

JOY IN SERVICE.

FORGETTING, AND PRESSING
ONWARD.

UNTIL THE DAY DAWN.

REV. GEORGE T. PURVES, D. D., LL. D.



THE TEACHER AND PASTOR.

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AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY

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George J. Purves

CONTENTS

	PAGE
JOY IN SERVICE,	7
"Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."	
FORGETTING, AND PRESSING ONWARD, .	45
"Forgetting these things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."	
"UNTIL THE DAY DAWN,"	83
"The things which are not seen are eternal."	

THE TEACHER AND PASTOR,	87
Address of Dr. F. L. Patton, at the funeral of Dr. Purves.	

THE TEACHER AND PASTOR.

From President F. L. Patton's address at the funeral of Dr. Purves.

WE all felt the terrible shock when word came to us on Wednesday morning that Dr. Purves had died suddenly the night before. We knew that he was suffering under an acute attack and that in recent months he had been subject to such attacks, but we did not suppose that his illness was of a nature that was likely to prove fatal.

This congregation, the First Presbyterian Church of Princeton, the Princeton Theological Seminary, and Princeton University have sustained a great loss. All connected with these institutions feel that they have suffered a personal bereavement, for Dr. Purves had a singular power of laying hold upon

the affections of those to whom he stood related.

We admired him as a preacher and as a teacher. We were impressed with his goodness and with the genuineness of his religious life, but, beyond all that, we loved him as a man. The story of his life is familiar to us all. He was born in the city of Philadelphia on the 27th of February, 1852. After graduating at the University of Pennsylvania, he entered Princeton Theological Seminary, remaining there after the completion of his curriculum for a year of graduate study.

It was during this year in Princeton that he came under the quickening influence of his great friend and teacher, the beloved Dr. Caspar Wistar Hodge, and that he acquired that taste for New Testament study which he so assiduously cultivated during his two pastorates in Baltimore and Pittsburg, and which ended in his being the unanimous choice of the directors of the Princeton Theological Seminary as the successor of Dr. Hodge.

It was a matter of great doubt to him and to his friends whether he should give up the pulpit to take the professor's chair, for he had singular qualifications for both positions. He was an eloquent preacher, and his services were especially acceptable to young men, who came in throngs to hear him on Sunday evenings.

He also had special qualifications as a teacher. He was a ripe scholar, and what was a very important factor in the case, he knew, as few men know, how to show the bearing of accurate, minute exegetical study of the Bible to the service of the pulpit. These facts, added to his warmth of temperament, gave him great facility in dealing with theological students.

None who had the privilege of being his pupil will ever forget his hospitality. His house was their home, and they were always welcomed to his table. Many a young minister in the service of the church to-day will recall his relations to Dr. Purves, and the hospitality of his home, as the brightest memory of his seminary days.

It is rare that we find a man equally capable to do the work of the pulpit and the professor's chair. And while each sphere furnishes ample opportunities for anyone, still, in rare cases, it is perhaps well to allow those who are fitted to do so to fill both positions. When, therefore, Dr. Purves, as stated supply to the First Presbyterian Church of Princeton, and afterwards its pastor, added the duties of the pulpit to those of his professorship, it was felt to be advantageous to the best interests of all concerned.

During his life in Princeton he had frequent invitations from prominent churches to become their pastor, but he declined. Through all, I believe, he felt that his heart was in the work of his chair, and that with a dual position of pastor and professor, he had the widest scope for the exercise of his best powers, and the fullest opportunity for the realization of his highest ambitions. I think I do not misrepresent him when I say it. But when the pulpit of this church became vacant, the eyes of the congregation turned to him. Occupying a fore-

most place in the denomination to which it belongs, it called for a strong man who could administer with great ability its affairs and maintain the high standard of spiritual preaching set by Dr. James W. Alexander, Dr. Rice, and Dr. Hall.

