

THE PERPETUITY OF THE GOSPEL.

A SERMON

PREACHED ON

SABBATH EVENING,

January 8, 1865.

BY ALEX. McLEOD STAVELY,

MINISTER OF THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ST. JOHN, N. B.

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Correspondence.

St. John, N. B., January 11, 1865.

REV. A. McLEOD STAVELY:

DEAR SIR—We, who had the privilege of hearing your Discourse on last Sabbath evening, preached with special reference to the death of your venerated Father, the late REV. WILLIAM JOHN STAVELY, D. D., desire to have it in a permanent form; and therefore request that you will give it for publication, confident that it will do good beyond the bounds of your own congregation.

We are, dear Sir,
Very truly yours,

JOHN BOYD,
THOS. MACLELLAN.
GEORGE SUFFREN,
ROBERT EWING,
JOHN MILLEN,
WILLIAM DOUGALL,
GEORGE BELL,
JOHN McMASTER,
SAMUEL REID,
JOHN TOLAND,
JAMES DUNBAR,
NEIL MORRISON,
JAMES MILLER.

January 18, 1865.

MY DEAR FRIENDS:

I cannot but appreciate the feelings of kindness in which your request is made, and while, from considerations of delicacy, I feel a great measure of hesitation in complying with it, yet, in deference to your wish, and that of others who heard the discourse, and whose opinion and judgment I likewise respect, it is now given to the press.

I am, very affectionately yours,

A. M. STAVELY.

Messrs. JOHN BOYD,
THOS. MACLELLAN, & Co.

SERMON.

1 PETER i. 25:—The word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

WE are permitted this evening, in the good providence of God, to meet you again in the sanctuary, and to meet some of you here for the first time since the opening of the New Year, that we may raise our *Eben-ezer* of gratitude, and inscribe on it sentiments of thanksgiving and praise. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." Let us now, under the enlightening, sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, whose presence and blessing we have just implored at the throne of mercy, embrace this renewed opportunity of directing your thoughts to the word of the Lord, that you and I may thus be strong in the grace that is in Christ, and that through the blessing of God on our labours much good may be done amongst us in the name and by the power of His holy child Jesus. "My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof. I will go in the strength of the Lord God. I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only."

The verse which we have read as the subject of our present discourse, suggests a theme at once pleasing and profitable, a theme which must ever be precious to all true believers. Seeing then that the Apostle has used great plainness of speech in thus addressing "the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia," let us imitate his example and follow in his footsteps when we declare unto you, fellow christians and fellow sinners, the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation.

The first part of this text was, as you perceive, originally

addressed to the Old Testament church, and is contained in that sublime and beautiful chapter which we have just read at the commencement of this service—the fortieth of the prophecies of Isaiah. He heard a voice. “The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.” The Apostle Peter is inspired to make the same announcement to the New Testament church. *All flesh is as grass.* How expressive is this poetical imagery of the vanity of man in his best estate. God may clothe it in the morning, when fresh with the early dew, in a splendour superior to that of Solomon in all his glory when *he made himself a great chariot of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold*, but ere the evening sun goes down the scorching east wind blows, or before the mower’s scythe it withers and dies. In like manner all the goodness of man is as the flower of the field. In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and withereth.

At this season of the year the voice of nature and the voice of revelation unite with the sublime voice of Providence in giving emphasis to the language of our text. Where is now the grass which only a few weeks ago so richly adorned our hills and valleys with their verdant carpet? Where are now those fragrant flowers which cheered the eye with their beauty and regaled the smell with their perfume? They are gone; and the barren fields and leafless trees and withered branches covered with snow like wool and hoarfrost as ashes: whilst they remind us of the divine faithfulness in the recurrence of the seasons, and that while the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, day and night, summer and winter shall not cease; they remind us, too, that as in the natural world summer succeeds spring, autumn succeeds summer, and winter succeeds autumn—so man passes from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, from manhood to old age, from life to death. “We all,” says

Isaiah, "do fade as a leaf," and the genius of uninspired poetry thus improves the similitude.

"Like leaves on trees, the race of man is found—
Now green in youth, now withering on the ground;
Another race the following spring supplies;
They fall successive, and successive rise.
So generations in their course decay,
So flourish these when those are passed away."

"Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men." "But," saith the Spirit, "the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

Our text contains two propositions. In discoursing from these words, I shall consider,

FIRST. The perpetuity of the gospel here called the word of the Lord, as contrasted with the frailty of man.

SECONDLY. The preaching of the gospel as the appointed means of dispensing the blessings of salvation to the end of time.

I. *It endureth for ever.* Whilst every thing on earth is subject to change and liable to decay, the glorious gospel of the blessed God is like its divine author—the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. It is the word of the Lord, a tried word. "His covenant will he not break nor alter the thing that is gone out of his mouth. He remembereth his covenant forever, the thoughts of his heart to a thousand generations." The word of the Lord, the proclamation of mercy to our guilty race, written under the inspiration of the Spirit, endureth forever. In the adorable purposes of everlasting love from all eternity it pleased the triune Jehovah, that the second person of the adorable Trinity, the Son of God, should become the Saviour, and appear in the fulness of time, according to the arrangements of the mediatorial covenant, that by his obedience, sufferings and death, he might open up a channel through which mercy might flow to guilty man. This salvation, worthy of the God of all grace to devise, and worthy of the Son of God to effect, early became the subject of Scripture prophecy—

it was announced in the first promise, prefigured in every type, rejoiced in by every patriarch, foretold by every prophet, and all the dispensations of Providence from age to age during four thousand years were wonderfully overruled to prepare the way for Christ's coming in the flesh. To Patriarchs and Prophets, to Apostles and Evangelists, God imparted a knowledge of his will, and the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are given unto us that we may learn therefrom the doctrines we are to believe and the duties we are to practise in every situation and relation of life. We read in the epistle to Timothy: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." On the same subject Peter says: "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Again, "God spake by his holy servants the prophets." That which they have written, that which the evangelists have written remains what it was, what it is, and what it will be, till the end of time, and the consummation of all things. We are assured that there never will be any *new* revelation of the will of God to mankind, and that the revelation which we have in the Scriptures never can grow old. "And I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book." Rev. xii. 18.

Year after year may revolve, generation after generation may appear on the theatre of human existence and pass away, all things bright and beautiful on earth may fade; the marble monument, the imperial city, even the pyramids of Egypt, and the most durable works of human art, may mingle with the dust of bygone centuries, yea, the mountains may depart and the everlasting hills be removed, the heavens may be rolled together as a parchment

scroll, and the elements melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein may be burnt up. But *here* is perpetuity. The word of God endureth for ever. Blessed be his name, when patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and evangelists have died, it still lives to guide our feet in the way of peace and salvation, to our heavenly home. Oh, let us receive it, as did some of old, not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the word of God.

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." (1 Pet. i. 23.)

"This lamp from off the everlasting Throne
 Mercy brought down; and in the night of time
 Stands casting on the dark her gracious bow,
 And evermore beseeching men, with tears and earnest sighs,
 To read, believe, and live."

