

A

DISCOURSE

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

REV'D. JAMES M'CHORD;

DELIVERED IN MARKET-STREET CHURCH,

Lexington, Ky. Sabbath, 13th August, 1820.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

*THE ADDRESS DELIVERED AT HIS INTER-
MENT.*

BY ROBERT H. BISHOP, A. M.
Prof. of Nat. Philosophy and Hist. Trans. University

LEXINGTON:

PRINTED BY THOMAS T. SKILLMAN.

1821.

This page in the original text is blank.

TO

THE MEMBERS AND PEWHOLDERS

OF

MARKET-STREET CHURCH, LEXINGTON, KY.

THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSE

IS MOST AFFECTIONATELY & RESPECTFULLY

DEDICATED,

BY THEIR FRIEND AND SERVANT

IN THE GOSPEL OF OUR LORD JESUS.

THE AUTHOR.

This page in the original text is blank.

A DISCOURSE.

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

1 Cor. v. 1.

That we are mortal, and that we are soon, very soon, to enter the eternal world, is a truth which no individual of our race has the hardihood to deny. The truth may have no practical influence upon either the heart or the life, yet every man admits it, and every man also admits that it is a truth of the last importance. A truth with which he ought never to trifle—no not for a moment.

We are met here this morning from different quarters, and of different ages, and we are all met in one assembly for the first, and for the last time, on this side eternity. We were never all assembled before in any one place, and we will never again all meet in any other place till with our eyes we shall see the dead small and great stand before God.

It is our wisdom, not our folly, to have this great and important fact frequently brought home to our hearts as well as to our understandings. We are soon to close our eyes forever upon all the beauties of this lower world.—We must soon give up to other owners these profitable farms, and these elegant and commodious dwellings, and these extensive commercial speculations.. We must soon part with all these useful and agreeable companions—and these bodies of ours, so active and so curiously organized, are soon to be laid in the dust. And where will the soul, the better part, then be—? Shall it wing its way into the regions of bliss—to the mansions in the skies—and make one

of the innumerable company who drink of everlasting pleasures—? or shall it descend to the blackness and darkness of eternal death—?

Among those wise men who, by constantly keeping the fact of their mortality before them, have made this fact subservient to the noblest of purposes, the apostle Paul holds a distinguished place. He habitually remembered that he was mortal—and therefore did not consider any of the sufferings to which he was exposed in the present life, as of any great account. “They were but light afflictions, and only for a moment. The sufferings of the present life were not worthy to be compared with the glory which was to be revealed.” He was mortal—his bodily frame was soon to be dissolved—but in this dissolution he was not to be the loser. Suppose I am killed—suppose my body crushed in the service of my master! What then! “We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

Should the worst come to the worst—the worst which can possibly happen is intimately connected with the very best thing which God has to bestow. The worst that the wicked can do to a faithful servant of our Lord, is to send him to heaven. In the very worst possible case the faithful servant of our Lord has the advantage, as much as a building of God is beyond a mere tabernacle, or an heavenly house is better than an earthly, or that which is eternal is better than that which may be dissolved.

These bodies of ours are fearfully and wonderfully made. The muscular arm—the sparkling eye—the expressive countenance—the nimble limb—all proclaim their divine workmanship. But the whole structure is only temporary. We dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust; and we are crushed sooner than the moth.

Ever since sin came into the world this beautiful and apparently strong fabric has been in its best state crazy and tottering, and the inhabitant has frequently much to do to keep it in only tolerable repair. It must be daily propped by food. It must be fenced by raiment from the injuries of the weather, the very changes of which sensibly effect it—and the aid of the physician, with the experience of a thousand years, must frequently be called in. And yet after all, there is no keeping of it standing beyond a small number of years. If outward troubles, like so many storms, do not overturn it—if it is not crushed by the innumerable accidents of the moment—it is but for some provision to miss its proper channel, or a few drops of blood to run out of their proper vessel—it is but for some string to crack by frequent use, or some small passage to be choaked up, or some small portion of the usual food not to produce the usual effect—and it falls all at once. The dust returns to the dust as it was, and from the most lovely and enchanting object, it is in a few hours transformed into the vilest and most loathsome.

