

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

AND

SERMONS,

OF SOME OF THE

FIRST MINISTERS OF THE ASSOCIATE CHURCH IN AMERICA.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

A HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION,

CONTAINING AN ACCOUNT OF THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF THE ASSOCIATE CHURCH FOR THE FIRST HALF CENTURY OF HER EXISTENCE IN THIS COUNTRY.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF THE REV. THOMAS BEVERIDGE.

IT must be confirming to the faith of christians, and encouraging to those who are engaged in a testimony for present truth, to read the ensuing account of the life and death of that eminent servant of Jesus Christ, the REV. THOMAS BEVERIDGE, late minister of the gospel to the Associate congregation of Cambridge, Washington county, State of New-York.

This great and good man was born in the year 1749, at East-side, parish of Fossoway and shire of Fife, in Scotland. He was descended of reputable parents. His uncle, Thomas Beveridge, was a member of the Associate congregation of Paisley, and died in a manner almost as remarkable and triumphant as that of his nephew. Mr. Beveridge was bred under the ministry of the Rev. William Mair, of Muckart, whose lectures on the 1st, 2d and 3d chapters of Matthew are published, and have received the approbation of a discerning public: the preface to these lectures was written by him. After studying philosophy he entered the divinity hall, under the inspection of the Rev. William Moncrief of Alloa.

Some time after he was licensed to preach the gospel, he was appointed to assist the Rev. Adam Gib, minister of the gospel at Edinburgh, in his aged and infirm state. Here, by lodging in the same house with Mr. Gib, he had access not only to his library, but to be daily conversant with him, which was greatly for his improvement. This intercourse led to a friendship between them, which was never after impaired. His public services in Edinburgh were very acceptable both to Mr. Gib and the congregation; and his private deportment was marked with wisdom and circumspection.

In consequence of a petition from the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania for help, the General Associate Synod ap-

pointed Mr. Beveridge to come to America, and directed that he should be ordained by the Associate Presbytery of Edinburgh. Mr. Gib preached the ordination sermon on the 23d of September, 1783, from John x. 16, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold, them also must I bring."*

In the spring of 1784 he arrived in America, after a tedious passage of sixteen weeks: and soon after took his seat in the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, met at Philadelphia May 4th, same year.

Here the abilities of Mr. Beveridge were early displayed. The Presbytery finding it necessary to state their profession of the faith of Christ, in a manner more particularly suited to the state of this country, agreed to draw up a Testimony for the Doctrine and Order of the Church of Christ; and they appointed Mr. Beveridge to make out a draught. This work he cheerfully undertook, and assiduously

* This excellent sermon is printed, and contains the following remarkable passage. Speaking of the manner of Christ's bringing his sheep—"He waits not till they come to the means of grace, but he sends these means to them. He has each in his eye, in every generation, through all parts of the world, whom he must bring; and he sends, and will send the gospel to them for that end. He sent it in the early ages to Scotland. He has been bringing many of his sheep here, in the course of by-past generations, and he is still doing so to the northernmost isles of it, which the ancients are supposed to have meant by their *Ultima Thule*, as being the remotest parts of the then known world, from the original seat of literature and refinement. And in this latter period he has gone, and is still going farther off, for bringing in his other sheep, in the far remoter climes of America. He will bring them all as they may be found scattered through the regions of a new protestant empire, wonderfully constituted in that part of the world."

The solemn charge delivered to Mr. Beveridge immediately after his ordination, concludes with this memorable passage:—"Commit yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, as devoted to his service in the ministry of reconciliation. Entrust him with your preservation and through-bearing, amidst all dangers, distresses and difficulties, which may be before your hand.—Commit your ministry to the Lord Christ, for his supporting you in it, qualifying you more and more for it, and countenancing you in the exercise of it, in bringing some of his other sheep.—Study faithfulness to the solemn engagements which you have come under, with steadfastness in your christian profession; maintaining a steadfast adherence to that Testimony for a Covenanted Reformation which you have solemnly espoused; neither ashamed nor afraid to persevere in an honest appearance for it.—Study faithfulness to the exercise of your ministry: 'rightly dividing the word of truth;' and preaching to others, that doctrine upon which you are to venture your own soul for eternity. 'Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine: Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.' And let all your dependence be upon the Lord Christ, for his being the breath while he makes you the trumpet.—Depend upon him in frequent and earnest prayer; for his enduing you with wisdom, prudence, courage, honesty and ability, on the side of his cause: in opposition to the apostacy now taking place in North America, among some who were once of the same witnessing body with us. And 'the Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit: Grace be with you. Amen.'"—This solemn charge was delivered by the aged and venerable Mr. Gib, and was truly exemplified and faithfully kept by Mr. Beveridge, in the whole course of his ministry.

