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Remarks at P.T. S. Funeral

Jan 18-1888
Remarks of the Rev. Dr. S. Sunderland at the obsequies of
Dr. Peter Parker, Friday, January 13, 1883.

The event which convenes us to-day though not unanticipated,
has nevertheless awakened an emotion of sympathy—and as we feel
it—even a grief that proclaims the sundering of the fondest earthly
ties, the suspension of the most sacred earthly relationships.

Though it has come to pass in the ordinary courses of nature
and has closed the earthly life of a man in the ripeness of his age
an age of four score and four years—still no gradual approach, no
gentleness of coming, no abundance of preparation for it could alto-
etgether mitigate the shock of the final moment or the suddenness of
the inevitable separation.

Dr. Parker with his life-long Christian faith and devotion,
his deep and spiritual reading of the word and providence of God,
conscious of his growing physical infirmities, realizing the changes
which year by year and month by month were bearing him toward the
brink of the river, and his own transit from the visible, to the in-
visible world, nevertheless lost nothing of his great interest in the
fortunes of the Redeemer's Kingdom among men, in the vast questions
of human civilization and national destiny, or in the success of what-
ever may tend to diffuse the light of the Christian Gospel among the
enlighted and imperiled families of the globe.

To the very last and as long as reason and memory were clear
be regarded with an almost paternal solicitude every movement in
his own and in other lands which might possibly affect favorably or
unfavorably the triumph of evangelical Christianity among all the
races of mankind; and to him it was in some sense doubtless a source
of regret that he should be withdrawn from the personal co-operation.
contact, intercourse and fellowship of so many with whom he had been
so happily and honorably associated in so great a variety of patriot-
ic, philanthropic, and Christian endeavors.

None of these things, however, interrupted his most sacred meditations upon the life to come or dimmed for a single moment the conviction of its realities or the hope of eternal glory which so surely possessed him.

Especially in these last years the Word of God was the man of his counsel, and became more and more a lamp to his feet and a light to his path—and through the wide range of literature with which he was so familiar, that seemed only to attract him which more clearly rendered to his thought the wisdom of the infinite mind or the vital consciousness of the human soul. In its yearning after God and the supreme experience of the coming immortality.

But what shall I say to you—his family and friends, of this great and good man—even this Prince of Israel. How can I fitly speak of one whose character and achievements have been so conspicuous and so beneficial to the world. No poor words of mine can add anything to his fame, while in the soberness of our last offices of reverence and affection we come to bury and not to praise him.

The life which has just now here closed on earth is already written in many an archive of our century. In America, in England and in China his name is familiar as a household word. Extended over a period of one of the most eventful chapters of the world's history, this life was associated with the most eminent factors that have given shape and direction to many of the great modern reformatory movements and many far-reaching and international affairs.

A thorough evangelical Christian, a preacher of the gracious Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the righteousness which is by faith—a distinguished physician and surgeon, a fellow of scientific Associations, a regent of the Smithsonian Institution, President of the Washington Branch of the American Evangelical Alliance, a member of the Executive Committee of the American Colonization Society,
a prominent figure in the vast undertakings of modern evangelical missions, keenly alive to everything that concerns the highest welfare of mankind, his venerable presence was for a long period seen and felt among many bodies of the most distinguished philosophers and philanthropists and Christians in this and in foreign lands.

Yet in all this he was simple and humble as a little child, a Christian father, the husband of a Christian woman and the head of a Christian household, the Crown and Chief of a large family relationship, fortunate in his temporal prosperity, fraternal towards his brethren in the ministry of Christ, affable, accessible, and loving in all his associations; combining with singular felicity the most exalted dignity with the gentlest courtesy and amenity of life.

But the ruling principle, the master passion of his mind and the very keynote of all his life was the unwavering trust and childlike confidence of his soul in Jesus Christ as the Redeemer and Saviour of the world, and his unflagging reliance upon the word of God as the eternal counsel and revelation of infinite wisdom to mankind.

In the many conversations it was my privilege to have with him during the long period of his life, and suffering this quality and direction of his thoughts were ever uppermost and conspicuous.

Thoroughly familiar with every portion of the Sacred Volume, his mind would revert to and his lips recite passage after passage and promise after promise of the great and precious Book, not in the cold speculation of philosophic analysis, not in the tasteless scrutiny of a caviling critic, but as if he were actually feeding on the word of God as to him, "the very bread and water of eternal life".

His religion was experimental and his faith correspondingly profound. Anchored in the great doctrines of Christianity as propounded by Christ and the apostles, by the orthodox Christian fathers, by the reformers and confessors of the 16th century and by
the great preacher of Evangelism since that day, he had no sympathy with the vagaries of the modern 'new theology' and deplored with the strongest lamentation its pernicious influence on modern missions and on the whole church of God both at home and abroad. Confined so long by disease and suffering in his own chamber, his thoughts were constantly reaching out after God and the glorious mystery of the unseen beyond.

And never in his proudest and most conspicuous hour, not even when as Minister resident and Plenipotentiary from the latest to the oldest existing Government on earth he stood in the imperial court, did he seem so venerable, so full of dignity, of power, sweetness and love as when in the serenity of his retirement in his own house, by his own request we bowed together in prayer before the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

Always dwelling upon the wonders of redemption, always looking forward to his own departure from this earthly stage, he sought expression of this great change in any words of others which seemed to be a vehicle of his own aspiration.

