

*Wm. Alexander*

In Memoriam

WILLIAM LINDSAY ALEXANDER

D.D.

SERMONS

Preached in Augustine Church, Edinburgh

BY

THE REV. ANDREW THOMSON, D.D.

AND

THE REV. J. M. JARVIE

*ON DECEMBER 28, 1884*

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION

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## SERMONS.

“I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.”—GEN. xlix. 18.

THE chapter in which these words appear records one of the most sublime and affecting scenes that have occurred in human history. The venerable patriarch Jacob, at the age of a hundred and thirty years, is about to yield up his spirit and to be gathered unto his people: and his twelve sons, the roots of the Jewish nation and the future heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, are assembled around his couch to listen to his parting words. His last eighteen years, spent in Egypt under the protection and the filial care of his beloved Joseph, have been years of prosperity and peace; and there are many reasons for thinking, also, of enlarged devotion and ripening graces. With what sad interest do his twelve sons listen to catch his dying words, and with what unfeigned veneration and love do they look into that aged countenance, upon which they know that they are gazing for the last time: “For the silver cord is now to be loosed, and the golden bowl to be broken, and the pitcher to be broken at the fountain, and the wheel to be broken at the cistern, and the dust is to



such words as these: "For many a year my desires and expectations have passed beyond the boundaries of earth and time. I have sought a better country, even an heavenly. I have looked for a home beyond the skies, 'a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.' I have lingered long and watched for this, like the traveller on the river's brink waiting for the boatman to carry him over; or like the watchman on his high tower, gazing eagerly towards the east, and waiting for the first streaks of the morning dawn. And now, my failing strength tells me that all my fond longings are about to be realised, that the heir is about to enter on his inheritance, that the goodly land is in sight, that the pilgrimage is over, and home is near. 'I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.'" I proceed to found on the text, as thus understood and explained, the following remarks:—

I. *So long as the saint continues on earth, his salvation is not completed.* It is still a thing for which he waits, the matter not of full fruition, but of "good hope through grace." No doubt there are places in Scripture in which salvation is spoken of as a boon already possessed and enjoyed,—as when we read that "God hath saved us and called us with an holy calling," and when believers are described as God's "saved ones." And there are two reasons for this, which explain and fully justify the language. First, that every believer in Christ has, by that very fact, become an heir of God,

and a joint-heir with Christ of the heavenly inheritance, and thereby holds a present and divinely assured title to the fulness of salvation. And, secondly, that he already possesses, in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, in his holy dispositions, his heavenly aspirations, and his living hope founded on the word and promises of God, the germs and earnest of "the glory that is yet to be revealed." He has a heaven within him which is the prophecy and pledge of the heaven above him, and these two shall one day meet and mingle for ever like the river and the ocean-tide. He has a begun, though not as yet a perfected salvation,—glory in the bud,—and he would not part, even with this, for the wealth of a world. Still, it is not finished salvation; and many things sadly indicate this to him in his daily experience. There is the remaining influence of unmortified sin, which often greatly humbles and vexes him. There is the daily battle he is obliged to maintain with outward temptations in many forms, as with an unfriendly world, and with Satan, the enemy of God and the great spiritual adversary of man. There is a body which is subject to pain and disease, to frailty, decay and death. There are the burdensome cares, and bitter sorrows, and crushing disappointments of life. All these things proclaim to him that "this is not his rest," for it is polluted,—that the wilderness is not Canaan,—that earth is not heaven,—that though his crown may be secure, and even shining within sight of him, he does not yet grasp it with his hand or wear it



on his brow. There are times, therefore, when he is ready to say, "O that I had the wings of a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest," and when he would willingly, if it were possible, overleap the intervening barrier between him and the kingdom of the spotless and the saved. "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord."

II. *The text leads us to remark that the salvation of the believer will be perfected when he leaves the world.* Death shall be to him the signal of victory and the bridge to glory. This was evidently now the confidence and expectation of the dying Jacob. One thought contained in his language is plainly this: "I have long waited for a completed salvation, for the fulness of eternal life, and I gladly perceive that it is now near at hand. Already I hear the welcome voice which calls me to 'enter into the joy of my Lord.'" When, long ago, he beheld the waggons, the horses, and the camels which Joseph sent to Haran, he gathered from this that he was called to go down into Egypt; and now, in like manner, those signs of dissolution of which he was every hour becoming more conscious, were hailed by him as the harbingers of the glory into which he was about to pass. Welcome death, then, when it comes with such a gracious commission. This is everywhere the teaching of Scripture, only becoming more and more distinct and decided in the progress of revelation. There is no measurable interval between our dissolution and our putting on our robes of glory.