applied himself to it, during the summer ; and it was approved, and judicially agreed to at Pequa, August 25, 1784. During the same meeting of Presbytery a petition arrived from Cambridge, in the state of New York, subscribed by a large number of respectable people, praying the Associate Presbytery to send one of their number to dispense divine ordinances among them according to the received principles of said Presbytery. Mr. Beveridge was sent in the autumn of this year, and continued there till the next spring ; during which time the hearts of the people became knit to him as their minister, and they afterwards applied for the ordinary steps to have him fixed among them.

In the spring of the year 1785, he came to New-York, and was the instrument of organizing the Associate Congregation there ; and from that time till his death, he had a very tender concern about that people. Indeed he had the care of all the churchès on his mind.

The call from Cambridge being accepted by him, he was accordingly fixed among that people, on the 10th of Sept. 1789. The Rev. John Anderson preached on the occasion, from John xiii. 20. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me ; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me." After which ; the Rev. David Goodwillie did, in the ordinary manner, admit Mr. Beveridge to the Pastoral charge of said congregation.

In this charge he labored with great diligence, in explaining the doctrines of the gospel, and applying them to the conscience of his hearers ; in visiting the sick, in catechising and exhorting from house to house ; and was particularly careful to instruct the rising generation. His labors were also extended to several places in the state, particularly to Argyle-Town, and Curries Bush, at both which places he dispensed the Lord's Supper. And it was remarked that on these solemn occasions, both at home and abroad, he appeared evidently to "ride on the high places of the earth," and to be "fed with the heritage of Jacob his father,"—having much secret "fellowship, with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

Mr. Beveridge presided at the ordination of the Rev. David Goodwillie, in the hall of the University of Pennsylvania, on the 31st of October, 1788, when he preached from 2 Cor. iv. i. "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy we faint not."* He also presided at the ordination of the Rev. John Cree, at New-York, October, 12,

*See the following sermon.

1792, when he preached from 2 Tim. ii. 2. "The same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others." This day was spent as a day of solemn humiliation and prayer, in the afternoon and evening whereof, the members of the Associate Presbytery, together with the elders and other members of the Associate congregation of New-York, did, with uplifted hands, enter into the Solemn Engagement to duties. Mr. Beveridge joined with his brethren in this solemn work.

In the end of June 1798, he set out for Barnet,* in order to assist the Rev. David Goodwillie at the dispensation of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In passing through Rye-gate township, on his way thither, he received a draught of bad water, which infected his bowels, and issued in a dysentery, which occasioned his death. Though much indisposed when he arrived at Barnet, he preached on Saturday. On Sabbath his disorder had increased to such a degree, that he was obliged to sit while he served two tables. But notwithstanding his afflicted situation, he preached in the evening, an excellent and very affecting sermon, from John xvii. 11, "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world; and I come to thee." This was his last appearance in public; and though conflicting with a mortal distemper, his piety and talents seemed to shine with uncommon lustre, and he addressed the audience with all the fervor of a dying man. He was unable to attend public worship on the thanksgiving on Monday.

It was not till three weeks after this, that he departed this life: all which time the hopes and fears of those who attended him were alternately excited; yet hopes of his recovery were never totally given up till the evening before his death.

* Just before he set out on his last journey, he wrote to his friend in Philadelphia, as follows:

"I hesitate a little about setting out to Barnet, from the state of my family; but it is probable I will go. I never found my family more safe, than when going abroad. I have committed them to the Lord's protection. No journey can be less agreeable; but it may be the Lord whom I desire to serve, may have some use for his poor unworthy servant in that place. I am sure I cannot well blame myself as to bye ends. The government is on Christ's shoulder. I bless God, I have satisfaction of soul at times in his work: and I know it is good to draw near to him. Let us rely on the Lord, and he will do great things for us. The voice of Christ from heaven saith, 'according to your faith be it unto you.'—My hope is, that as the Lord of hosts hath a 'very small remnant,' we shall not 'be as Sodom', nor made 'like unto Gomorrah.' I hope for mercy in the midst of wrath, to Britain and America. Great things are accomplishing in the way of judgment, yet it is sad to think of the ruin of the churches—Geneva, Switzerland, and Holland ruined, or nearly so. O Lord, in wrath remember mercy! May the Lord God of all consolation be with you."

During these three weeks he was chiefly employed in prayer and reading the scriptures; and when unable to read himself, he would desire one or other of his elders, (who faithfully attended him) to read to him such passages as he pointed out on which he frequently made observations as they went along.

