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THE

Faith of Christ's Ministers.

AN

EXAMPLE FOR HIS PEOPLE.

A DISCOURSE

COMMEMORATIVE OF

BENJAMIN HOLT RICE, D.D.

PREACHED IN THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY,
ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 20, 1856,

BY REQUEST OF THE SESSION.

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM EDWARD SCHENCK,

CORRESPONDING SECRETARY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION,
FORMERLY PASTOR OF THAT CHURCH.

PHILADELPHIA:

WILLIAM S. & ALFRED MARTIEN, •

No. 144 CHESTNUT STREET.

1856.

At a meeting of the Session of the First Presbyterian Church, of Princeton, New Jersey, held March 7, 1856, it was

Resolved, 1. That this Session have learned with sorrow of the death of the late Benjamin H. Rice, D. D., of whom they cherish kindly and grateful recollections as their former pastor.

Resolved, 2. That we would humbly take to ourselves the lesson inculcated by the peculiar circumstances attending this dispensation of divine Providence.

Resolved, 3. That we tender our condolence to the relatives of the deceased.

On motion of the present pastor, Rev. James M. Macdonald, D. D., it was

Resolved, 4. That the Rev. William E. Schenck, former pastor of this church, be invited to preach a funeral sermon on this occasion, at such time as may be most convenient to himself.

STEPHEN ALEXANDER, *Clerk of Session*.

At a meeting of the Session of the First Presbyterian Church, of Princeton, New Jersey, held July 25th, 1856, it was, on motion,

Resolved, 1. That the thanks of this Session are hereby tendered to the Rev. William E. Schenck, for his very just and appropriate discourse on the life, character, and death of the late Benjamin H. Rice, D. D., former pastor of this church.

Resolved, 2. That the Rev. Mr. Schenck be requested to furnish a copy of his discourse for publication.

STEPHEN ALEXANDER, *Clerk of Session*.

DISCOURSE.

HEBREWS XIII. 7—8.

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

THE people of God are here expressly exhorted to keep before them the past example, and to follow the finished faith of those who were once the ministers of Christ to them, but who have gone to their heavenly reward. The text may be thus paraphrased: Remember your spiritual leaders, who in times past have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith carefully and perseveringly *imitate*, attentively considering the *ending* or issue of their manner of life. And for your encouragement in pursuing such a course, bear in mind that Jesus Christ, who was at once both the Author and the Finisher of their faith, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

The ministers of Christ are mentioned in the text in their double character of *rulers* (or more literally following the original, of *leaders*) and of *teachers*. Such a class of persons was ordained in the beginning of the Church of Christ, and with a design that they should act in this double capacity. Jesus sent forth first the twelve, and afterwards the seventy, and from

that time until the present, he has, by his providence and by his Spirit, continued to enlarge their numbers, and to fill up their ranks as they were thinned by death. Marshalling the hosts of God in his church militant, and furnishing them with panoplies drawn from a celestial armory, they have not been raised up as mere commanders in their spiritual rule, but as leaders and guides, going before the ranks, taking an arduous share in every enterprise for Christ, and bearing a full measure of the toils, the trials, and the conflicts of each campaign. Nor are they allowed by mere force of official position, to lead an unquestioning and unimproving multitude; but as heaven-taught instructors they are bound to impart unceasingly to bands of disciples the lessons of heavenly wisdom. Short-sighted man might have said: Let some superior and unfallen order of beings become our teachers. But herein the foolishness of God was wiser than the wisdom of man. God had a great and wise purpose, not only to show forth the excellency of his own power, but also to give full scope to a heaven-imparted faith. He has, therefore, set as guides for his pilgrim-people men of like passions with themselves, committing the treasures of the gospel into earthen vessels. *Men* are divinely called by God's providence and by his Spirit to this work, they are also divinely qualified and sustained in it. They are henceforth both commanded and enabled to live lives of faith upon the Son of God. They turn aside from those walks of life which lead to power, to glory, and to fame, to be in the estimation of the world as nothing for Christ's sake. They

labour as much, yea, as a class even more than other men, yet look by faith for their reward beyond the grave. In whatever aspect they may be regarded, they are seen, so far as they possess the true spirit of Christian ministers, to be men of faith. Faith leads them into the ministry of reconciliation; faith sustains them there amidst such toils and cares as few other men endure; faith enables them to triumph amidst fightings without and fears within; faith leads them along their way through sins and sorrows; faith brings them off victorious at last.

