

# FUNERAL SERMON,

DELIVERED IN THE

MEETING HOUSE OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH,  
IN WASHINGTON, D. C.,

March 30, 1834,

ON THE DEATH OF

## GEORGE WHITEFIELD BROWN,

(Son of Rev. O. B. Brown,)

MEMBER OF THE SENIOR CLASS IN THE COLUMBIAN COLLEGE, D. C.,

Who died March 21, 1834, in the 18th year of his age.

BY

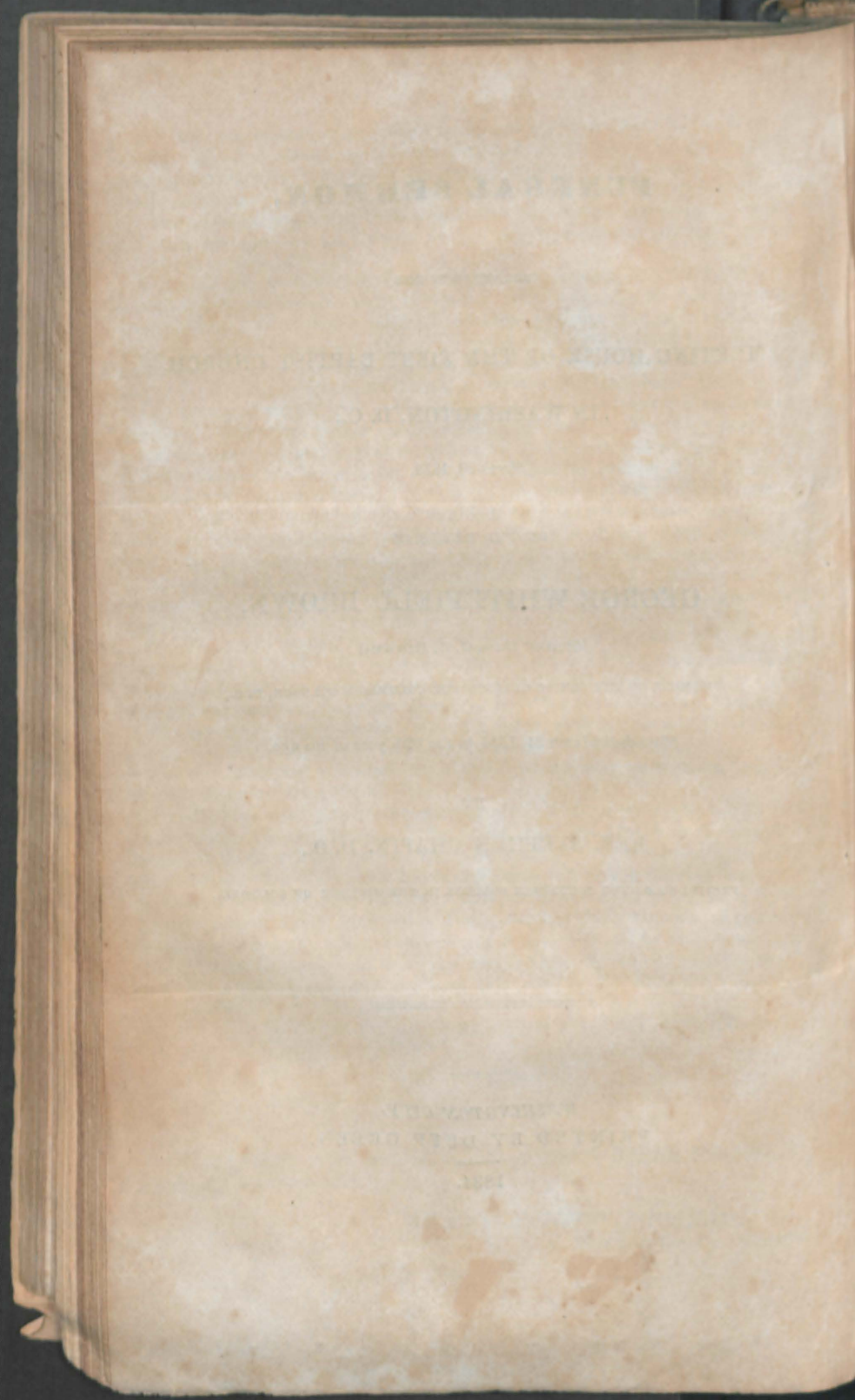
REV. STEPHEN CHAPIN, D. D.,

PRESIDENT OF THE COLUMBIAN COLLEGE IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

---

WASHINGTON CITY:  
PRINTED BY DUFF GREEN.

1834.



## FUNERAL SERMON.

---

“Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

1 THESSALONIANS, iv. 18.

It appears that the church to whom the apostle addressed this epistle, were then mourning for the death of some of their Christian relatives. They wept, because death had consigned the bodies of their friends to the grave, and deprived them of their personal society. Hence, he prayed that they might not be ignorant of the fact, that death had not destroyed their union with their deceased brethren, that they were to be restored to them both in soul and body, and that then they were to enjoy each other's society for ever in the presence of their common Lord. The great truth by which the apostle commanded the bereaved brethren to comfort one another, is this :

Personal connections formed on the earth are to be renewed in the world to come. This sentiment needs some guarding : it is not to be taken in the broadest sense. In the future state, there will be neither civil nor domestic society. Beyond the grave, there will be no kings and subjects, no magistrates and citizens, no husbands and wives, no parents and children. Material and carnal connections are unknown in the world of spirits. But still its inhabitants will have a perfect remembrance of these earthly relations, and each one will be able to single out the individuals who once stood in the most endeared connection with him, and say, this was my father, this was my mother, and these were my kindred. Each minister of Christ will say, this was one of my flock, whom I was commanded to feed ; one for whom I wept and prayed, and of whose salvation God made me the humble instrument. But while it is admitted that all civil and domestic ties are dissolved at the close of probation, yet we believe that in Heaven religious society will be perpetuated. Christians who have borne a peculiar relation to each other while in their mili-

