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Hartford, January 29th, 1865, by J. Williams**

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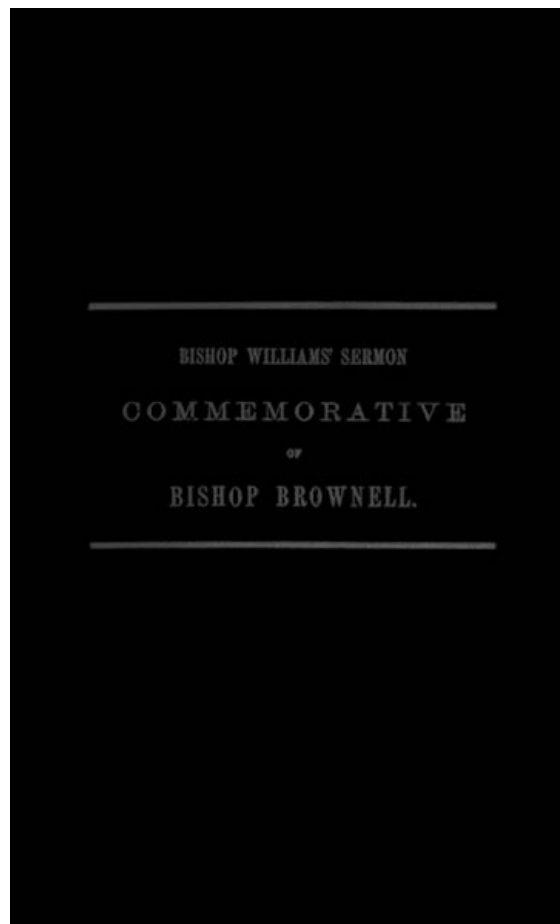
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A SERMON PREACHED IN CHRIST
CHURCH, HARTFORD, JANUARY 29TH, 1865 ***



**A SERMON
PREACHED IN
CHRIST CHURCH, HARTFORD,**

JANUARY 29th, 1865;

IN COMMEMORATION OF

THE RT. REV.

THOMAS CHURCH BROWNELL,

D. D., LL. D.,

THIRD BISHOP OF CONNECTICUT,

AND

PRESIDING BISHOP OF THE PROTESTANT

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

IN THE UNITED STATES.

BY
HIS ASSISTANT AND SUCCESSOR.

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HARTFORD:
BROWN & GROSS.
1865.

SERMON.

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PROVERBS, xi: 11.

BY THE BLESSING OF THE UPRIGHT THE CITY IS EXALTED.

It is a law of the Divine government of the world, that the temporal blessings granted to the righteous, and the temporal punishments sent upon the wicked, are shared in by others than the individuals specially concerned. We realize this perhaps, more distinctly, and it comes home to us more solemnly, in the latter case than in the former. For so it is, that the punishments of the Almighty always impress us more than his mercies. The occasional thunder-bolt awes us as the daily sunlight does not; the sweeping storm we wonder at as we do not at the gentle rain and dew; death is more solemn to us than the continued life. We feel God's hand in the first-named of all these things, we are apt to forget it in the last.

And yet the progress of the world gives us as many proofs that the blessings given to the righteous are shared in by others than themselves, as that the punishments sent to the wicked extend beyond those on whom, especially, they come. And God's word is as full of instances illustrating the one truth, as it is of those illustrating the other.

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For if we find in Jerusalem, Samaria, Babylon and Egypt, the innocent suffering with, and because of the guilty, so too we find not Lot alone, but his family with him, rescued from the city of the plain; not Joseph only, but his brethren also, and even his Egyptian lord, blessed and

prospered; not Elijah only, but the family of the widow of Sarepta, miraculously supported through the famine: not St. Paul alone, but "all in the ship, two hundred, three score and sixteen souls," preserved from wreck and destruction.^[A]

[A] Bishop Heber.