In all this they are set to be not merely *servants* to the church; they are its *leaders* and *examples* likewise. They become to all God's people, in their measure, illustrations of the origin, the power, the beauty, and the durability of faith. Faith no longer remains an abstract principle. It is no longer a mere bookish theory, that men may live and walk and overcome by faith. Here it is embodied, operative, mighty, and triumphant. Men look, reflect, and are convinced, as they see not a pure and unfallen order of beings, not even a superior and pre-eminently sanctified portion of their own race; but men like themselves, equally corrupt by nature, equally encompassed about by infirmities, by temptations, by sorrows, and by sins; struggling onward, struggling upward, and struggling successfully, while they turn their backs on earthly things, and make it the one thing they do to "press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Faith is thus, as it were, made visible; and the possibility, the practicability, and the blessed-

ness of walking by the light of things unseen, are demonstrated in the most impressive and convincing form. It was for this reason that Paul, by inspiration, presents himself in his life of faith to the contemplation of believers, saying, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example." For the same reason he exhorts Timothy, "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, *in faith*, in purity." So too the Apostle Peter exhorts the ministry at large to "feed the flock of God, not as being lords over God's heritage, but as ensamples to the flock." So then, every minister of the gospel is a divinely appointed example, as well as an instructor of God's people. He is bound to walk the walk of faith so that they may safely follow in his steps, and they on their part are bound to fix their eyes on him attentively, and to "follow" the movements of his faith. How wide and blessed may thus be the product where the faith of even a single servant of God is strong, lively, and progressive! What mind can adequately conceive it! What tongue can suitably express it! Who can tell us how much of the power of the gospel has been exerted through the faith of the collective ministry, illustrated in their lives, and thus acting on the minds of men in every Christian land and in every age of Christianity?

But there is one point in this example of faith set before the Church by every true minister of Christ, to which our special notice is directed in the text. If God gives him to be an example while he lives, so it is

intimated that he gives him to be such in a very special manner *in his dying hour*. Believers are to follow his faith, “*considering the ending or issue of his manner of life.*” That manner of life has been throughout, in many respects, strange, peculiar, and utterly opposed to the modes, maxims, and manner of life of an ungodly world. While the multitude around him are thinking, talking, and acting with chief reference to things visible and tangible, the faithful servant of God remembers that he has been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, “from his *vain* conversation received by tradition.” Hence, he diligently strives, “as a wise man and endued with knowledge, to show out of a *good* conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.” Unostentatiously and very imperfectly, yet truly, disregarding the examples of those “who mind earthly things, and whose end is destruction,” he “has his conversation in Heaven, whence also he looks for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” In all this, the man who, with a lively faith, places himself as a living sacrifice upon the altar of Christ, still makes himself as he did in the days of Paul, “a fool for Christ’s sake.” Unenlightened and unchristian men will oftentimes wonder at him and despise him, esteeming him weak-minded and unduly enthusiastic.

It seems needful then, that both for the sake of an ungodly world, and of the host of timorous and wavering believers among Christ’s disciples, some great, crowning, and decisive proof should be afforded, that the principles on which faith lives and acts are no

weak and worthless principles, undeserving of adoption, and, like broken reeds, likely to pierce the side, when he who trusts to them most needs to lean heavily upon them for support.

Such a proof, in amazing clearness, beauty, and power, God gives. To the simple life of faith he adds the illustrious death of faith. In the "ending of the conversation" of the spiritual guides and teachers of the Church, God furnishes a demonstration of the superior excellence and wisdom of a life of faith, such as ought to arrest the attention, secure the conviction, and excite the imitation of every weak and wavering disciple. When God summons his people to consider the closing up of another such life, and the voice of his providence cries aloud, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace," then that heart must be insensate and immoveable indeed, which is not ready to respond, "His faith, Lord, would we follow."

Death is oftentimes called *the honest hour*. Not that it is entirely impossible even for the dying man to deceive both others and himself; but the dying man is certainly far likelier both to know and to express the truth, when the motives to deception are all just disappearing for ever, and the motives for honesty and candour are grown immensely great and palpable. Death is oftentimes also called *the trying hour*. And surely, if there is a moment of existence when one longs to know that his foot is planted on a rock which only Omnipotence can shake, it is when, standing in mid-ocean, the last plank of his wrecked vessel wrested

from his grasp, the storm-piled billows roar and rage on every side.

To such a test, for the benefit of those who are to follow, does God submit the power and value of faith in the appointed guides of his people. Enoch and Elijah may, for rare reasons, have been taken by another path to Heaven. But Isaiah and Paul, the martyred Stephen and the beloved John, Augustine and Wickliffe, Calvin and Knox, Whitfield and Chalmers, with hosts of others, (stars of lesser magnitude, but shining with the same celestial radiance) from high places and from low in the great field, have been called to pass by the same dark path along which their Master trod his painful way to Heaven. And they are passing still. As I look around this house to-day, and remember the men of God who in times past have occupied these pews and stood before you in this pulpit, but who are here no more, I cannot help exclaiming, "Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live for ever?" Scarcely a week passes, but the news comes to us from this quarter or from that, that another leader in Israel is fallen. Zion mourns her loss, and the remark is often made, "How mysterious that God should take from his Church such men of earnest faith and active zeal!" But our text shows that their departure is not an unmixed evil, even in reference to the Church here below. If God has had a great purpose to accomplish by their lives and labours, he has also a wise and glorious purpose to accomplish by their deaths. If the Church has been blessed by the example they have given her while