"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." "To depart is to be with Christ." "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." To die is only, in a truer and unspeakably nobler sense, to live. "We know that if this earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

What, then, are some of the elements which go to make up the fulness of that salvation,—to complete the ideal of that eternal life,—upon which every good man enters the next moment after death? He would indeed be a very boldly presumptuous man who should profess to give a minutely detailed description of the glories of the heavenly state; and it is one out of a hundred indications of the superhuman origin of the Bible, that it never indulges in descriptions of this kind. The sacred books of all false religions do indeed abound in this species of material representations, and there is a strong craving in the human mind for such pictures of the unseen world as shall satiate curiosity and dazzle the imagination; but throughout the whole Scriptures there is a studied and systematic abstinence from all this, as if a wisdom higher than their own had guided the hands of the various writers. When they refer to heaven, it is to speak not so much of condition as of character, not of scenery but of sanctity. And yet they do tell us what is, beyond measure, interesting, attractive, and edifying to every sanctified heart. Thus, it is distinctly intimated that *the knowledge* of



the glorified believer will be immeasurably and progressively enlarged. Here, in comparison, we often see little more than the mere shadows and outlines of truth,—we “gather only a few beautiful shells and pebbles on the shore”; but it will form no small part of our completed salvation in the celestial world that we shall there look into the unveiled countenance of truth, that it shall be free from all mixture of mistake and error, and that all our knowledge shall be connected with God, and shall lead our thoughts up to God. An apostle puts the contrast between the knowledge of the saint on earth and that which he is to acquire in heaven, when he says, “*Now*, we see through a glass, darkly, but then, face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known.” Here, as regards the range of our sphere of knowledge, we may be compared to one looking up from the bottom of a mine and seeing only a small patch of sky and a few stars; yonder, we shall resemble one who has been brought up to the top of the mine, who can look around him on the vast and verdant earth, and up on the boundless firmament, “sown with stars thick as a field.” Then, in heaven with its perfected salvation, there will be *a complete and everlasting emancipation* from every form of evil that embittered the lot and marred the happiness of the believer on earth. Sin shall not only have ceased to reign in him: it shall have ceased to exist. He shall not bear even one link of all his former chain: the glorified spirit shall be “without

spot or wrinkle, or any such thing,"—pure as Adam was in Paradise before his fall, stainless as an angel of God. Oh what a precious part of our full salvation will this be! And sorrow and suffering shall have vanished away for ever with sin. All the bitter springs of these bitter streams shall have been dried up. "The inhabitant of that world shall never say, I am sick." Jacob shall never complain there, "Me have ye bereaved of my children;" or David cry, "Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar; when shall I come to appear before God?" when he basks for ever in the light of the divine countenance. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. 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."

Then, it is further certain that there shall not only be the absolute exclusion of evil, but every capacity of happiness in the glorified saint shall be filled to overflowing. Every inlet to the soul shall carry gladness into it. How shall the social instinct, for instance, find scope and be satisfied in "the glorious company of the apostles, in the goodly fellowship of the prophets, and in the noble army of the martyrs"! And is it not more than likely that many new capacities of blessedness shall be opened there of which we have no experience and cannot form even the least conception here?



Heaven alone can tell us fully what is meant by heaven. Three of the greatest authors among the Puritans wrote each a book about heaven—John Howe, on *The Blessedness of the Righteous*; Baxter, on the *Saints' Rest*; and Owen, on the *Glory of Christ*, as the subject of the saint's meditation in the celestial world. Each of them regarded heaven in a different aspect, as a world of perfect holiness, of mental rest and peace, and of devout contemplation of God. It is also recorded that Mr. Hall of Bristol and Mr. Wilberforce once stated, in conversation with each other, what was the summary representation of heaven that most frequently occurred to their own mind; and the one said "Rest," and the other "Love." But the delightful circumstance is, that all the different aspects were true. And we have to add to them all, what is indeed the crown and consummation of all, into whose radiance our mental eye cannot penetrate, because of its excess of glory, when we are told of sitting with Christ upon His throne, and of "seeing Him as He is." And is this what we would sometimes hold back our friends from entering on the possession of? Oh, could we see them as they are, we should be able to weep for them no longer, but would rather bid the wheels of time roll round with double speed, that we might join them the sooner in those festal halls of heaven, saying, with the dying Jacob, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord."

III. I advance to a third remark founded on these

words, namely, that *the prospect of his perfected salvation in heaven exercises a sustaining, attractive, and purifying influence over the believer while he remains upon earth.*

Jacob was one of those men of mighty faith of whom an apostle expressly declares, in writing to the Hebrews, that "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker was God." It would be difficult to estimate the extent to which the lively and realising anticipation of this by a good man bears him up under, and reconciles him to, the troubles and vexations of this present life. He often says in his heart, "I shall soon be done with all these sorrows and sufferings, and be placed for ever beyond their reach, in that bright world in which there is nothing to hurt or to destroy; each day, as it passes, is bringing me nearer to it, and 'every night I pitch my tent a day's march nearer home.' And I shall soon forget all these present tribulations amid the worship and the joy of the heavenly temple not made with hands, or I shall only remember them to enhance my sense of security and blessedness; one day of heaven, one hour with Christ, will make amends for all." Then there is an *attractive* power which heaven exercises over every good man on the earth, and this in proportion to the strength of his faith and the brightness of his hope. There were many things fitted to make even the aged Jacob cling to life, and wish to remain a little longer on this side the deep and silent river. The greater number of men, indeed, that are spared to old age, find many of the attractions