These instances, and there are many like them, illustrate and prove the law of God that the temporal blessings which are sent upon the righteous flow over, as one may say, upon others besides themselves. And, Beloved, do not the very instincts of our nature respond to, and recognise this law? Do we not rejoice in the presence among us of a godly man, even if our eyes rarely behold him; and is there not sorrow of heart and a more than ordinary feeling of vacancy when such an one is taken from us? And in either case, whether we joy or sorrow, is there not more in our hearts than a mere recognition of the value of example, counsel, guidance, which is *given* in the one case, and in the other is *taken* from us? Do we not on the one hand feel, that we have among us a herald and a pledge of the blessings from the Lord, blessings which shall light our pathway, as they have on his? or, on the other hand, is there not the feeling that such a herald, and such a pledge is gone, that an avenue of benediction has been closed, and that the world is darker than it was? And is the feeling of such loss ever deeper, or stronger than when a holy and a sanctified old age, around which gathered the gentlest ministries of earth, and the most precious ones of heaven, and which glowed in the high place where God had set it with the calm, mild glory of the evening star, has been taken away from us, transformed, though our eyes can not behold it, into the freshness of eternal youth?

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My Brethren, it is with this feeling of vacancy, and loss, and bereavement pressing on my heart that I come to you to-day, to speak of our dear and honored Bishop and Father whom God has taken from us. I utter no idle word of ordinary custom when I say, that it entails a task from which, for reasons which you know without their statement, I shrink. Not least among these reasons is the feeling that it almost seems presumptuous to add one word to those so fitly spoken, so leaving nothing to be said or even wished, when the mourning multitude that gathered round our departed Father's bier, made an Abel-mizraim indeed, of this House of God. Still, duty has seemed to demand this service at my hands, and I have tried to nerve myself for its discharge. And here, surely, is where any such words should be spoken; here, where he once held pastoral charge;^[B] here, where he came with the faithful to worship God; here, where all that remained on earth was brought, when life was ended. May God be with us all, that our communing here, may be for good!

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[B] Bishop Brownell was Rector of Christ Church, Hartford, from Dec. 1819 to Dec. 1820.

I will not weary and chill you, Brethren, with those ordinary biographical details with the chief of which you are already familiar, and which in another way and place will all be gathered and preserved. The thought that is uppermost in all our minds to-day, is that of the godly man whose serene old age has passed into the heavenly life; of the honored Prelate, oldest in consecration in all our now widely spread communion, who has laid down his earthly mitre, that he may receive "a beautiful crown from the Lord's hand."

His early life was full with the promise of the later; the youth was the fair pledge of the coming manhood. Two things, as it seems to me, stand out from these early years with a prominence that challenges attention. There was, first, the same gentle, thoughtful kindness, smoothing difficulties and restoring harmony and peace, that developed into so marked an element of the later character. He was known among his fellows, even then, as a peacemaker; and the very appellation which boyish affection, with the keen instinct that it often shows, bestowed upon him, marks the way in which this characteristic forced itself on the attention.

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But there was, besides, that capacity for rapid and ready acquirement and adaptation, which we trace so clearly in after years. At the age of fifteen, when as yet he had received no other education than that afforded by a common country school, he took charge of a school himself, and as he says,—with characteristic modesty—"succeeded in securing the respect of his former schoolmates." Who can doubt that the same marked qualities, the same wonderful balance, that made his Episcopate all it was, worked the same result in this so difficult and so contracted field of duty? Who does not believe that he might have spoken of affection as well as of respect? Who does not see the foreshadowing of the man in this little picture of the boy's every day life? It was not till he had nearly reached his majority that he decided to enter on a collegiate life. And then his preparation was all made in less than two years' time. Nor could it have been a hasty, patched-up preparation; for he held his place as a leader still, and when his college life was ended, stood first among his fellows. Such were the marks of his early years; how full of promise for, how exactly answered by, his future ones.

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The years of preparation ended, the choice of the life work came next, and this was to be the work of the Ministry; for to that his heart and purpose had long been turning. Had his earliest plans been carried out, he would, probably, have lived and labored in another Communion than our own, and his honored name and fragrant memory could never have been ours.

But now began a train of circumstances, so manifestly ordered by the Providence of God, that we can scarcely refuse to see in them, nay rather, that we may rejoice to see in them, the divinely arranged training for the great work for which God had appointed him.

