down his work in Princeton, and became pastor of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York, the fourth in that series of remarkable pastors by which the history of that church during the last half century has

been distinguished—James W. Alexander, Nathan L. Rice, John Hall, and George T. Purves. This was, in a sense, the fitting culmination of his life. But less than eighteen months were granted him for the cultivation of this new field before he “fell on sleep,” having literally worn himself out in a service of love.

It is doubtless idle to ask whether Dr. Purves was more the preacher or more the scholar. The greater portion of his active life was passed in the pulpit, and it will not be strange if he is longer remembered as one of the most impressive preachers of his day. In truth, however, the two things cannot be separated in his case. He was never more the profoundly instructed scholar than when he stood in the pulpit: he was never more the preacher of righteousness than when he sat in the class-room. He certainly was not a scholastic preacher; and he certainly was not what is called a “homiletical” teacher. He was too ripe a scholar to take the atmosphere of the study into the pulpit with him; he was too skilled in the art of religious impression to carry the pulpit tone into the class-room. But, on the other hand, the whole man, with all his gifts and graces, was present wherever he went; and as he was one of the most reverential of teachers, so was he habitually one of the most theological of preachers.

It was not merely that he had thought himself through theologically, and held firmly to a devel-

oped theological system which underlay and sustained and gave body to all his preaching. This was eminently true of him; and it went far to account for the consistency, strength, and edifying effect of his pulpit ministrations. But he did not merely preach out of his theology; he preached his theology. He constantly took a theological topic for his subject, and developed it with notable precision and fullness. As he preached his theology, so also he preached his "criticism." The boldness with which he introduced into his sermons the results, and, on the positive side, even the processes of his critical studies, was equalled only by the skill with which he bent it all to serve a religious end. The staple of his preaching may be, perhaps, best described as Biblico-theological. His colleague, Dr. John DeWitt, has admirably expressed it by calling his sermons "didactic orations of which the substance was yielded by studies in Biblical theology." But so skillful was he in truly popular exposition, so free was he from all parade of learning, so vitalized was all he said with experimental religion, so earnestly and simply were the truths he presented pressed home to the heart and conscience, that only the most reflecting of his hearers quite realized that they were being as carefully "indoctrinated" as they were being powerfully aroused to religious emotion and action.

The most striking quality of his delivery was its vigor,—its nervous expenditure. He preached all



over. He threw a tremendous energy of bodily action into what he said, gesturing not with forethought and calculated effect, but as if the force of his conviction and his earnestness of purpose must find exit in something more than words. His spoken style was correct, clear, and forcible. He was no phrase-maker; he did not deal in antitheses, assonances, colloquialisms; he used illustrations sparingly. He had no broken-sentences; his periods were rounded, balanced, and pellucidly clear; he never framed an unintelligible, weak, or unvitalized sentence. He knew what he wished to say, and he knew how to say it so that it went straight from his lips to the intellects, hearts, and consciences of his hearers. His sermons were always systematically and compactly organized and made a unitary impression. His aim in preaching was obviously not to delight but to instruct, not to give pleasure but guidance; and he had his reward. He was not a revivalist—he was rather a master-builder. His churches grew steadily and solidly under his hands, and became compacted into thoroughly vitalized organisms. To this result no doubt the faithfulness of his pastoral care contributed; but much must be attributed also to the faithfulness and power of his preaching.

