

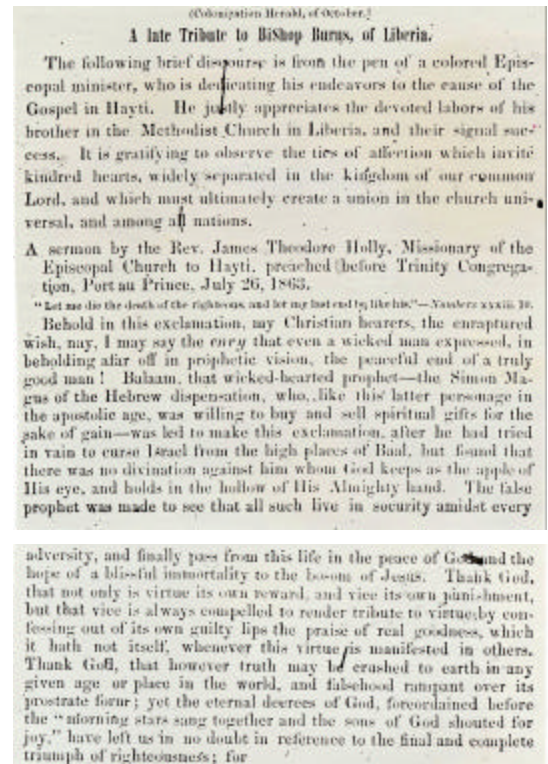
### A late Tribute to BiShop Burns, of Liberia.

[The following brief discourse is from the pen of a colored Episcopal minister, who is dedicating his endeavors to the cause of the Gospel in Hayti. He justly appreciates the devoted labors of his brother in the Methodist Church in Liberia, and their signal success. It is gratifying to observe the ties of affection which invite kindred hearts, widely separated in the kingdom of our common Lord, and which must ultimately create a union in the church universal, and among all nations.

A sermon by the Rev. James Theodore Holly, Missionary of the Episcopal Church to Hayti, preached before Trinity Congregation, Port au Prince, July 26, 1863.]

"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."—*Numbers xxxiii. 10.*

Behold in this exclamation, my Christian hearers, the enraptured wish, nay, I may say the *envy* that even a wicked man expressed, in beholding afar off in prophetic vision, the peaceful end of truly good man! Balaam, that wicked-hearted prophet—the Simon Magus of the Hebrew dispensation, who, like this latter personage in the apostolic age, was willing to buy and sell spiritual gifts for the sake of gain—was led to make his exclamation, after he had tried in vain to curse Israel from the high places of Baal, but found that there was no divination against him whom God keeps as the apple of His eye, and holds in the hollow of His Almighty hand. The false prophet was made to see that all such live in security amidst every adversity, and finally pass from this life in the peace of God and the hope of a blissful immortality to the bosom of Jesus. Thank God, that not only is virtue its own reward, and vice its own punishment, but that vice is always compelled to render tribute to virtue by confessing out of its own guilty lips the praise of real goodness, which it hath not itself, whenever this virtue is manifested in others. Thank God, that however truth may be crushed to earth in any given age or place in the world, and falsehood rampant over its prostrate form; yet the eternal decrees of God, foreordained before the "morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy," have left us in no doubt in reference to the final and complete triumph of righteousness; for



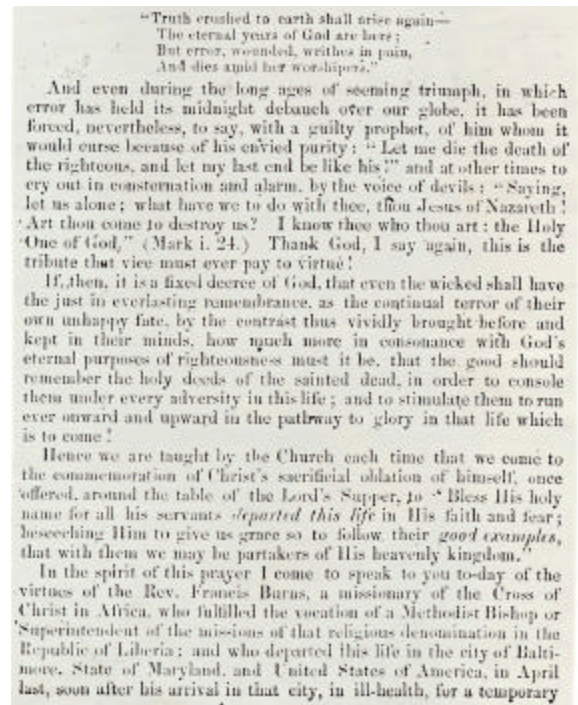
“Truth crushed to earth shall arise again—  
The eternal years of God are hers;  
But error, wounded, writhes in pain,  
And dies amid her worshippers.”