of this life diminished, if not entirely vanished. Nearly all the friends and companions of their youth and early manhood no longer continue by reason of death. "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me." And few have arisen to fill their empty place. What has become of their playmates on the school-ground? They begin to feel themselves strangers in a new generation that knows them not; they imagine themselves to be jostled at times into a corner by the younger and more active, and to have become a kind of superfluity which the world could spare. But those last seventeen years of the patriarch's life had probably been his happiest. His beloved Joseph was in power and affluence; his other sons had become united, affectionate, and dutiful, and there was an unwonted measure of calm and sunshine around his old age. But there was a far stronger fascination in that better country, even the heavenly, on which his faith rested, and which more than counterbalanced all the earth's attractions. He longed to be emancipated, to pass through the golden portals, and to enter on the sorrowless and sinless world. He was eager to join the "general assembly and church of the first-born," to sit down with Abraham and Isaac, and all the other children of God who had already gone up to glory during the past two thousand years, in the kingdom of the saved. Like the caged bird which hears its companions singing around it in the air and in the neighbouring woods, he aims to be set free that he may take part

in their happy minstrelsy. Goshen was pleasant, but what was Goshen to heaven? He remembered that glimpse of the celestial glory with which he had been favoured so long ago in the vision at Bethel, when he lay with his head pillowed on the stones, and saw the ladder with its golden strands, and the bright and happy angels ascending and descending upon it, and the glory of God shining out from the open heavens at the summit; and he longed, as it were, to ascend that ladder, to be taken up into glory, and to behold his redeeming God face to face. His language is that of one not only ready for his summons upward, but listening for the sound of the heavenly chariot in which he shall be rapt heavenward into the gracious presence, like aged Simeon, when, with the infant Saviour folded in his embrace, he uttered his "*Nunc dimittis*"—"Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace;" or like Paul, when he said, "willing rather to be absent from the body;" "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." To my mind there is something of wondrous sublimity and impressiveness in this dying scene of Jacob. His twelve sons, the roots and founders of the chosen nation, gathered around him with a strange mingling of awe and love; the aged patriarch, with the spirit of prophecy resting on him, uttering from the midst of it those predictions, the words of faith and hope, aware that the conflict is over and the prize won, and the gates of glory opening to take him in. Earth and heaven meet and touch each other in that death-



chamber, like sea and sky at sunset, and he is about to ascend and sit down near to the head of that banqueting-table, with Abraham and Isaac, in the kingdom of God. Death is on the point of being swallowed up in victory. And here, more than even at the great Bethel vision, as he gathered up his feet into the bed and yielded up his spirit, he could have said, "Surely God is in this place. This is none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven."

IV. No time now remains for me to do more than notice, in the fourth place, *that while it is one of the marks of a true saint of God that he longs for heaven, it is another mark that he also waits God's time for his removal to it.* Jacob's language, "I have waited," implies that he would not wish to go before God's time, and that he was sure that, because it was God's time, it must be the wisest and the best. There is a great difference between longing for heaven and being rebelliously impatient for departure from the world. The former is the only right exercise and experience for a child of God. "It is good," says Jeremiah, "that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." Job seems to have struck the happy medium in his days, when he said, "All the days of my appointed time on the earth will I wait, till my change come." And it is evident that Jacob's exercise had been similar, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord."

And now, in conclusion, who is not ready to say in Balaam's words, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his"? But it is impossible to die the death of the righteous man, unless we possess his faith and have lived his life. Nothing so illustrates and manifests the importance and value of true religion as the manner in which it supports and comforts those who are under its influence, when they come to their dying hour. How different, for instance, was the experience of Jacob when he lay a-dying in that home in Goshen, as compared with that of an Egyptian idolater at the same period, when death came and laid its terrible arrest upon him! We are supplied with a means of estimating the immense benefit which the religion of the Bible has conferred upon its disciples in the article of dying, as compared with the resources of heathenism and heathen philosophy, when comfort is sought from it in the same circumstances. The most accomplished and thoughtful of all the philosophers of ancient Rome wrote a book on old age, which has descended to our own times. There are many beautiful and tender thoughts in the book, but when the writer attempts to comfort old age in the prospect of death, we are struck with his impotence. There is nothing but conjecture, and uncertainty, and shadow. The grave is left by heathen philosophy, as it is indeed by modern philosophy without Christ, in all its original gloom and terror. There is no longing for the higher and nobler life which Christianity tells us has

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been provided for and awaits the just, no glory gilding the grave, and no crying of a spirit that regards death as an introduction to blessedness, and that can say with Jacob, as it reposes on assured belief, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." How dreary, says John Foster, would old age be without the atonement of Christ! But see what rays of light those words of Paul shed over the green turf where a Christian sleeps, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Surely one exercise in which Christians ought frequently to indulge is to familiarise their minds with that heavenly state of which the text speaks, and which is as near to us as death. It would help to reconcile us to our troubles, and to take the bitterness out of our sorrows, were we to think to what a blessed state all these things are bringing us forward. Why should not the heir think often of his inheritance? Go up in thought beforehand and look at your everlasting home. "Oh, thrice fools are we," says an old divine, "who, like new-born princes weeping in the cradle, know not that there is a kingdom before them." "But our light afflictions which are but for a moment work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Amen.