You made no mistake, my dear friends, when you felt that the one man to fill this vacant place in the American pulpit, and to be added to his great succession, was Dr. Purves. We were loath to have him leave Princeton, and there were some, perhaps, who were never satisfied respecting the wisdom of his decision, but most of us thought that the interests of the Church at large transcended all local interests, and that they would be best subserved by his acceptance of its call. He entered upon the duties here with enthusiasm. His heart and his head were enlisted to their utmost efforts in the work of this church, and he soon found himself absorbed in the many religious and philanthropic enterprises that consume the time and exhaust the energy of ministers of large churches in great cities. I do not think he worked harder

in New York than he did in Princeton, for Dr. Purves was a man who did with all his might what his hands found to do.

One rarely finds a man with such capacity for hard work and varied work. When he sustained the dual relation of pastor and professor in Princeton, he never allowed the duties of one sphere of labor to be an excuse for slighting the other sphere of labor. He was always up to date in the literature of his department, notwithstanding the exacting calls of his parish. Nor did he find an easy mode of preparation for the pulpit by giving his theological lectures a homiletical form. Indeed I sometimes thought it would have been well if he had brought some of his New Testament studies into the pulpit. This was Dr. Hodge's method, and his sermons were all studies in biblical theology; but Dr. Purves, though always a preacher to whom theological students listened with delight for hours, was not distinctively a preacher to theological students. He was very comprehensive and varied in his range of topics for the pulpit, and was equally accept-

able to the undergraduates of the university and to the men and women who constitute the congregations of great cities.

We cannot understand Dr. Purves as a preacher or as teacher unless we know him as a man. He had a warm heart; he had a keen eye, a good memory for names and faces. He seemed to know more people in Princeton than anyone else. He never loitered or dreamed; he was alert, active, energetic, interested in all good work. The movements of his mind, like those of his body, were quick. He was religious without being austere, just as he was companionable without being worldly. He touched human life at a great many points. As a New Testament specialist, it was his business to be familiar with the literature and progress of the Apostolic period. How much he had made himself master of that period his "Apostolic Age" * will testify. But he had a wider range of thought than that. I have heard him preach Thanksgiving sermons that involved much thought, the re-

* Apostolic Age. Scribner's, 1900.

sult of much reading and clear thinking upon political science. While he was far from being disposed to allow sociology to supersede theology, yet he recognized that the Gospel had great bearing on social questions, and he was deeply interested in all sociological movements.

But when we judge him as a teacher, we must judge him rather by his influence upon the minds of his pupils than by the products of his pen, scholarly and creditable as they always were. For in a department that is so full of activity as that of New Testament literature, it is only by incessant study that one can do much original work.

A great teacher cannot always be an author, and a great author is not always the best teacher. Dr. Purves, as all his students will testify, was a great teacher, and by common consent he held, and is recognized as having held, a foremost place in the American pulpit. He was not a controversial preacher. He was not a theological preacher. He was not a literary preacher, though he had command of a finished style. Philosophy

had little place in his sermons, and he made no use of the sensational topics of the day: He was eloquent rather than brilliant. His sermons were always spiritual. They were compactly, systematically organized, with no parade of logic. Of no one could it be more truly said than of him, that his coming among you was not with the wisdom of enticing words of man's pleasing, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, and that he determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified. He was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, believing it to be the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation.

I have spoken of Dr. Purves as I knew him. I have spoken of him in reference to his wide relations, because I believe that he belongs to the church at large, but I do not forget that the special grief of this occasion falls upon this bereaved congregation. He was a great preacher, but he was more than that, he was a great pastor. How comforting he was to the bereaved; how prompt he was

to visit the sick; how uplifting and tender his prayers; how precious the communion seasons which you and I and others in Princeton and elsewhere have enjoyed under his ministrations!

There are men who are great in the pulpit, but who find the obligations of the pulpit are such that they leave them no time for pastoral visitation. There are men who are great in other spheres who give their best efforts to the reviews and journals, and give what time is left to the pulpit. Dr. Purves gave his best to his congregation—heart and soul and spirit he gave to them.

And now that he is gone, it is with a full consciousness of our loss that we mourn him. The loss is ours, not his. Our hearts bleed for those who are left behind. We raise anxious questions, when men like him are called away, as to who shall fill the vacant place. But we do not murmur. For him to live was Christ and to die was gain.