Among the many causes which produce the dissolution of the fair and stately building—the action of the mind,—the action of the inhabitant upon the clay tenement, is none of the least. We have all felt the effects of this action.—Grief preys upon the animal spirits, makes us forget our daily and necessary food, and in a few days or months crushes the whole frame. Intense application of any kind gives an unnatural impulse to the animal fluids, raises the pulse to the rapidity of fever, and by beating and beating on every fibre, soon leaves the whole system a wreck. And if to these are added great anxiety for the fate of some favourite object, and a continual vibration betwixt hope and fear, betwixt the highest joys and the most pungent sorrows, the strongest constitution with which ever mortal

was endowed, unless supported by some counteracting principles, will not last long.

And of all the occupations of man, the ministerial office, when sufficiently understood, and entered upon with becoming spirit, produces the greatest action of the mind upon the clay tabernacle. Here there is the most intense application, for the whole soul is engaged. And here the labour is of such a kind, that all the varieties of hopes and fears—of joys and sorrows, are continually operating upon the man. And to this point we would particularly turn your attention at this time. And in illustrating it, we shall simply glance at a few obvious facts—facts so obvious that it will require very little stretch of thought to make the suitable application.

Christian friends and fellow mortals,—we watch for souls, each of whom is of more value than a world—we watch for those souls for whom the Son of God laid down His life. And we watch for those souls, as those who are to give an account; and who are to account for the loss of souls, at the peril of the loss of their own souls.

We are the representatives or agents of Jehovah in his great work of reconciling the world to himself. We are entrusted in a great measure with the execution of the most glorious of all God's plans—the plan to which all his other works of creation and providence are made subservient.

The final result of our labours can never in any case be a matter of indifference. It is in every case either a soul saved, or a soul lost. To one we are the saviour of death unto death, and to the other saviour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? And who is there, who being daily and hourly impressed with a sense of this vast responsibility, has not his mind agitated with hopes and fears, with joys and sorrows, far beyond any thing which is felt in any of the other departments of human life? The

apostle himself, when he determined to know nothing among them to whom he laboured, save Jesus and him crucified, was with them in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.

But again. Those souls, for whom we ought to travail as in birth, are not generally sensible either of their own value, or of their own danger—or of the value and suitability of the salvation which is offered to them in the gospel. They weary men, and they weary our God also. They daily give occasion of grief to those who in some measure feel for their situation, and they daily grieve God's good and Holy Spirit. "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." "How shall I give thee up Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim?—Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together."

And how often are the most flattering prospects of ministerial success blasted? This or the other individual gives some evidence of being awakened. The servant of souls enters with exquisite feelings into all the supposed feelings of the supposed convert. He weeps with him when he weeps, and he partakes also largely of his joys. But after a few weeks or months of alternate distress and alternate joy, he returns again to the world, or he sinks down into a cold and lifeless profession. And the servant of souls has now to weep by himself, for the object of his grief cannot enter into his feelings. Hear the declaration of an apostle, 2 Cor. xii. 20, 21. "For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not; lest there be de-

bates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness, and fornication, and lasciviousness, which they have committed."

And even with respect to those who in some measure preserve their first love, and who continue to give some considerable evidence of having passed from death unto life, the anxiety of the faithful servant of our Lord Jesus is great and permanent. The heart of man is remarkably deceitful. The adversary of souls is ever on the alert. The world at large is watching for our halting. Instances of final apostacy even in those who were considered the most firmly established are numerous. And just in proportion as our pleasures and our hopes are high, when the word has apparently produced the desired effect, will be our disappointment and our mental agony when facts demonstrate that even in our prosperity the enemy had only deceived us.

Now, add to all these things—that the man of God, the faithful expounder of God's word, is a man of reading, a man of study and close thinking, a man who, from fidelity to his master and the souls of men, never attempts to serve his God with that which cost him nothing.—And add also—that as a man of prayer, he has to wrestle with his God in his closet for himself, and his family, and his flock, and his careless neighbours—and that as a christian, he has to watch over his own heart, deceitful above all things and desperately wicked—and that he is always more or less reminded, that after he has preached Christ to others he himself may be a cast-away.—Add all these things together, and the wear and tear of the body by mental exertion must be daily and hourly and nightly, and always of such

a kind as admits of very little repair. Against continual wastes of this kind, the most approved rules to promote longevity and bodily vigour furnish no defence. The only rule given in all such cases is, "Remove the cause;" that is, cease to discharge ministerial duty with vigour and fidelity.

