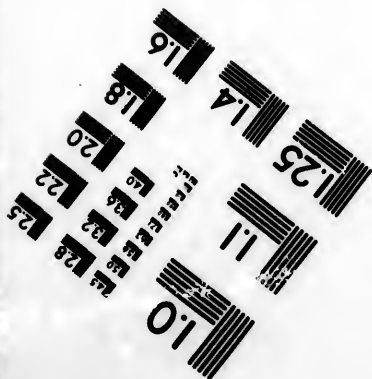
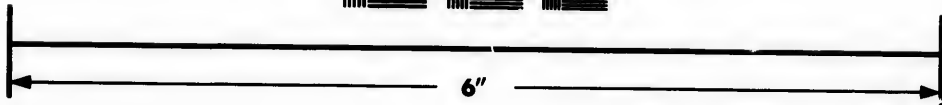
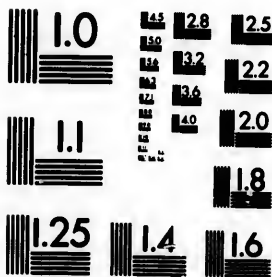


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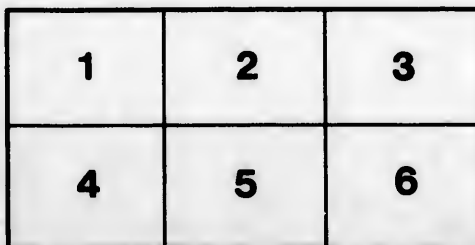
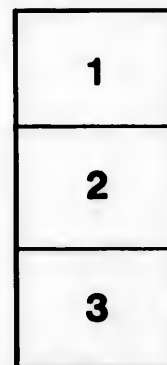
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*W. H. Newcomb's Am. Th. Sem. Copy*

**SERMON,**

PREACHED IN THE SCOTCH CHURCH, BEAUHARNOIS,

BY

**REV. WALTER ROACH,**

MINISTER OF THAT CHURCH,

On Sabbath, 28th September, 1845:

ON OCCASION OF THE DEATHS

BY

**DROWNING,**

OF

**MESSRS. F. COWAN AND C. J. CHARD.**

~~~~~  
PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE CONGREGATION.

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MONTREAL:

PRINTED BY STARKE AND CO.

1845.

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THIS Sermon was preached in consequence of a mournful accident which occurred at Beauharnois, on the 14th September, 1845. Messrs. FRANCIS COWAN, and CHARLES JOHN CHARD, of that place, with a Friend, went out in a pleasure yacht for a sail. After sailing about for some time, they got into that part of Lake St. Louis, near the foot of the Cascades Rapids, where the St. Lawrence and Ottawa, and the current and eddy meet. There the boat became unmanageable:—a sudden squall took her, when she immediately filled with water and went down, stern foremost. COWAN and CHARD were drowned, the other gentleman was saved by swimming, assisted by an oar which he found floating, and was picked up by some persons who came to his assistance in a boat from the neighbouring shore. The untimely fate of these two young persons, only 25 years of age, has caused a deep feeling of regret in all that knew them, and much sympathy has been evinced in the parish where they lived, as well as in the surrounding neighbourhood.



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## SERMON.

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II. SAMUEL, xiv. 14.—“For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person, yet doth he devise means that his banished be not expelled from him.”

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You are acquainted with the story, or rather the parable in the story from whence this Text is taken. Absalom was a wicked prince of the blood-royal of Judah. He had grievously offended against the Lord, by taking the law into his own hand, and acting above law; in consequence he was banished from the home and the privileges of his father's house. He was as already dead; denied the recognition of kindred, and excluded from the honors of his high connection. The woman of Tekoah intercedes with David, and gains her suit, in inducing the father to recall his banished son. Little at that time did David or the woman think on what would afterwards transpire in the history of the prodigal and unnatural youth, who subsequently raised the standard of civil war, rebelled against his parent, and wrought abomination in the sight of Israel. Absalom trusted in his beauty—his winning manner in stealing the hearts of others, though his strength

proved his weakness, and his pride his ruin, in the day of God's judgment against him. In behalf of this wicked prince, even though lacking evidences of a heartfelt repentance of the past, the prayer of intercession was made. What a figure of the human race! We, though the offspring of God, have yet offended him, both as Father and as King. We were all of us as dead; yea, dead in trespasses and in sins: intercession was made for our restoration to Divine favor: that intercession has prevailed: by the blood of Jesus we are brought nigh unto God, though we see not this fact as yet, even as Absalom was brought to Jerusalem, where though seeing not David his father, opportunity was afforded him, even as is afforded us, of bringing forth fruits meet for repentance, the best security for a further enlargement in enjoying, and being admitted to the privileges of the Royal Household.

The beautiful sentiment of the text is illustrative of the vanity of human life. The law of mortality is over all flesh. It is appointed unto all men once to die. There is no exception, for God doth not respect any person, however elevated his rank, or distinguished his virtues;—however low his station, and unworthy his character;—however honoured and loved and revered, or however hated and despised by others. To all the thread of time will cease to be spun at its appoint-

ed season, the life strings of the heart shall be snapt asunder, the silver cord will be loosed, the golden bowl shall be broken, the body shall return to the dust, and the spirit to him who gave it.

The text naturally divides itself into three parts :—1st. The Law of Death—2d. The vanity of human life—3d. The hope which even in death is afforded to God's people of a blessed resurrection.

#### I.—THE LAW OF DEATH.

This is so palpable as to require, but little illustration. Man is not the only creature in this world under the law of mortality. Death or dissolution is common to all objects in this world of sin. The beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, the fishes of the sea, and creeping things, are short-lived beings; the works of men's hands which so long outlive their makers, are subject to the same law. The most stately mansions and magnificent temples, however long they may retain their strength and beauty, cannot forever withstand the warring elements, and the lapse of time. The greatest empires of the world have waxed and waned. The wisest of constitutions, and the best of human laws, have been altered or annulled. "Nature herself grows old." Though every year and every season she arrays herself with the garments befitting her circumstances, yet in her change of external attire she confesses death. Everything finds a grave, and