tant state, and have performed peculiar services for each other while here below, will be more capable of promoting each other's happiness in the world to come, than they will be of promoting the happiness of those saints whom they never saw in the flesh. Will not Brainerd feel a more intense glow of delight when he surveys those Indians who were the fruits of his labors, than he will while surveying an equal number who were saved through the instrumentality of Whitefield? And will not the beloved Judson feel deeper emotions of gratitude in gazing upon those Burmans and Karens who received the gospel from his lips, than he will while surveying an equal number of converts from the islands in the South Sea? And, on the other hand, will not the redeemed individual hold sweeter communion with the instrument of his salvation, than he can with one from whom he never received any aid in his spiritual labors? We do not mean to say that the association among Christians on earth will result in the formation of exclusive societies in Heaven; yet we believe that those who are the most instrumental in promoting each other's happiness while accomplishing their earthly pilgrimage, will be the greatest helpers of each other's joys in the heavenly state.

Having thus briefly explained our doctrine, we will offer a few arguments in its support.

1st. It is the natural desire of man, that the friendships formed on earth should be renewed in the future state. This is true, even of those who never enjoyed the light of revelation. Cherishing a faint hope that their soul will not die with their body, they ardently desire to meet their departed friends beyond the grave, and to enjoy with them for ever their fancied paradise. Socrates delighted himself in the hour of death with the prospect of conversing with Orpheus, and Musæus, and Hesiod, and Homer; and Cicero exulted in the anticipation of a re-union with Cato, amidst the assembly of the great and good. Similar, at the present day, is the sentiment of the untutored heathen. The mother, in the island of the Pacific, mourning for her children, comforts herself with the belief that, after her own death, she shall rejoice them; the Gentoo widow burns, that she may be re-united with her husband; and the Indian of our own wilderness is confident that he shall find "behind the cloud-top't hill an humbler hea-

ven," where he shall unite with the spirits of his fathers and kindred chieftains in the chase of the deer, and in the pursuit of the ancient enemies of their tribe. The common desire for continued existence is considered a sound argument in proof of immortality: why, then, may not this equally common desire, that friendships formed on earth should be renewed after death, be considered as good an argument that they will be so renewed? We may be certain that God has not so formed the mind that its original desires should only deceive and tantalize.