And yet these are not all. Nor are they in many cases the kind of mental feelings which are the most destructive to our animal nature. The messenger of God's salvation to fallen man is himself a man. He has all the feelings and a large share of the infirmities of men. And while he is himself the object of envy and jealousy, and every malicious passion, those passions themselves also occasionally prey upon his own spirits. See Acts xv. 34—39. and Gal. ii. 11—14.

He is a man, and he expects to be supported by his fellow men and fellow christians in the faithful discharge of the important duties of his station. But in cases innumerable, and in important cases too, he is left, so far as human aid is concerned, to stand alone. Nay it is even well, if those from whom he expected important assistance are not found in the opposition. See Gal. iv. 12—18.

He is a man, and as a man he is a member of civil as well as of religious society; and as a member of civil society, he partakes more or less of the spirit of the place where Providence has cast his lot. And from every thing, whether without or within, which disturbs the peace of the place, he also suffers, and generally suffers in a manner peculiar to himself.

He is a man, and he has all the honorable feelings of a man. He puts a high value upon his character, and this character is to him every thing; and yet this character is frequently by no means respected or appreciated, or defended as he expected it would have been, even by those

who are very far from joining the hue and cry which is raised against him.

He is a man, and he has all the relations of a man, and he is under obligations to perform all the social duties of a man. The anxieties of the family, and the affections of the family, and the little jealousies of the family, and the daily wants of the family, are consequently daily preying upon his spirits. And from his habits, and from his high state of moral feeling, and from the rank which he is supposed to hold in society, all these different kind of feelings have a more destructive influence upon his animal frame, than the very same kind of cares have upon other men, in other situations of life.

The general proposition is then, we think, clearly made out—viz.—That of all the occupations of men, the ministerial office, when sufficiently understood, and entered upon with becoming spirit, produces the most intense action of the mind upon the clay tabernacle.

It was under such labours, and under such anxieties, that the clay tabernacle of our friend, whose death we would this day improve, was worn out. Blest with a mind of the first order—having his lot cast under circumstances peculiarly trying—feeling strongly the obligations under which he was to have his all devoted to the service of his master—the earthly tenement was battered down before, in the ordinary language of men, he had half fulfilled his days. His period of public services was short—his period of notoriety and successful action still shorter—but from the hour that he resolved to live, and to serve his God and his fellow men, by the energies of his mind, till the hour that his spirit took its flight to the land of spirits, the action of his mind upon his body was continued and intense, and the building was nearly dissolved before the value of the inhabitant was known, except by a few of those who were in some degree kindred spirits.

He was from the very commencement of his studies a close student—and all that he studied he resolved thoroughly to understand. In no case was it enough for him merely to know that such and such was the doctrine taught, or such and such was the matter of fact. In every case, and in every step, he thought and examined for himself—and in many cases in the course of his studies he carried his enquiries, and made his application of facts considerably farther than either his author or instructor had done. Originality was a leading feature in the character of his mind.

He entered upon the great work of the ministry under circumstances peculiarly well adapted for the excitement of a mind of this cast. The important tract of country extending from the Allegheny to the Gulf of Mexico was to be the sphere of his action. He beheld this vast region filling up with immortal beings. He knew the value of natural advantages. The fertility of the soil—the salubrity of the climate—the facilities for internal navigation, of this portion of the country, were duly appreciated by him. He despised not political sagacity. The wisdom of the legislator—the integrity of the judge—the valor of the soldier, he well knew were essential to the prosperity of any country; and with no common joy did he behold these intellectual and moral talents springing up among the sons of the west, with a luxuriance only surpassed by the productions of their fields and their forests. But with him all plans of future greatness were deficient which did not embrace ETERNITY. And with him the gospel of God's Son, with its regenerating and sanctifying influences, was the only thing which could confer durability and happiness upon any association of men. He beheld, and beheld with no ordinary feeling, that the means enjoyed for religious and moral improvement were