And even during the long ages of seeming triumph, in which error has held its midnight debauch over our globe, it has been forced, nevertheless, to say, with a guilty prophet, of him whom it would curse because of his envied purity: “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!” and at other times to cry out in consternation and alarm, by the voice of devils: “Saying, let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth! Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art: the Holy One of God,” (Mark i.24.) Thank God, I say again, this is the tribute that vice must ever pay to virtue!

If, then, it is a fixed decree of God, that even the wicked shall have the just in everlasting remembrance, as the continual terror of their own unhappy fate, by the contrast thus vividly brought before and kept in their minds, how much more in consonance with God’s eternal purposes of righteousness must it be, that the good should remember the holy deeds of the sainted dead, in order to console them under every adversity in this life; and to stimulate them to run ever onward and upward in the pathway to glory in that life which is to come!

Hence we are taught by the Church each time that we come to the commemoration of Christ’s sacrificial oblation of himself, once offered, around the table of the Lord’s Supper to “Bless His holy name for all his servants *departed this life* in His faith and fear; beseeching Him to give us grace so to follow their *good examples*, that with them we may be partakers of His heavenly kingdom.”

In the spirit of this prayer I come to speak to you to-day of the virtues of the Rev. Francis Burns, a missionary of the Cross of Christ in Africa, who fulfilled the vocation of a Methodist Bishop or Superintendent at the missions of that religious denomination in the Republic of Liberia; and who departed this life in the city of Baltimore, State of Maryland, and United States of America, in April last, soon after his arrival in that city, in ill-health, for a temporary



respite, from the field of his missionary charge and labors in Africa.

And here, let me say, my Christian hearers, that it is with the utmost diffidence that I permit myself to indulge in a funeral panegyric. This diffidence on my part arises out of the following reasons:

1. The fondness of relatives and friends, or the interest of sect or party, nation or race, are almost sure to have some undue influence in painting in exaggerated colors the character of the deceased. And *secondly*, the extreme perversion that such influences has caused the commemoration of the dead to assume. Hence, anything that might possibly warp the pulpit from truth or rectitude to the baser interest of clan, sect or party, need always to be approached with the utmost diffidence by the preacher jealous for the truth as it is in Jesus.

But in the case of the illustrious deceased, of whom I am about to speak in this place, I thank God there are no such melancholy considerations to be feared. There are no fond friends or relatives around me here, using their too partial influence over me, in order to give a high and undue coloring to the virtues of this dear departed one. Neither am I connected with the deceased by the peculiar sectarian ties of the same religious denomination. Nor have I ever been in the interest of that party or Society which led him to seek the peculiar destiny of his race on the Western shores of Africa. On the contrary, I have rather chosen to become a citizen of quite a different nation from that where the adopted citizenship of the illustrious deceased Bishop is enregistered.

There remains, however, one peculiar tie between us, viz: that of having mutually sprung from the same peculiar branch of the human race—a race whose suffering is well calculated to elicit strong sympathy and partiality in all that I might say of such a brilliant star that has illustrated its destiny. But even this partial, but in good part excusable sympathy, I entirely waive and set aside in presence of Him who is no respecter of persons, and in whom there is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian or Scythian, bond or free, male or female, but who are all one in Christ Jesus. Col. iii. II. While I hold the sacred character of the minister of God, and speak as his oracle from the sanctuary, I must not recognize anything less than the

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common fatherhood of God, and the universal brotherhood of man.

I am confined to the general and more elevated facts in the life of the deceased, which are matters of public record, in now proceeding to pronounce his panegyric.

I. First, then, in the catalogue of his virtues let me say, *that he was a messenger who had the everlasting Gospel to preach*. The illustrious deceased was one of those ministers of the last prophetic *time* of our dispensation, whom St. John has represented in his apocalyptic visions, under various symbols of an angel having a message to proclaim to the inhabitants of the earth after the sixth trumpet has sounded in the history of the Christian church. Rev. x. The first symbol given of the missionary preacher thereafter, is that of an angel standing with the right foot on the sea, and the left on the land, holding an open book in one hand, and lifting the other up to heaven, and swearing by Him who lives forever, that from that date the mystery of God shall be finished in less than one more prophetic *time*; (verse 6.) [A period of three hundred and sixty solar years,] during the sounding of the seventh trumpet, as the same had been declared to His servants the prophets. (7.) This symbol is an eminent figure of the true missionary of the Gospel in these latter times, acting under the consciousness of the [near] approach of the end of our dispensation. More particularly is this angel a striking symbol of the deceased Bishop, whose memory we revere. His ministerial career was distinguished by the fact that his feet being shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, passed over both sea and land, grasping in one hand the precious Bible—the written word of God—while with the other uplifted he pointed perishing sinners to heaven—to Jesus, the High Priest of our salvation, seated at the right hand of God the Father everlasting, to make intercession for us. Like this symbolic angel of the apocalypse, whose right foot is represented as resting on the sea, so it was the principal aim of this sainted Bishop to preach the Gospel to the perishing heathen beyond seas. Like that other angel of the apocalypse (xiv. 6.) flying in mid-heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, the missionary career of this illustrious servant of God was distinguished by his voyages hither and thither across the