2d. The inhabitants of Heaven are described as remembering their individual history. Each one is represented as having a perfect recollection of his native country, of the tongue he used to speak, of the agent of his redemption, and of all the various scenes in his state of probation. But this perfect remembrance cannot be gained without gaining, at the same time, a distinct recollection of much of the history of his earthly associates; because his own character and happiness are materially affected by the treatment which he received from his earthly connections.

3d. Death does not destroy our social nature. By this, we mean those native affections by which man is led to associate with his fellow beings. Some of these affections are, benevolence, gratitude, disapprobation of vice, dread of reproach, esteem of others, and love of commendation for well doing. This character of man is the strong bond in the civil state, and is a principal agent in advancing its welfare. Indeed, it does more to promote the good of society than legislative enactments and the power of the magistrate. This social spirit survives the grave, and will for ever reign in the service of Heaven. Its inhabitants are described as being united in their acts of adoration, thanksgiving, and praise. Each of the worshipers animates the devotions of those around him, and is ready to say, "O, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together." But this social disposition cannot be gratified in the highest degree, and made the most efficient in promoting the happiness of Heaven, unless the saints in glory have a remembrance of the temporal history of those who are the objects of their lasting attachment: for holy admiration is founded on a knowledge of Christian character, and of the circumstances under which it was formed. If,

then, they do not know who were their earthly associates ; or if they cannot recollect what they once knew of their temporal history, how can they determine to what degree of commendation and of love they are entitled ?

4th. That Christians will know each other in the relations of renewed friendship, may be inferred from the earnest manner in which brotherly love and the social affections are inculcated. Few duties are so frequently insisted upon as that of Christian fellowship. " Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love ; weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice ; let brotherly love continue. Ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another, and indeed ye do it towards all the brethren which are in all Macedonia ; but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more. See that ye love one another with a pure heart, fervently." Indeed, the Christian character on earth is formed, in a great degree, by performing the offices of brotherly kindness, and in strengthening the social affections. Now, is it reasonable to suppose that the divine spirit would thus frequently urge the culture of the endearing bonds of Christian society, if it were to be only temporary—if, at death, all its endearing elements were to be extinguished—if those who enjoyed their happiest moments in taking sweet counsel together in the house of God, and in the interchange of the tokens of reciprocal attachment, were, as soon as they leave the scene of their joint conflicts and triumphs, to forget each other for ever, and to retire into everlasting solitude where each is to enjoy his heaven, as truly unknown and unnoticed by his former companions in the militant church as though they had never existed ? No, brethren, such a supposition reflects upon the character of God, and if it were true, the fact " would quite unparadise the realms of light."

5th. Without a personal knowledge, among the inhabitants of the future state, of their earthly relations, the divine attributes of justice and of mercy cannot be fully displayed. The Scriptures teach us that the retributions at the general judgment will be assigned very much according to the conduct of men toward each other. The impenitent are to be debarred from entering Heaven, not so much on account of their neglecting their own private good, as for the injury which they have inflicted upon others.

