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REV. E. McLEOD.

"THAT GOD IN ALL THINGS MAY BE GLORIFIED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST."

Peter.

[Editor and Proprietor.]

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THE EARTHLY AND THE HEAVENLY HOUSE.

A SERMON DELIVERED BY THE REV. W. ARTHUR, M.A.,

At Highbury Wesleyan Chapel, Sunday Morning, April 5.

"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."—II. Cor. v. 1.

These are the words of a man living amidst

trouble. "We are troubled on every side; we

are persecuted." And persecuted, not in the way

which sometimes happens to us, when if any person

gives us a cross look or a cross word, or in the

least degree interferes with our feelings or interest

on account of our religion, we at once dignify the

very slight inconvenience by the name of persecu-

tion. It was not so with him. His comforts

were sacrificed—his person was not respected—

his life was never for a moment secure. He

always bore about in the body the dying of the

Lord Jesus—was always delivered to death—in

the continual uncertainty whether he might live

another hour, and as to what form of violence sud-

den death might assume. Yet, though this was

the state of the case, he does not make much of

his troubles. He calls them a light affliction, endur-

ing but for a moment; and he rather looks at

their effect than at themselves. The effects are

twofold—in this world, and in the world to come

they work a far more exceeding and eternal

weight of glory. In this world the inward man

is renewed day by day. What—the man renewed

by suffering, by wrong, by tribulation, by death?

Not the whole man. The outward man perishes;

the hair bleaches, the brow becomes wrinkled,

the frame decays, the limbs tremble. The outward

man shows signs of going down under the con-

stantly accumulated pressure of all these afflictions,

but the inward man is renewed day by day. The

spirit, instead of being broken by the repetition of

calamities, is rising up yonder more joyful than it

ever was before. How is this? It is, he says,

because we look not at the things that are seen,

but at the things that are not seen. He means

no paradox here. The language appears paradoxical,

but that is only at first sight. You say, How

can a man look at what he does not see? A man

sees by very few things. The eye was never

meant to see everything in this physical world,

much less everything in the universe. It was

never intended to see the thoughts that lie within

the heart, nor the great world of spirits which is

as near to us as the world of bodies, and with

which we are infinitely more connected. There

are things that are seen; there are things that

are not seen; and according to the state of a

man's heart he looks at the one or the other.

There are things he cannot help seeing; and

there are things that, if the inward eye is closed,

he never sees at all. The soul has its eye as

well as the body; and when the eye of the soul is

opened, he that up to that time was unconscious

that he was ever walking and moving in the midst

of an infinitely populous world of spiritual beings,

and in the everlasting presence of one great Power

—one great Judge—sees the things that are not

seen—discerns the invisible—lives in the presence

of God, of heaven, of hell, of the judgment-day,

of the angels that are bright, of the devils that are

fallen, of the saints that are happy in glory, of the

human spirits that are lost in sin. All these be-

come to him realities, and he looks at the things

that are not seen. The mind's eye rests

upon them, and the conclusion is, that the things

that are seen are temporal, and the things that

are not seen are eternal.

Oh, would to God you all thought what a ser-

mon you preach to yourselves in every time you

say, I must attend to my temporal affairs. Yes;

you must. They are "affairs"—things to be done.

They are your affairs. You say "my temporal

affairs"—what do you mean? Precisely the same

as if you had said "my temporal affairs"—affairs

that I have in hand at present, but that I shall not

have in hand long; mine to-day, but to-morrow

they may be the affairs of my son, or of a stranger,

or of an enemy. The things that are not seen

are eternal; but the things that are seen are tem-

poral; they are passing away. Now, I have no

doubt that there are many here who feel when

they are honest with themselves that such thoughts

pressing upon their minds, so far from renewing

their spirit and raising them above all trouble,

would be the very things to depress them. They

feel that nothing would bear them down so much

as the thought that business, friend, wife, children

houses, lauds, were but for a moment; or as look-

ing at the things that are not seen—the day of

judgment, the great Judge, the world to come. I

can imagine a person saying, "All this would

make me melancholy and sad." Probably it

would; but that was not the case with St. Paul.

He said that looking at those eternal things renewed

his spirit in the midst of temporal trouble. Why?

Why was it that it should produce that effect

upon him and not upon you? Simply because of

what is expressed in my text, "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."

Here you see the Apostle has in view three

things, the dissolution before all mortals, the restora-

tion provided for all the saints, and the confidence

that restoration was actually his own. The dissolu-

tion before all mortals is this—the "earthly house

of this tabernacle" is to be "dissolved;" the restora-

tion provided for all saints is this—"the building

of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in

the heavens;" the confidence is this "we know

that we have a building of God, a house not

made with hands."