neither of that character nor of that extent which the wants of such a country required. Nor, without a very great change in the spirit and conduct of those whose duty it was to attend to these matters, were adequate means likely soon to be enjoyed. For, whatever may be the fact now, the real situation of this important section of the union, was at the time of his entering into the ministry, not known, or if known, not generally felt, even by those among us who were very far from being indifferent to these things.— That he had at this time pretty accurate conceptions of the state of things, and what is more, had an accurate conception of the only remedy, and actually made some considerable exertions to apply the remedy, it will be the duty of his biographer to state.

The circumstances, my friends, under which he endeavoured, in the strength of his Master, to rear up within these walls—“a glorious church—(to use his own words) a church composed of spirits ardent as the seraph—pure as heaven’s own cherubim, and lofty as arch angels which bow before God;”—these circumstances, and these labours and these anxieties, are still fresh before us. Many of them are also of such a nature that, though my heart is considerably steeled against feelings of that kind, yet I could not command myself in attempting any detail. But they are fresh and known; and may they never be forgotten by us, or by any to whom he ministered, till under the influence of the good and holy Spirit they produce that great and important effect, which was the object of all his labours, and all his anxieties.

He was taken away from among us, while his value was but very imperfectly known. Yet he lived not, he laboured not in vain. When Messiah’s mighty plan shall be fully executed, it will be seen that the labours and the sufferings of JAMES M’CHORD were important links in the grand

chain of events which are ushering in the glory of the **latter days**. The building in which we are assembled, which we trust will be consecrated to the service of Almighty God till the consummation of all things, and within whose walls the praises of the Saviour shall perhaps be singing at the very moment when the second coming of Messiah shall be announced.* Yes, this building, and the successive generations of worshippers within it, shall bear testimony that he lived; that he laboured not in vain.

He lived not in vain.—In the vast assembly which is now before the throne, there are already more than one individual, who, in raising and in continuing the song—“worthy is the Lamb who was slain,”—points to a corner of a pew in Market-Street church, in which her or his heart was first led to acknowledge the Lamb’s supremacy.

He lived not in vain.—By no means. He has entered into his rest, and his works shall follow him. The Spirit shall yet be given—nay, we trust he is already given, to bring to remembrance many of the warnings and admonitions, and tenders of mercy, which he made to perishing sinners in the name of his Master. And for many years yet to come, standing on the portals of high heaven, he shall welcome into the society of the blessed, “you my father, and you my little daughter.”§

He lived not in vain.—While the English language is known—while any thing of refined taste and genuine piety shall fire the human heart, his Vol. of Sermons entitled “A Last Appeal,” shall bear testimony of a lofty mind bringing all its energies into the service of the sanctuary. And what is more—these sermons shall be, in the hands of the Spirit of God, while they are known, as they have already in some instances been, the means of leading

* *Last Appeal*, page 26. § *Ibid.* page 182—183.

many of the thoughtless and of the hardened, to contemplate Eternity, and the realities of Eternity, as objects of desire—not of dread.

He lived not in vain.—He was selected by infinite wisdom, as the first of a noble host of native Kentuckians who in the morning of life, and at a period in the history of their country when the honours and the emoluments of this world were to be found every where but among the servants of the Cross, have deliberately devoted their substance, and their time, and their talents, and their literary acquirements, and their lives, to promote the eternal salvation of their fellow men.

Hail Kentucky!—Messiah's grant of the heathen, and of the ends of the earth, covers thy extensive and fertile fields. Thy own sons shall yet wave Messiah's banner, and publish Messiah's salvation, along thy every brook and along thy every mountain side. The wisdom which is from above, which is first pure, and then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy, shall yet be the inheritance of thy numerous children. And in the day when our God shall come, and all his saints with him, JAMES M'CHORD shall be seen rising from that vault and taking his place at the head of the Kentucky detachment.

And "the resurrection of the just shall unfold his character," and shall fully explain all that has been dark and mysterious in his lot. May you and I, my friends, on that important day, have our portion with him. And when we are called individually to put off this clay tabernacle, may we give as decisive evidence as he gave, that we are going to an house not made with hands eternal in the heavens.