Your late pastor, Dr. William Lindsay Alexander, having "finished his course and kept the faith," has now entered on the fulness of that salvation of which we have been speaking; for to every true Christian death is not the bar but the bridge to glory. How much does he already know and experience of what before he could not have even faintly conceived! "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." It is not my province to present you with even the briefest biographical sketch of my departed friend, or to endeavour to trace an estimate of his character and work. This has already been admirably done in some of the public journals, and will, I expect, be done again in the afternoon, by one of his oldest student-friends, who is singularly qualified for the task. It will be sufficient that I indulge myself in a very few short notices.

You are already aware that your former minister was born in Leith in 1808. He was favoured with the inestimable advantage of a godly parentage; his father being an eminent Christian merchant, ready for every good work, and prominent in his day on the platform, whenever there was an abuse to denounce, or a righteous and benevolent cause to advocate. His mother was singularly lowly in her own self-estimate, especially in regard to her religious attainments, but meanwhile, liberal with her worldly means, and unwearied in her Christian activity. It is easy to understand how the interest and the prayers of such parents should have gathered much around their son, who gave



early indications of superior mental gifts. In the year 1826 two youths were received into membership in the little Congregational Church in Leith, George Harvey and William Lindsay Alexander. The one was to become one of the most eminent Scottish artists of his day, and, as Sir George Harvey, to rise to the presidency of the Royal Scottish Academy; the other was to become one of our most distinguished preachers and biblical scholars. The former was more remarkable for his fine emotional temperament; in the latter the intellectual element seemed to predominate; but the sincerity of both on that day of public self-devotement was proved by the history of all their future life.

It was not, however, immediately after his act of public consecration to Christ, that Mr. Alexander determined to give himself to the work of the Christian ministry. In the course of his somewhat diversified university studies,—mingled with which, there was evidently an unusual measure of self-education,—his leanings were, by turns, to law and medicine, and physical science and theology. But the growth of his personal religion, and probably the winter that he spent under Chalmers, whom he followed to St. Andrews, where so many ardent minds received an impulse that never left them, and not least, the unmistakable leadings of Providence, brought him at length into the sacred office. After some years, not unprofitably spent in England and Wales, principally in evangelistic work

and the advocacy of foreign Christian missions, he accepted in 1835 the invitation of the Congregational Church then meeting in Argyle Square, and afterwards in this elegant house of prayer, to become their minister. It was a happy day, not only for this congregation, but for this city, and for places far beyond it, when this pastoral tie was formed.

When I came to Edinburgh a few years later than Dr. Alexander, I noticed that his name was already on men's lips. They had discovered that a man had come among them who was certain to leave his mark. I can well remember that his speeches on platforms were remarkable for their eloquence, and for the energy and fire with which they were spoken. In his pulpit discourses there was much that was suited to all classes and conditions of hearers. But his clearness of argument, his freshness of illustration, his evident mastery of whatever subjects he handled, the rich learning which he brought to bear upon them, and the literary finish of his style, as well as his effective delivery, rendered him peculiarly adapted and attractive to educated men. I can imagine many a one, after listening to one of his masterly expositions, saying to himself, "I am conscious of having added to my stores of Bible knowledge. I understand that part of the Word of God a great deal better than when I entered the Church." It was not, however, until his removal to St. Augustine Church that he acquired, as well as retained, his full place in the public estimate.





Two things greatly surprised me in your departed minister. One of these was, in addition to his high position as a Biblical scholar, the eminence which he reached in so many other departments of study. No door of knowledge seemed closed against him. He seemed to be quite as much at home in the Royal Society among scientific men, or in a club of literary men, or of students of the classics, as he would have been in a conference of divines. His articles in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* show how carefully he had studied the great problems in mental and moral philosophy; and his numerous papers in *Kitto's Cyclopædia*, which he almost transformed into a new book, reveal to us how rich were his stores of knowledge in Biblical literature. Then, the numerous books of solid learning, vigorous discussion, and fresh and stimulating thought, which he gave to the world were no ephemeral productions, but substantial contributions to men's knowledge of the subjects of which they treated. I confess that I honour him much, because, while one of the most independent thinkers I have ever known, "calling no man master upon earth," he never sought to purchase the easy reputation of being a great thinker, by being drawn away into some dazzling novelty which was popular for the hour, and which shallow men called progress, but continued firm in his attachment to the distinguishing principles of Evangelical truth, his hold of them becoming all the firmer as his field of view became wider and his learning

more enlarged. The fact that he was so frequently employed as an examiner in our universities, that he was placed on the honourable roll of learned men appointed to revise the authorised version of the Bible, as well as the more recent honour with which he was crowned by our own University, show how much the verdict of our highest authorities and the popular judgment harmonised regarding him.