Hence saith Paul, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Must not, then, the condemned individual, to feel the justice of his doom, remember his crimes, and the individuals against whom they were committed? Must he not recollect the victim of his seduction, the companion of his cups, the character he reviled, the owner of the goods he purloined, and the poor man whom he ground to the dust by his extortions? So, on the other hand, Christ at the bar of God will say to his followers, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," and assign their acts of kindness to his friends as the reason why he admits them into the mansions of Heaven. But how can they fully enjoy this welcome, without a particular recognition of the individuals who were the subjects of their benevolence? While it is true, that the manner in which men treat each other in this world will thus influence the decisions of the last day, yet the turning point will be their reception or rejection of the Son of God, and they will be fixed for ever in a state of bliss or wo, according as they embrace or spurn the Lord of Life and Glory. But the treatment which the Saviour receives from mankind, is generally manifested through the medium of his friends and ambassadors. Said Christ to his disciples, "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me." Must not, then, the guilty individual, in order to feel the justice of his doom, have a perfect recollection of the particular messenger of Christ on whose entreaties he refused to listen to the voice of mercy? And must not the redeemed, in order to see fully the grace of God in his behalf, have a full remembrance of the honored instrument of his salvation?

6th. Our doctrine is sustained not only by inferential argument, but by direct Scripture proof. Said David respecting the deceased child, for whom, while it lived, he fasted and wept, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." Some suppose that these words express nothing more than his conviction that he should soon die and go to his son in the abodes of the dead;

while others maintain that they express his belief that he should soon be restored to his child, and recognize him in the world of glory. If the former be the true sense, then the conduct of David after the death of his child, in laying aside his sackcloth, in ceasing to mourn and fast, and in taking on his wonted habits of activity, and in displaying entire calmness, appears wholly unnatural; but if the latter be the meaning, then his tranquillity, and even cheerfulness of deportment, are highly commendable and worthy of imitation, denoting his solid consolation and cheering belief that, when he should die, he should go to his son to be reunited with him for ever in the rest of Heaven. The Scriptures teach us that many will come from the east and the west, and from the north and the south, to "sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven." These saints, coming from the four quarters of the globe, must surely have a personal knowledge of these distinguished believers, in order that they may fully enjoy the privilege of a seat in their presence. If these three patriarchs are distinctly known by all around them, will they not recognize each other? Will not Abraham know that he is beholding his beloved Isaac? will not Isaac know that he is dwelling with his revered father? and will not Jacob know his own parent and the father of the faithful? The account which our Saviour has given us of the beggar and of the votary of wealth, confirms the truth of our subject. The rich man, on lifting up his eyes in the place of torment, knows Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham—knows him to be the same beggar who, he remembers, once desired to be fed with the crumbs which fell from his own table. His earnest prayer is founded on his distinct recollection of his conduct in this world, and of his companions whom he had left behind; and the answer of Abraham recognizes this recollection, and assigns the remembered facts as the reasons why his prayer could not be granted. "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented." Now, if the rich man knew that he had surviving brethren, and remembered the part which he had acted with them; and if he knew from what he saw of the keen upbraidings of those around him, that their coming there would add fuel to the flames of hell, because



he would know them to be his brethren whom in life he had led on in the paths of the destroyer, shall we say that happy spirits in the other world do not recognize their former associates in this life? Surely not, for on this point we have more than implicit argument. In the passage before us we are assured that Abraham knew not only the name of Lazarus, but his earthly history and his happy state in the presence of God. I will refer you to only one more passage—the account of our Saviour's transfiguration. In this memorable transaction we have proof that glorified saints know each other, and that they hold the most interesting communications together respecting the interests of Zion.

Is it true that connections formed on the earth are to be perpetuated in the world to come? then it deeply concerns us to be attentive to the principles upon which we form our personal associations. If their effect were light and temporary, the ground of our union would not be so material, or whom we select for our companions. This, however, is not the fact; the action of the members of any community on each other will be great, and its reciprocal effects will be for ever increasing. Yes, my hearers, your state, both here and hereafter, will be mainly fixed according to the basis of your friendships. If they rest on mere worldly principles, they will soon cease, and result in shedding the bitterest ingredients into your cup of endless wo; but if they are grounded on the benevolent spirit of christianity—that spirit which prompts us to combine our influence for the purpose of doing the greater good to our fellow-men, and to advance each other more rapidly in our preparations for the fellowship of the saints in light—then they will flourish for ever, and become the chief elements of our joy in Heaven.