II. *It endureth forever, to make us acquainted with the way of life and immortality.*

By some, it is asserted that human reason is of itself sufficient to lead men to all necessary knowledge as to holiness and happiness. It is altogether vain to talk of what human reason might have accomplished, when both the intellectual and the moral powers of man were unimpaired by sin and transgression. It is equally vain to talk of what reason has done or can do in morality or religion in professedly christian countries, because it is aided by divine revelation, shedding light upon the relation which man sustains to his fellow man and his God. The most distinguished of the heathen philosophers, a Pythagoras, a Plato, and an Aristotle had no correct views of immortality. Unaided reason might indeed teach Socrates, favored as he was with some dark glimpses of eternity, to use such language as this. "By and bye," said Socrates to his friends, "you will be saying that Socrates is dead, but Socrates will not be dead. By and bye you will be saying that Socrates is in his coffin, but Socrates will not be in his coffin. By and bye you will be saying: we are going to bury Socrates; but you will not bury Socrates, you will

only bury something that belonged to him." It is, however, a question whether the doctrine which he taught concerning the immortality of the soul was not derived from some scattered ray of the light of revelation. But however this may have been we are convinced that those destitute of the gospel, by which life and immortality are brought to light, have no correct idea of the doctrine of a future state, and there is every reason to suppose that of the resurrection of the body they are entirely ignorant.

When the apostle Paul, driven by persecution from Berea, preached at Athens, then one of the most distinguished cities in the world, and not more distinguished for the learning than for the wickedness of its inhabitants—they had the choicest advantages for making the most of human reason, *and yet his spirit was stirred within him*: in other words, he was irritated or provoked because of their idolatry. And no wonder, for if they were wiser than the wisest of the world when worshipping their thirty thousand deities, we may indeed thank that God, whom he declared unto them, for what they would have called the *foolishness* of preaching, which makes us, through the assistance of his Spirit, wise unto salvation. In the Areopagus of Athens certain of the Epicureans and of the Stoics, two celebrated sects of the ancient heathen philosophers, came to hear him: and some said, "What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection." Acts xvii. 18. Again at the 32d verse we are told that "When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter." Without occupying time in mentioning other facts, which might be adduced to an almost endless extent from sacred and profane history, as illustrating what men are without the gospel, we would only observe that, let reason do her best, we nevertheless require that word which liveth and abideth forever, to confirm her conclusions, to make known the fundamental truths of religion, to reveal the great doc-

trine of immortality, and to furnish a satisfactory answer to the question, "If a man die shall he live again?" Such an answer as can illuminate our passage through the dark valley when we read in the sunlight of revelation of that exceeding and eternal weight of glory which the Lord hath prepared for them that love him; such an answer as can lead us to say, when the bodies of our christian parents, or children, or relatives or friends are cold in the tomb, and "have no share in all that's done beneath the circuit of the sun," that they still live to eat of the fruit of the tree of life that grows in the midst of the paradise of God, and to drink from the river of eternal pleasure in that state of heavenly felicity into which all those are admitted who have been the faithful friends and followers of Christ. "For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

How very beautiful and expressive is the language of the Shorter Catechism, that excellent form of sound words, with which, we believe, most of you have been made acquainted from your earliest childhood, and which we regard as agreeable to the mind of the Spirit, as revealed through the sacred Scriptures. "The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory, and their bodies being still united to Christ do rest in their graves till the resurrection." May we not then joyfully exclaim, "O grave, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" That God leaves his people, as regards the dissolution of the body, in the same condition as other men; that like them the most honoured, and devoted, and useful of his servants are afflicted; that like them they die, there can be no doubt. "Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live forever?" Such enquiries have found a negative answer from age to age, during a period of nearly six thousand years. The king of terrors selected his first victim from the Church of God; and since the death of righteous Abel, the second

born of the sons of Adam, he has continued his ravages from Adam to Moses, before the giving of the law, and from Moses to the present hour, sweeping one generation after another from the face of the earth. The righteous and the wicked, then, are alike subject to mortality, for all are by nature the children of wrath, and therefore to be cut down by the great destroyer of our race. No sin, no death; and no death, no sin. It is true that Enoch and Elijah were translated corporeally as well as spiritually, and entered at once on all the glory of heaven without passing through the dark valley; but neither prophets, nor patriarchs, nor apostles, nor saints, nor martyrs furnish any other exception from the universal law, "It is appointed unto men once to die;" and it is not for me, nor for any mortal to assign a reason why such is the general course of the divine procedure, since none is given in Scripture more comprehensive than this: "The wages of sin is death." At the scaffold, or the stake, or in the dungeon of the Inquisition, multitudes, which cannot be numbered, of God's dear saints have many a time in the past history of the Church been consigned by their cruel and blood-thirsty persecutors to death in its most excruciating form—they have had trial of cruel mockings, and scourgings, and bonds, and imprisonments, and tortures, and death, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. But have they not, when exposed to sufferings almost incredible, witnessed a good confession? Have they not, even amidst the fire and the faggot, and the flame, shewn an unconquerable bravery, an undying fortitude, as worthy imitators of Him who endured the Cross and despised the shame? Their blood has watered the tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations; and we sit under its shadow, and eat its pleasant fruit. Oh, let us rejoice that by the contendings of these men of whom the world was not worthy, in New Testament times, there has been transmitted to us that word which we speak, that gospel which we preach, that liberty which we, even in this Province, far, far away from

where they suffered, and bled, and died, so fully and freely enjoy to worship the Christian's God. They were cheered amidst all their sore trials, and especially in death itself, with the joyful hope of an endless life: their persecutors might kill their bodies, but they could not touch their souls; and now "they have come out of great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple."

We, brethren, know as certainly as the Patriarch did, that God will bring us to death and to the house appointed for all living. In some way or other, and according to the general law of mortality, the human frame, so fearfully and wonderfully made, must be reduced to its kindred dust. But death is powerless as regards the immortal spirit. It has been robbed of its terrors by the Lord of *life*, who has deprived it of its final power in respect to all those who obtain salvation through his blood, and death, the end of their natural life, introduces them to the full enjoyment of eternal life. They die to live, and live to die no more. The word of God furnishes the most satisfactory evidence of the existence of the never-dying soul after it leaves this tenement of clay. Our Saviour spake of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as still living, although as regards the body they had been long since dead; thus teaching us as well as the Sadducees, who denied the separate existence of the soul, and affirmed that it perished with the body, the doctrine of a future state of existence. Moses and Elias appeared with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. Our Saviour on the Cross said to the penitent thief: "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Stephen committed his departing spirit to the Lord Jesus; and Paul desired to depart that he might be with Christ. We are thus reminded that, now, instead of regarding it as a sentence of wrath passed upon us in God's anger, the christian can meet and welcome death as a messenger of love, cheered by these words of Jesus: "I am the resurrection and the life;

whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." It is the christian alone who can rejoice in such a precious promise. The resurrection of Christ is a sure pledge of the resurrection of his people; and, the same power shall be put forth on their behalf that raised him from the dead. True, their bodies, with the exception of those who are alive at the second coming of Christ, must moulder in the dust of death; but it is not so certain that the light of the morning will shine brighter and brighter until the sun reaches his meridian splendour, shedding life and light far as the influence of his cheering rays extend; it is not so certain that the grain of wheat which is cast into the ground, although it may die, will afterwards spring up and produce first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear; it is not so certain that the trees which shed their leaves in autumn will bud and blossom and bear fruit in their appointed season; it is not so certain that the desolations of winter will be followed by the verdure, fragrance and loveliness of spring, when the flowers appear on the earth and the time of the singing of birds has come—as that there will be a resurrection of the righteous and the wicked, and that the dead bodies of God's saints shall be raised from their mouldering urn radiant in all the beauty and freshness of immortal youth: "For when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, they also shall appear with him in glory." Isaiah, the gospel prophet, says, "Thy dead men shall live, *together with* my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." "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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

Darkness and doubt are now fleeing away;
No longer we rove in conjecture forlorn:
Thus breaks on the traveller, faint and astray,
The bright and the balmy effulgence of morn.
See truth, love and mercy, in triumph descending;
All nature arises in Eden's first bloom.
On the cold cheek of death, smiles and roses are blending,
And beauty immortal awakes from the tomb.