living, she may be greatly blessed likewise by the example they have left her in their dying. What a vast mass of testimony has thus been accumulating from apostolic times until to-day, not merely concerning the truth of Christianity in general, but especially concerning the overcoming power of faith in Jesus in a dying hour! How striking and important a lesson is thus taught, would men but learn it, in these tens of thousands of examples, respecting the superior wisdom of heartily "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," and of "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, having respect unto the recompense of the reward." How important a lesson! And taught by how many dying witnesses! And, mark this! there is no conflict whatever among these witnesses. Heard you ever, my hearers, of a faithful minister of Jesus Christ, who, when he came to die, felt that he had lived too much a life of faith, had given up too much of the honours, the pleasures, or the possessions of this world? Or heard you ever of such a faithful minister who was not permitted to exemplify and to illustrate the blessedness of a life of faith by at least a peaceful if not a triumphant exit from this mortal state? We venture confidently to answer for you, you did never, *never*. Examine all the written records of the past, and summon all the living witnesses of the departure of God's servants, and you will find no exception. You may hear some of them bemoaning the weakness of their faith and its scanty influence on their past lives. You may even

find some of them questioning the genuineness of their faith. But you will find not one who does not rejoice in all the evidence he possesses of having had a true faith; not one who does not rejoice in all the trials, toils, and self-denials he has found involved in a life of faith; not one, "the end of whose conversation" has not been such as to exhibit the faithfulness of Jesus to the true believer, and to convey a new exhortation to all beholders to imitate that faith which has thus brought off its possessor conqueror, and more than conqueror.

We summon you then, O ye sceptic, insinuating ever that Christianity is no better than a cheat—a cunningly devised fable—the offspring of priestcraft and superstition—we summon you to learn this lesson from the dying ministers of Christ. Or if ye will not learn it, we then charge you to explain to us this strange phenomenon, that these tens of thousands, after spending their lives in toilfully upholding this delusion, are so invariably ready in a dying hour to testify in behalf of the gospel they have preached, and are enabled peacefully, hopefully, joyfully, as they go hence for ever, to stake *their own eternal all* upon its truthfulness. Is there nothing superhuman here? Must not that be the truth of God which they have preached? Must not that be a divine support, which enables those who have been the Church's guides and examples all their lives to continue their guidance and example still as they lie down upon the bed of death? If we stand by the bedside of the dying infidel who has striven ever so hard to propagate his terrible creed, we may often hear him confessing that before him lies

only "a great peradventure," or that he is taking "a fearful leap in the dark." Or, if we listen to the irreligious worldling in his last struggles, we hear how often, alas, how often! his anguished confession, that he has but grasped a phantom, and has lost for ever all that was really worth securing. But when the leaders of God's people pass away, even as they disappear from mortal view in the thick darkness of the valley and shadow of death, we hear the voices of these men of faith coming back in tones of cheerful and encouraging exhortation to those they leave behind, mingled oftentimes with triumphant shouts of blessedness anticipated.

We call on you too, O ye professed disciples of the Redeemer, to consider well the "ending of their conversation" who have spoken unto you the word of God. You, too, profess to live and walk by faith. But the objects of sense are all around you, and clamour loudly at every avenue of thought and feeling, striving to secure unto themselves all your affections and exertions. Faith, on the other hand, is the confidence of things *hoped* for, the persuasion of things *not seen*. What can be better adapted to strengthen and to stimulate your faith than a careful consideration of the example of those whom God has set to be his people's guides, especially in the triumphant issue of their faith? You once saw their devotement of themselves to the Lord's work. You observed how they turned aside from the possessions, the honours, and the sinful pleasures of this world. You perceived how, with the love of Christ in their hearts and their eyes fixed on

heaven, they did, both by example and by precept, beseech men to be reconciled to God. You saw something, yet was it but a small part you saw, of their crushing toils, privations, anxieties, and griefs. And as you looked, perhaps remaining unbelief suggested that their work was very hard, and their recompense was very distant, and that whatever they hoped for on high, they were losing much below. In short, instead of taking them as your leaders to a more perfect renunciation of the world, and a higher life and walk of faith in your several spheres, you perhaps shrank back, to secure the pleasures of the passing hour or to lay up treasures here on earth. But now their conversation is ended. The volume of their lives is closed. Their last testimony is given. They do rest from their labours. Look at their history now, in the light of its glorious conclusion. *Was* their recompense so very distant? Was their bargain so very bad? Was their wisdom so very doubtful, in walking through this world by faith, and laying up their treasures yonder? You dare not say it. Conscience tells you that that peace of God which was shed abroad in their bosoms in a dying hour, was worth infinitely more than all the unholy pleasures that could be crowded into the longest lifetime. Could all the honours which the world has power to heap upon you, be for one moment set in contrast in that dying hour, with their joyful expectation of soon receiving a loving approval from the glorious King of Saints? Or would all the houses and lands which the most successful industry and energy could accumulate,

be any equivalent at all for their assured title to a heavenly inheritance? No, no. Whatever you may think when you view the matter under other circumstances, yet when you consider the winding up of his manner of life, you cannot doubt that the true man of faith has secured an incalculable gain in the grand total of existence.