While yet in his course of preparatory study, he found himself brought face to face with that question which has met so many men, and almost always, when pursued, with one result, the question as to the organization and framework of the Church of Christ. He paused upon it with his wonted carefulness. The result of his enquiry I give in his own words. "It unfolded to me a

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new aspect of Christianity. The discovery afforded me unspeakable relief; but it was necessarily attended with many regrets. I had no relative, and no intimate friend connected with the Episcopal Church, and I seemed to be left alone in the world, in regard to my religious sympathies." It was a cross, but he did not shrink from it. He determined to take time for a final decision.

Just then—it was in 1805—he was called to undertake the duties of collegiate instruction, and the call came in such a form that he would not refuse it. He could not have dreamed of all its bearings then, but we can see that this was another step by which he was led on towards a goal, how invisible then to him, how bright and glorious now to us!

In his academic life, we trace the same great notes of character that I paused on in his youth. How many are there who remember yet, the gentle ways in which he won the turbulent and the perverse, to better things; the even gentler ways, in which he led on those whose steps were ordered rightly; the many whom he lifted up when they were down, and cheered when they desponded. And here too, in a broader field and with a wider range, his powers of acquirement and adaptation gained fresh triumphs. In three different departments of instruction, not different merely, but diverse also, he labored, and he labored well. He filled a large place beyond the College walls. In many lines of activity and labor, where we, who knew him only as an ecclesiastic, can hardly fancy him, he gained respect and confidence. And all this made him a many sided man; gave him a varied culture; adorned and fitted him with diversified acquirements; was, in short, a noble earthly preparation for what was to be his real life work.

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And now, as we stand by him amidst these accumulated labors and these gathering honors, we are fain to ask, have we not found that life work? So we should think. So, perhaps, he thought. Yet it was not so.

His convictions, as has already been said, pointed him to our own Church, as the home of his rest; but he had never yet come in contact with it, nor had it been presented to him as a living reality. At last, in God's providence, after years had gone by, an event occurred which brought him into relations with those to whom, as yet, he had been a stranger. That event was his marriage in 1811.

As I utter these words, there comes, I am sure, to your minds as there does to mine, the picture of that domestic life which for more than half a century brought to our departed Father, a happiness that rarely falls to the lot of man; that affection of wife and children which gladdened his manhood, and watched with such lavish wealth of tenderness over his declining years. We all saw it living in and lighting up the household, and meeting love with answering love; and I saw it as it watched the dying bed, and showered such constant ministries, that it seemed to almost anticipate on earth the reunion of those homes in heaven, where death and pain may never come, and where God wipes away all tears forever. But I may not dwell on this—enough, too much, perhaps, to touch it—and I return to other things.

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The new companionships awoke old thoughts and convictions, not so much forgotten as laid aside under the pressure of instant and weighty duties. And now the thread was taken up once more, and the result of prayer and study was, that in 1813, in that ancient Church^[C] where for some time he had been a worshipper, a Church with which are associated the dearest and most cherished memories of my own ministerial life, our Father was made in Holy Baptism "a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven." His confirmation followed at an interval of scarce a week; and then all his leisure time was given to the study of Theology. Three years later, he knelt to receive at the honored hands of Hobart, his warrant to serve in the lowest of the Holy Orders, and in the same year was advanced to the "good degree" of the Priesthood.

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[C] St. George's, Schenectady, N. Y.

And now he has gained the condition of life to which God had so clearly called him; though of the field where labors, responsibilities and honors shall gather round him he can not even dream. His earliest ministerial labors were among scattered, feeble parishes in the neighborhood of his collegiate duties; and here—another instance it seems to me of providential ordering—he learned much that was to be of use in coming years.

For one year the venerable parish of Trinity Church, New York, was the scene of his pastoral work,—he thought, he has often told me, it was to be his resting place for life—and then he was transferred hither; and on the 27th day of October, 1819, a day long to be gratefully remembered in this Diocese, he was consecrated third Bishop of Connecticut, and the life work was reached at last.

Comparatively few can go back to that day now. To most of us it emerges dimly from the past as something we know about, only by the hearing of the ear. Our oldest living Prelates come no nearer to it than 1832. It long stood the bright spot that seemed to connect us with the earlier days. And now that its living light is gone, history claims the years down to a period so near us, that we are startled as we think of it.