We now come to the second division of the subject.

II. Preaching of the gospel is the appointed means of dispensing the blessings of salvation.

1. *Preaching the gospel is a divine ordinance.* "This is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." The term here translated preached is elsewhere rendered *made known, shewn forth, declared*; and as used in the New Testament it signifies the oral delivery of a message from God to man. The Greek word, which literally signifies good news, or glad tidings, is here translated by the word gospel; and to preach the gospel is to proclaim as heralds the great truth which it reveals concerning the method, the only method of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the word we are to preach—the glad tidings we are to proclaim. The holy angels, who are still ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation, do not need such a message; and the angels that sinned and kept not their first estate God hath reserved in chains under darkness to the judgment of the great day. They are not favored with a revelation of that astonishing mystery of love which has been hid in God from everlasting ages, and is made known unto us in the gospel. For many ages a knowledge of the long promised and long expected Messiah was confined to the Jews. Hence the inspired writer says "He shewed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and judgments unto Israel: he hath not dealt so with any nation." But the angel who came to announce to the shepherds who kept watch over their flocks

by night on the plains of Bethlehem the birth of the Messiah, said, "Behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy which shall be"—to you, no—"to *all* people: for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." And presently there was a triumphant band of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." When Christ ascended to take possession of that glory which he had with the Father before the world was, He received gifts for men, that the Lord God should dwell amongst them, even among the rebellious. What were these gifts? "He gave some apostles; some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ;" and that these latter officers are to be continued in the church the following words unquestionably prove: "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." That is, evidently the pastoral office, as instituted by the Mediator of the New Covenant, shall continue till all the sheep of the good Shepherd are gathered into the Saviour's fold, till the lamp of divine truth is carried to every remote and idolatrous nation, till every system of Mahomedan delusion, and Jewish bigotry, and heathen superstition be overthrown, till, in a word, the gospel be given for a light to the Gentiles, and Jesus Christ for salvation to the ends of the earth. *Upon His head are many crowns. Men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed.*

It is not our design at present to investigate at any length the grounds of those violent and unhappy disputes (for the unchristian spirit in which religious controversy has oftentimes been conducted we deplore), which have arisen at different times respecting what has been called Apostolical succession, or the necessity of ordination coming down in an unbroken chain from the Apostles themselves

to the ministry of every succeeding age, to the present day, and even to the end of time. Maintaining, as we firmly do, the sovereign absolute authority of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as the supreme and only King and Head of the Church, we firmly believe, as held by the purest Reformed Churches, that the Apostolic office as such, terminated with those who had supernatural gifts and apostolic authority in settling the affairs of the infant Church, according to her New Testament organization. Do any maintain that they are ordained to succeed these extraordinary officers in virtue of a power and an authority derived from their predecessors? Then the proof of their apostleship will be written with the pencil of heaven in the Scriptures of truth. Are they inspired? Do they possess the gift of miracles? Have they seen the Lord? Have they been witnesses of his resurrection? Have they received their commission directly from Christ himself? We answer, Certainly not. With propriety we may affirm that the Apostles did a work which could not be repeated, and no others can ever be required to do what they were miraculously qualified to perform. Opinions contrary to those which we have uttered are indeed well calculated to foster the pride or encourage the prejudices of those who lord it over God's heritage. But we believe that there is a scriptural warrant for Presbyterian church government, and that there is a charter of incorporation furnished in the memorable promise, *Lo I am with you alway*, which no earthly creature can annul—and that the adorable Redeemer, in the riches of his grace, has made provision for a regular succession of gospel ministers, called in the New Testament, *Bishops* or *Presbyters*, possessed of equal authority and rank, in virtue of the great commission, to the end of time. *And the things which thou hast heard of me before many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall teach others also.* "For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they be-

lieve in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent? As it is written—How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel, that bring glad tidings of good things.” True preaching—the preaching that God will bless—comes from those who are really sent, and to every one who has the honour of being a faithful minister of the Word: for of our office we will boast, our office we will magnify; unto him it is said, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” It becomes us then to rejoice that the ever-living, ever-reigning Head of the Church, is possessed of all power in heaven and on earth; and that as in times past he gave prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors and teachers, so he will continue the ordinance of the christian ministry, and furnish, with all needful gifts and graces, these *saviours* (Obad., verse 21) on Mount Zion; these *angels* or *messengers* of the Lord of Hosts called according to his own appointment, to shew unto their fellow men the way of salvation, and to dispense the ordinances of our holy religion till Christ come again. “No man taketh this honour to himself but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.” These words were primarily spoken of the Jewish high priest, under the legal economy; but his call was not more really divine than that of every minister of Christ. He is called of the Holy Ghost; and being so called, “he is no longer a servant of men, or by man, but of Jesus Christ.” Happy then is he who can say with the apostle of the Gentiles: “I was made a minister according to the effectual working of his Spirit. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I might preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” No wonder that even he should exclaim: “Who is sufficient for these things?”

The present may indeed be a time of perplexity and trouble amongst the nations; and it is difficult to say, in these stirring times, what a few days, or months, or years

may unfold; but the future, as regards the Church, is a vision bright with glory, and all things are hastening on that glorious consummation of which the pen of inspiration has written, and which the voice of prophecy has foretold, in connexion with the preaching of the glorious gospel. Therefore, till God's ancient people are restored, and the fulness of the Gentiles are brought in—till love and harmony and good-will pervade the *confederated* nations; till through the instrumentality of that benevolence which is not circumscribed by the limits of the world, the sword shall be turned into a ploughshare and the spear into a pruning hook; the wolf and the lamb, the leopard and the kid, shall lie together on the same pasture; and men shall not learn war any more: because that Christianity has spread its leavening influence over the whole earth; till then, even then, we say, will God raise up a divinely commissioned ministry to hold forth the word of life. Speaking of things not as they ought to be, and will be, but as they are, we remark again:

The same reasons as formerly existed for preaching the gospel still continue, and will continue to the end of time. The scriptures teach us, in language that cannot be misunderstood, that all the descendants of Adam are alienated from God, and enemies in their minds by wicked works; and the most eminent saints have always been the most ready to confess this humiliating truth. Indeed the divine testimony on this all-important subject is confirmed by universal observation and experience. Does not every page in the volume of this world's history establish the inspired account of that corruption which has been transmitted from Adam to his descendants? In respect to the universal spread of this hereditary disease there is no difference between the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the prince and the peasant, the illiterate and the learned. As all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, so all are by nature his enemies, the slaves of sin and the children of wrath. The message of heaven

to the sinful myriads of our guilty race is contained in these words: *Be ye reconciled to God.* Did we find some verdant hill or peaceful vale on the earth's surface inhabited by human beings who need not such a message, we might say that they are like the angels, and that the gospel is not intended for them. But, alas! even the angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and tongue, and people, has seen no such second paradise. Far different, indeed, are the mournful characteristics of some of the fairest and most luxuriant portions of the habitable globe, "where every prospect pleases, and only man is vile." But the world, all the world is the field of missionary exertion; and till the tidings of redeeming grace are borne on the wings of the wind to the innumerable islands of the vast Pacific—till the idolatrous worshippers of India and China hear them—till the six hundred millions of the eight hundred and sixty millions of this earth's inhabitants, without God and without Christ, whether involved in Pagan darkness or Mahomedan delusion, or Hindoo superstition, hear them and share in the blessedness of the people who know the joyful sound, the words of our text will remain unrepealed on the statute book of heaven.