Dr. Alexander obtained, what Chalmers had sought but did not find, a calm retirement during the larger portion of the last decade of his life. When he withdrew from the active duties of his pulpit, after a noble and splendid service of two-and-forty years, it was not, indeed, to live the life of a recluse, but of a devoted student, when his decaying strength forbade him to attempt more. There, in the midst of his books and his flowers, of his children and grandchildren, and with occasional visits from his "inner friends," he spent his closing years. It is a sublime sight to look on a man who has lived a long public life before innumerable observers, and when, at the end, he stands up with an untainted reputation. It was thus with your departed minister, whom you and his amiable successor so greatly mourn. Even calumny did not dare to breathe against him, for no one would have believed its lie. When the end approached, the distress of his body was such as to make conversation next to impossible, and so there was no dying testimony. But we have something better far in the testimony of a



long, consistent, greatly useful Christian life. At length the Master gave the word, and the tempest ceased, and there was a great calm. His servant had passed away into the everlasting calm of heaven.

## II.

“Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?”—2 Samuel iii. 38.

**A**PART altogether from the special relation David sustained to Abner there is a touching pathos in the simple record of the text that the king followed Abner’s bier, and lifted up his voice and wept at Abner’s grave. The distinctions of rank and office were lost in the presence of a great sorrow. The king and his courtiers were one in a common grief; they mourned together the loss of a prince and a great man.

And the words express at once a generous recognition of Abner’s qualities, and a sympathetic appreciation of these, intensified by the deception and cruelty of which he had been the victim. Probably Joab himself, no less than his monarch, would have been prompt to acknowledge that he whom he had so treacherously slain was indeed a prince and a great man.

I am not, however, about to speak of David or of Abner, or of the sons of Zeruiah, but to consider and apply to the special occasion of this day’s service the sentiment the words express, viz.—I. Appreciation of



princely qualities in man ; and II. Sympathetic sorrow when the subject of these is removed by death.

I. A prince and a great man.

The terms are indefinite, but not the less comprehensive and suggestive. They do not admit of adequate definition. "Greatness" is a relative quality, and may be determined in its application by such a diversity of standards that its interpretation in any case must be little more than the echo of the interpreter's own thought. "Princeliness" is subject to the same conditions ; but in its best and noblest sense it is independent of rank, or position, or circumstance. It is not the accident of inheritance, or the mere possession and exercise of a temporary and delegated power. It is emphatically a creation of God, an inspiration of the Highest, a light from heaven that never leads astray. There are in every generation kings who walk the earth uncrowned, unnoticed, and unknown ; princes who are strangers to the anointing of men, or the consecration that created hands can impart. Their palaces are not seldom among the dwellings of the poor, and their empire exercised in holy, obscure, and gentle ministries amid the lowly, the sorrowing, and the lost.

On such an occasion as this, and before a Christian audience, I may well, and with all confidence, assume the principle that moral and spiritual qualities in the Christian sense alone constitute the truest greatness,

and that distinguished eminence in these justifies the term "princely." The sovereignty of Christ recognised, revered, and loyally obeyed under all conditions, makes the humblest man a king "great in the sight of the Lord." It imparts a regal dignity to lowliest service, invests with sacred and suggestive meaning the manifold and varying experiences of life's brief day, adds power to effort, inspires courage in conflict, and makes the dying saint "more than a conqueror through Him who loved him."

Whenever men see in any single life the fair and fruitful development of Christian grace expressing itself in high degree, as of a light shining brightly, and shedding its radiance far and wide; or as a stream of living water fed from the eternal fountain, and pouring its rich full flood of blessing on the earth, then they cannot help being reminded of Him who is Himself the source of all being and all blessing, the Chiefest among ten thousand, who "went about doing good." The rare degree of excellency illustrated in endowments faithfully exercised, services generously rendered, and character consistently maintained, compels attention and attracts involuntary admiration or affection. We instinctively recognise in its subject "a prince and a great man."

To such an exercise are we brought this day by the recent removal of that beloved and honoured servant of Christ who illustrated in so eminent a degree the princely gifts of God, and whose death has excited a



sympathetic sorrow so widespread and profound. You will not misunderstand me when I say that I shrink with unspeakable aversion from the utterance of a single word or thought that by any possibility could be deemed extravagant, or of the nature of idle and unreal encomium, in connection with the name and ministry of Dr. Lindsay Alexander. To do so would not only do violence to the reverence and affection I cherish toward that name, but it would do great dishonour to his memory. No man ever stood before his fellows who more than he "reverenced his conscience as his king," or shunned with more sensitive dislike all self-obtrusion. He sought no flattery; he needed none. Truth was his noblest eulogy.