Our subject will enable each individual to predict what will be his reward at the judgment seat of Christ. It is a trite saying, that men are known by the company they keep. This proverb is confirmed by experience and observation. When all restraints are removed, each individual will go to his own company, and associate with those among whom he finds the greatest fellowship; the readiness with which every man thus seeks the company of kindred spirits indicates the ruling passion of his mind. If

through life he find his chief delight with worldly men, he is not prepared to hold communion with the spirits of just men made perfect: for the mere transit from this to the other world makes no change in the settled temper: so, too, if any one resorts to the saints in the earth, in whom he finds all his delight, this will be equal proof that he is not prepared for the abodes of the ungodly. These, my hearers, are weighty thoughts. The amazing difference in degrees of substantial good and of real evil in this and the future world has been mistaken for difference in character; but this is not the fact. The difference is, mainly, not in kind, but in intensity of enjoyment and suffering. Heaven is here, and hell is here, in their incipient growth; and when they pass out of time, they will suffer no change in their nature, but only an augmentation of power to produce happiness and misery. The great principles and combinations here formed will not be broken up by the close of life, but will be carried forward into eternity, there to be acted out on a broader scale. Let me, then, my hearers, ask each individual in this house, what would be your eternal portion were you to die this present hour?

This topic should excite our reflection on the momentous consequences of intercourse in human society: for it is through mutual action upon each other in our social relations, that all the powers and passions of the mind are brought out and strengthened—that habits are settled—that characters are formed, and characters, too, to become as fixed as the decrees of God. Time is a nursery, where the tender plants are sprouting up to be transferred to the future world, there to flourish for ever, and bear fruits of life or death; and let no man think that the part which he acts here is trifling in its fruits. No man, however obscure, can pass his life in human society without producing an amount either of good, greater than the aggregate happiness that has ever yet been enjoyed by the whole created universe; or of evil, greater than the sum of misery that has yet been endured since time began. Each man, in moving through the world, creates around him an attracting atmosphere; so that no one will ascend to glory without alluring some to follow his course, and no one will descend to the place of torment without enticing some to tread in his steps.

How serious, then, are our duties as members of community; the part we act will not be confined to ourselves, but it will affect, to an inconceivable degree, the final state of countless multitudes. Though the men around us must answer for the use they make of our example, yet we stand responsible at the last tribunal for the influence we exert upon them, and in the reckoning day we must hear the plaudits of the millions whose happiness we have increased, or the curses of those whose misery we have augmented.

Our subject naturally leads us to reflect upon the ultimate force of public opinion. The ability among the inhabitants of the future state to recognize their earthly associates is, doubtless, intended to enable them to form a perfect judgment of their characters. By this correct estimate they will see the righteous decisions of the judge of all, and know how to measure to every individual the deserved degree of praise or of censure. Each one will be conscious that all around him cherish the same opinion of him that he does of himself. If he have the approval of his own conscience, he will know that the voice of all is in his favor; but if his conscience condemn him, he will know that the voice of all is against him. This perfect union of public sentiment is the great power of the moral universe. Public sentiment, yes, my hearers, public sentiment would, if there were nothing else, form the impassable gulf between heaven and hell. For how could the guilty soul bear the presence of his Maker, or the intolerant gaze of saints and angels?