Human laws are altogether inadequate to reach the cause of man's misery, or to remove the black spot which the Arabs say is on every man's heart by nature. Systems of philosophy, schemes of education, codes of jurisprudence, precepts of morality, fail altogether to meet the wants of man's spiritual being. The gospel is the true balm of Gilead, the only effectual and divinely appointed remedy for man's spiritual and moral diseases; and a cloud of witnesses on earth and in heaven attest its efficacy. It is needed in every land, and with it the living missionary, the servant of the God of the Bible, to proclaim its message and its mission to every continent, and to every clime, far as the wants and woes of man extend. Oh, when it comes home to the hearts of those who are dead in trespasses and

sins, who see no beauty in Christ, no excellency in holiness, divine love triumphs over human hatred: they are quickened to a spiritual life, born again of the Holy Ghost, and it is their earnest prayer that the word which proscribes every other method of salvation, and testifies of Jesus Christ, of his incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension, as their only Saviour, may dwell in them richly, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Thus they make its promises the foundation of their hopes, its precepts the rule of their conduct, and God's glory the end of their being: whilst they confess that without Christ abiding in them by his Spirit, and their abiding in Christ by faith, they cannot successfully resist or overcome their spiritual enemies. Let those whose experience can be described in such language as this bless God, who has called them out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel, and at the same time seek to be instruments of doing good to others, whilst they cherish the tenderest sympathy to such of their fellow creatures as are still in ignorance without any saving knowledge of those truths which the word of life inculcates. We do not expect that the enemies of Christ's righteousness will exert themselves in the promotion of Christianity; but we have reason to expect that its professed friends, under a sacred impulse, and in the exercise of a benevolence which is not limited to any country nor bounded by any sea, will do more than look with what they regard as a lively interest on those benighted regions which the foot of civilization has never yet trod, and where the glad tidings of salvation have never yet been proclaimed. The money which in the nominally Christian world is spent annually on riotous living would, if differently appropriated, by the machinery of the gospel, produce a revolution far more extensive than the pages of history record, and more beneficial, beyond description, than ever has been effected by implements of war. Nevertheless the human mind, called into action by the voice of him who said, "*Let there be light, and there was light,*"

is directing its energies as it has never done before to the amelioration of mankind. Men of piety and enterprise volunteer their services; men of learning dedicate their literature; the poor of this world, who are rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom, pour out their supplications; and many of the opulent are cheerfully and liberally contributing of their substance to the spread, both at home and abroad, of the glorious gospel. The times in which we live require energy and action. Much has been done; but much, very much, remains yet to be accomplished. Hear again the voice of the evangelical prophet: "O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength: lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!" Isaiah xl. 9.

Worldliness, ungodliness, idolatry, infidelity, error and heresy may for a time continue to prevail, but fear not: the Almighty has pledged his veracity, that in spite of every opposition His name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered to His name, and a pure offering. The battle of truth against error, of faith against unbelief, of Christ against Satan and his emissaries, may be long and painful, but the cause of truth and righteousness, being the cause of God, must eventually prevail. The spirit of a Luther, and a Renwick, and a Guthrie, and a Knox, shall yet arise.

Then from the lips of truth one mighty breath
Shall, like a whirlwind, scatter in its breeze
The whole dark pile of human mockeries.

Lastly, in connexion with this part of our subject, we observe:

The past history of the Church encourages us to believe that there will be a succession of gospel ministers throughout all generations. God hath established a testimony and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children, that the generation to come might know them, even the chil-

dren to be born. "My Spirit, that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever." Isaiah lix. 21. The removal by death of godly ministers may sometimes excite in survivors feelings of anxiety and sadness with regard to the perpetual dispensation of gospel ordinances, by those divinely appointed to publish the glad tidings of salvation through Jesus Christ; but there is no good reason to fear that the Church will in any age be left destitute of such witnesses for the truth. It is certain indeed that those who teach the doctrines pertaining to the kingdom of God, like other men, have *a time to be born* and *a time to die*, but Jehovah lives and liveth forever more. Our adorable Saviour, who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever," furnishes pastors and teachers, with all needful qualifications, making them the messengers of the churches and the glory of Christ; and when they have served their own generation, and passed away from the scene of their labors, others are raised up to occupy their places; so that the ministers of the gospel in any particular period of time may be regarded as so many links in that wondrous chain of instrumentality, which stretches backward to the beginning and forward to the end of time: He has put the treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be all his own.

Under the Old Testament dispensation God separated the tribe of Levi to bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord, to minister unto him, and to bless his name. From this tribe he established in the family of Aaron an everlasting priesthood, to offer sacrifices and to burn incense in his tabernacle throughout their generations. The Lord said unto Moses, "Thou shalt take unto thee Aaron, thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons." (Exodus xxviii. 1).

When again Aaron was to be gathered to his people, Moses accompanied him to the top of mount Hor, stripped him of his garments, and put them on Eleazar his son, and then saw him die on the mount. Afterwards this divinely instituted priesthood was continued from generation to generation, until superseded by the Christian dispensation. It was foretold by Isaiah that God would take some of the Gentiles for priests and for Levites; and by Malachi, the last of the Jewish prophets, that not in Jerusalem only, but in every place, incense should be offered to His name, and a pure offering. Aaron himself was a type of our great High Priest. And now that Christ has come by the sacrifice of himself, to finish transgression, make an end of sin, and bring in an everlasting righteousness, the ministry of the New Testament, and the preaching of the word, accompanied by the Holy Ghost, is God's great ordinance—a standing ordinance for extending a knowledge of the gospel throughout the whole earth.

It appears from sacred history that the disciples, having the gift of tongues and the power of working miracles committed to them, went forth expounding the Scriptures, telling the simple story of the crucifixion and exaltation of Christ—preaching repentance and remission of sins in his name, beginning at Jerusalem; and that extraordinary success attended their labors. Thus we find that a few years after the ascension of our Lord the number of the disciples, as the first fruits of the apostle's preaching on the day of Pentecost, was three thousand converts; that the Lord added daily to the Church of such as should be saved. Yea, that multitudes both of men and women, won from the darkness of heathenism, idolatry and superstition, embraced the doctrine of the despised Nazarene. Afterwards the conversion of Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian band, followed by the miraculous outpouring of the Holy Ghost, was regarded as a divine intimation that the gospel of the Kingdom, as owned of God, was to be preached to all nations. Nearly nineteen centuries have rolled over our

world, and we have the same gospel still—a preached gospel; we have still the same commission and commandment—the same promise of the Lord's presence and blessing on this divinely appointed instrumentality for making known to the most distant regions of the earth a full, free, and eternal salvation.

As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth: for the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children. Psalm ciii. 15, 16, 17. "For of Him, and to Him, and through Him, are all things: to whom be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, world without end." AMEN.

CONCLUDING SKETCH.