His congregation hearing that he was sick, immediately sent Mr. James Small and Mr. Robert Oliver,* two of their elders to see him; these not returning, as soon as was expected two others were dispatched who arrived at Barnet as the people were returning from his funeral.

The contagion of his disorder was caught by Mr. Goodwillie's family. Two of his children fell victims to it before Mr. Beveridge's death, and were laid in one grave;† and Mr. Goodwillie himself was dangerously ill of it. On Sabbath, a number of the people gathered to the house where these two distressed ministers lay. Mr. Beveridge's heart was so touched with compassion towards them, who were, at that time, as sheep without a shepherd, that he insisted on being permitted to preach to them. Notwithstanding the entreaty of his friends, he roused himself once more, and sat up in bed, around which the people gathered; and after praise and prayer, he preached a well connected and very practical sermon, from Psal. xxxi. 23. "O love the Lord all ye his saints."‡ This discourse was delivered with great fervor of spirit, and in the application, he did, in a very pathetic manner, exhort the people of Barnet to study peace among themselves; and said, if any of them should still go on with their contentions, which he had labored to remove, he would be a witness against them in the day of judgment: he exhorted them to steadfastness in their religious profession, and warned them of the danger of leaving their own communion, which he understood some of them seemed disposed to do at that time.

He preached about an hour, and after prayer and praise dismissed the congregation. The fatigue he then subjected

* Mr. Oliver was for a number of years Stated Clerk of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania.

† Mrs. Goodwillie behaved with such exemplary prudence, that notwithstanding Mr. Beveridge was the means of bringing the disorder into the house, of which two of her children died, she was unremitting in her kindness to him; and, though an affectionate mother, never shed a tear in his sight, for fear of hurting his sensibility.

‡ Mr. Beveridge, while a student, heard a remarkable sermon on the evening of a Communion Sabbath, from this same text, preached by the late Rev. and pious William Jamieson, minister of the gospel at Killwinning, which made a deep and lasting impression on his mind, and ever after endeared the memory of Mr. Jamieson to him.

himself to was far above his strength. In the evening he grew worse; the fever increased, and before midnight all hopes of his recovery were lost. He was fully sensible of his situation, and desired Mr. Oliver to call Mr. Small (who had lain down to take some rest) to his assistance, as he found he could not raise himself by the help of one, as formerly. He continued in this state till about the break of day, when the storm was changed into a calm.

To the astonishment of those who attended him, he sat up in his bed, and said, "I am a dying man, and dying fast,—but as to bodily pain I am free of it. I feel no more of this than you do, nor is there a man in Barnet who is more at ease than I am.* Did ever you witness any thing similar to this? Are you not also persuaded I am dying?" One of them answered, yes. "It is well, said he, I am not afraid to die." Mr. Goodwillie was now called up from his bed. When he and the family were come into the room, Mr. Beveridge said, he would pray once more with them before he departed. He then stretched forth his hands, and spoke as fully and distinctly, and with as much composure as when in perfect health. With an audible voice he addressed the throne of grace, in behalf of the church of Christ in general, and the Secession body in particular,—his own congregation at Cambridge, especially the rising generation,—his brethren in the ministry, Mr. Marshall in Philadelphia, and Mr. Goodwillie by name, that they might be supported under the trying providences they had met with in their flocks and families. He also prayed for them who had so faithfully attended him during his illness,—and having commended his soul into the hand of God who gave it, he concluded his pathetic and heart-melting prayer with these words, **THE PRAYERS OF THOMAS BEVERIDGE ARE NOW ENDED**; in allusion to what David says in the close of the 72d Psalm.

After this he addressed the company that were round about him: he exhorted Mr. Goodwillie not to give way to excessive grief for the loss of his children, as he would eventually find this among the things that were working together for good. He thanked him and Mrs. Goodwillie for their great kindness shown to him in his illness; and desired him, when he wrote to Mr. Marshall in Philadelphia, to inform him, that he had not forgot him in his last moments. He addressed others in the company, according to the various trials which had passed

* It is supposed that the physical cause of his feeling no pain, was, that his bowels were now mortified.

over them, in which he discovered the most perfect recollection. After this he lay down, and desired that two persons might sit by him, one on each side, as he was apprehensive he would depart if he fell asleep: he then requested the rest of the company to withdraw. In the forenoon he lay very quiet, and declared he was perfectly at ease. In the afternoon he became worse, and took little notice of any person. He called for Mr. Goodwillie, and asked him if he knew what time the Son of man would come. He replied, he thought it would be the ensuing night about ten o'clock, or at farthest about cock-crowing. To which Mr. Beveridge answered, I know now; after which he lay still.

