

**SUBSTANCE OF A DISCOURSE
PREACHED AT WILBRAHAM,
MASS. ON THE OCCASION OF
THE DEATH OF REV. EDWARD
HYDE, WHO FELL ASLEEP**

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Substance of a Discourse Preached at Wilbraham, Mass. On the Occasion of the Death of Rev. Edward Hyde, who fell asleep by W. Fisk

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W. FISK

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over

MS 13592'37

DR. FISK'S SERMON
ON THE
DEATH OF REV. EDWARD HYDE.

SUBSTANCE
OF A
D I S C O U R S E

PREACHED AT
WILBRAHAM, MASS.
ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF

REV. EDWARD HYDE,

WHO FELL ASLEEP IN CHRIST, MARCH 16, 1832.

BY W. FISK, D. D.
PRESIDENT OF THE WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY.

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THE BEQUEST OF
EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
1918

TO THE READER.

At the request of the widow of our departed brother, I have consented to submit the following Discourse for publication. The remarks upon the doctrine of the text are only to be viewed in the light of a preface to the biographical sketch that follows. The sketch itself is brief, and is, with very little alteration and addition, the same that has already been published in the New England Christian Herald. If it should serve in a small degree to emblem the memory of our brother and benefit the living, I shall be satisfied.

THE AUTHOR.

DISCOURSE.

2 COR. iv. 7.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

HUMILITY was a most prominent trait in the character of the apostle Paul. Though among the most eminent and the most highly favored of God, of his or of any age, he esteemed himself least of all. This low estimate of himself was not merely the result of his personal experience, as a child of God; which grace he had, in common with other Christians;—nor yet was it owing wholly to the deep conviction he had of his former guilt, on account of his having been a bloody persecutor, and by reason of which, he said, “he was not meet to be called an apostle;”—but his was the humility of the *minister* of Christ, as well as of the *disciple* of Christ. This *ministerial* humility was the fruit of his deep conviction, that in all his labors and successes, (and who was more laborious and successful than Paul?) the excellency of the power was of God. Weighed in the balance with the truth of God and the power of the Holy Ghost, he found himself to be comparatively nothing. As an exhibition of this feeling, hear him, while rebuking his brethren for their partial attachments to their favorite teachers, demanding, “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So

then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." "I labored," he truly says, "more abundantly than they all;" but he adds, "yet not I, but the grace of God, that was with me." He contrasted the richness and glory of that gospel which he had so successfully preached, with the weakness of his own mind, and the frailty of his own body, and exclaimed, in terms as indicative of the vigor of his intellect, as of the lowliness of his heart, *We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*

How appropriate is this subject to the occasion that has called us together. A minister of Christ is fallen,—a vessel, in which was deposited the gospel treasure, is broken,—in view of whose ministerial character, and success in preaching the word, contrasted with his frailty and death, we may well say, and must certainly feel, that "we have this treasure in earthen vessels;" and in view of whose unostentatious ministrations and humble character, we have, so far as the grace of humility is concerned, a striking illustration of the apostle's experience and doctrine.

On an examination of this text and context, I am constrained to give a more extended meaning to the terms contained in it than is generally given by commentators on this passage. By the treasure here, I think we are not to understand only or chiefly, the grace of regeneration, common to all Christians, but also and especially, that gracious gospel message and commission, by which the ministers of Christ are qualified and authorized to offer salvation to a perishing world. And by the *earthen vessels*, I understand chiefly the ministers of the gospel, in their whole character of body and mind. Called *vessels*, because, in a certain sense, they contain this treasure—in them it is deposited, and by them conveyed, to enrich as many as accept it at their hands—called *earthen vessels*, because of their feeble-

ness and frailty, both of body and mind, and because of their great inferiority to the treasure they contain. The doctrine of the text, then, is clearly this—

The rich and powerful truths of the gospel are preached to the world, through a human ministry, of feeble minds and mortal bodies, that the efficiency and glory of man's salvation may evidently appear to be of God, and not of his ministers.

This doctrine, like all the other parts of the gospel system, is a direct contravention of worldly policy. The earthly prince hopes to secure honor and dignity to himself and his throne, in proportion to the dignity and splendor of his ministers and ambassadors;—"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." Wherefore? "That no flesh should glory in his presence;" that "he that glorieth may glory in the Lord."

A word of caution, however, may be necessary here. We are not to infer from this doctrine, that *the more ignorant, the better minister*. Human nature, in its *best estate*, is none too good for the sacred office; therefore, he who is God's minister should gain all he can, and bring all he gains, to his holy vocation: but at the same time, human nature, in its *feeblest estate*, is none too feeble, if God chooses to use it, to confound the mighty. The doctrine of the text, in short, is predicated of human nature *in general*, as contrasted with the excellency of the gospel treasure, and as compared with *higher orders* of beings, which God might have used, if he had preferred them, for this ministry. We come to inquire, then, how the employment of such a ministry is an occasion of showing that the excellency of the power is of God.

1. The nature of the work accomplished by the ministers of Christ, is such as the unaided powers of man are inadequate to perform. I speak now of this work, as a moral and religious reform. In this view, whether the reform relate to one soul, or a million, it will appear equally impossible,—naturally and philosophically impossible,—to the mere human agent. It is a change of heart; a renovation of moral nature. Such a renovation seems, from the nature of the case, to demand a hand as skilful and efficient as that of the Creator himself;—and this idea is confirmed by the consideration of the entire failure of all human effort for the accomplishment of this work. Eloquence, interest, philosophy, and human authority, had all been repeatedly tried, and had always failed. How then can the minister of Christ hope to succeed? What has he to urge? What adequate resources can he command, to insure success? Motives, he has, it is true, to which human philosophy is a stranger; and he brings to this work a purer zeal and a warmer heart than the philosopher or the secular orator can command. But what can these effect in such a work, without the power of God? With only these advantages, the Christian orator might produce an effect, but it would be temporary; he might excite strong feeling, but it would be transient. So Demosthenes could wake the Athenians to a transient effort, and make Philip of Macedon fear and pause; but this eloquence had no effect upon moral character—the corruptor and the corrupted were still the same, and Macedonian gold conquered Athens. The eloquence of Cicero made Catiline and his associates tremble; but this only drove them to greater rage and open violence. But the Christian orator takes hold of the heart; bends the will; alarms the fears; excites hope; mollifies the ferocious passions; changes the current of the mind; renews the affections, and transforms the soul. The Christian orator goes forth, not to confirm the minds of men in a