In the preparation and delivery of this, and a previous discourse, from these words, "We are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding" (1 Chron. xxix. 15), my mind has been naturally influenced by the tidings which have very lately come across the ocean, of the death of an aged minister of Christ, who was personally known to some now present,—my revered Father. Some one has said in his autobiography that it is difficult for any person to speak long of himself without vanity, therefore, says he, I shall be short. I can fully appreciate the truthfulness of the remark as applied to my present melancholy duty. Filial partiality, or the warmth of filial attachment, will not lead me, I trust, to draw a full length or over-coloured picture, if, as a matter of historical interest, for our mutual edification, as a last loving tribute of affection, combined with great respect to his memory, and above all, to the praise of that grace by which he was what he was, I refer thus publicly to a few particulars in the life, character and history of one whose instructions, counsels and prayers, I do not and cannot forget—of one who was the

honoured associate, for more than the first half of the present century, of a McFadden, an Orr, an Alexander, a Gamble, and a Cameron, the ministry of a past but still remembered generation in our native land, to unfurl a banner for the truth on earth, and is now, as we feel assured, with his Saviour in heaven. *The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.* "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

My father was born 12th October, 1780, at Annsborough, County Down, near Belfast, Ireland, the residence of his father,* then pastor of the congregation of Knockbracken &c. From a personal and domestic memorandum written by himself, it appears that after having received a suitable preparatory education, he became a student in the college of Glasgow, Nov. 1797. Therefor four successive sessions he enjoyed the privilege of an extensive curriculum of literary and philosophical education; and he has left behind him ample evidence that he applied himself to his collegiate studies with diligence and success. In the mathematical and natural philosophy classes especially, he received some of the highest honors that ancient seat of learning could bestow. It does not appear that until this time he had been decided as to what profession should engage the energies of his future life; but it does seem that from an early age he was the subject of divine grace: and he now speedily adopted the resolution of devoting himself to the ministry of the word of life. After giving the usual pieces of trial before the Reformed Presbytery, he was licensed on the 19th of November, 1802, to preach the everlasting gospel; and he became thus accredited, according to the good order of the Presbyterian Church, to receive an invitation from any particular congregation to become its pastor. To use his own language—"I had not been long a probationer when I received a call from three vacant congregations: Lower Antrim,

* The Rev. Wm. Stavelly, latterly of Kellswater, County Antrim.

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Lower Down, and Crevagh. At length, after mature deli-
 beration, I accepted the call from Lower Antrim at the
 Spring meeting of Presbytery, 1804. This congregation
 was regarded for many reasons, as the *least* eligible of the
 three; yet the choice was determined by Him who disposes
 of the minds of men. Having, as is customary, given
 the pieces of trial before Presbytery, I was ordained at
 Dervock meeting house, 5th September, 1804."

In one district of his widely scattered charge, Kilraughts,
 through his exertions, a large and commodious house of
 worship was soon erected; and at the first census of the
 congregation there were 227 communicants. He who or-
 ders our footsteps and tells our wanderings, cast his lot in
 a part of the world where the ministers of the gospel were
 comparatively few: so that he was favored from Sabbath
 to Sabbath with a large audience; and he had cheering
 evidence from an early period that his labours were not in
 vain, and that the pleasure of the Lord prospered in his
 hand. "External amendment have in some instances cer-
 tainly been accomplished; as to what is *internal* we must
 of course be silent. The Kingdom of God in the hearts of
 men cometh not with observation. The building of the
 spiritual temple in this respect resembles that of the Tem-
 ple of old, in which was not found the sound of a hammer,
 or of the workman's tool."

We pass over much which under other circumstances we
 might mention concerning his ministerial labours during a
 period of more than fifty years. We have heard, and
 known, and our fathers have told us what God did in their
 day through their instrumentality and in answer to the
 prayers of his people. We will not hide them from their
 children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of
 the Lord, and his strength, and the wonderful works which
 he hath done.

After the toils and anxieties, the watchings and the
 prayers incident to such a long and chequered period in
 the life of man, he says, "The promising state of our con-

gregation is a reason why we should joy and rejoice in the Lord. I could record its statistics, but I fear to say or write anything which might border on boasting. Union, co-operation, and the divine blessing, can do wonders. God has done much for us. That cause committed to our keeping has neither been abandoned nor mutilated; neither have we permitted any known innovation. We received it as we thought it the cause of God; we retain it, because we think it his; and, with his assistance, we purpose handing it down unimpaired to those who are pressing forward to occupy our place. We most cordially rejoice in every step of reformation made by any denomination of christians, and that there are so many valiant for the truth in that part of the world where God has ordered our lot: whilst we ourselves maintain the doctrine, worship, discipline and government of the ancient Kirk of Scotland, as presently professed and preached in our Church.".... "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant."

It was his desire in 1832 that his congregation; which in that year numbered upwards of five hundred communicants, and had within its boundaries three houses of worship, should become "two bands." "Feeling," says he, in reply to an address, with a very valuable testimonial, presented to him in 1854, "feeling unequal to the toil which a congregation so numerous and so extended required, I considered it my duty to recommend a division of the congregation. This was gone about in an orderly way; and in 1832 two calls were presented me through Presbytery—the one requesting that my ministerial services be restricted to Kilranghts, and the other asking that they be confined to Dervock congregation. Acting now as I had done at a period more remote, I gave myself to the weaker of the two; and from that time to this I have been the stated pastor of the united congregation of Dervock and Ballymoney. This, like many others, is sustaining annual loss in a continued emigration to the 'Far West;' yet the

Master whom we serve, and whose cause we advocate, has amid deserved wrath remembered mercy. There are now in our congregation over three hundred communicants."

"In regard to our ministrations there are several incidents deserving of recollection. During the fifty years of my ministerial services there were only three Sabbaths in which I was not employed. One Sabbath I was not engaged in consequence of an altered appointment. On a second Sabbath death had entered into my family, and wrested from my embrace my first born son; and on the third Sabbath I was indisposed.

"A second thing deserving notice is, that of 228 parsons whose names were placed beneath my first call, there is not one forthcoming. They are all gone. They *were*, but now *are* not. I stand alone insulated by the ravages of the last enemy. Between us and death there is only one step. Yes, the very ministers and licentiates of 1804, with one exception and myself, have passed away—when sought for they are not to be found."

"A third thing deserving special notice is, that during this long period, and amid very many changes in the world, there has been a good understanding between minister and people. We have lived together in love and peace; and at no time was there any alienation of affection between teacher and taught. We have had times of scattering and times of gathering, times of sorrow and times of joy, times of lifting up and times of casting down, still the bond of union to Christ the Head, and to one another in Him, exists, and is, we believe, in continued operation. The suppressed sigh and the noiseless tear indicate, however, that the waters of Jordan are before us—not behind us. They are not crossed—but are yet to be crossed."

For a few years after he thus spake and wrote, and until some more hoary heads had disappeared from the eldership and membership of his flock, he continued with much of the zeal and earnestness of bygone days to go in and

out amongst his attached people. They beheld from Sabbath to Sabbath, with solemn and affectionate interest, that venerable countenance which had now become so familiar, and heard that voice which they had so long known, still leading them in the green pastures and by the still waters of the sanctuary.

In 1857, when the Reformed Presbyterian Synod in Ireland met at Dervock for the purpose of renewing the Covenants, National and Solemn League, in a Bond suited to the present time, it devolved on him, as the oldest minister of Synod, to preside in the solemn work. The Bond, as adapted to the circumstances of the Church, having been read over, paragraph by paragraph, he was the first to append his signature to it, as engrossed in a roll of parchment; and all the ministers, elders and licentiates, followed, severally attaching their names.*

But to proceed. Advancing age brought its infirmities; and in 1858 our parent solicited the appointment of an assistant; and in 1860, the Rev. James Brown, by the unanimous choice of the Church, was ordained his assistant and successor, and is now the esteemed minister of that old and respectable congregation to which my father sustained the

* We cannot refrain from quoting in this connexion the following expressive references to that memorable occasion, in the affecting services of which many brethren took a part:

"The scene was indeed very striking and impressive—forcibly reminding one of some of those favoured occasions, in which our Presbyterian forefathers publicly pledged their allegiance to Zion's Covenanted King. The day was calm and delightful—the sun breaking forth with mellow splendour about the time the discourse on Covenanting was commenced, and continuing to shed his beams upon the House of Worship, and surrounding grounds, and to gladden the assembly, till he sunk beneath the horizon. The dense congregation—consisting besides those in the neighbourhood, of many friends of the covenanted cause who had come from remote distances, and even of several brethren from Scotland—remained immovable in their seats for many hours; and appeared, at different parts of the service, penetrated by deep devotional feelings. When the ministers and elders stood up and swore the Covenant, many of the spectators shed tears; and as they came forward to append their signatures, the act was witnessed with breathless attention. It was as if all felt that God was among his people of a truth; and that an act had been performed, which tended to elevate and spiritualize the minds of all, and whose happy results would extend far beyond the present service, into future generations."—From "*A Memorial of Covenanting*," a very interesting volume, by the Rev. Thos. Houston, D. D., Knockbracken.

pastoral relation for so many years, and in which I believe he had many seals to his ministry—many who will be, yea, are even now, his “joy and crown.”

