

MEMOIR AND SERMONS

OF

REV. WM. J. ARMSTRONG, D.D.

LATE SECRETARY OF AM. BD. OF COM. FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS.

Edited by

REV. HOLLIS READ.

NEW YORK:
PUBLISHED BY M. W. DODD,
CORNER OF SPRUCE STREET AND CITY HALL SQUARE.

1853.

ENTERED, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1853, by
M. W. DODD,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Southern District of New York.

R. CRAIGHEAD, PRINTER AND STEREOTYPER,
53 Vesey street, N. Y.

prodigal, but suitably used the goods that fell to him from a worthy father. But we will let the letter speak for itself.

Letter addressed to Wm. J. Armstrong by his father, Rev. Amzi Armstrong.

“Mendham, 20th Feb. 1816.

“MY DEAR SON :

“Yours of the 10th inst. came in due time by the mail. Never before did you give me such pleasure and comfort as when you asked counsel of me, to help you in the service of the Lord Christ, and concerning the way of life. It is of immense importance to you that the present precious opportunity you enjoy should be used to acquire a fixed and settled taste and decided predilection for your Lord’s service, and for the moral principles, and the holy doctrines of His word. Cultivate, therefore, I beseech you, a spirit of meek and dutiful obedience to his will, and firm and unwavering reliance upon his word and promise. I hope the spirit of grace has wrought in your heart that full persuasion which has given you a more complete and joyful assurance that Jesus is the Christ, and that all the promises of God are in him, yea, and in him amen, than you ever had of any other truth or position whatever. This is the rock on which the church is builded, and the foundation—the cornerstone of all our hopes.

“Strive to have this conviction deeply inwrought into all the sentiments and feelings of your heart. This you cannot accomplish by any artful contrivances or stratagems; but only by maintaining a meek and dutiful temper, and strengthening the conviction by prayerful reading and meditation in the Divine Word. That word is the great charter of your Christian hopes,

and must be your guide in the path of life, and, therefore, your best security will be an intimate and pious acquaintance with it.

“Whether written obligations, as you mentioned in your last, would be useful in your case, I am at a loss to judge. My opinion has been, that for persons naturally of a phlegmatic, unyielding temper they may be useful. But for those of a more pliant and generous native temper, it is better that they accustom themselves to frequent repeated acts of consecration in prayer and worship addressed immediately to their Lord, continually referring in their thoughts and feelings to those highest bonds, and most solemn obligations that are written and sealed in the blood of Christ. In every case there is danger, I suppose: the execution of such written obligations as, I think, Dr. Doddridge proposes, may lead to a legal and self-righteous spirit in relying, if not on our own doings, yet on our purposes of doing, and in holding ourselves bound, by our own act, rather than by those everlasting and most solemn obligations which we owe to God in Christ.

“I think it would be better for you if you could habituate yourself to a cheerful and entire trust, committing yourself and all your interests and concerns to God in Christ, and being anxious only to obey his will and do his service. Your self-examinations, then, would turn not on the question ‘Am I safe?’ but on this rather, ‘Do I reverence and love my Lord and Master, and am I obedient to His holy will and pleasure?’ And if, at any time, fears and doubts beset you hard, look into the pages of His sacred Word for a refreshing of your faith in that Divine truth, which is the source of light and peace. And continue to look there, with prayer and supplication, and turn not to any other expedient, till the spirit of grace revive that

persuasion which so fills and satisfies the mind as to leave no wish or desire unsatisfied, but this, that you may serve and please the Lord. Be assured that nothing short of this persuasion of the truth as it is in Jesus will ever fill your heart with the true joy and peace of the believer, and without this persuasion all other sources of joy and consolation must fail you. Your Christianity is no better than deism if this be not the chief and leading axiom in it, that Jesus is the Christ; and it is only by a direct view of faith, beholding the Lamb of God, that the power of sin in us, and over us, is effectually broken. If you lose sight of this object, you will be involved in darkness. And, remember, God requires of you the exercise of your moral faculties, and your rational nature, in *habits* of believing, and extended views of the precious truth, to supply, in a measure, the place and office of those vivid apprehensions which are the more immediate work of the spirit of grace, and which you are not to expect will be always continually supplied to you in your state of trial; else there would be no trial. If you be indeed a Christian, it is your *faith* that is to be tried, that your temper may be mended. You are not to be guided or measured by men, nor to rely on comparing yourself with yourself, but your rule of faith and the foundation and support of your hope, are to be taken only from the sacred Scriptures.

“ Your very affectionate father,

“ AMZI ARMSTRONG.”

The lines which follow, the effusions of his youthful heart and untried muse, give us a further intimation as to where young Armstrong gathered the elements of that healthful, Bible character, which unfolded in such ripeness in after years. The means by which these