Be wise, then, to “follow” where He leads. Imitate his faith. In whatever sphere in life God has appointed your lot, live for your unseen Saviour. Live for yonder glorious Heaven. Use this world, but abuse it not, remembering that the fashion thereof is passing rapidly away. Give not to it your warmest affections. Devote not to it your chief exertions.

How many spiritual guides and teachers, who have here spoken to you in days past the word of God, are already gone! You have seen their manner of life, and you have seen its conclusion. To go no further back among the many sainted worthies of the past, who in this place have preached to you the gospel, what tender, holy memories arise to-day around us, when we think of the lamented DOD, of the venerated MILLER and ALEXANDER, and now, too, of the lately ascended Dr. RICE! Although none of them free from human imperfections—imperfections felt and lamented most deeply by themselves—yet what beautiful and inviting foot-prints have they left along the path towards heaven; foot-prints more beautiful and more inviting nowhere than just upon the margin of that dreaded valley, which was not permitted to be dark or dreadful at all to them. They have left a rich legacy,

not only to the people of Princeton, but to the entire Church of God, in the example of their living, and in the example of their dying too. May it be often "considered!" May the same faith which gave all the value to their examples, be assiduously cultivated by you likewise!

Sensible of your weakness, do you ask where you can find help and strength? Our text points you to an abundant source of supply. "Jesus Christ (is) the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." He always has been, he is now, he always will be, both "the Author and the FINISHER" of his people's faith. From the days of righteous Abel until now, he has kept, and strengthened, and brought off victorious all who have looked to him. He furnished the faith of the glorious prophets, and apostles, and martyrs of olden time. He is ready, according to all their need, to sustain and strengthen the faith of the very weakest and humblest of his people now. Let them be found "ever looking unto Jesus," in all their temptations and their fears, in all their joys and griefs, in all their labours and their sins, and not one of them that looks shall ever be confounded. He will find in Jesus the same unchanging heart of love, the same infinity of wisdom, the same arm of omnipotence, which have given victory to weak, and tempted, and timorous saints from the days of old, ready to bring him off conqueror too.

I trust you will have no difficulty in perceiving that the strain of remark already offered, forms a legitimate part of the service requested at my hands to-day.

Yet you will desire to hear some notice, however brief and inadequate it may be, of the life, labours, and death of your beloved former pastor, whose death has not long since filled your hearts with sadness. I am not here to-day to utter his eulogy. I speak to those who knew him. Your hearts, unprompted, will not fail to cherish duly the memory of his virtues. A brief outline of his life and death is all I have to offer you.

BENJAMIN HOLT RICE, D. D., was born near New London in Bedford county, Virginia, on the 29th day of November, A. D. 1782. His father, Benjamin Rice, was a lawyer by profession, but for several years filled the post of deputy clerk of the county. He was also a ruling elder in the adjacent Peak and Pisgah Presbyterian congregations, of which his brother, the Rev. David Rice, afterwards called the Apostle of Kentucky, was at that time pastor. The mother of Dr. Rice was Catharine Holt, "a woman of cultivated mind, gentle disposition, and exemplary piety, fondly attached to her husband and truly devoted to her children."* When Dr. Rice was at the early age of about seven years, this fond and pious mother was removed by death. It would seem, however, that God did not permit the earnest prayers and faithful instructions of this devoted woman to be unavailing. When was such seed, sown by a fond mother's hand, ever permitted to be ultimately fruitless, even if the sower lived not to see so much as the first and tenderest blade appearing?

* Memoir of Rev. John H. Rice, D. D. By William Maxwell.

His early education was very slender, having amounted, when he had reached the age of fifteen, to only six months attendance at a country school. At that age he began to assist his father by writing in the office of the county clerk, in which occupation he continued about five years. It was during this period that he was hopefully brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ under the ministry of the Rev. James Turner, a most eloquent preacher, who was at that time his pastor. Dr. Rice was seldom heard in later years to make any reference to the circumstances of his own conversion, so that almost nothing is known respecting his early religious exercises. In the summer of the year 1802, his elder brother, the Rev. John H. Rice, afterwards an eminent light in the Church, and at that time a tutor at Hampden Sydney, made a visit to his father, in the course of which he had some conversation with his brother Benjamin about pursuing a liberal education. The result was that he soon after followed his brother to Hampden Sydney, and there, under his direction, commenced the study of the Latin language. Here he met the Rev. Archibald Alexander, D. D., at that time President of Hampden Sydney College, whose sister he married some years afterward, and for whom he soon formed an admiring friendship, which continued unbroken to the end of life.