In the evening of his days he was not a stranger to those domestic afflictions which are common to the children of men. His eldest son, already referred to, at the age and in the vigor of manhood, was first called home; then the faithful and beloved partner of his years; then a daughter; and then his youngest son, the staff and stay of his advancing age. But when toward the close of his well-spent life the “grief and labour” of a prolonged continuance on earth manifested itself to a considerable extent in debility both of mind and body, he had still, in the providence of God, those of his own family left around him who were willing, with all tenderness and love, to minister to his every comfort; and at last, on Sabbath evening, the fourth of December, 1864, in the 85th year of his age and the sixty-first of his ministry, the good father, the devoted pastor, the faithful friend and humble christian, peacefully passed away from the Sabbath on earth to enjoy a better Sabbath where there will be no night—where, in the society of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, he now enjoys the promised rest that remaineth to the christian in Heaven.

“Soldier of Christ, well done—
Rest from thy loved employ;
The battle fought, the victory won—
Enter thy Master's joy.”

The apparently deep interest which you manifest in what I have spoken, connected with the history of the departed Minister of Christ, encourages me to say a few words more respecting one or two features of his general character. The limits of this discourse will not permit of that delineation of which the subject is capable, and which we have ample materials to supply. In this congregation, from my earliest settlement, he naturally took the deepest interest, and always associated any little measure of success we

might have with your spiritual welfare and growth in grace. I remember how in one communication he feelingly expressed a desire to know our people and friends here by name. Often indeed, at a late as well as an early period of his ministry, did he cherish an earnest desire, yea even form the resolution, of visiting this Western world. "In consequence," says he in his memoranda, "of an invitation which I received in 1806 from America, I resolved to remove thither, but Presbytery after mature deliberation counteracted my intention." On this side of the Atlantic he had numerous correspondents, and amongst the ministers and members of the Church in the United States he had many warmly attached friends. Some of these, a McLeod, a Black, a Wylie, and a Wilson, who once adorned the American Church, with the McMillans, the Rowatts, the Masons, and the Symingtons, of the Scottish Church, were earlier called away, and he has now joined them in a brighter and better world where the genial fellowship of the redeemed, who meet to part no more, shall be uninterrupted and eternal. To others who are left behind, both on this and that side of the great waters, we doubt not his memory will long be precious. Amongst ourselves there was one kind friend, who immediately on receiving intelligence of this bereavement, contributed, through the press, a graceful and affectionate tribute to his memory, who as a shock of corn fully ripe, has been cut down by the hand of death, and entered into the joy of his Lord.

When on earth few could more feelingly than he weep with them that wept, or comfort more tenderly the sons and daughters of affliction. He loved to follow in the footsteps of Him who was sent to *bind up the broken heart*, and to *comfort all that mourn*. "First he practised, afterward he preached." Whilst as a minister of Christ the great and substantial truths of the gospel were his favourite themes, and the energetic discharge of pastoral duties the object of his unwearied assiduity, missionary operations, tract societies, Sabbath schools, schools for the education

of the young and rising generation, as well as other Institutions of benevolence and philanthropy, had his cordial and constant support. As he was always well acquainted with the public movements, civil and ecclesiastical, of the times in which he lived, and could make his information profitable to others, his conversation was equally interesting and instructive. Seldom we think did any one retire from his society without having realized some pleasure and reaped some advantage. In the young, especially young men looking forward to the ministry, he always took a deep interest, and gave them when required, with all the earnestness and affection of a father, his judicious and friendly counsel. In the social and domestic circle he had a kind and happy manner, much of that simplicity and godly sincerity which will not soon be forgotten by his family, his flock, or his friends.* In the Courts of the Church his counsels were much valued, and in any discussion that arose he seemed always to remember that there is *a time to be silent and a time to speak*. He was, we need scarcely remark, a man of prayer, and his addresses to the throne of grace were characterized by much unction and liberty. Besides the morning and evening worship of God in the family, singing on each occasion some portion of the Psalms of David, which he so dearly loved, he spent the Sabbath evening chiefly according to the good old custom of former years—a custom we fear too much neglected by many professing christians in our day,—in catechetical exercises, ex-

* One who knew him well (I refer to our mutual friend, the Rev. William Sommerville), in a letter written to me shortly after his decease, incidentally makes the following allusion:—"If I was asked to tell what Dr. Stavelly was I would say, he was habitually cheerful but a stranger to levity, yet very susceptible of enjoyment from the sallies of youth. Without being censorious or a stern reprover, profanity dare not develop itself in his presence. The poor and ignorant admitted to the nearest familiarity, never lost the profound respect to which he was entitled. His piety and ministerial consistency were never obtruded upon the notice of others but were felt, and giving form to his whole deportment left their impress on observers. Possessed of the dignity and address of a gentleman, which made his society ever acceptable to men of the world, he never forgot, nor permitted others to forget, that he was a Christian and a minister of the gospel. The only defect that seemed to cleave to him arose from that delicate sensibility which led him to bear an injury rather than give expression to wounded feelings."

amining the members of his household on what they had heard or read through the day; thus striving to impress religious truth on the consciences and hearts of those around him. It is much, but not we think too much, to say that in every relation and in the discharge of every duty, he manifested in some good measure that sublime view of the christian life which the apostle enjoined upon Timothy, "An example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." When a friend rejoiced he rejoiced with him—when he suffered adversity he sympathized with him—when he needed guidance he counselled him—when he erred he reprov'd him with the *meekness of wisdom*.

To a beloved brother in the ministry, named this evening amongst the departed, on the occasion of a sad domestic bereavement, he thus wrote :

..... "Oh, it was a heavy stroke which deprived you of I—— and J——. But whence came this stroke? It was from the hand of a Father, yes, from your Father and my Father, from your God and my God. We should not open our mouths to question, to fret, to repine. This work, "O Lord, is thine." Here is the arresting and solemnizing consideration. It was the Lord's doing. He gave, and He has taken away. Oh that we could in the full exercise of filial submission say, 'Blessed be the name of the Lord.' I am not sure, my dear Brother, that there is any of the New Covenant relations in which God stands to his people which should more frequently command our attentive consideration than that of a Father. In a father's love, in a father's pity, in a father's care, and in the chastisement of a father's hand, there is much instruction. We discern all this pretty well; but yet we are puzzled about chastisement. We can explain it in reference to others; but when afflictions come on us, or on our children, we have difficulty in learning the lessons we have been striving to teach; we are nonplussed in reducing to practice the very instructions we have been tendering to our fellow sufferers. It is only the sovereign grace of God that can make us docile, submissive and contented. Believing that you have been taught of God, you have now an opportunity of bringing before the surviving members of your family, before your congregation, before your townsmen—before the church and before the world—the hallowed and heavenly bearing of that divine tuition under which you have been. It is, and shall be my daily prayer, that you and yours, coming out of the furnace, may not only appear, but actually be a family from which the glory of God shall be reflected to every part of the circle with which you are connected.