AMEN.

ADDRESS DELIVERED AT HIS INTERMENT,

May 30, 1820.

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

The occasion on which we are assembled speaks, and speaks loudly to us, and to the inhabitants of this town—or rather—the God who made us—the God who preserves us—and the God who is soon to be our judge, speaks to us through the occasion.

Another* of God's messengers of peace is departed—and is taken from us by his master in the prime of life. The event itself is a sermon—and no ordinary sermon. May we attend to it.

Our brother, who frequently addressed us in this house, and prayed us in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God, is now taken home, and his dust is to be deposited in this sacred spot till the resurrection of the great day. He has, by the will of God, served his generation. We are yet left in our different stations, and with our different talents and different opportunities of usefulness. But how soon, or under what circumstances, we may be called to follow him into the eternal world, we know not. Let us occupy till our Lord come. "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence: But we will bless the Lord from this time and for evermore."

Perhaps to every individual present our departed brother has, on more occasions than one, made a plain, a direct, and pressing offer of pardon and peace, and eternal salvation through the blood of the atonement. And to the most of us, he has made many such offers. And before his body could be brought to the place of interment, he has made his return to his Master.† He has given in his account, and we must in our turn individually give in ours.

* *The Rev. Benjamin Birge, of the Episcopal Church, at the age of 25, and who had been only a few months in orders, had died 1st April.*

† *Last Appeal, page 90.*

Sinner, wilt thou still reject, and reject to thy own eternal destruction, God's offer of peace?—Were our departed brother to address you again, he would just in God's name say, as he often said, "Why wilt thou die? There is hope in Israel for you. God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing to them their trespasses. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so even is the Son of man lifted up—that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. We pray you therefore in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God. Put not away from you the Saviour and his salvation. With the simplicity of a little child give yourself up to the Saviour. Make direct application to this Saviour, and verily thou shalt be saved. Reject this Saviour—neglect and despise the ordinances of the Saviour, and thou must perish."

Sinner, thou art once more warned, and if thou dost perish, thy blood shall be upon thy own head.

Friends of our Lord Jesus—who in mercy were called from darkness to light—from death to life—or who were edified and comforted under the ministrations of our departed brother—give thanks to God on his account, and on your own account. You are to be his crown of joy and rejoicing in the day of the Lord. In you, and in the multitude whom we trust you will be the means of bringing to glory, he is to have a full compensation for all the sorrows and and toils, and distresses of every kind, which he endured, and endured as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. His warfare was perhaps severe—but it was short. He served a good Master—he was not kept too long in the field. He is now entered into an eternity of unmixed enjoyment, as the reward of a few years hard services.

Personal friends of the deceased—The object of your attention had a heart without guile.* Your friendship there-

* *Last Appeal*, page 119.

fore was not misplaced. His Master also duly appreciates all the services and offices of love, which you performed to his disciple and servant in the gospel. And this Master will be in no man's debt. He will fully reward you and yours even in this life. And only commit your personal salvation to the same keeping to which your departed friend at an early period of life committed his personal salvation, and when all earthly friends must stand at a distance, you will not be without a friend. And that friend will be the Lord of the happy land into which you shall be admitted.

Personal enemies of the deceased, if any such are present—JAMES M'CHORD was a man, and a young man, and he had to deal with men—and it was his lot to deal with men, sometimes under circumstances peculiarly delicate—and sometimes also to deal with men who were not always of the most gentle temper. He may therefore, in some cases, have given just cause of offence, and of alienation of affection.

He was a faithful minister of our Lord Jesus Christ.—He declared the whole counsel of God, and knew of no compromise betwixt light and darkness, betwixt Christ and Belial. He never for a moment admitted the principle that a man might at the same time be a genuine friend of Messiah, and the servant of the God of this world. He never flattered. He was consequently, as his master was before him, hated by the world.

But whatever he was when he was himself flesh and blood, and when he had to deal with flesh and blood, he is now among the spirits of just men made perfect, and is himself as perfect as any of them. And he now knows in all its extent and force, the injunction of our Lord—"Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you." And were he now to speak, he would