The Rev. Dr. George E. Horr, of Boston, happened to hear Dr. Purves at a communion service in the Fifth Avenue Church, New York, just as he was about to assume that pastorate; and the visitor wrote out the



impression he carried away with him and printed it in his paper, *The Watchman* (March 1, 1900). It will perhaps give us a more vivid picture of Dr. Purves in the pulpit than we can easily obtain elsewhere. "Dr. Purves," he writes, "is a stocky man, a little below the medium height, with a clear, persuasive, penetrating voice. The peculiar quality of his preaching is its combination of modernness and conservative orthodoxy. His topic was 'The Precious Blood of Christ.' His language was clear, direct, and sinewy; his analysis of his proposition singularly convincing and effective, and the discourse moved strongly, like an army, from point to point, leaving the impression that the blood of the Redeemer was infinitely worthful. But the assumptions of the discourse were as weighty as its argument. Dr. Purves did not apologize for the Bible nor seek to show that its statements are true. He assumed their truth, and some of the most conclusive and effective passages in the sermon were those in which he appealed to the Word of God in confirmation of his statements. He quotes the Scriptures with accuracy and pertinence, though he seems to discard entirely the help of notes."

Cut off as he was in the midst of his days, Dr. Purves has left behind him no such literary product as will convey to posterity an adequate measure of his powers. He served his own generation. Outside of the pulpit and the class-room, it was in numerous

addresses and equally numerous "flying leaves" of newspaper articles that he expended his strength. It is easy to value these too lightly. We are, perhaps, prone to overestimate the relative importance of books: *Litera scripta manet*. But the "winged word" of speech moves the world; and it is better, after all, to form characters than to compile volumes. Dr. Purves seems to have thought so; and he gave himself freely, or rather prodigally, to the oral communication of his thought. The subjects on which he spoke, the audiences which he addressed, were of the most varied kinds. Few of these addresses have found their way into print. But each has had its own effect on human lives.

He published but two books. One of these has already been mentioned—his admirable "Stone Lectures," on *The Testimony of Justin Martyr to Early Christianity*, published in 1889. By its side he placed, in the closing days of his professorship at Princeton, his equally admirable hand-book on *The Apostolic Age* (1900). Both books are thoroughly characteristic of Dr. Purves: careful, painstaking, absolutely honest pieces of work, presented in an unambitious, workmanlike style. In reviewing the former book, Lüdemann, though rejecting Dr. Purves' whole point of view, yet is constrained to confess that his work exhibits "thorough knowledge," and proceeds by means of "an exact presentation of the data—suppress-

ing nothing, concealing nothing." This is worth adverting to, as it reveals a fundamental trait of Dr. Purves' mind. His was above everything else a fair mind, an honest mind. He might sometimes appear too cautious in reaching and announcing conclusions; never too little so.

In a notable address, which he delivered at the Commencement Exercises of Emporia College in 1894, on *The Value of the Highest Culture*, he let drop a phrase which fairly enunciates the note of all his work. "Such culture," he says, "induces caution and modesty in reaching conclusions." There speaks Dr. Purves' scientific conscience, and there we have in a few words the primary trait of his scientific life. He sedulously sought to have all the facts before him before forming an opinion. Perhaps he sometimes found it difficult to recognize the truth until he could see it whole. But he spared no pains in seeking to see it whole. And when he did come to see it, he clung to it with the strength of conviction naturally induced by the consciousness that he had attained it by solid processes of investigation and thought.

It is worth while to observe that both of Dr. Purves' published works are historical studies, and historical studies based on minute investigation and presented with masterly command of the material. The same historical interest is apparent also in his minor publications. Nevertheless, this was not his primary in-

terest. His engagement with the historical aspects of New Testament problems was the effect partly of his unquenchable zeal for the exploration of every side of New Testament study, but chiefly of the exigencies of the situation. His historical investigations were largely incidental to apologetical ends. The apologetical motive is indeed explicitly put forward in nearly all of his historical studies. Nevertheless, not even in it can we find the real spring of his zeal. If he was interested in history for its apologetical value, he was interested in apologetics not for its own sake, but for the sake of the precious truth which it guarded. His primary interest in the New Testament was, in a word, doctrinal; and he was most in his element when he was investigating its treasures of truth.