..... "What more does the Lord require. In a little, a very little time, my Brother, shall you be called home; your Father will shortly require your attendance in the upper story of the building of mercy, and all that he has been doing in you and around you has had for its object your holy, happy and triumphant departure. Your work and day shall together soon terminate, and some of these illegible pages in the volume of Providence which are now read so badly shall be then well understood. Do not allow yourself to shrink from the stroke; it is accompanied with a Father's love. Your children gave hopeful evidence that they were born of God—children of his family and partakers of his holiness. You may have lost, they have gained. You may be sad, but

they possess an unspeakable joy and an imperishable glory.".....
They have reached their heavenly home, far away from a world
 of sin and sorrow, and mingle, whilst I am writing, with the redeemed spirits
 before the throne of the Eternal. "Weep not for me," said the compassionate
 Saviour, "weep not for me, but for yourselves, and for your children." * *

In conclusion, as there may be some mourner now present needing comfort under bereavement, I will add an extract from a letter written to another Christian friend—one whose house had likewise been darkened by the shadow of death:—

"Lately I addressed my people from these words—'How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?' This is a question which concerns us. The death of our neighbors, our friends, our children, brings this question home to you and to me. To collect materials for a correct and soul-satisfying answer is not by any means so easy as some might imagine. Is it not well that conscience becomes an advocate for the claims of Jehovah? It rejects our own righteousness; it even rejects its combination with Christ's righteousness, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, requires a total reliance on our New Testament Joshua for conducting us through Jordan's heavy surges into the land of peace and rest. * * * When the foundations of the second temple were laid, the voice of joy and of sorrow were so blended that it was difficult to distinguish the one from the other. Thus I believe it is in the bereavement which pious parents sustain in the removal of their pious children. May the good Lord make up your loss in the enlarged communication of his grace to your own soul, and may the affliction you have sustained be instrumental in preparing you for the enjoyment of a holiness and a happiness which belong exclusively to the redeemed."

IMPROVEMENT.

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS—The subject which we have brought under your consideration this evening, the perpetuity of the word of God, "which by the gospel is preached unto you," is indeed a subject of infinite importance. Oh, let every one of us seek so to receive the message with which we are favored, that when all our tears, trials and comforts, in so far as this present state of existence is concerned, have passed away forever, we may together enjoy that eternal life secured by the blood of Christ to all who believe in his name.

Surely if the angels in glory rejoiced at the Saviour's birth we, though neither possessed of their knowledge nor of their purity, should be exceeding glad; as the Saviour was not provided for angels, but for the children of men. That we might be saved from the curse of a broken law he was made a curse for us. Though holy and innocent in himself

he was numbered with the transgressors. For us he suffered and died—for us he lives and reigns. What then?

We who live should not live unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again. Oh, it is no wonder that these “sons of God” who sang together at creation’s birth should even now tarry in their flight of love, as they are sent to minister to the heirs of salvation, that they may look into the mysteries of redeeming mercy, ever discovering in these things new matter for admiration, gratitude and praise. I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, by the truth of his word, by the certainty of his threatenings, by the faithfulness of his promises, by the shortness of time, and the endless duration of eternity, to improve what we have said. Seek now the promised aid of divine grace, that you may be prepared at last in a state of glory to unite with holy angels and holy men in joyful ascriptions of gratitude to “Him who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb forever.” He who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, and holds in his right hand the seven stars, which are the ministers of the seven churches, has been pleased to institute and bless a system of means which shall prove the wisdom of God, and the power of God in the salvation of all his people. He hath promised to bless Sion’s provision, to satisfy her poor with bread, to clothe her priests with salvation, and that her saints shall shout aloud for joy: yet for these things will he be enquired of by the house of Israel. He with whom is the residue of the Spirit is ever willing to give if we are willing to ask. Has he not said, “*Ask and ye shall receive.*” Yea, the word has gone out of his mouth, and endureth forever—a source of encouragement to the sinner, and of consolation to the saint. *He will give his holy Spirit to them who ask him. “Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.”* Psalm xlviii. 12, 13, 14.

Finally, brethren—*The voice of bereavement, which is at the same time the voice of admonition, should be heard, and its lessons of wisdom improved.* Whilst, therefore, we seek to avoid the mournful symptom of degeneracy so emphatically described by Isaiah, whose words of inspired wisdom we have so frequently introduced this evening—“The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come,” (Isaiah lvii. 1)—let us seek to follow those who have lived and died by faith, even as they also have followed Christ. Surely it becometh us to remember what they now are, that we ourselves may resemble in some measure what they once were. For him, to whose life and character we have at this time briefly referred, we need not weep: for we sorrow not as those who have no hope. His work in the church militant was done; and having finished his course, and kept the faith, he now wears a crown of glory in the Kingdom of his blessed Master.

The removal by death, from our society and friendship of those who were the sharers of our joys and sorrows, of those who were united to us on earth by the dearest and tenderest ties of nature and of grace; of those, especially, who sought in the early stages of our life's journey, under a solemn sense of their obligation to God, to bring us up in the nurture and knowledge of the Lord, and who at the family altar as the morning opened and the evening closed, whenever the psalm of praise was sung and the voice of prayer was uttered, remembered us, is an event which it would be criminal and ungrateful to forget.

“Weep ye not for the dead,” says Jeremiah, “neither bemoan him, but weep sore for him that goeth away, for he shall return no more nor see his native country.” He who has come away, to improve the allusion of the weeping Prophet, from all those fond family endearments which he enjoyed in infancy and youth, when every scene was gladness, and every season spring, and every spot was green,

can find no place dearer to him than his childhood's home. The very name is hallowed and delightful. Yes, as changes come and maturer years pass away, pregnant with the stern realities of life, its anxieties, its bereavements and its cares, busy memory retracing every scene still looks back to those bright and happy days when in a pious mother's love, and a godly father's care, and a gentle sister's smile, he found his chiefest joy. Happy, indeed, is the Exile, and some before me far far away from their native land can recognize the truth and application of such a reference, who, as he hears from time to time of the links of his once unbroken family circle being severed by the hand of disease or death, and who, though he was not privileged to stand around the dying bed, or to cast a longing, lingering look on that loveliness in death, "which parts not quite with parting breath," or to join in the slow and solemn funeral procession, or to appear chief amongst the mourners around the open tomb as it received to their last resting place—even earth's lowest room—the lifeless dust of the honoured dead; who, though he may never be privileged in after days or years to bedew the urn of relationship with affection's tears, yet guided not by the faint glimmerings of nature's light, nor by the vague and unsatisfactory teachings of philosophy, but by the noontide brightness of revelation and the good hope of the glorious Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, as a disciple of Him who hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light, can look beyond the dark cloud of sorrow, the chilling shadows of the valley of death and the deep gloom of the grave, to a happy meeting and a happy home with those whom he has loved and mourned on earth, where no natural or moral evil can exist, where former trials will be remembered only to increase an ever present joy; where the mystery and the mercy of every dispensation will be made clear in an ever advancing knowledge of the perfections and the providence of God; where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the

former things are passed away from that building of God, that house not made with hands, even the many mansions of our Father's house in that place which Christ himself has gone to prepare for his people, and where all the redeemed, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, evangelists, pastors and saints, from every age, from every dispensation and from every clime, from the north and the south, and the east and the west, shall form one family, one great society under one blessed Head, Jesus Christ the elder Brother; a family that can experience no change and can mourn over no separation, for the links which bind its members together can never be broken—a whole family forevermore at HOME IN HEAVEN.

