

baser—portion of our nature to which we are so prone. Surely we may have seen sometimes how the wasting of pining sickness, or the agony of acute suffering—how the anticipation of the dissolution of the body has served to purify and exalt the souls of those who have been subjected to these visitations of the Almighty; and also how these “spectacles of mortality” have wrought upon those who have witnessed them, teaching them, as nothing less could teach, the utter emptiness—the miserable falsehood—of those deceits of the world and of the flesh which are yet, to many of us, so fatally alluring. We may indeed well think with shame and sorrow that we need these bitter lessons of the vanity of man, but let us not doubt that we do need them; let us be sure that our heavenly Father chastens us even thus for “our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.”

Be it then our deep conviction that the wisdom to which we are to apply our hearts, as the result of duly numbering our days, is no cold cruel philosophy which shall teach us to despise life—to harden our hearts—to stifle our natural affections, and to await in gloomy indifference our inevitable end; but, much rather, a holy and heavenly wisdom, which tells us of days which are not numbered—of life everlasting; which bids us regard the death of the righteous as a “sleeping in Jesus,” and teaches us to seek for ourselves their safety—their blessedness—by repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, by the renunciation of that sin which is the sting of death, and by a loving and obedient trust in Him who is the life of them that believe and the Resurrection of the dead.

And when, brethren, can we be more solemnly called upon to number our days, and to apply our hearts to this sacred wisdom, than when the grave has just closed upon a beloved and familiar friend, the pastor of this flock of Christ, the teacher of its babes, the minister to its sick members, the carer for its poor. Lessons fit for all seasons are especially to be taken home at seasons such as these, when the voice of God in His Providence