As to the dissolution which is here looked

forward to, the body of man is not regarded by

St. Paul as if it were nothing, or as if it were

merely an excrescence of manhood. It is not the

man; yet it is the outer man. It is not a mere

encumbrance; it is a house—an abode prepared

for the offspring of the eternal being who dwells

within it. It is true that it is but an "earthly

house" made of clay, but it is marvellously fashion-

ed by God's hands. He that made the eye knew

every property of the sunbeams, had perfect mas-

tery over them, and knew exactly how to harmon-

ize the operations of the eye with their influence,

and make the two together do the perfect service

of the spirit that is within. The Maker of the eye

was the Lord of light. He that planted the ear

knew all about the world's speech, and how to

harmonise sound with the actual human body,

and make both contribute to the service of the

spirit within. The Maker of the ear was the Lord

of speech. He that made this breath knew all

about the air, and how to control and command it,

and adapt it to the purposes of human life; and

every breath that goes down into your bosom says

that the Maker of your chest was the God of all

living. And so as you go through every part of

this body it is, after all, a house set up by won-

derous skill; but it is to be dissolved. It might have

been without dissolution, by a touch of its great

author changed,—changed from corruptible, to in-

corruptible, from the earthly to the heavenly and

spiritual—made without the possibility of ever

again contracting corruption or decay. But it is

not the will of the Creator that that should be

except in the case of the ultimate few who shall

be living when the trumpet shall sound and the

dead shall be raised incorruptible, and they—the

last of the human race—will be the only part of it

which will not undergo the sentence that they

must see death and pass through the grave. They

shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of

an eye, without passing through the trial of the

last death. The spirit and the body shall put on

their immortality at once. But not so with us

who are here in an earthly tabernacle—the house

that is to be dissolved. We are passing through

a probationary state, provided for the time being

with an abode commodious, comfortable, and good;

but only temporary. It hath no foundation; it is

not to stand; and after we have done the work of

our pilgrimage here, one by one, as the Master

chooses to call us, we must move to another

land; we must go to the gardens of pleasure

beyond, or to a place of penalty. But every one

must be removed, not by a single summons, but

by the actual shaking of pieces of his abode

around him. The spirit will be removed from the

body, and the body left to perish—earth to earth,

ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

When will this dissolution come? How and in

what form will it come? We may put death out

of our path! We may refuse to prepare to die,

but we cannot refuse to die. There may be sud-

den deaths in London to-day, and it is quite as

possible that if they do occur they may happen to

that man who is this day for the first time commit-

ting some great sin, or that man who is to-day

for the first time bowing in penitence to seek his

God. It is quite as possible if there should be

sudden death to-day that they may occur in the

most crowded thoroughfares as in the House of

God. And if you were to select four men, one of

them at this moment in the fore-front of the terri-

ble battle, another hanging on a stranded ship

over which the sea is rushing, a third on the rail-

way when two trains crash one into the other, and

a fourth seated at his own table, surrounded by

his family, in the midst of health and comfort, tell

me which of these four men shall first stand before

God? We cannot tell. We only know that they

are all mortal. The earthly tabernacle is to be

dissolved, and we are to stand in the presence

of the Most High.

But when the dissolution comes what provision

is there for us—what restoration is there pro-

vided for us? May we think of Him who is the

resurrection and the life, and who, coming up out

of the grave, opens that grave to our view, and

makes it shine as the portal of eternal day? Yes,

here we see the wondrous provision made for us—

"a building of God, a house not made with hands,

in the heavens."

Our provision is in heaven; our provision is a

house; our provision is a body. In this world

before God gives us a three fold abode—first, a

general abode that belongs to every man promiscu-

ously. There is one sky stretched as a curtain

over us all, and the mightiest king cannot say

that a richer sky shall cover him. There is one

lamp by day, and ten thousand lamps by night

above us all, and the greatest sage that ever lived

cannot say that his sun shall be brighter or his

stars more numerous than those of other men.

There is one body of air provided for every breath,

and one world of beauty and of glory provided for

every eye, and neither king nor sage, neither saint

nor prophet, neither millionaire nor hero, can

make a difference for themselves in those things

which God has given to us all. And so in that

country—that wide and wondrous world above—

there will be a common provision of glory, which

shall be shared by all that are redeemed; the

same great firmament; the same wondrous sun-

beams of the Father's manifested glory; the same

endless stars of beauty; the same height, depth,

length, breadth; the same untold and to us ineffa-

ble things that shall be open to the humblest saint

to enjoy as to the highest angel. But here we

have not only this common abode, we have *every*

one his own dwelling. Standing under the same

sky and fanned by the same wind, oh what a dif-

ference is there between yonder palace and yonder

hovel; and the two human beings whose lot out-

side their own door is just the same, provided by

the same hand, inside how wonderfully different the

provision is! "In my Father's house," said the

Great Master, "are many mansions." The poor

cotter who has never seen a structure higher than

a shed, when he walks by the king's palace thinks

it a city. And so it is as compared with his

hovel; and yet it is looked upon by the monarch

who dwells there as his abode, his house. But in

that house there are many mansions—this dig-

nitary abode, that officer's apartments, yonder

servant's lodgings—all comfortable, but still many

mansions. In some of the old palaces of Egypt

even in this day you may trace temple after temple,

abode after abode; and within the buried ruins

you may find a whole Arab village, and you

think again of the house with many mansions.

Yet all the heavenly mansions, though wonderfully

diversified in size, beauty, ornament, are all built

on the same eternal foundations, all covered with

the same roof, all illuminated with the same in-

finite and inexpressible glory, and all warmed with

the same paternal presence. God is there and

pervades them all, and every dweller in those

mansions is blessed with the sight of Him that

loved us and gave Himself for us.

But beside the general dwelling and the indi-

vidual home there is the still closer tabernacle

of *our own body*. Nearer than the sky, nearer than

the dear, dear rock that we call home; nearer

than the very arched that love us and surround us

with affections, nearer than all other things—so

near to me, to myself, than I can hardly separate

the one from the other except in thought—this

abode which God has provided for every man in