His ENDOWMENTS were princely. God had bestowed upon him an intellect of great power, quick to perceive the manifold relations of truth, and skilful to discern and expose the sophistries by which at any time its glory was obscured, or its authority invaded. There were few spheres of philosophic thought with which he was not in some degree familiar. His wide and accurate scholarship enabled him with perfect ease to read in their own tongue alike the speculative creations of ancient Greece and Rome, and the modern theories of continental Europe; while the robust vigour of his understanding and his power of logical penetration enabled him without difficulty to distinguish between the precious and the vile. Of the history and development of theological science he was from

his youth up an earnest and interested student. Although he has been known to affirm that he began to study theology only after he became a preacher, the saying must be understood as indicating no more than a playful comparison in his own esteem between his attainments in this department, while as yet his course was undetermined, and those which were acquired in the years that followed his assumption of ministerial and pastoral responsibilities.

He possessed in an eminent degree the creative power of imagination. This faculty, however, was by him kept in rigorous subordination to intellectual supremacy alike in propriety of figure and clearness and simplicity of expression. It never degenerates into passion or loses its point by a mere multiplicity of words. Its utterances are brief and its forms beautiful; they at once reveal and adorn the truth they represent. They who have for any length of time been attendants on Dr. Alexander's ministry cannot but have felt oftentimes that special quality of his mind to which I now advert. Not seldom in the course of a weighty argument or the exposition of an apparently involved passage of Scripture he would at once relieve the pressure of protracted thought, and dispel a whole host of difficulties by some simple and appropriate illustration from a familiar scene in nature or an incident of common life. The poetical compositions with which he has enriched the devotional services of the universal Church, and ministered consolation and



strength to mourning and broken hearts in the season of their sorrow, are creations of exquisite beauty, and will long be esteemed as precious for the ends desired.

He was a man of warm and intense affection. This indeed did not lie upon the surface of his life. The very depth and tenderness of his sympathetic emotions restrained their obvious, much more their obtrusive, expression. They were too sacred for exposure to the common gaze; they shunned display. Yet no heart was more susceptible to the griefs of others, and none more prompt to impart consolation as occasion and opportunity arose. In a very true and worthy sense it might be said of him as of the prophet, "God had given him the tongue of the learned, that he should know how to speak a word *in season* to him that was weary."

The SERVICES he rendered to the Church of Christ were princely. All his gifts were consecrated to noblest and holiest ends. His penetrating intellect, his profound learning, his noble eloquence found each its choicest sphere and highest exercise in connection with the kingdom of God. It is alike unnecessary and inexpedient that I should here attempt to trace either the origin or the development of his own spiritual life. I do not possess the materials of any such detail, and if I did I should probably decline to use them. Respecting his final resolution to study for the Christian ministry, I have been favoured by a friend with some notes of a conversation which he held with Dr. Alex-

ander only a few weeks before his decease. A severe illness from which he suffered in 1832 led to his spending some time in Wales with a view to convalescence. During this period his mind was much exercised in reflection upon divine things, and the honour and privilege of serving Christ in the ministry of the Gospel. The perusal of some Christian biographies, particularly that of Robert Hall, proved very helpful to him at the time, and his course appears to have been then practically determined. Previous to this, however, he had acted for four years as classical tutor in Blackburn, now Lancashire Independent College. To this office he had been appointed in his nineteenth year, and during that time had occasionally preached in village chapels. His purpose hitherto had not been to become a minister, but to prosecute studies either for the medical or for the legal profession—in the latter case with a view to practice at the Bar.

In a most interesting autobiographical sketch which Dr. Alexander presented at a special service held to celebrate the conclusion of the fortieth year of his ministry as pastor of this church, he narrates the successive steps by which he had been led to the position. The report is contained in the *Scottish Congregational Magazine* for April 1876, and need not be further referred to here.

The eminent service he rendered in this capacity cannot be told in words. The clearness of his expositions, the beauty of his illustrations, the fervour and



earnestness of his appeals, produced a powerful impression alike in compelling the careless to become thoughtful and in confirming the faith of those who had already believed. His ministry, moreover, proved singularly attractive and instructive to students of all denominations, especially to those who were themselves preparing for the work of the ministry. Many who to-day occupy important and influential spheres of pastoral service in the various churches alike at home and abroad, received an impulse and a quickening inspiration from his ministry which has diffused itself in countless forms of blessing wherever their lot has been cast. That ministry possessed a singular combination of qualities which are not always or frequently found together. It presented rare adaptations to contrasted varieties of life and character and experience. The learned and the uninstructed, the profound thinker and the simplest believer in Christ, found in it that which equally met their need and satisfied their spiritual longings. Alike in the exposition of doctrine and the enforcement of duty the truth was presented clearly and with authority. There was nothing mystic or nebulous or doubtful in the utterances of the preacher. Christ and His Gospel were ever the central theme. Christ in the glory of His person, Christ in the sacrificial efficacy of His blood, Christ in the grace of His intercession, Christ in the sovereignty of His eternal dominion,—these and their associated doctrines were always prominent, and ever faithfully applied with

unction and spiritual power to the reason, the conscience, and the affection of the hearers. It was invariably a ministry of establishment and of faith—never of unsettlement and doubt. The preacher spake because he believed, and because he knew WHOM and WHAT he believed.

