

A Discourse Delivered at the Funeral of Rev. James Aikman Carnahan. of Dayton, Ind.

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I have selected two verses of the Holy Scripture as an appropriate text for this discourse, which is designed as a memorial of the late venerable and beloved father, the Rev. James Aikman Carnahan, known widely as

“FATHER CARNAHAN OF DAYTON.”

And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace, thou shalt be buried in a good old age. *Gen. 15:15*

Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in his season. *Job. 5:26.*

Both these verses express a great truth very beautifully, that God loves a good man, and often shows this by bestowing on him “a good old age,” by letting him come to his grave in a full age like a sheaf of ripe wheat that is ready for the garner.

Some people speak contemptuously of this principle with its promised blessing, as if neither is of any practical value. They even quote the description of old age as given by Solomon in the 12th *Ecclesiastes*, as proving their assertion true.

I admit that picture to be a very gloomy one. It almost makes one shudder to read it. And well it might, for it is

¹ A word of apology for this discourse is due on this occasion. It may seem to be asking of you, young men, an unusual indulgence to listen to a discourse concerning an old man with whom very few were personally acquainted.

But in the first place it is not straining a point for us who just now constitute the working center of the College which this man helped to found, to pay a deserved tribute to his memory. In so doing we act officially and representatively for all the men who have helped to build up Wabash College, and also all those who have been educated in its halls.

And in the second place as we learn some of the best lessons of life by looking at the lives of men, or at life actually lived, it is to be hoped that it will be a source of improvement to the young, as well as those older, to look on the life of a venerable and good man who has “come to his grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in his season.” This is published in the *Magazine* as an example of the better class of old time funeral orations.

the description of the old age of a bad man, a man that has lived a bad, sensual life, and has grown old in sin.

But certainly the Lord was not promising to Abraham such a dreary doom, when he said "Thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace, thou shalt be buried in a good old age." Surely the picture which Solomon drew of the closing scenes of a wicked old man's life was not meant to contradict that which Eliphaz drew of a good old man's life when he said "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in his season." Nay, Solomon himself had said when, as a young man, he wrote the *Proverbs*, "The hoary head is a crown of glory if it be found in the way of righteousness;" and again, "the beauty of old men is the grey head." So also the Psalmist expressed it when he not only said, "the righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon," but, he added, as if stating a very beautiful and desirable fact that should mark the righteous man, "Those that he planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God; they shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing."

Let me illustrate this for a moment: Is there anything more beautiful than the picture of the late venerable Dr. Skinner of New York, as for the last time one evening he stood among his brethren of the Chi Alpha just as they were about to part with a song and prayer? There stood the sweet old man, with beaming face, almost "as it had been the face of an angel," as he repeated from memory all the hymn of which I will repeat the closing stanza:

My Jesus as thou wilt!
All shall be well with me;
Each changing future scene,
I gladly trust to thee;
Straight to my home above
I travel calmly on,
And sing in life or death,
My Lord, Thy will be done!

Only a week before his own death he wrote these words concerning the death of another grand old man, the Rev. Albert Barnes, whose funeral he had just been attending:

What a glorious death was that of Albert Barnes! It holds me wondering and praising God for his singular grace to that remarkable man. Is it possible that such a death is to be mine? Is such a mercy in reserve for me? Pray for me, my dear friend, that die, when, or where, or how I may, I may glorify God in dying.

And in a few days he was dying, but "his lips broke forth in the most wonderful expressions of love to his Savior." And the burden of all his words was this, "My Jesus, as thou wilt!"

Why, my friends, there could be no propriety whatever in reading Solomon's description of the dreary old age of a bad man at the funeral of one who was as "Paul the aged," or "John the aged," or such an old man as I have just named who, as he was entering the deep shadow, exclaimed, "My Jesus as thou wilt," and who, when he had almost disappeared from human sight, was still heard murmuring the same expression of loving submission, "My Jesus, as thou wilt!"

Now, my friends, I did not propose to preach a funeral sermon, but only to briefly show you in a very imperfect way why it seems to me very beautiful when an aged saint goes to his fathers in peace, and is buried in a good old age; why I would as soon grieve and break my heart as I look out over the ripened wheat which the reaper is gathering as to grieve and break my heart when I see an aged saint "coming to his grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in his season."

