

In the sacred moment of Whitman's funeral, Quaker Daniel G. Brinton asserted that ' the iteration of this child of the doctrine of the inner light, whose mortal remains we now consign to the tomb, was "Be thyself." ' I view Brinton as the de facto Quaker ambassador to Whitman's circle.

Daniel G. Brinton. [Eulogy for Walt Whitman]. *At the Graveside of Walt Whitman: Harleigh, Camden, New Jersey, March 30, 1892; And, Sprigs of Lilac*. Horace C Traubel, editor. (Philadelphia: Billstein & Son, 1892), 11-13. [Digitized by Google Books; edited by Mitchell Santine Gould, curator, LeavesOfGrass.Org. Thank you, Google.]

Friends of the dead, comrades and lovers of him who has left us — We meet to bid farewell to him whose life and thoughts have forged the bonds between us. We feared that in midwinter he would have been taken from us; but he abided until the flowers of spring had come to deck his sepulchre, and until the leaves of grass, typical to his soul of the mystic energy of nature, stretched out their tender fronds, toward his tomb.

His contending spirit has reached the end of the untried roads he loved to follow. Through sharp defeats and baffled crises he has fought out the fight, ever marching on with clear eyes fixed on the well-marked goal. His spirit has passed beyond the “frontiers to eyes impenetrable.” The “dark mother, gliding near with soft feet,” has taken this child to her sure-enwinding arms, and laves him in the flood of her bliss. We stand on the hither shore, and our eyes have not force to search the dimness of the floating ocean into which he has journeyed. Let us turn to note the legacy he has left.

No idler was he, no dallier with the golden hours, but arduous, contentious, undissuadable and infinitely loving. He came bearing the burden of a Gospel, the Gospel of the Individual Man; he came teaching that the soul is not more than the body, and that the body is not more than the soul, and that nothing, not God himself, is greater to one than one's self is.

He asked no man to accept his teachings, or to become his disciple, or to call him master. His strong voice resounded above the heads of all high men, and over the roofs of the world. It challenged alike wealth and power, and want and death, proclaiming that man, the one man, the individual, every individual, has all rights and all powers, is the autocrat of the world, sole ruler of the universe — let him only enforce his claims and make good his title.

His words are perpetual warnings to all sects and syndicates, to all leagues and orders which bind men's minds or muscles to the bidding of another, which make them slaves in thought or in action; and a warning against that worse and commoner bondage to one's own self, to imbibed traditions, to cultivated fears, to accepted and self-forged shackles. He who would gain true freedom, who would feel soul and body stinging with a new, an electric life, the life of one's self, let him patiently, persistently seek the meaning of that legacy of verse left with us by him whom now we consign to the clasp of the tomb.

Never did he fear that fatal and certain end. Idle, indeed, it was for Death to try to alarm him. Almost did it seem that to him, as to the mighty sage of Kapilavastu, the King of Terrors had given up his secret, and in his ear had whispered hints of cheer and joy. Death had come to him to mean the truth “without name,” the “word unsaid,” not to be found “in any dictionary, utterance, symbol,” the creative sign, “the friend whose embracing” should awake him.

Therefore he harbored no suspicion of death; but he forgot not that his concern, and that of all men, is not with death, but with life; not with that which cannot be said, but with that the saying and doing of which will help the weak and gladden the strong, lift the fallen and enlighten the thoughtful, spread robust love between men and tender sympathy among women. This was his practical mission.

On the portal of the holiest shrine in ancient Greece were inscribed the words, “Know thyself”; the message of “the Pilot of the Galilean Lake” was “Deny thyself”; the iteration of this child of the doctrine of the inner light, whose mortal remains we now consign to the tomb, was “Be thyself.”

There is no conflict in these teachings. They are the evolution of the self-same sentiment. They are all embraced in one line of him whom Walt Whitman in his strong and homely phrase called “the boss of us all” —

“Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.”

Be thyself; suffer neither the tyranny which comes from the assumptions of others, nor that which proceeds from thine own lower nature; true to thyself, never canst thou be false to any one — to man, to woman, or to God. This was *his* teaching to whom we now bid farewell — the long, the timeless farewell.