In the fall of 1804, the Rev. John H. Rice having become pastor of the church of Cub Creek in Charlotte county, Virginia, Benjamin went thither with him, and assisted him in teaching a school of some twenty boys, at the same time continuing his own studies under the

direction of his brother. During all this portion of his life, his health was extremely bad, and close study was very painful to him. He lived with his brother in all about six years, and received the whole of his education under his direction. At the expiration of this time he went to North Carolina, where he taught school for a time, first at Newbern, and afterwards at Raleigh, in connection with the Rev. Dr. McPheeters.

While at Raleigh, Dr. Rice received his license to preach the gospel from the Presbytery of Orange, at its sessions in the church at Buffaloe in Guildford county, North Carolina, on the 28th day of September, A. D. 1810. Shortly after, in the spring of 1811, he was sent as a missionary to the seaboard counties of North Carolina, under an appointment of the General Assembly.* Here he preached at Newbern, Washington, Wilmington, Edenton, and through the intervening region. We are informed that his labours here were abundant. His preaching was with great acceptance and no little success. I have been informed by one who heard him in North Carolina at this time, that "his preaching was peculiarly powerful. The strain of it was richly evangelical, and unusually adapted to awaken and convert sinners." What other fruits sprang from these missionary labours eternity only may reveal. One fact, however, I can state with confidence. On a certain Sabbath in the course of his itinerations, Dr. Rice preached twice at Edenton, and among his hearers was an interesting young man, at that time a student at law. He went to hear, not

* See Minutes of General Assembly for 1811, p. 323.

without strong prejudice, both against the preacher and the truth. But God carried that truth home to his heart, and made it a means of his conversion. That young man is now the Rev. Thomas H. Skinner, D. D., a Professor in the Union Theological Seminary in New York, who always retained a special regard and love for Dr. Rice.

On the 3d day of April, 1812, in the Grove Church, the Presbytery of Orange, "believing that it would tend to promote the interests of the Church," proceeded, after going through the usual examinations, to ordain Mr. Rice, *sine titulo*, and on the next day appointed him a commissioner to attend the approaching meeting of the General Assembly in Philadelphia. After the adjournment of the Assembly, he laboured for about six weeks in the suburbs of that city. Under what auspices these labours were performed, we know not; but as he abode during his sojourn in that city with Dr. A. Alexander, who, while a pastor there, was an earnest advocate of city missions, it was very probably in accordance with some arrangement of his planning, for the destitute and perishing population of the suburbs. In the summer of the same year, having received an appointment from the late General Assembly to labour for four months on the Northern Neck of Virginia,* he determined to select a field of labour where there seemed to be the best prospect of building up a church. While travelling southward through the state of Virginia, and without any human instrumentality to influence him,

* See Minutes of General Assembly for 1812, p. 12.

his mind was irresistibly drawn towards Petersburg in that State. He at once determined to spend the coming winter in that town, and to make full proof of the practicability of gathering there a church of the Lord Jesus Christ. During the summer he visited the town for a few days, preached occasionally, and won the affectionate regard of many individuals with whom he became acquainted. Towards the close of the year, (Dec. 15, 1812,) he commenced his stated labours, preaching sometimes in an unfinished store-house.

Petersburg at that time contained about eight thousand people, in which number there were two, and *only two* Presbyterians. The population, as a whole, was very indifferent to all religion. Infidelity was wide-spread among them; and card-playing, horse-racing, the theatre, and the ball-room, absorbed the attention of the people. Such was the religious condition of the town into which Dr. Rice, yet a young man, and inexperienced, heroically resolved to enter, for the purpose of planting there the standard of the cross, and taking possession in the name of his Divine Master. A considerable number soon attended his preaching, and some, ere long, had their hearts opened to receive the word. By the close of the year 1813, a church was organized with about twenty members. Dr. Rice was unanimously elected their pastor, and was duly installed by the old Hanover Presbytery, in the spring of 1814. During the earlier part of his ministry in Petersburg, the infidels made great efforts to drive him from the place. They wrote him threatening letters; they circulated all manner of slanders

against him; and when these all failed, they strove to set up other churches in opposition to him. It was all in vain. The work was of God, and it went forward. The infant church, from the date of its organization, continued to grow and thrive. It soon became firmly rooted and grounded, and continues to this day a large and flourishing church, a noble monument to the zeal and energy of him who, as the servant of Christ, toilsomely laid its foundation-walls. Seventeen years Dr. Rice continued to be the pastor at Petersburg, and during that time three hundred and nineteen members were added to the church. Several revivals of deep interest occurred, especially one in 1822, when seventy-nine converts were added; one in 1824, when twenty-three were added; and one in 1826, when fifty-two were added. Amidst vicissitudes of encouragement and of discouragement, Dr. Rice's ministry in Petersburg was, upon the whole, eminently successful. It was there, undoubtedly, that he performed the great work of his life, and had he done nothing afterwards, we must have considered his ministry as successful, even beyond that of most preachers of the gospel.