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The Church in this Diocese needed, then, the very man whom God in his gracious goodness sent to it. The Episcopate had been vacant six years from the death of the second Bishop. Not all the evils, indeed, that must accompany so long a vacancy were felt; for the provisional charge exercised by Bishop Hobart, whose services and sacrifices were gratefully acknowledged then, and are gratefully remembered now, had guarded the Diocese from as many evils as any such charge could. Still, the necessity was obvious and pressing, and no one saw it more plainly than the clear-sighted Bishop of New York.

With what faithfulness, patience, long suffering, meekness, wisdom and prudence, that long Episcopate was gone through, that life work done, I need hardly tell you. How the varied culture, the manifold training, the diversified acquirements, which so quietly, and because so quietly, therefore so successfully, did their work, were crowned and irradiated with heavenly grace, with a living faith in the Crucified, and with an utter abnegation of other strength or merit than that of Jesus Christ, you know, indeed, we all know, and we rejoice in knowing. That well balanced and well rounded Christian character, all whose parts were so harmoniously blended, and which, as it was mellowed by advancing years, and gathered round itself the clustering honors of old age, even as the sun gathers around his setting bright clouds and glorious colorings, became such a centre of reverence and love, you have seen living among you, and you need no words of mine to recall it to you here. We have been privileged, all of us, to look for years on years—may we estimate the privilege at its great worth—on the "path of the just," and we have seen it "shining more and more unto the perfect day."

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How truly may we say as we recall that long Episcopate with its manifold labors, its personal graces and its great results, "If you seek his monument look around you." See it in our College, placed after years of struggle on a firm foundation; in the work of Church-extension, so vigorous now, so weak and stunted five-and-forty years ago; in the little band of clergy multiplied five-fold; in the seven parishes that maintained a pastor increased to a hundred; in the peace that marked that pure and wise administration, and the sorrow that bore witness to it when it ended. It may all be summed in the passage of the Psalmist—I can never read it without the involuntary application—"So he fed them with a faithful and true heart, and ruled them prudently with all his power."

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The knowledge of all this, and the feeling of all this, was universal through our whole communion. Every where he was known as the good man and the wise ruler; and his exercise of the responsible office of the Presiding Bishop was welcomed with joy and rested in with confidence; and with the feeling that in his hands, under God, the Church was safe.

But the end was to come, as the end must come to blessings and trials alike in this world of ours, and our Father was to be taken from us. "He was a burning and a shining light," and "we were willing for a season to rejoice in his light." But it could be only for a season that the light could shine on earth, then it must beam in Paradise.

I know how difficult and delicate a task it is to speak of the closing hours of any life. I know that ordinarily one shrinks from it, and would veil such sacred things from view. But the last hours and the dying testimony of an eminent Christian, and that Christian an aged and distinguished Prelate in the Church, are a part of the Church's heritage. Nay more, it seems to me a sacred duty that I should declare to you the witness of those last hours to which I was allowed in some degree to minister, and the memory of which will go with me while I live. But I shall try to observe such reticence as the case demands, though not, perhaps, what he would have imposed upon me.

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It pleased God in his mysterious providence that he should pass through great physical suffering before the release was granted. Yet no one ever heard, amid it all, a word of murmur, impatience or complaint. "Not more than I can bear," was the utmost acknowledgment of suffering that ever came from him. It was "the fellowship of suffering," making him perfect in the sufferer. Once when I had spoken to him of the comfort of the sustaining presence of the adorable Redeemer, he said fervently, "Yes, it is sufficient," and then solemnly lifting his hand towards heaven, he added, "and there is nothing else!"

The subdued and yet deeply earnest way in which he joined in the office of the last Communion he received on earth, and the fervency of his response, especially in the Confession, made the service, always so solemn and impressive, even more than ordinarily so. At its close, weak as he was, he rose to his feet, and joined, with a voice stronger than it had been before, and filled with deep emotion, in the *Gloria in Excelsis*. Fitting prelude to the eternal anthem which, this day, he sings in Paradise!