It may be added here that while at all times the style and manner of Dr. Alexander's preaching indicated his own deep personal interest in the theme, not less than the scholarly elegance which distinguished all his productions, there were occasions when the fervour of his spiritual emotions seemed almost to command him, and to become for the time being ecstatic. Turning aside for a moment from the regular sequence of the subject under discussion, he would pause as if some new thought had struck him, or some revelation from the Highest had opened on his sight; then resuming, he would, in tones of tenderest pathos and words of rarest power, speak under the glowing influence of the vision his soul had seen, and the holy elevation its beauty had inspired. Such occasions, which, I believe, became more and more impressive as his years advanced, recalled the experience of the great dreamer: "Now just as the gates were opened to let in the men, I looked in after them, and behold, the city shone like the sun; the streets also were paved with gold, and in them walked many men, with crowns on their head, palms in their hand, and golden harps to sing praises withal. Which when I had seen, *I wished myself among them.*"

c



The services he rendered to Christian literature were many and great. He states, in the speech he made on the occasion already referred to, that he began his pastorate with the steadfast resolution "that he would never have an hour to spare;" and well he kept it. He was never idle. His productions embrace various departments of literary effort, including biographical, exegetical, homiletic, and historical. These have been since his decease so definitely specified, and so generously appreciated, by the organs of public opinion that further allusion to them here is unnecessary. The special work of his later years was his service as one of the company of revisionists of the Old Testament Scriptures, in which he was deeply interested, and which was to him at once a labour and a delight.

The necessities of the hour compel me to make only the briefest reference to other and not less eminent services which Dr. Alexander rendered throughout his active life.

As one of the professors, and subsequently Principal, of the Theological Hall of the Congregational Churches in Scotland, he was instrumental in training for the ministry of Christ a large number of young men who in our own and in other lands have occupied, or are occupying to-day, spheres of usefulness and honour. From Scotland and England and Ireland, and from the continents of Europe and America, and from almost every sphere of missionary labour abroad, grateful thanksgiving for many years have ascended to God for

the priceless benefits derived from Dr. Alexander's work in the Theological Hall; and many warm hearts are moved to-day with a tender grief, sorrowing most of all that they shall see his face no more.

Dr. Alexander became pastor of this church early in 1835, and continued to discharge the office for upwards of forty years. In your presence, dear brethren, and in this place, I do not need to speak of what he has been to you, alike as a teacher, a counsellor, a comforter, and a friend. "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and righteously and unblameably he behaved himself toward you that believe; as ye know how he dealt with each one of you, as a father with his own children, exhorting you, and encouraging you, and testifying, to the end that ye should walk worthily of God, who calleth you into His own kingdom and glory." From a position of comparative obscurity and limited influence this church became under his ministry one of growing attractiveness and increasing spiritual power. This was due not to anything artificial or sensational (to which your pastor had a sensitive aversion), but, under the blessing of God, to his earnest and faithful exposition and application of Christian doctrine and duty. From his lips these seemed to drop as the rain and distil as the dew. From Sabbath to Sabbath, as the years went on, the weary were refreshed, the mourning comforted, the careless arrested and aroused. And over all there advanced, in the silent unobtrusiveness of grace, that



deepening and enlarging of the spiritual life in the souls of men which revealed itself in the increasing fervour of devotion, strength of Christian character, and fruitfulness alike of service and of sacrifice in the cause of Christ.

My own connection with this church began within a year after Dr. Alexander's settlement, although I was not in fellowship until some years later. The services of this day recall to me with peculiar vividness persons and scenes and events which have passed away with the years, but which live in memory for ever. The men who then were the fathers have been gathered long ago to *their* fathers: many of those who represented the vigour and energy of healthy middle life have had their strength "weakened in the way,"—their names alone abide, and the few who remain are grown "old and gray-headed." But a band of ingenuous youths who at that time stood to Dr. Alexander as the first-born of his strength gathered around him with all the affection of sons, and the admiring enthusiasm of disciples whose souls had found their true teacher at length. Some of these I rejoice to find here and there to-day, now the living fathers in a generation whose sun is toward the west. But the greater number have fallen on sleep. The links are broken one by one; the circle diminishes with every passing year.

My personal obligations to Dr. Alexander are very great, and to me his memory is precious. To him

I owe it, under God, that I ever knew Christ as a personal Redeemer, or felt in any degree the powers of the world to come. By his encouragement and kindly counsel I was first induced to study for the ministry, and thereafter stimulated to persevere. Thirty-three years ago he presided at my ordination to the pastorate, and through all the intervening years his friendship has been to me a joy and his example an inspiration.

Time will not permit me to do more than briefly advert to the beneficial influence he exercised by the consistency and symmetry of his CHRISTIAN CHARACTER and deportment. The standard was lofty; the course progressive; and the consistency uniform through all change of circumstance. His path was as that of the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The generous catholicity of his sentiment needed no formal expression: it animated his whole life.