The renewed recollections and the personal knowledge of religious friends, when re-united in the world to come, are calculated to impart great joy and animation to Christian ministers. Indeed, the great secret of the self-denial, of the prayers, of the tears, of the joys, and of the untiring labors of every faithful pastor, St. Paul meant to explain, when he said, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy. The connection subsisting between bishops and their spiritual flocks is sure to answer the purpose for which it was formed. In all worldly interests, there is more or less of uncertainty;

but he who has chosen for his profession the winning of souls to Christ, will succeed, even to the extent of Divine wisdom and benevolence: nor will he merely succeed; but his success will be of greater moment than that in any other pursuit. You may save your country, spread the lights of science, and redeem nations from despotic power; but these achievements are nothing compared with the salvation of one sinner—of one spirit saved from eternal death to sing for ever in the height of Zion. What man has probably done the most good of any in the human race? Perhaps, my friends, you are ready to reply, Paul, the servant of Jesus Christ. But why? Was it owing to the superiority of his powers, to the depth of his various learning, or to his untiring efforts? No, my hearers, his success must be ascribed to the nature of his profession, to the influence of his constant view of the bright crown that awaited him, and to the granted aids of the spirit. It is true that the times in which he lived are never to return, and that no other man is to be inspired to write epistles to the churches, to guide and animate them to the end of the world. But who can say that a minister of the cross may not yet be raised up to eclipse even the apostle of the Gentiles in the number of his converts? The cause which he plead is still pending; the weapons which he wielded are still mighty; heaven has lost nothing of its interest in the success of the ambassadors of Christ, and the promise is yet sure that they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. But, my ministering brethren, whatever may be the degree of your success, you are assured that you and all you have been instrumental in saying, will meet before the throne of God, there to recognize each other with increased attachments and mutual gratulations. Yes, brethren, the souls you shall have won to Christ will there constitute your eternal crown, and be your richest theme of joy.

The truth contained in our text, affords the best consolation to believers when called to mourn the death of their pious friends and connections. Death has produced more tears than any other physical evil: nor is it strange that it should occasion so much grief; for it reduces the body to its primitive dust, and appears to dissolve all the endearing ties of blood and friendship. Our attach-

ment to the body is great ; through it we gain all our knowledge of the material world, and from it we derive a great portion of our happiness in this life. It is the medium through which the minds of men hold intercourse with each other ; its motions, its voice, and the language of its countenance, are the only signals by which we learn the presence of the immortal inhabitant within. The soul we never see ; its existence, its thoughts, its affections, its sorrows, and its joys, are revealed to us through bodily symbols. When, therefore, it dies, the whole man seems to be dead, and to be for ever removed from our knowledge. Hence the deep mourning it has occasioned in every period of time. Pagans, when called to bury their relatives, being ignorant of the promise of the resurrection, and doubtful of the immortality of the soul, gave way to the most extravagant expressions of grief. They rent their clothes, plucked out their hair, cut their bodies, and cried aloud with bitter wailings. To prevent Christians from imitating this excess of grief, Paul said to them, " I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air : and so shall we ever be with the Lord." By the aid of the truths here expressed, we can erect our richest trophies upon the bodies of the dead, and shout, " O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ?" Yes, my hearers, the believer may stand by the tomb of his dearest Christian friend, and gain his brightest evidence of the worth of the ties which bind them together. Here, by the light of this passage, he learns that death has not dissolved their connection, and that the interruption in their Christian intercourse is only for a short season ; he traces the ascent of his departed brother to his

heavenly rest. Here, too, when he looks down upon the grave, he learns that it does not destroy the body, but is only an honorable resting place, until it shall be raised in the likeness of the Son of God.

The instance of mortality now before us speaks impressively to the students of this Institution. It teaches them that no possessions and no prospects, however great and flattering, can shield them from the attacks of disease and death. Say, my young friends, is not that gospel which affords such support under the ills of life, and which gave your companion in study such a peaceful death, worthy of your acceptance? Under its influence, all your learning and talents will be made to honor your Maker, and subserve your highest good. The deceased, whose death we now lament, you loved and esteemed as a classmate and friend. Would you rejoin him, and all your pious connections in the world of glory, let me exhort you to resign yourselves to the Lord who bought you, and seek your associates among his disciples; and then you will never have reason to mourn their death: for friendships cemented by virtue and religion will live when the heavens and the earth are no more, and "become the principal part of the happiness of the blessed."