In the month of May, A. D. 1829, Dr. Rice attended the sessions of the General Assembly in the city of Philadelphia, as one of the commissioners of Hanover Presbytery, and was elected Moderator of the Assembly. He presided in an able and dignified manner. The year following, in the same city, he opened the Assembly with a sermon on John xviii. 36, 37, which was regarded by competent judges as a discourse of extraordinary ability and impressiveness.

In the autumn of the year 1829, Dr. Rice received a call to the Pearl Street Church, in the city of New York. This call, he believed it his duty to accept, and his people at Petersburg, reluctantly, and even tearfully, gave him up to his new charge. He was installed as pastor of the Pearl Street Church on December 3d, 1829. Respecting his labours in New York, I have been able to learn nothing that would be of special interest to you. He evidently did not feel at home in the atmosphere of a great and bustling city, and painfully missed the free and social habits of Virginia life. His frame had been much shattered before he left Petersburg, and he had lost much of that elasticity and buoyancy of spirit which had carried him so successfully through his early labours. After remaining a little less than three years in the Pearl Street Church, he was invited in July, 1832, to become Associate Secretary of the American Home Missionary Society. Having resigned his pastoral charge, he entered upon the duties of that office in September following, and continued to perform them a little less than a year. In September, A. D. 1832, he received the degree of Doctor in Divinity from the College of New Jersey.

In the summer of 1833, Dr. Rice received a call to become the pastor of this church, at that time the only one of any denomination in Princeton. Having accepted this call, he was duly installed by a Committee of the Presbytery of New Brunswick, August 15th, 1833. On that occasion, the installation sermon was preached by the Rev. Symmes C. Henry of Cran-

berry; the Rev. Samuel Miller, D. D., gave the charge to the pastor; and the Rev. James Carnahan, D. D., gave the charge to the people. It is surely unnecessary for me here to enter into details respecting the ministry of Dr. Rice among you. These are still fresh in your memories. For nearly fourteen years he was with you, breaking unto you the bread of life. During much of this time he was oppressed by feelings of bodily infirmity. These feelings were much aggravated by the heavy afflictions which befel him in the early part of the year 1844, first, in the sudden death of a favorite daughter,* and again in less than two months after, in the far severer stroke which removed his tenderly-beloved wife,† the assiduous and ever cheerful companion of his former toils. Yet he was

* Mrs. Anne Forman, Dr. Rice's second daughter, died in or near Versailles, Ky., where her husband, the Rev. Ezekiel Forman, was at that time settled as a pastor. She had visited her parents at Princeton in the spring preceding, at which time her health was excellent, and she was uncommonly cheerful in spirit. She gently departed this life January 11th, 1844, after an illness of a few weeks, having given every evidence of being a true Christian. Her last words were, "I wish to be a better Christian."

† Mrs. Martha Rice was the youngest of the nine children of William and Ann Alexander of Rockbridge County, Virginia, and youngest sister of the late venerated Archibald Alexander, D.D. She was born July 28, 1788, and at the early age of about seventeen years, became a member of the Presbyterian church at Lexington, Virginia. She was united to Dr. Rice in marriage, September 23d, 1815, a little more than a year after his installation over the then infant church at Petersburg. She died at Princeton, of a congestive fever, March 6th, 1844, in the fifty-sixth year of her age. She bore a most striking resemblance to her venerable brother, Dr. Alexander, both in her personal appearance and in her mental and moral traits. She was always vivacious and hopeful in her temperament, and was active and earnest in seizing every opportunity for usefulness among the people of her husband's charge. She undoubtedly did much, all through their married life, to sustain and encourage, and thus to promote the usefulness of Dr. Rice, whose temperament strongly inclined him to a morbid despondency. During her last illness, which was of about three weeks duration, she enjoyed uninterrupted serenity and confidence to the last. Even when speechless she understood everything; and when her husband asked her whether she could now say that God had given her victory over death, and requested her to signify it by raising her hand, she immediately did this, and soon after expired. The people of Princeton expressed their sense of her virtues and their loss, by erecting a neat marble monument upon her grave, upon which is placed an appropriate and touching epitaph.