And just as he had found a hymn of Burder which he adopted as his own, often with his devoted and ever sympathetic wife he had spoken of these lines with a sacred request that if she should be near him in the final hour, she that would read them in his hearing, when crossing the river that voice and these words might be the last he could ever hear on earth.

And so in the gracious providence of God, it was.

To see the current of his mind in his last hours I recite these lines:

170 the hour when this material
shall have vanished as a cloud,
when amid the wide ethereal
Can I remember the invisible shall crowd:
And the naked soul surrendered,
with realities unknown,
triumphing in the view unbound,
seal herself with God alone.

Then the Judge, the unconquered,
in that sudden, strange transition,
by what new and finer sense,
shall she grasp the mighty vision,
and receive its influence,
the New Immortal,
through the wonder, treading space,
to the everlasting portal,
to the spirits resting place.

in the living fountains lead she,
will she then in no condition,
naught of human love retain,
or absorbed in pure devotion,
will no earthly trace remain;
then the grave those ties disperse
with the very heart-strings twined,
how she part and part forever,
with the friend she leaves behind.

Angels, let the ransomed stranger,
in your tender care be blest,
Hope ing, trusting, safe from danger,
Till the trumpet end her rest.
Till the trumpet which shakes creation,
Through the circling heavens shall roll,
Till the day of consummation,
Till the bridal of the soul.

Can I trust a fellow being,
Can I trust and angel's care
O thou Merciful, All-seeing!

Seek around my spirit there,
Jesus, blessed mediator,
Thou the airy path hast trod,
Thou the Judge, the consumator,
Shepherd of the fold of God.

Blessed fold; no foe can enter,
And no friend departs the same,
Jesus is their sun and center,
And their shield, Omnipotence;
Blessed; for the Lamb shall feed them,
All their tears shall wipe away,
To the living fountains lead them.
Rich fruitsions perfect day.

Lo! it comes that day of wonder,
Loud chorals shake the skies,
Hades' gates are burst asunder,
Sea, the new clothed myriads rise;
Thought repress thy weak endeavor,
Here must reason prostrate fall,
O the ineffable "Forever!"
And the eternal, "All in all!".

On Monday the day before his departure as he was lying quietly, his ever watchful wife asked him "If he could think?" His reply was most truly characteristic. "Not much," he said, and then as if turning from his best earthly friend to his great heavenly Friend, he added, "Only to be passive in Thy hands-I know no will but Thine." This was his last Christian testimony on earth, and, now as we look on that most placid countenance, even in death more beautiful, can we doubt for one moment that he lies asleep in Jesus?
And, so our father and friend, departed, with her last voice and those last words lingering in his ears. So we went out into the great invisible, one hour in the afternoon when the winter sun fell westering, gliding the windows of his earthly habitation with a symbolic light. So he went away to leave us lingering and yearning on these earthly shores for such a space as may seem best to God. Soon though to follow him, as we trust, into the glad reunion. And as he went at last, so swiftly ascending as in a moment to the glorious upper realms, may we not have shouted, in the cry of one of old, as the great prophet ascended into heaven,

"My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horses thereof."

On whom shall his mantle fall. As the servants of God shall finish their work on earth and are summoned home at last, there must be among the children and youth of our times and of our country a vocation of God from which they may not turn away. Though the workmen die the work of Christ can never perish. The places of the mighty men who have borne up the standard of the cross so grandly must be filled from the coming generations till all is consummated. Elisha must succeed Elijah in the stupendous labor of the world's redemption; and if to-day standing by the grave of this revered man of God, this father in Israel, this patriarch of the tribe of Judah, this eminent doctor of the law, this noble missionary of the cross, some flame springing from his ashes might kindle the breast of a young man or of many of the two sexes, with that all-consuming passion for mankind's deliverance, how gladly would he recognize from yonder exaltation the truth of the divine testimony concerning the saints of God. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, yea saith the Spirit from henceforth, for they rest from their labors and their works do follow them."

It will be to you and to all of us who knew him a startling change that we can see him no more. But will not his memory be
ever before us, will not his life, his toil, his triumph ever remain with us to realize in our own experience more and more the stability of the Redeemer's kingdom among men, the strength of our faith and the hope of eternal glory.

He has taught us lessons never to be forgotten. Henceforth we shall think of him as crowned and robed for an everlasting ministry, a peer of apostles and martyrs, brother of the mighty fraternity of the Saints of whom,

"All of the host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now."

And now what remains but the final rites of sepulture—not to be swallowed up of our own much sorrow, though indeed it be a grief that we shall see him among us here no more, but rather with thanksgiving to God that we have known him so long, and so well, that he has been so fondly dear to us on earth, that he has wrought out such miracles of faith, that he has by God's help bestowed such benefits on the human race, that now, as in a chariot of prophetic fire he has gone up to the eternal reward, to the society of all the redeemed and to the ineffable presence of our Christ and God.

Farewell, father and friend, hero, chieftain, noble soul. With hearts full of memories, with inspirations from thyself which put to shame the gloomy and despairing, the cold and bitter scepticisms of our times, looking forward to that wondrous day for which all other days are made, once more, and again; we say a final farewell. Wait for us and watch for us. God help us at length to meet again all safe on the other side. Amen.