But what shall I say on the present melancholy occasion to the immediate circle of mourners? Your pastor and his family are deeply afflicted; they have just committed to the grave a son and brother greatly beloved. I know they have your sympathies, for some of you have been called to the same trials, and, therefore, know the anguish of their heart. I see before me fathers and mothers, and their afflicted families, who have recently been called to follow some of their children to the grave: their sorrows are great, and they need all the consolations that the gospel can afford. The child for whom they weep was cut down in his youth—taken from them when every thing in his character and circumstances was calculated to render his life precious and full of hope. You will allow me to speak of him freely, for I knew him well; for upwards of four years, he passed his time chiefly under my notice. He was a member of the senior class in the Columbian college, and would have graduated next October had his life been

spared. I have watched his deportment, and have had the best opportunities to know the character of his mind, the growth of his powers, and his attainments in the branches of knowledge to which his attention was called. On our merit bills, his name ever stood first. During the whole period he was with us, the Faculty never had occasion to speak a word to him either for impropriety in conduct or delinquency in study. For eleven years I have been conversant with college classes, and among all the students who have come under my trust, I know of no one more entitled to commendation than the deceased. He possessed a mind far above the ordinary cast; its characteristics were strength and discrimination. Neither was he destitute of taste and of a fertile imagination. He was fond of those sciences which directly tend to develope and invigorate the powers of the mind. He was particularly attached to the study of mathematics; in this department, had he lived and devoted his attention to it, he would have shone with uncommon lustre. There was a special clearness in his mental movements; he seized the leading features of his subject, and kept them steadily in view. Whatever topic he examined, he wished thoroughly to understand it, and was never satisfied till he gained his object. But this young man, with all his distinguished powers, and in the midst of his labors to enrich and adorn them, has been cut down by the stroke of death. Ah, lovely youth, my heart bleeds while I record thy character and retrace thy virtues. Sleep on, for I shall see thee again in the morning of the resurrection, to join thee in admiring the Saviour of sinners. This cup is not one of unmingled sorrow; it has its sweet ingredients. What is enough to take away all the bitterness of grief, is the good reason we have to believe that he is now in Heaven. In the early part of his sickness, he had a presentiment of death, and became deeply concerned for the salvation of his soul. He knew that he was unprepared to die, and that nothing but a renewed heart, and an interest in the atoning blood of Christ, could fit him to leave the world in peace. For several days, he continued to confess and bewail his sins and to cry for mercy, often saying that he was worse than the chief of sinners, and that he hungered and thirsted after righteousness.

The Lord, we trust, heard his prayer, and appeared for his relief. His distress of mind was removed, and he repeatedly manifested his belief that it would be well with him after death. He often expressed his willingness to depart, that he might go to be forever with the Lord. When his body was racked with pain, the reading of the Scriptures or a prayer from his father would mitigate his sufferings, and soothe his mind to rest. What consolation has he thus left to his surviving friends! Yes, ye bereaved parents and ye weeping children, your son and brother is not dead, but sleeps—he sleeps in Jesus. Nay,

“He lives, he greatly lives a life, on earth  
Unkindled, unconceived.”

He has only gone a little before you to the joys of Heaven, where he waits to welcome your arrival, where he remembers you still, and all your kindness, your labors, your prayers, your tears, and where he loves you still with a purer and higher affection. Yes, my friends, you will meet him again—meet him again under circumstances best adapted to honor God and enhance your mutual joys; for the Saviour who died to save his soul, procured the right to raise his body from the grave. He will, therefore, bring it forth together with your own, and fashion them like unto his own glorious body. Then your salvation will be finished, your reunion with each other perfected, and your fellowship eternal. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.