that grave is in Mother Earth, and so must man ; for why should man be excepted ? If the earth we tread and all the works therein must be burned up, if the elements must melt with fervent heat, if even the heavens above us shall pass away, shall man be an exception ? No! the Judgment is that *man must NEEDS die*. This is the sentence, though the time of executing that sentence is not revealed. Some are called away in helpless infancy,—in playful childhood,—in thoughtless youth,—in sturdy manhood,—in declining age. Some are called away after enduring sorrows of mind and pains of body ; others suddenly, without time to heave a sigh, to breathe a prayer, or suffer a pang, save the last, the only one of the spirit's bursting forth from its earthly tabernacle. Some are called away after witnessing their dissolution inch by inch, weakness succeeding weakness, the loss of one faculty after another ; others by accident, or quick and powerful disease, are unexpectedly laid low. Many have left their dwellings on the call of duty, or the passing invitation of pleasure, to return no more. A squall of wind, the flashing lightning, the gaping earth, the sweeping hurricane, the burning dwelling, the falling of a tile, any thing which happens to be chosen as the servant of the Lord at the appointed time, serves to snap asunder the heart-strings of life, and bring to the dust the strong and healthy man. As to every other purpose, so

to that of death, there is time and judgment, "for man knoweth not that which shall be, for who can tell him when it shall be? There is no man hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit, neither hath he power in the day of death, and there is no discharge in that war." In whatever way death cometh it cometh, simply as the law, or rather as the execution of the law of mortality, under which all live and move and have their being. We know but of two exceptions to this universal law—Enoch and Elias. All from Adam downwards, countless millions though they be in number, have suffered, or will suffer, the penalty of death. But why reason I thus? "The living know that they shall die! Their love, their hatred, and their envy, all must perish; for as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men, snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them."

Man *must needs* die. Yes, it is necessity; man's will is not consulted in this matter. He is not a free, but a bondsman, in this respect. Dissolution is *his* doom, as well as that of all things around him. It is *necessity*, not merely as a punishment for sin, but as an important primary step in going through a process of preparation for a glorious work to be achieved by the Divine Being, in a future renovation of all things, the resurrection

of the dead, either to glory and honour, or to shame and everlasting contempt.

## II.—THE VANITY OF HUMAN LIFE.

In shewing this, a fit figure borrowed from nature is used in the text, that of water. In its nature, water is weak, of no consistence, no solid standing, always descending to a lower station, abiding in no one particular place, except detained by restraint. Let the sun in his strength shine upon, it, and its surface sparkles, let the wind blow and it is troubled, presenting the wrinkles of a determined but a weak resistance to opposition. And what is man? We ask not what he *was* before he sinned, while daily watered by the streams of gladness flowing from the fountain of life, refreshed with the dew of Heaven and the wells of God in the Paradise of Eden. But we ask what is he *now*? Weak and unstable as water, fickle in resolution, wavering in counsel, always descending to the grave, at one time with the imperceptible flow of a sweet and pleasant surface, at another with the turgid impetuosity of a rapid stream, impatient to lose itself in the boundless ocean. The sun of prosperity makes him sweet and happy, the cloud of adversity makes him tremble and retreat, the wind of opposition troubles his face and indents on his forehead the hollow furrows that bespeak the grave.

But he is like water spilt on the ground ; that is to say, he is a being of contingencies and dangers. As in a moment of thoughtlessness in carrying water in a vessel a part or the whole of it is by some accident spilt on the ground, so is man not to be confident in the hopes of attaining the goal to which he looks forward, however good his health, or flattering his prospects, may be. Death has no fixed rule ; its way is the way of darkness. The shafts of disease, hasty or lingering in their work, fly thickly around him, in carrying man off from the stage of existence. Let the pitcher be broken at the fountain, and the water will be spilt ; let the silver cord be cut and the vessel shall be dashed to pieces ; let the golden bowl be broken and the contents will be lost. Justly then is the figure of the text applied to man, for than water his nature is no stronger, nor his abode more certain. Stop its current, and it swells and overflows, confine it, and it putrifies and corrupts.

But this is not all ; when man dies, there is then an end of hope and interest, so far as the present life is concerned. The flickering flame that lightened and carried him through earth being extinguished, he goeth to darkness and the land of shadows ; he leaves the converse of earth to converse with spirits ; for man is as water when spilt, it cannot be gathered up again. He goeth to his long



home, and to expect his return to his former lot in life is as vain as to expect the water that has been spilt on the parched ground to be gathered by the labour of mortal. His body when laid in the grave becomes the food of worms ; he ceases to have a name or an interest under the sun, or to exist save now and then in the busy memory of the anxious friendship of surviving relations ; but these too in turn are also called to yield the taper of a mortal existence by which as the former they were conducted to the gate of death.