One scene there was, most dear and sacred perhaps of all, on which I may but barely touch. A dark and stormy day was drawing to its close; a day of gloom without, and of great anxiety and watchfulness within. Suddenly the storm clouds parted and were scattered, and the sun shone out almost with summer brightness. And within, the storm of suffering was stilled, and a space of rest was given to the sufferer, in which he spoke words of farewell and of blessing never to be forgotten; words for all present and absent too; words which not only proved that for him the sting of death was gone, but which mitigated also for others the bitterness of separation. It was a beautiful coincidence, the glorious sunlight without the dwelling, and within the light of a soul stayed on God, and cleansed in the blood of Christ, walking "through the valley of the shadow of death," and yet "fearing no evil," because of the comfort of the rod and the staff of God!

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At last, in God's great mercy, all suffering seemed to pass away, and the soul was released, so quietly, that we hardly knew when the earthly life ended and the eternal life began. "For so he giveth his beloved sleep."

Thus feebly and imperfectly, with a sorrowing heart and a trembling hand, I have written and spoken, Beloved, of our departed Father in the Lord. I can not close, even at the risk of being charged with speaking, when I ought not, of myself, without one word concerning my personal relations to him. For almost thirty years I had known, on earth, no other Father. From his hands I received my confirmation; from his hands my ordination to the Diaconate and Priesthood, and my consecration to the Episcopate; and once more, that same hand, in his latest hours, was laid on my head in parting benediction. For more than thirteen years I had been with him in relations of

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the closest confidence, and—I thank God—he told me at the last, that "no shadow had ever come between us." Brethren, give me your prayers, that if I can not be what he was, I may at least follow at humble distance where he has led. For myself, I can only say now and here, "My Father, my Father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!"

The briefest summary—no other can be needed, and, it may be, not even that—must close this painful task.

Our late Bishop was a godly man. His religion was not a religion that spent itself in words. Its stream was too deep and too full to flow otherwise than silently. But it spoke with that strongest logic and most persuasive rhetoric, the logic and the rhetoric of a consistent, even, well balanced Christian life. And this life was built up on those two foundations on which alone any Christian life can be built; trust in the merits of the Redeemer for salvation, and trust in the personal presence of the Holy Spirit, renewing the sinful soul to holiness. He was a true-hearted Churchman. In those convictions of the Church's claims to which careful and deliberate study brought him, he never wavered. Through life they went with him; through evil report and good report; and peacemaker as he was, he proved, time and again, that he would never seek peace at the sacrifice of principles. He was a wise ruler. As one has well said, he governed without seeming to govern. Giving to all their rights, all gave his rights to him, gladly and without reserve. He was a faithful Bishop. Few knew under what trial of physical suffering he went his rounds of duty, with such cheerful adaptation of himself to all persons and all places; with such thoughtful kindness and regard for the feelings of all with whom he came in contact; never allowing annoyance, and never, by any chance, giving discomfort on his way. Making such allowance as we must ever make for human infirmity and sinfulness, I ask, and I know the answer that will be given, did he not fulfill the solemn pledges of his consecration? Did he not teach his people from the Word of God? Did he not exercise himself in that Word, and "teach and exhort with wholesome doctrine," in his preaching, in his charges to his clergy and his people, and in his published works? Did he not faithfully watch against erroneous and strange doctrine? Was he not "an example of good works unto others?" Did he not maintain "quietness, peace and love among all men;" and diligently exercise discipline; and faithfully ordain others? And was he not merciful and gentle for Christ's sake to the poor and needy?

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With this witness then, Beloved, given by us here, laid up for him on high, I leave him, my friend, my Bishop and my Father, in the memories of his people, in the rest of his sleep in Jesus, in the glorious life of Paradise! As I close, words of our Blessed Lord are in my heart, and come unbidden to my lips.

"Blessed are the meek! for they shall inherit the earth!"

"Blessed are the merciful! for they shall obtain mercy!"

"Blessed are the pure in heart! for they shall see God!"

"Blessed are the peacemakers! for they shall be called the children of God!"

Transcriber's Note

The title on the front cover is:

BISHOP WILLIAMS' SERMON
COMMEMORATIVE
OF
BISHOP BROWNELL.

The author of this work should be Bishop John Williams (successor of Bishop Brownell).

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A SERMON PREACHED IN CHRIST CHURCH,
HARTFORD, JANUARY 29TH, 1865 ***

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