He was by conviction and preference a Congregationalist. He loved the system for its liberty—for its fraternal spirit—for the scope it afforded for every variety of character and attainment to express itself in Christian service and labour. Most of all he loved it for the spiritual fellowship and the evangelistic zeal which had distinguished its origin and history. But he was the lover and the representative—the friend and the brother—of *all* the Churches. Beyond the distinctions of sect and party he recognised Christ's



presence and power under different forms alike of polity and creed ; and it was his delight to express and realise that larger fellowship of the Church universal wherever and whenever opportunity afforded.

Brief as this record has been—imperfect and fragmentary as it must necessarily appear compared with the occasion—yet, in view of all the unspoken truth it can only partially represent, the words of the text could find no more worthy appropriation than to him who forms the special subject of this day's service: "A prince and a great man in Israel."

II. We note further the expression of sympathetic sorrow when the princely great are removed by death.

"The King lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner, and all the people wept." Such emotion at such an occasion is true to the best feelings of our nature, and in perfect harmony with the requirements of deepest piety and undoubting trust in God. Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus, and thereby consecrated for ever, with holiest sanction, the tears of sorrowing love. We weep to-day at the grave of one whose princely greatness, while he lived, was to each of us a higher joy than we knew, and in whose removal we suffer a deep personal affliction. We say of such an one: "He is fallen." Alas, yes! It is the first impulsive expression of our grief ; we judge of him by what our sense perceives, by the loss our stricken hearts feel as we follow his bier, gather at his sepulchre, and

resign his form to decay. For us he is no longer a living presence, but only a sacred and tender memory. The place that once knew him shall know him no more. From the bosom of his family, from his study and his books, from this pulpit—where for so many years he, with commanding power and presence, unfolded the glory of the Cross—from the councils of brethren for the Church's weal, from the school of the prophets, where, with liberal hand, he dispensed the treasures of wisdom, from familiar scenes of grave deliberation and lofty argument on life's hidden mysteries, he has gone—for ever gone.

But has he fallen? Nay, verily! He has ascended—gone to be with Christ, which is far better. That which we call "Death" has admitted him to the vision of the glory of which he often spoke—to the rest he longed for—to grander scenes and loftier service than were possible here. He has joined the fellowship of the great and good of old—been restored to those of his dearest and best—the early loved and lost who had preceded him to the Eternal Home. For him death has been a glad, a glorious reunion to many to whom, alike in earlier and in later years, he had been God's messenger of life on earth, and who are now his glory and his joy in heaven. . . . Oh say not—think not—he has fallen! Rather let us rejoice that for him now and for evermore his own grand vision has been realised:—



“ At length the door is opened,  
 And free from pain and sin,  
 With joy and gladness on his head  
 The pilgrim enters in ;  
 The Master bids him welcome,  
 And on the Father's breast  
 By loving arms enfolded  
 The weary is at rest.

“ The pilgrim's staff is left behind,  
 Behind—the sword, the shield,  
 The armour dimmed and dented  
 On many a hard-fought field ;  
*His* now the shining palace,  
 The garden of delight,  
 The palm, the robe, the diadem,  
 The glory ever bright.

. . . . .  
 “ And now from out the glory,  
 The living cloud of light,  
 The old familiar faces  
 Come beaming on his sight ;  
 The early lost, the ever loved,  
 The friends of long ago,  
 Companions of his conflicts  
 And pilgrimage below.

“ They parted here in weakness,  
 And suffering, and gloom ;  
 They meet amid the freshness  
 Of heaven's immortal bloom ;  
 Henceforth in ever-during bliss  
 To wander, hand in hand,  
 Beside the living waters  
 Of the still and sinless land.”

And such, in all its fulness and beauty and blessing,  
is his, we believe, to-day,

By a striking coincidence his beloved and honoured friend, and for many years his colleague in the Theological Hall, Dr. Anthony Thomson Gowan, predeceased him by only a few days. They each esteemed the other for the eminent gifts they severally possessed; they loved as brethren; their common fellowship in labour was a mutual joy. "They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided."

As the jubilee of Dr. Alexander's ministry approached, friends were taking measures to celebrate the event by appropriate methods. To this occasion he had looked forward with peculiar interest. God had willed it otherwise by preparing for him something better. We asked life for him, and God has given him life, even length of days for ever and ever.

The lessons of his death are too obvious to require illustration here. May you, dear friends, to whom he ministered so long and faithfully, and whom he so greatly loved, have grace given you to prove by your Christian life and character until the end that he being dead yet speaketh. So shall you be best prepared for the blessed and eternal reunion of the heavens. Till then, however, and in the good hope of that great day of God, it remains for us in the meantime patiently and prayerfully to wait the consummation.

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“Farewell, dear honoured friend ! Where thou art gone  
Adieus and farewells are a sound unknown.  
May I but meet thee on that peaceful shore,  
The parting word shall cross these lips no more !”

AMEN.

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