And what say the young and unconcerned, as well as the old and timorous, among you, on such a subject as this ? You must needs all die, and be as water spilt on the ground. Vain are your thoughts if you suppose your days will yet be many, and it is time enough to think of the sentiment in the text. Many are the avenues by which death approaches. At every age he is at hand. Deference to rank or fortune he shows not. Three-score years and ten is considered the maximum of human life ; but before the half of that period has expired, the half of mankind are summoned to their graves. Go to the charnel house of death, look on the graves of the many who lie buried from the view of the world, and of every age you will find them there ; and none so old, if they had tongues to speak but would tell you that they thought, not as a matter of pos-

sibility, but of probability, many even of a moral certainty, that their period of life would have been farther prolonged. Go to the statistics of a country and calculate the average mortality of every age, and you will feel astounded at the few, the very few, that are spared as Fathers to tell of former years. Go to any land and fancy ten thousand born in one day. How many of these see the days of manhood? Alas! four thousand sleep in the silent tomb; some called there in infancy and happy childhood, others in the pride of beauty and of promise, in rising youth. Call up the survivors at the age of forty and another thousand have gone the way of all the earth. Summon them again at sixty years, and nearly other fifteen hundred have followed, while at four-score years not one in ten of the survivors remains to tell in his wrinkled forehead, his stooping body, and his tottering limbs, who of his former compeers have paid the debt of nature! Go my friends, and this day for once think of death. Set eternity before your eyes, that you may so spend the time of your sojourning here as to be able to say, "For us to live is Christ, and to die is gain." God regardeth no man, for says the text, "Neither doth God respect any person."

### III.—THE HOPE OF A RESURRECTION.

"If in this life only we had hope," said Paul,

“of all men we would be the most miserable.” The vanity and brevity of life is fitted to fill us with sadness. To go hence and to be seen no more ; to exchange life for death, present enjoyments for the prison of our long home, our happy dwellings for the dark grave, our families for the consuming worm which is to become a mother and a sister, cannot fail to convey a regret to the mind, at the same time a closer clinging love of life. But God in his mercy has alleviated the bitterness of this feeling. There is a YET in the text, “for all this *yet* doth he devise means that his banished be not expelled from him.” Banished we were, because of sin, from the home and the happiness of our Heavenly Father, even as Absalom was, on account of his wickedness, from the privileges of his father’s house. But banished though we were, yet in this world of exile, sin and sorrow, God thought on us. He knew the frailty of our frame—he remembered that we were dust—he wished us not to be forever expelled from his presence—we were still his children, and in infinite wisdom he devised the means of our restoration to his favour and his kingdom. Christ descended to earth for the especial purpose of bringing us as erring children back to God. While the believer is on earth he obtains peace with God, by means of the intercession of Jesus. In the hour of death, through the same Saviour he has hope ; yea the assurance of

hope ; for though evidently banished to the grave, yet God has devised means that he be not expelled from him. "The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory, and their bodies being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection." By the union, then, which exists between Christ and his people, we see the means which God has devised to restore his banished to himself. It is true the body is still in a state of banishment, nay confined in the dark prison of the tomb, undergoing that dissolution which was the curse ; "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return : " but the immortal spirit lives with Christ, and enjoys fellowship with him in a state of rest and glory. God is the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, though they have long since been dead, and God not being the God of the dead but of the living, they must live to him. "I desire to depart," said Paul, "and to be with Christ, which is far better than to abide in the flesh: for whether I live, I live unto the Lord, and whether I die I die unto the Lord ; living or dying I am the Lord's ; for we know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Thus you see how God has devised means, through Christ, not only of causing his banished to enjoy his favour and re-