not without many seals to his ministry among the people of this place. Many of you who now hear my voice, have cause to bless God that you were permitted to hear the gospel from his lips. And not a few are already with him in the world of glory, who were first brought to receive the truth as it was imparted unto them by him. During the nearly fourteen years of his pastoral labours in this church, two hundred and seventy-one members were added by examination. Although no extended and powerful revival of religion occurred, yet on two several occasions the Spirit of God was more than ordinarily poured out, resulting, in the winter and spring of 1840-1, and again, of 1843-4, in the addition to the church of considerably larger numbers than ordinary. Although his preaching was oftentimes indicative of his infirm health and depression of spirits, it was always evangelical, spiritual, and practical; sometimes earnest and solemn; usually tender and affectionate. When his spirit was roused by any peculiar circumstance, especially by indications of the presence of God's Spirit among his hearers, he rose to flights of ability and eloquence, such as are rarely surpassed in any pulpit.*

A sense of bodily infirmity continuing to grow upon

* In confirmation of this assertion, we quote a few sentences from an article published in the *Presbyterian Herald* at Louisville, Ky., shortly after Dr. Rice's death. The article is presumed to be from the pen of the Rev. W. W. Hill, D. D., the editor of that paper. "Dr. Rice's preaching was earnest, plain, and eminently practical, and when he was thoroughly aroused, at times it became eloquent and powerful. We remember to have heard him for near two weeks, twice a day, in the famous revival in Bound Brook congregation, which occurred in 1836, and we never heard the doctrines and duties of the gospel presented with more searching power and eloquence, than they were presented by him at that time." Dr. Rice took peculiar pleasure in aiding his ministerial brethren at such times, and was always ready promptly to respond to their calls for help, both when in Virginia and at the North. It is probable that no small portion of the usefulness of his life was found in these occasional visits to other congregations.

him, he finally offered to the congregation his resignation of his pastoral charge, April 26th, 1847, and the pastoral relation was dissolved by the Presbytery on the 28th day of the same month. He assigned as his reason, that he felt himself unable any longer to discharge properly his duties as pastor of this church. Proceeding to Virginia, he visited, in December following, at Hampden Sydney, his sister-in-law, the widow of Dr. John H. Rice. The College Church at that place was vacant at that time, and soon after made out a call for him. He at first agreed to stay six months, but afterwards accepted the call, and was installed shortly after the spring meeting of the Presbytery.

Here, amidst friends of his youth, and scenes of his early studies, he was destined to perform his last labours, and to end his days. The circumstances which surrounded Dr. Rice during his residence in New York and Princeton, were evidently not congenial to his temperament and habits. But after his return to Virginia, his heart settled itself in the conviction that he was once more *at home*, and his mind recovered a large measure of the freedom of its early action. In the vicinity of his church he purchased a little farm, and both mind and body were much benefitted by a moderate attention to agricultural pursuits. One who occasionally heard him in these last years, testifies that "although the fire of his youthful ardour was gone, yet the warmth of his large, loving heart remained, and at times, his mind raised to its former elevation of tone, his rich, clear, and earnest utterances would delight, and captivate, and startle,

as in the days of his unabated vigour. In these days his peculiar glory was in the social meeting, at the communion table, and in personal converse with anxiously inquiring sinners." Indeed, in these last years, Dr. Rice seems to have resumed no small share of the large popularity and influence he enjoyed in Virginia during his labours in Petersburg. His attendance at meetings of Presbytery and Synod was greeted with affectionate respect, and although he spoke seldom, he was invariably heard with deference.

It was the happiness of him who addresses you, to have a last and most pleasing interview with Dr. Rice during the sessions of the Synod of Virginia, at Lexington, in October last. Never will he forget the hearty grasp of the hand, the kindly tones and cordial smiles with which he was there greeted, by the friend and pastor of his early youth. Dr. Rice's increasingly bowed form, and his general appearance, betokened sadly, that he was travelling down the vale of years. Yet when, on Sabbath afternoon and on a sacramental occasion, he addressed the Synod, there was even more than the fire, and energy, and fluency of twenty years ago.

The closing scene of Dr. Rice's life is graphically described in an account penned by the very competent hand of one residing on the spot.* I will give you as brief an abstract of it as I can.

The state of Dr. Rice's health had given much solicitude to carefully observing friends, for some months

* The account referred to was written by the Rev. Benjamin M. Smith, D. D., Professor in Union Theological Seminary, Prince Edward County, Va., and was published in the *Central Presbyterian* at Richmond.