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Atlantic, borne on the wings of the wind, backward and forward from Africa to America, whenever the great interests of his missionary work were to be promoted thereby.

II. I add, in the second place, *that the deceased BISHOP was self-sacrificing in the discharge of his missionary duty.* This fact has already become apparent in what I have just said. To choose the dark, benighted land of Africa, destitute as it has been both of civilization and Christianity, as his special field of labors, is evidence at once to the *self-sacrificing* spirit that animated him. And this humble choice appears in a still more *self-sacrificing* light when we consider that the West Coast of Africa, where he labored, has been for centuries the by-word, the jeer, the hissing, and the scorn of the rest of the nations of the earth. Africa, since her ancient glory has passed away, has been associated with every thing that is low, vile, mean, and contemptible by the proud, haughty, avaricious, and uncharitable nations. But despite this mean estimate of his fatherland by a supercilious civilization, this great missionary of the Cross, like another Moses, chose rather to suffer affliction with his ancestral race in Africa, than to enjoy the riches and treasures of Anglo-American civilization. (Heb. xi., 24, 25.) Like St. John in his vision, having tasted that the word of God was sweet to his own mouth, he must speak thereof before peoples, nations, tongues, and kings, however bitter the experience that came home to his own bosom in social privation. (Rev. x, 9, 10.) By the eye of faith, the long-recorded prophecy of David appeared as a star before his spiritual vision, illuminating the mid-night blackness of Africa's present social position, and heralding her future glorious destiny in these omnific words: "Princes shall come out of Egypt, and Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." (Psl. xviii, 31.)

Like the ancient Magi from Anatolia following the star which proclaimed the Saviour's birth, over hill and dale, to where the infant Jesus lay cradled in Bethlehem, so our good missionary Bishop clung to the precious promises of this prophecy through good report and through evil report, until he was led to the cradling of the truth of Jesus again in an infant branch of His church on

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that once dark, drear, and benighted coast.

III. I now proceed to affirm, in the third place, *that the illustrious deceased was persevering in the work the Spirit of God led him to do.* This point has also been partially anticipated by what I have just said. His perseverance is apparent in the fact, that he pursued a bright prophetic hope—which others took for a phantom—through the deepest obloquy, until he saw the dawn of its radiant accomplishment. But, in order to make this characteristic of the deceased still more apparent, I desire to state the specific number of years that he diligently pursued this beau-ideal of his life. For thirty-five years did he consecrate himself to the hope of African's regeneration; and for twenty-nine years out of these thirty-five did he engage in a personal and hand-to-hand struggle with the powers of darkness on the West Coast of Africa, until they have been driven back dismayed, and the glorious banner of Immanuel triumphantly unfurled, by his persevering and untiring labors. Thus, during the average period of one of earth's generations, his best thoughts, words, and deeds were devoted to this one grand idea of his life! How many other men have commenced as well as he, and yet have fallen out by the way! How cowardly thousands become in the face of difficulties, sufferings, privations, and other adversities, and are thereby led to abandon the most hopeful causes ere the house of success arrives! But with the deceased, he was resolved never to grow weary in well doing. He resolved to persevere unto the end—to be faithful unto death, and to finish his course with joy, so as to obtain the crown of life. And a period covering a third part of a century, illustrated with the noblest deeds of self-sacrifice, in this or in any other age, attests how well and faithfully he has fulfilled his resolution and held fast to his primitive integrity!

IV. I come now, in the fourth place, to say *that he was crowned with success in his labors.* Ordinarily it is not given to many men to commence such an arduous, vast, and stupendous moral undertaking, and live to see it emerge from its primitive obloquy, and arrive to that glorious consummation when the entwined

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V. I pass now to add in the fifth and last place, *that he finished his course with joy*. This fact every one must have anticipated, as the natural sequence of what I have already had occasion to say. How could it be otherwise with a man conscious of such a mighty *mission* as he had given to him! What else could we expect from one who had been so *self-sacrificing* in fulfilling that mission! What other result could such long *persevering* and devoted labors have! Why should not a man, in fine, whose labors have been crowned with so much honor and success, *finish his course with joy!* It is not surprising, therefore, to us to hear his last dying testimony, when he was told by his attending friends

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who stood by his bedside, that the moment of his departure was near. It was perfectly in keeping with his glorious career for him to say: "For this end I have lived, and therefore I am not afraid to die." Like another Paul, he could truly say: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." (2 Tim., iv., 6, 7, 8.)