conciliation on earth, but also happiness and glory in the intermediate state of existence between death and final judgment. But we stop not here : God has also devised means for the restoration of the body of man, even though worms may long have consumed that body, and its dust become so mixed with the dust of the ground that it is beyond the power of man to discern its particles. There is a day when the dead will be raised by Jesus Christ, who is consequently called the "resurrection and the life," and in whom if a man believe "he shall be raised up at the last day; for the Lord shall descend with a shout, with the voice of the trump of the living God," to call the decayed bodies of his people to life and beauty, to be fashioned like unto his glorious body, changing corruption into incorruption, mortality into immortality, death into life, the prison of the grave to the throne of the redeemed. Though we are as water spilt on the dry ground, which cannot be gathered up again, yet we are not lost to God, for what is impossible with man is possible with Him. As water spilt on the ground sinks and is afterwards exhaled by the heat of the sun, so though we die and sink into the grave, yet as soon as the sun of righteousness shall be fully risen, with healing in his wings, on the last and joyful day, by his exhaling influence shall we be raised to the Heavens, to be around the Throne of God.

O! blessed hope of immortality and life through Jesus Christ! Well may it prove an anchor to our souls amidst all our cares, sorrows, pains and trials. Nay, in the dark hour of death, well may it light our way and cheer our hearts, even with our graves dug before our eyes. We can descend with buoyant minds, and lay us down as on beds of peaceful rest, knowing that our Redeemer liveth, and we shall stand with him in the latter day—when the song will be sung in fruition we now sing in faith and hope:—“O Death! where is thy sting? O Grave! where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law, but thanks be to God who has given us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Time will not permit me to enlarge on the topic of the King fetching home again his banished; besides I cannot otherwise than by faith in the precious promises of God, carry you to the Heavenly city, show you its streets of gold, its spiritual services, its countless mansions, with their inhabitants, so great a multitude that no man can number. Nor can I describe to you the garments of salvation, the robes of white, the crowns of gold, the palms of victory, which so befit the Saints. Nor can I tell you how enlarged the understanding, how increased the powers of knowledge, of memory, and of judgment, of the redeemed will become. Nor can I repeat that song of Moses and the Lamb which is

there so joyfully sung, beyond the chorus which we have learnt, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing." But I leave you to your Bibles, to the exercise of faith in the promises, that "there they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat, for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

What is the lesson, my brethren, which we learn from the subject of this day's meditation? Is it not to be watchful and ready for the approach of death? Every day we are taught this truth, that we must needs die: the silent approach of the destroying angel to the cot of the lowly, the dwelling of the wealthy, or the palace of the noble; the mourning group that follows to the grave the one, or the stately equipage which with its dumb show seems to mock the greatness of departed glory, in following the other, tell us in language which cannot be gainsayed, "that neither doth God respect any person."

I cannot, my brethren, pass over the present opportunity of praying you, in the name of God, to improve not only what you have now heard, but, that afflicting dispensation which lately has plunged our little community into gloom and sorrow.

But three weeks ago, you and I met within these walls for the same professed purpose we do this day. "Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation," was the warning then addressed us. Alas, two of your number heard that warning as the last in the house of the Lord. I am not here to speak of the dead, but to you the living, even although we would say, that, not only as men young, fresh and vigorous, quiet, kind, and unobtrusive in their manners, steady, diligent and attentive to business—they enjoyed, as they richly deserved, the respect and esteem of all who knew them—but that we did not know we ourselves loved them so much, till now that they are gone from the midst of us. Though we could say much within the bounds of our knowledge, of their characteristic traits of goodness, yet we forbear, for it is to you, the living, we would speak, that you may stand in awe and sin not,—remembering that you too must needs die.

We are no advocates for sitting in judgment on the dead. We have even ever discouraged sitting in judgment on the living. It is God that judgeth, and we may not mount the throne, nor dare to displace Him that sitteth there, to pass sentence on any one as we will. As soon as any departs this life, he goes to a higher court than any either of the church or the world. He ceases to be affected in the slightest degree, either by the praise or dis-



praise of men. "Let no man judge of my state by my dying hour, the *manner* of my departure is no sure evidence of my salvation. Look to my life, that is the surest index of my religious faith and character;"—so spake an eminent Christian. But what saith Jesus? "Suppose ye that the Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices, were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things; I tell you, Nay, but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish; or those eighteen upon whom the Tower of Siloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem; I tell you, Nay, but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." We grant that these two young men were not in the way of duty at the time sentence of death was executed upon them. The day was the Sabbath, the one sacred to God and to holiness, and not to pleasure and amusement. But are there not various other ways, by which the Sabbath is profaned, aye and profaned too by many who fancy themselves righteous and despise others. The call given to you is to repent not only of your own frequent breach of this, but of all the commandments, for he that offendeth in one point, is guilty of all. They are not always safe who think themselves safe. If there be any among you who fancieth himself; better than these, let him give glory to God, and not to himself, let him take heed