5 He has unfortunately left us very few Biblico-theological discussions; but what he has left us are very sane and very valuable. Those who knew him well found an intense interest in watching the slow but steady and solid growth in his mind of a complete doctrinal system, consciously drawn by him from the New Testament, and built up step by step only as in the course of time he was enabled to investigate thoroughly its entire reach of teaching. To those who knew him well, the fact that the system to which he thus attained was that which is commonly known under the name of Federalistic Calvinism, although he had originally no predilection for this mode of con-

ceiving evangelical truth, but was, on the contrary, somewhat prejudiced against it, afforded notable renewed evidence of the real rooting of this system in the teaching of the New Testament.

The whole mass of Dr. Purves' published scientific work is not large. By the side of his two books there are only five or six extended Review articles to be placed. These, in the order of time of publication, bear the following titles: "The Influence of Paganism on Post-Apostolic Christianity" (*Presbyterian Review*, 1888); "Simon Peter in the School of Christ" (*Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, 1891); "St. Paul and Inspiration" (*Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, 1893); "The Incarnation Biblically Considered" (in *Christ and the Church*, Revell, 1894); "The Formation of the New Testament" (*Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, 1895); "The Witness of Apostolic Literature to Apostolic History" (*Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, 1898); "The Unity of Second Corinthians" (*The Union Seminary Magazine*, 1900). Quite a series of articles were contributed by him also to two recent *Dictionaries of the Bible*,—that edited by Dr. James Hastings and published by T. & T. Clark, and that edited by Dr. John D. Davis and published by the Presbyterian Board of Publication. At the time of his death he was under appointment for two courses of lectures, one to be delivered at Harvard University and one at Princeton Seminary; and he had it in mind

to work up some of his accumulations of scientific material into these. He had also long cherished a design to prepare and publish a treatise on the Apostle Peter, of a type somewhat like Conybeare and Howson's well-known work on Paul. We are the poorer that these projected works were never published.

No account of Dr. Purves' life would be complete which neglected to note his faithfulness in the discharge of the duties that came to him as a presbyter in an organized Church. He was as good a presbyter as he was a pastor, diligent in all the work of the presbytery. He was four times delegated to represent his presbytery in the General Assembly (1884, 1889, 1896, 1901). Those were stirring years in ecclesiastical annals, in which it was no sinecure to serve the Church as a bishop in council. It must suffice here to say that Dr. Purves bore his full part in the labors and the debates of the body, and no voice was more potent in its councils. Special prominence was given him at the Assembly of 1901 by his nomination for the moderatorship; and the affection and esteem in which he was held by the house was exhibited not only by the large vote cast for him in this contest, but also by the reception given him whenever he rose in his place to address the house.

He was one of the representatives of his Church at the Seventh Council of the "Alliance of the Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian Sys-

tem," sitting at Washington in 1899. From 1888 to 1892 he was a member of the Board of Missions for Freedmen, and from 1900 to his death, of the Board of Home Missions. He was appointed by the Assembly of 1901 a member of a special *ad interim* committee charged with the duty of stimulating the churches in evangelistic work, with the considering of such work and its conduct in relation to the churches: and into the labors of this committee he was throwing himself with great spirit when death overtook him. It would not be possible to record here, however, all the appointments with which he was entrusted. Let it be enough to say that it was the delight of the Church to honor him with positions of trust and his delight to respond by a most distinguished service to the calls so made upon him.

Dr. Purves' private life was one of exceptional beauty. There was something in his address that was peculiarly charming: a manifest sincerity, willing self-effacement, and unmistakable sympathy. This gave a certain personal quality to all his intercourse which begot in those with whom he came in contact a response in kind. He made many and close friends. The simple annals of a diligent scholar and tireless pastor were his, during all the faithfully improved years in which he grew steadily, like a cedar, straight upward, in perfect quiet, and with no consciousness of the wide shadow he was casting about him. He was

just completing his forty-ninth year when he died, in New York, on the 24th of September, 1901, deprived, as we cannot but sadly say to ourselves, of the residue of his days. They were forty-nine strenuous years he had lived. It would be cruel for us to begrudge him at last his well-earned rest.

BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD.

PRINCETON, May 1, 1902.