The leading dates in his life which occasions these remarks are these:

The Rev. James Aikman Carnahan was the descendent of Scotch-Irish ancestors who settled in Pennsylvania about 1740. His grandfather settled in Virginia and followed teaching. In 1790 his grandparents removed to Kentucky. He himself was born in Nicholas county, Kentucky, December 2, 1802, and died at Dayton, Indiana, January 19, 1879, in the 77th year of his age.

In September, 1817, he became a Christian and united with the Presbyterian church of Concord, Kentucky. He was then not quite 15 years old.

In 1818 his father removed to Davies county, Indiana, and cleared up a farm. In this hard work he was assisted by his

son James three years. And the hard work matured him into a man of very remarkable physical strength.

In December, 1821, he began in earnest the attempt to realize the high destiny to which his parents had devoted him in baptism, and to which he had devoted himself when he was converted to God. With a view to preparing himself for the gospel ministry, at the time named—December, 1821—he began his studies in the academy of Livonia, Indiana, taught by the Rev. William W. Martin. He prosecuted there his studies with great vigor three years, and in January, 1825, placed himself under the instruction of the Rev. Dr. Blackburn and Prof. Butler at Louisville. He remained there a little more than a year, pursuing collegiate studies. In May, 1826, he went to Auburn, New York, and in September entered the Theological seminary, over which Dr. James Richards presided. He held this great preacher and theologian in the most profound veneration. For three years he remained in the seminary, not missing an exercise of any kind.

July 1, 1829, he was licensed and also ordained, *sine titulo*, at East Geneva, New York, and at once returned to Indiana. He preached at various places in southern Indiana until November when he visited Crawfordsville and LaFayette. Having entered into an arrangement to supply the church at LaFayette, he returned to Davies county and on the 30th of January, 1830, was married to Miss Isabella Lynn of Livonia. The next day the young couple began their journey on horseback to LaFayette, a distance of about 150 miles.

He began his labors at LaFayette in February, 1830, and extended his missionary tours in one direction as far as Monticello where he had several members.

Among his members at LaFayette when he was about dissolving his connection with that church were 49 who resided in Dayton, some seven miles distant. In April, 1834, these were organized into a church, and on the 1st of May he began his labors there. Inasmuch as the new church at Dayton was composed of members whose pastor he had already been for four years, we may regard his ministry with the Dayton church as really beginning in February, 1830. Literally it began May, 1834, but really February, 1830. From January,

1847, to April, 1848, he acted as agent for the college, a period of fifteen months. In 1852, against the wishes of his church, he went to Delphi to minister to that church and one at Pittsburgh, two or three miles away. At the end of four years he returned to his first love at Dayton, and remained there until his death. For three years past he has been too feeble to preach steadily and yet the church regarded him as a *Pastor Emeritus*. So that from July 1, 1829, when he was ordained until January 19, 1879, when he died, his entire ministry included 49 years and 7 months. His connection with the Dayton church, including the 4 years at LaFayette and deducting his time in service of the college covered nearly forty-four years.

If we subtract the four years at LaFayette, the year and a quarter at the college, the four at Delphi, and the three since he ceased active labor, his labor of thirty-seven solid years in the one church remains. But his church at Dayton allows no such deduction for the last three years. His ministry there is forty-one years.

The fact is as honorable to the church as it is to him, and it is a conspicuous and remarkable fact that shall lose nothing by time.

When our venerated father Carnahan began his labors in this region it was a wilderness. Crawfordsville was only eight years old, LaFayette five, Indianapolis ten, Terre Haute ten, Delphi two, Logansport a trading post of three years old with thirty or forty families, and in the entire county beside, eight or ten families more. "Out of Logansport and Fort Wayne there were not in Indiana north of the Wabash, three hundred inhabitants."

The pioneer ministers who planted Presbyterian churches in the wilderness were not ordinary men. Among them were John Ross and James Chute at Fort Wayne, Martin M. Post at Logansport, James Crawford at LaFayette, Carnahan at Dayton, Edmund O. Hovey at Coalcreek, James Thomson at Crawfordsville, John S. Thomson at Waveland, Ransom Hawley at Putnamville, John Finley Crow at Hanover, James H. Johnson at Madison, William W. Martin at Livonia, John McElroy Dickey at Washington, Stuart at Rushville, Caleb Mills

at Wabash College, and others of whom these are fair representatives, men eminently fitted to do a hard and difficult work. They endured hardness as good soldiers, and the record of what they endured and accomplished cannot fail to excite both our admiration and gratitude.