lest he fall ; and remember that publicans and harlots will enter the Kingdom of God, while many who like the self-righteous, the captious and the hard-judging Pharisees, accounted themselves children of the Kingdom, shall be thrust out.

Many are the ways of death to men. Some suffer it as a penalty for a breach of command either by the hand of man or of God. Not only in the Word, but in the laws of every land, we are told that there is a sin unto death. There are sins punishable by death, or serious consequences till a dying hour. Many of God's people have been guilty of such, as for instance Moses and David. But who will say that future judgment is to be according to present punishment. In whatever way death cometh, however it may be in judgment, it may be mixed with mercy either in removing from the evil to come, the individual himself, or in affording a salutary warning to others against the breach of a known precept. We have no authority for believing that the man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath day, and suffered the death of the body, was doomed to suffer eternally the wrath of Heaven, any more than we have for believing that all who undergo the sentence of capital punishment among men, are forever forsaken of God. But we are to view such events as affording a warning to the living, that as they value life they should remember the command. Sometimes God

in seeing the breach of a positive statute, taketh judgment into his own hands, to teach us, that though men in power and authority may not enforce obedience, he himself is watchful and jealous. Many others from time to time transgress against a penal statute and yet escape, but still they run the risk of death.

We are not here pleading for the dead—we are only cautioning any against condemning the dead. “Judgment is mine,” saith the Lord, “I will repay.” It is the remark of an old Divine, that three wonders will be seen by the Saints above—they will wonder to see some in Heaven whom they never expected to see there—they will wonder that some are not there whom they confidently expected to have beheld—they will wonder too, and this will spring from humility and the largeness of the grace of God, that they are there themselves. There was in our Saviour’s days, what has been found in every age, and in ours too, such a thing as straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. Let all of us then look into our own hearts, judging ourselves that we be not judged. Have we, the living, not been perhaps more guilty of sin, than these who have been cut off? If then such things be done in the green tree what may not be done in the dry, if we do not repent? Remember the Fourth commandment, to keep holy to God the Sabbath day. This command

is broken in many other ways than open profanation. Scandal, converse on worldly interests, planning and scheming for the future on earth, neglecting religion, forsaking the sanctuary, heeding neither the bible nor prayer, are all of them breaches of the same precept, and not less hateful in the sight of God, because of their comparative secrecy, as frustrating the great end of the command—glorifying God and promoting spiritual improvement and growth in grace in man.

In conclusion, let me urge upon you to stir up your minds by way of lively remembrance what you heard this day three weeks, when these young men last heard the word of exhortation: “Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation.” The importance of the work of religion—the shortness and uncertainty of life,—the tendency of delay in strengthening the power of evil habits and increasing the difficulty of repentance—and the risk which is run of losing wholly the spirit and the grace of God, at a future period, being all of them reasons as we then shewed you, for improving the present hour.

I close with my then finishing remarks, which alas! little did we then think, and little did Cowan and Chard then think, should have been so shortly applicable to them, but which God only knows may be just as applicable in some way or other to some one of us now present. “Who among you can

say that this is not the last time you may enter the House of the Lord, upon earth? Who can say that the arrow of death is not already on the wing to bring him to the dust? Who among you can say that the tree is not grown, that it has not been felled, is not sawn asunder, is not all but ready for a few hours labour to be converted into his coffin? That his winding sheet is not already spun and woven, and altogether ready? That the nails are not already forged, to nail him down in his chest, for ever from the light of the sun? That the strong man's hand is not almost ready to grasp his mattock and his spade, to break up the ground and prepare his last chamber of rest? That the turf still green may not wholly fade or be attired with the snows of winter, till it covers all that is left of him from the view of mortal?" "We must needs all die, and be as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again!"

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