In conclusion, gospel hearer, may we not ask the question—*How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?* Can you now claim an interest in this promise: "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you." If so, rejoice—you are Christ's. You have no other friend that loves you like this Friend; and he will love you to the end. Clothed in his righteousness, and sanctified by his Spirit, you need fear neither fire nor flood. The land of promise is before you. His gracious presence with you, as you pass through that river which divides time from eternity, is a sure antidote against the fear of death; and wherever and whenever the last enemy may come—whether at the beginning, or the middle, or the close of the year—whether at midnight or at cock-crowing, or in the morning, Jesus himself will come too, that he may introduce you to life and rest, and joy, to a stainless holiness, a spotless happiness, and an uninterrupted peace. "Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." Isaiah lx. 20. And He will come again at the end of the world in his own and his Father's glory, and the

glory of his holy angels, when yonder heavens and this earth shall witness that none else is Judge but God! *Behold*, says he, *I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.* Hear again his voice—it is the voice of your beloved: *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

"On the brow of mighty monarchs may sparkle many a gem,
And gold, and pearls, and jewels may deck the diadem;
But it shines with earthly lustre—it will tarnish and decay—
While the christian's crown of amaranth will never fade away.

Proud were the mighty conquerors, crown'd in Olympic games;
They deem'd that deathless honours were entwin'd around their names;
But sere was soon the ivy wreath, and the olive, and the bay,
While the christian's crown of amaranth will never fade away.

With a harp of angel melody, and a palm-branch in his hand,
The saint, 'mid circling spirits, round the golden throne shall stand;
And his song shall be enduring as heaven's eternal day,
And his victor crown of amaranth shall never fade away."

Now, brethren, we commend you to God, who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified, praying that he would make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing to his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. **AMEN.**

APPENDIX.

After the previous Sermon was in type, the author received a copy of a Discourse, delivered in Ballymoney, by the Rev. Robert Nevin, and published in January. Mr. Nevin is the son of one who was, till the time of his death, a greatly esteemed Elder of Dervock and Ballymoney congregation. He himself is a distinguished Minister, and now Pastor of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Londonderry, Ireland.

From this Discourse, founded on 2 Sam. iii. 38, the following extracts are made:—

"When I would attempt a delineation of the CHARACTER of our beloved father, as a man, a Christian, and a minister of the Word, I approach a part of my theme of greater difficulty and delicacy. We have, no doubt, here a noble subject for a moral portraiture. May it not be marred in the hands of an incompetent artist! Dr. Stavelay was tall in stature, robust, and well-proportioned, altogether a man of commanding presence. Grave and dignified in aspect and demeanour, blameless in the truthfulness and integrity of his life and conduct, those who knew him best would have been shocked and indignant at the very idea of connecting any thing little, mean, or frivolous with his name. His very presence was an effectual check and restraint on every approach to unbecoming levity on the part of others. Yet in admirable combination with this dignity was the affability, the kindness, the geniality of his nature. Easily accessible to all, he knew well how to suit himself to every capacity, at home alike with the sage philosopher and the little child. His manners were cast in the mould of true politeness. His conversational powers were of the highest order. Drawing from the rich stores of his cultivated mind that which his refined taste and delicacy of judgment enabled him to set off to the best advantage, he was fitted to take a place in any circle of society, and shine brilliantly there. In these respects, indeed, he was a prince amongst men, reigning easily without a rival, like Saul among the Israelites, the head and shoulders above others. He was the very model of the finished Christian gentleman. In all the relations of private life, he was an example of the believers—a most affectionate husband, a tender father, a firm friend, a judicious counsellor. Given to hospitality, his acquaintance was large, his society was courted, and he had an extensive correspondence with many on both sides of the Atlantic. In the pulpit he was peculiarly solemn and impressive. The doctrines of free grace were declared with all fidelity and much unction. There was no tinsel or meretricious adornment, but solid instruction and weighty sentiment, the manifest result of much study. The scientific cast of his mind enabled him to express his thoughts in language at once logically precise, appropriate, chaste, and elegant. Clearly apprehending both doctrine and duty himself, with the bearing of the one upon the other, he set them forth plainly and forcibly before his auditory, urging them home to the heart and conscience in measured accents and distinct utterance. A discourse from him was no exemplification of labored dexterity in mere word building; not a bushel of chaff, in which one would have to search long and hard to find a grain of wheat. Rather was it a bushel of rich grain in which the labor and the search would be to find a single particle of chaff. Never,

perhaps, was there one to whom the well-known lines of Cowper could have a more strikingly just application:—

“Would I describe a preacher, such as Paul,
Were he on earth, would hear, approve, and own,
Paul should himself direct me. I would trace
His master strokes, and draw from his design:
I would express him simple, grave, sincere;
In doctrine uncorrupt; in language plain,
And plain in manner; decent, solemn, chaste,
And natural in gesture; much impressed
Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,
And anxious mainly that the flock he feeds
May feel it too; affectionate in look,
And tender in address, as well becomes
A messenger of grace to guilty men.”

Sincerely attached to the Principles and Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, he did not shun the exposition and application of them when occasion seemed to require. One possessed of his accomplishments, natural and acquired, and he chosen a different profession, or had he even entered the ministry of some other connection, might easily have raised his prospects for this world very high. But having, on deliberate and conscientious conviction, cast his lot with the Covenanters, and decided on exercising his ministry amongst them, he never after repented his choice, notwithstanding the privations which it necessarily involved. Yet his was no narrow and sectarian spirit that would coop itself up within the limits of its own denomination; and refuse the practical recognition of any excellence lying beyond. He acknowledged and rejoiced in the universal brotherhood of believers in Jesus. When another appeared in the field, engaged in fighting the good fight of faith, though his uniform might be somewhat different from his own, and though it was under a banner somewhat different from that which he followed, he could salute him as a fellow-soldier in the one great sacramental host of the Divine Captain of the common salvation. He made himself versant with the various movements in the world abroad, that he might have understanding of the times, and sound a seasonable trumpet-note of warning as to what Israel ought to do; and he was ever ready and willing to co-operate with brethren of other denominations, in any scheme of piety and benevolence, when this could be done without the compromise or abandonment, to any extent, of our peculiar position. This trait in his character, this large-hearted catholicity, was well-known and appreciated. A touching evidence of this was furnished on the day of his interment. I could not but note with great satisfaction the numbers of brother ministers, belonging to another section of the Church of Christ, some of them from considerable distances, who joined in the funeral procession; and in paying the last sad offices of respect to the remains of departed worth. * * * *

And now that he has gone to his reward: that we shall see his face and hear his voice no more on earth, it may seem to some the fond and partial estimate of one who is only delighted to have this public opportunity to acknowledge his obligations to him; and who, if he has any clear views in respect to Christian faith and practice, ascribes it in a great measure, under God, to having sat at his feet; and having grown up listening from Sabbath to Sabbath to his lucid expositions of divinely revealed truth, nevertheless the conviction is strong, and I must express it: “Take him for all in all, we ne’er shall look upon his like again.” A stranger might deem the eulogium exaggerated. But I address myself to those who have known him most intimately, who have seen his going out and coming in, and had the best opportunities of remarking the beautiful, Christ-like consistency of his long life. I speak to men of intelligence and discriminating judgment. Say—I can trust your verdict—have I overdrawn the picture in the least? have I dipped my brush in one whit too glowing colours? The call in Providence is loud to you, my beloved brethren: “Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?”

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