Go, therefore, Christian Bishop, to rest from thy earthly labors, in the blessed company of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the holy patriarchs and prophets! Let thy great soul depart in peace from this world of misery and sin, for thy labors here have been well done, truly and faithfully finished! Depart therefore beyond the reach of temptation, beyond the power of Satan and sin; in the name of the Father who created thee; in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, who died for thee; in the name of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, who sanctifieth and preserveth thee. May the angels, which minister to the heirs of salvation attend around thee; the glorious company of apostles and the goodly fellowship of prophets receive thee; may the noble army of martyrs, the triumphant band of confessors, the multitude of saints who have gone before, welcome thee to thy rest, wherein thou shalt rejoice in hope of that blessed resurrection, in the which, with all the blest of God, thou shalt receive again thy body made like unto Christ's glorious body; and shall have thy perfect consummation and bliss in the kingdom of eternal joy. And grant, O most merciful Father, that we, who remain behind, may finally have our part with him and them, abiding in Thy fear and love, and patiently abounding in our work, until our change shall also come through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Yes, my dear brethren, we are only justified in referring to these sainted examples in order to stimulate us onward in the pathway to glory, by making our calling and election sure. And in order that this glorious end may be attained, it is necessary that we, like that

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Christian Bishop, just passed on from grace to glory, should, in our day and generation "patiently abound in our work until our change shall also come," as we are taught in an ancient liturgical office of the church. Like him we have a work to do for our blessed Saviour in this island of the sea, where we have chosen to cast our lot. Like him we have raised in this spiritually dark land, the glorious standard of the cross. Like him we have commenced in obscurity to build a church here upon the ancient foundation which Jesus Christ himself has laid. Let us therefore patiently endeavor to emulate the sacred pentalpha of virtues which shone so conspicuously in the life and character of the deceased Bishop, and which we have just been contemplating with so much admiration. May each one of us, like him, feel that we are called to be *messengers*, both in word and action, of the *everlasting Gospel of Christ*. May each one of us, like him, make the same *self-sacrificing* efforts for the enlightenment of those who sit in darkness. May each one of us, like him, exhibit the same unyielding *perseverance* in pursuing the good work that we have taken in hand. May each one of us see our several labors, according to our respective spheres, *crowned with an abundant and honorable success*. May each one of us, in fine, like the good Christian Bishop whose virtues we now commemorate, *finish our course with joy*, by going to our final rest in that sublime peace of God which surpasses all human understanding.

Then shall our labors, added on to those who have gone before, and completed by those who shall come after us; under the blessing of God, contribute to enlighten all the dark places of the earth with the blaze of the everlasting Gospel of Christ. Africa shall again rejoice in her hundred gated cities and her six hundred Christian Bishops. The ancient glory of her conquering Carthage, her world renowned Thebes, and superb Memphis, shall be surpassed by the radiant splendor which Christianity shall give to this new birth from their present mouldering ruins, dust and ashes. And the brilliant patristic learning of her Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen, Augustine and Athanasius, shall be eclipsed by the more magnificent glory that the incoming millennial age shall give to that new succession of Gospel theologians of which our lamented Bishop was the noble and glorious forerun-

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ner. And Africa, that ancient cradle of the world's civilization, thus restored to more than her original pre-eminence among the nations of the earth by the resurrection power of the Gospel of Christ, will give back again to the world the highest type and most brilliant lustre of Christian civilization; and Christian sages shall go again to visit her shrines to study the wonderful beauty of her Christian polity, as Joseph and Moses, Plato and Pythagoras, and other Hebrew, Greek and Roman philosophers of antiquity went up thither in the infancy of civilization to be instructed in her amazing civil polity.

In that day shall generations now unborn rise up and call the illustrious Bishop, whose departure we now commemorate, with all others who have emulated his example, the blessed precursors of this happy destiny, and the benefactors of humanity. And the returning Son of Man shall welcome them with his resurrection voice—

“From dust and ashes and the dead,”

as blessed children of His Father into the mansions of His heavenly kingdom. Such, therefore, being the glorious recompense of reward reserved for all those who, like the Rev. Francis Burns—the angel-evangelist of Africa—shall finish their course with joy, well might even a wicked prophet exclaim, in beholding their triumphant departure, in rapturous tones of admiration:—

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