before his death. Yet, during the two months preceding the fatal attack, he had regularly occupied his pulpit. On Sabbath, the 17th of January last, according to previous notice, a collection was to be taken for Domestic Missions, and Dr. Rice had prepared an appropriate discourse on Exodus xiv. 15: "Speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward." The day, however, proved to be remarkably inclement, and the collection having been postponed, he proceeded to make another and extemporaneous use of the same text, applying it to Christians. He then turned to the impenitent among his hearers, saying solemnly, "You are in the way of death, and every step forward brings you nearer to your ruin. To you I dare not say go forward, but retreat, and advance not another step until you have found the right path and entered it." He continued in this strain of clear and animated remark for some time, when his voice became too subdued to be heard over the house, and he seemed rather like one thinking aloud. Pausing, he made a sign for a glass of water, and as he took it, he remarked, that his tongue was becoming paralysed. The Rev. Lewis W. Green, D. D., and A. A. Rice, M. D., (Dr. Rice's son) immediately went to him. The former gentleman gave out a hymn, but before the singing began, Dr. Rice arose, and evidently feeling that this was *his last opportunity*, leaned forward on the pulpit and said, "I wish to say a word to my Christian brethren. *"Are you all going forward in the divine life? Are you growing in grace and in fitness for heaven?"* This was uttered with great difficulty, and

was scarcely intelligible beyond the immediate vicinity of the pulpit. He was supported back to the seat, and it was found necessary to lift him from the pulpit, whence he was borne out amidst the sighs and tears of his afflicted and bereaved people, never more to return alive. He lived on until the following Sabbath, February 24, 1856, on the morning of which day, very appropriately, he entered into his rest. He never recovered his speech sufficiently to speak with usual distinctness, though enough to be partially understood. His thoughts still dwelt at times on the subject of his projected discourse, and even when his tongue refused fully to perform its office, the words "go forward," and "a wide world," could be distinguished. His faith in an all-sufficient Saviour and his precious promises, remained strong and unwavering to the very last. In a conversation with one of his physicians not long before his end, he said that he desired to live only that he might preach the gospel.

He died peacefully, in the very work of the ministry, with the harness on. He has doubtless already rejoined the sainted companions of his earthly pilgrimage, and with Turner, and Hoge, and Lacy, and Lyle, and Baxter, and Miller, and Alexander, and his brother, Dr. John H. Rice, is inhabiting the blessed mansions prepared for them by a Saviour's love.

"There the saints of all ages in harmony meet,
Their Saviour and brethren transported to greet,
Whilst the anthems of pleasure unceasingly roll,
And the smile of the Lord is the feast of the soul."

On Monday morning, February 25th, they laid his mortal remains to rest in the graveyard at Willing-

ton, about three miles from the church, and beside the honored dust of his eminent and sainted brother, who had preceded him to the grave a little over twenty-five years. A large concourse of families of his charge and officers and students of the College and Seminary, attended his remains to the grave. Many College students followed the hearse on foot the whole distance. A few brief remarks were made, and a prayer was offered by a Professor of the Seminary,* and the 622d Hymn was sung, after which they left his dust to sleep on until the resurrection morn.

Thus lived and thus died your former pastor, who so often and so earnestly proclaimed to you the glad tidings of salvation from this sacred desk. He had lived to reach his seventy-fourth year; had seen all his children gathered into the fold of Christ by a good profession; one of his sons† in the ministry of reconciliation, and three of his daughters the wives of ministers.‡ And then he went up, to be re-united to the sainted wife, the cheerful and inspiring partner of his early toils and cares, whose dust sleeps in Jesus in your graveyard yonder. He went up to join large numbers of his spiritual children, some of them from among yourselves, who had preceded him to glory, and to leave large numbers more to cherish an affectionate remembrance of his virtues and his usefulness. He was a man of undoubted and unusual natural abilities; of sound judgment; of great practical sagacity; of large-

* Rev. Benjamin M. Smith, D. D.

† Rev. John Holt Rice, pastor of a church in Louisville, Ky.

‡ Married to the Rev. Drury Lacy, D. D., President of Davidson College, N. C.; to Rev. Ezekiel Forman of Richmond, Ky., (see note, page 25); and to Rev. E. E. Porter of Memphis, Tennessee.

hearted liberality; of exquisite sensibility; and above all, of a paternal kindness that was irresistibly attractive. Unselfish and unassuming, his heart was large and true, and envy, jealousy, pride, and unholy ambition seemed to have no perceptible place therein.

Well done, aged and beloved servant of Christ and his Church! Thou hast finished thy course bravely! It was thine honour to receive thy summons in the sacred desk, and while thy tongue was teaching sinners the way of life eternal! Thou hast fallen upon the very battle-field of the gospel; in the midst of the conflict; with thine armour girt around thee, and wielding in good earnest the sword of the Spirit! Blessed is that servant, whom his Master when he cometh shall find so doing!

My Brethren, he has gone before you. But he will surely meet you at least once again—at the judgment seat of Christ. What witness will he then have to bear concerning you? The thousands of sermons he preached from this pulpit—the unnumbered words of more private instruction and warning and exhortation he uttered—will they then be found to have proved a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death?

It only remains for me to close as I began, by exhorting you once more—"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; *whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation,*" and looking unto "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever." AMEN.