But I must not dwell longer on these abundant labors in the planting of churches, building of meeting houses, the preaching of the word in the destitute places in the midst of great hardships. In these labors our deceased Father Carnahan was not a whit behind any of his noble peers. The fruits of his labor not only at LaFayette, Delphi and Dayton, but in his frequent and extensive missionary journeys, the Omniscient alone can value, but we know enough to be sure that these fruits were abundant and precious.

And here I may be indulged in a brief reference to the man of whom I am now speaking. In person he was six feet in stature and very erect. He was a large and muscular man, and famous for his strength and agility. He was a clear and logical thinker and ready to give a reason for his opinions. He was a man of deep religious convictions, and was one of the most earnest of preachers. Physically a strong and hardy man, and religiously deep in earnest, it was to him no hardship to traverse large sections of the country at all seasons of the year to preach the gospel he loved and believed. He would ride all day on horseback in the worst weather and over the worst roads and preach with wonderful vigor at night in a cabin, schoolhouse or church. He and James Thomson were "Sons of Thunder" in this wilderness. They often wrought together in sacramental meetings, camp meetings, and protracted meetings, and with great success.

Whilst in LaFayette February 21, 1831, he preached a sermon that led the late Rev. Geo. D. Miller to Christ and to a life of great usefulness in the ministry. He one day met a young man, Alexander Lemon, in the street and said to him, "are you a Christian?" And when Mr. L. answered that he was not, said Mr. C. to him with deep emotion, "it is a dreadful thing to be a sinner in such a world and refuse to become a Christian!" The result was his conversion, and a faithful ministry until his death.

It would be easy to name churches he planted, revivals he conducted, and to multiply incidents illustrating his unusual energy and success in his chosen vocation, but I must desist.

Were I to rest here the record would be a remarkable one, but I must add one item which will make his name to abide in history as long as the college he aided be found. I admit the importance of his work as a preacher, a pastor, and an organizer of churches. We cannot readily exaggerate the importance of his mission in these respects. But when James and John Thomson, Edmund O. Hovey, James A. Carnahan and John M. Ellis with the Elders John Gilliland, McConnell and William Robinson met to consider the question of founding a Christian college, when after a devout and careful examination of all the facts they resolved to found a college, and when in token of their dependence on God and also as the sign that they were devoting all they did to God, they knelt in the snow on the spot on which they proposed to build that college—our venerable Father Carnahan and his associates did the greatest act of their lives. That act will grow more and more illustrious as the years roll away and the institution they founded shall grow stronger and larger in the fulfillment of their beneficent purposes.

The interesting convention resulting in this great purpose, occurred November 21st, 1832, forty-six years ago, and the same day, Williamson Dunn, Edmund O. Hovey, James Thomson, John S. Thomson, James A. Carnahan, Martin M. Post, Samuel G. Lowry and John Gilliland were elected Trustees of the college. Of these eight men Carnahan and Hovey were continued trustees by repeated re-election until their death. When Father Carnahan died the last survivor of the founders, and of the first board of trustees passed away. Most happy were they, especially those who were active in the enterprise, in being honored as the founders, the trustees and the life long friends of Wabash college. And as it seems to me no more appropriate epitaph can be carved on the stone that shall mark the grave of Carnahan than this: A Devout Christian, an able Pioneer Missionary, and one of the Founders of Wabash College!

Truly he was a noble man in person, noble in mind, noble in purity, noble in Christian love, noble in Christian work,

noble in his calling, noble in what he helped to do for religion and education, noble in his life, and as you look on him in the repose of death you look on one who even in death seems "every inch a man."

These late years have been telling on the ranks of our Pioneer ministers. Ross, Post, Little, Johnson, Hovey and Carnahan have entered into rest. They lived to see "the wilderness blossom" and "the thirsty land springs of water." They wrought for God and man gloriously, and one by one they have been passing away crowned with blessings both from God and man. One by one they have gone to their fathers in peace, and have been buried in a good old age. We loved and honored them, and yet as we see them coming to the grave in a full age like as a shock of corn cometh in his season, we will not lament.

As President Edwards says, "Now they have got home; they were never home before." And as John Bunyan says, "I heard the bells of the city ring for joy as they entered it." And as Paul says, "The earthly house of their tabernacle is dissolved and they are in the house of God not made with hands eternal in the heaven." And as Jesus himself said, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

And so as we tenderly convey these mortal remains of our friend to the grave, we will recall what he was in life, and what he did, and Whom not having seen he loved, and the eternal heaven to which he has come, we will thank God and take courage.

"And I heard a voice saying unto me, write 'blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth;' yea, saith the Spirit that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them."