

A FEW
OBSERVATIONS,

IN REFERENCE TO THE CHARACTER
OF THE
Rev. Mr. AARON RICHARDS
of RAILWAY; father to WILLIAM RICHARDS, Esq;
of MIDDLETOWN.

DELIVERED AT HIS FUNERAL,
IN A
SERMON.

By ALEXANDER MACWHORTER, D. D.

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A FEW OBSERVATIONS, &c.

PHILL. I. 21.

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

IT is always expected in the improvement of such dispensations of divine Providence, as have occasioned this numerous and solemn assembly, that the preacher should give some general lines of the character of the deceased, with some supporting counsel to the mourning relatives and friends.

I could with propriety here introduce a large eulogium upon the character of this aged and venerable servant of JESUS CHRIST ; but, I shall confine myself to the general features and most striking outlines of it.

THE Rev. Mr. Richards was descended from a respectable family in the town of Newark, and about fifty-two years ago, became a subject with many others of those general and remarkable influences of the spirit of God, which at that season were poured out upon various parts of America. He was at this time brought to a hopeful closure with the Lord JESUS CHRIST ;

the sincerity and truth of which, a long unblemished life, a holy conversation, and a christian practice abundantly prove and most satisfactorily establish. His conversion was attended with such anxiousness of zeal, that all his heart and desires were to serve God in the holy ministry of the Gospel of his Son, and promote the salvation of immortal souls. In these exercises, and with these views, he engaged in procuring literary accomplishments, obtained his first degree in the Arts in the College of New-Haven, (for the College of New-Jersey was not at that time instituted,) in the year 1743. After his commencement, he devoted himself wholly to the study of Divinity, and in due time was orderly licensed by the Presbytery of New-York as a preacher of the blessed Gospel of our divine Redeemer. He was warm in the cause of religion, zealous and popular. Various invitations were soon presented to him for settlement, especially from the Wallkill in the state of New-York, and from this place; though this, at that time was just a beginning a young society, yet it obtained his preference, and you have enjoyed his labours in the Gospel, I think, for more than forty-five years. God has blessed the dispensation of the Gospel by him in the awakening and conversion of many souls in this place, some of whom are gone to glory and are now stars in the crown of his re-

joicing, and some still remain as witnesses of the efficacy and fruits of his ministry among you. There have been several revivals of religion during his ministration, so that God has greatly honored him, as the instrument of conveying heavenly blessings to your fathers, to you and your families.

He was from early life afflicted with nervous complaints, which induced a melancholy habit of body, which, at various seasons, for a considerable time together, took him off from the public service of the sanctuary ; and now for three years, except a short lucid interval last fall, he has been overwhelmed with these calamities ; reduced from a considerable degree of corpulency to a mere skeleton ; and they have at last brought him down to the dust of the earth.

THE prominent lines in the character of our dear departed friend were, a steady and fervent piety ; a warm and sincere devotion ; and a high and energetic zeal in all his public performances. In private life, he was a cordial and faithful friend. In his family, he was the affectionate husband, the tender father and kind master. He was a minister wholly devoted, while he enjoyed health, to his ministerial labors, both in season and out of season. The affairs of the world commanded but a small portion of his care and attention. Besides his public preaching on

the sabbath, how frequent were his weekly lectures? He loved, he delighted in his heavenly master's service. You are all witnesses to his diligence, in visiting the sick; administering directions and support to the dying; leading enquiring souls to JESUS; comforting them that mourn; and instructing you and your children from house to house. In imitation of his peaceful Lord, he was a man, and minister of peace.—He preserved peace in his neighbourhood and congregation. Never were the Presbytery or churches troubled with any complaints or uneasiness from this good man. The history of the conduct of Barnabas, together with the character given of him by St. Luke, when sent by the church in Jerusalem to visit Antioch, may here, I think, with propriety be applied. *He rejoiced when he saw the grace of God among the Antiochian christians, was glad, and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the LORD. For he was a good man, full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith.*

THE supreme God has preserved his life to a good old age, and now *has gathered him home like a shock of corn fully ripe.*—For whom should we mourn?—Not for this saint who is gone to glory, but for ourselves, who suffer the loss of his prayers and example.

WHAT shall I say to assuage the anguish of the wounds, and console the heart of the mourn-

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ing and bereaved widow. My dear madam, it is with you a day of heaviness gloominess and thick darkness. You can truly say with the psalmist ; “ Lover and friend hast thou put far from me and mine acquaintance, into the land of darkness.” To whom can I recommend you for consolation, but to the LORD, who has promised to be the widow’s God.—May the God of all peace, hope and comfort be your stay and support ! May Israel’s God, and your husband’s God, be your help, your portion, joy and salvation !

As to you the dear children of the deceased, the best counsel, I can give you in this the day of your sorrow, distress and bitterness of soul, is, to make your father’s God, your God ; your father’s Saviour, your Saviour ; recollect his exhortations and prayers ; imitate his religion and example ; walk in his steps ; and when you shall be called to leave this world, then shall you dwell with him in mansions of eternal felicity in the Paradise of God.

With respect to you, my dear hearers of this congregation, who have long been favoured with the labours, zeal and faithfulness of your departed pastor ; remember his doctrine, his life, his exhortations, and holy diligence ; how he warned you, prayed for you night and day, and watched for your souls. You will hear his voice no more. Prepare to meet him at the

bar of God.—Oh, that it may be your happy lot, that he may then say to his heavenly Father, “Here am I, and the children, thou hast given me.”

We who are ministers of the Gospel are called upon this day, to remember, that we hold our treasure in earthen vessels. Soon, very soon, many of us must give an account of our stewardship. A very few weeks ago went to rest that venerable servant of CHRIST, the Rev. Dr. Robert Smith of Pequea, a man eminently distinguished for his piety, his godly conversation, holy walking and ministerial zeal. And now another of our fathers and fellow laborers in the vineyard of CHRIST is gone. “Our fathers are now no more, but are they prepared to live forever?”—Let us gird up the loins of our minds and work while the day lasts, for we shall soon follow them into the eternal and unchangeable world.

THAT we may all, ministers and people, be prepared and be standing ready for our departure, may God of his free grace, and infinite mercy grant thro’ JESUS CHRIST. *Amen and Amen.*