In the evening he seemed to recover from the languor in which he had lain for some hours; and with an audible voice, as distinctly as if he had been in the pulpit, repeated twice that memorable passage, (Job xix. 25, 26, 27,) "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." These were the last words he spoke. After this he gradually weakened, till about ten o'clock, when he expired—without a sigh, without a struggle, and without a groan.

Thus ended his days, one of the best of men, and a most eminent servant of Jesus Christ; and who was supported in his last illness with that consolation he had often given to others. (Psal. xxxvii. 37,) "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace." He was called home to his Father's house, "to the general assembly and church of the first-born," to be with Christ and his apostles and prophets, and the wise men of old, with the ancient martyrs and confessors of the name of Jesus; and has received the divine approbation of his Lord and Master, "Well done good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord."

His brethren in the ministry are very sensible of the loss they have sustained, in being deprived of his counsel and advice. He was sent to America at a time when his singular abilities were much wanted; and there does not appear to have been a man sent by the General Associate Synod, whose talents have proved more useful to the general interests of the religious body with which he was connected. He took an active part in stating the religious profession made by the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, and had a principal hand

in composing the public papers, which express their views concerning the faith of Christ.* But amidst these and other avocations he did not neglect his flock; and his diligence among them was attended with visible success. They form now a very numerous, pious, and respectable body of people. They greatly esteemed their minister while he lived, and since his death have shown the most dutiful respect to his memory, by ordering a handsome monument to be erected over his grave in the church-yard of Barnet; and by making provision for his family. He has left a widow and five children, (the youngest of whom was born since his death) who very sensibly feel the loss they have sustained;—but he often committed them unto the Lord, who will be faithful to his promise, in being a Father to the fatherless, and a Husband to the widow.

To attempt to delineate the character of this eminent servant of Christ, would require one possessed of equal abilities. He was critically acquainted with the holy scriptures, which he daily studied in the original languages. His distinct views of evangelical truth, rendered him always acceptable in his public discourses, to those who had any savor for the things of God: while his extensive acquaintance with the history, constitution, and order of the church of Christ, made him very useful to the Presbytery of which he was a member. He had a plentiful measure of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which shone forth in his great humility, weanedness from the world, solemnity of carriage, and in his being a man of prayer, and always deeply impressed with a sense of the Divine Majesty. He was much favored with intimacy with his God: he frequently spent days, yea, whole nights, in prayer and wrestling with God. At sacramental times he slept little, and his conversation was very heavenly. He was ordinarily much countenanced in his ministry on such occasions.

He was well acquainted with the writings of the Reformers, and with the rise and progress of the Reformation, together with the wonderful events of Divine Providence in bringing it about. Indeed, he was possessed of the same spirit with these eminent instruments, in the hand of God, for bringing about our glorious deliverance from the tyranny of Antichrist; and had nothing more at heart than the further reformation of the church of Christ in his own day. In one

* "He had (says the Editors of the Christian Magazine) the satisfaction to see the church with which he was connected, spring up as from a tender shoot, till it became strong, and spread its branches through various parts of the United States of America."

word, it may be said, that very few in this age possess an equal assemblage of gifts and graces, with as few imperfections, as Mr. Beveridge did.

His body lies in the church-yard of Barnet, in the ground appropriated for the use of Mr. Goodwillie's family, and at the side of those two children who died of the same disorder with himself. On his tomb-stone is the following inscription :

“ In hope of a blessed resurrection, rests under this stone, the mortal part of the Rev. THOMAS BEVERIDGE, late minister of the Gospel at Cambridge, in the State of New-York, and member of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania. He was born at East-side, Parish of Fossoway, and Shire of Fife, Scotland.—Ordained to the holy ministry at Edinburgh, in September, 1783, by appointment of the Associate Synod, with a view to a mission to North America, where he arrived the ensuing year, and was admitted to his pastoral charge in September, 1789 ; in which he labored with uncommon care and diligence, and his labors were crowned with visible success. He came here to assist at the dipensation of the Lord's Supper, and departed this life on the 23d of July, 1798, in the 49th year of his age.—(Rev. xiv. 13.) ‘ Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth ; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors : and their works do follow them.’ (1 Thess. iv. 14.) ‘ Them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.’

“ The Associate Congregation of Cambridge have caused this Sepulchral Monument to be erected, as a lasting memorial of their sense of his great worth, and their respect to his memory, which will be long held in remembrance among them.”