



THE
HISTORY
OF
ELIZABETH VERMEULE.

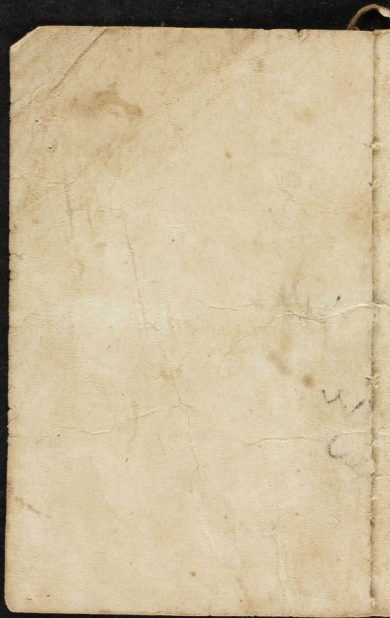


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THE
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE
OF
ELIZABETH VERMEULE;

Who died at Harlaem, New-York,
September 15, 1830,
aged nine years.

PUBLISHED BY
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Elizabeth Vermeule.

ELIZABETH VERMEULE.

THE following narrative affords at once a pleasing proof and example of the doctrine of Scripture, that children, in their earliest years, may be renewed and sanctified by divine grace. It shows, also, how desirable is such grace, both to fit them for heavenly happiness, and to smooth their passage to it. And it gives great encouragement to parental fidelity in the religious instruction of children. It was taken, chiefly, from a journal kept by the mother of the child. The quotations are in the child's own language.

ELIZABETH VERMEULE, the subject of this narrative, was remarkable for obedience, mildness, affection, and docility. Her powers of mind unfolded with unusual rapidity, and she applied herself to her studies with singular diligence and cheerfulness. Her education, excepting the Sabbath School, was private, her parents being her teachers, and for the most part her companions. This may account for a maturity of language and sentiment which might seem to exceed her years; and also for her preference of adult society; for she often said that she loved the company of grown persons much more than that of children.

At the age of four years she read her Bible with attention and apparent interest. About this time she commenced attending the Sabbath School, and took much pleasure in its exercises. The sedateness of her appearance and behavior was early observed by her teacher; and when, from her weeping in school, she was supposed to be weary or discontented, she said her tears were occasioned by the solemn truths which she heard and learned.

She was taught as early as possible to pray, and she soon used her own language and sentiments instead of forms. She was always pleased to be called to the exercise of prayer, and never seemed to become weary in its observance.—Toward the close of her life particularly, when engaged in this exercise, she would close her eyes and clasp her hands in a truly devotional manner.

As early as the age of five years she had considerable convictions of sin, and would awake her mother in the night to pray with her. Upon funeral occasions she was uncommonly serious and concerned for the deceased, inquiring if they were prepared to die.

To her parents she was ardently attached. Towards her sister and brother she was gentle and affectionate. Her

wishes and inclinations she willingly gave up, if told that they were unreasonable or improper.

Her health appeared to be good until the summer of 1828, she being then seven years of age, when she became feeble, and continued to droop, without any severe sickness, until July of the succeeding year. Then she was attacked with a chill and fever which, proved remittent, and confined her five or six weeks. During that sickness she was patient and calm, but manifested no extraordinary exercise of mind, though her Hymn-Book, or some religious Tract, was often found upon her bed. From this sickness she but partially recovered.

In June of 1830, she again sensibly declined, and though quiet and patient, could not bear any allusion to the probable termination of her disease. This may have been owing in part to great natural sensibility. But when asked if she would not rather die, than live and suffer? "No," said she, "because I have been a wicked child, and have not a new heart." Yet at that time she prayed much, and often sang

"Jesus, my love, my chief delight,
For thee I long, for thee I pray,"

which was her favorite hymn.

Her disorder becoming more serious, she was asked what she thought of her situation. "I shall never be well," she replied.

"How do you feel respecting the event?"

"I am willing the Almighty should do with me as he pleases. I have prayed to Him a long time to prepare me for death, and though He can make me well if He sees fit, I do not expect to get well."

"Are you as willing to die as live?"

"No, I would rather live a little longer."

She answered many questions concerning the state of her mind, but expressed no decided hope, though an entire resignation to the divine will. She said she knew that God could do for her all she desired. She afterwards requested prayer, and then appeared composed.

A change for the worse occurring in her bodily state in the course of a few days, she began to pray more earnestly, and said, "I often think of that hymn,

"And must this body die?"

About this time she remarked, "I do not envy any one riches or pleasure, or any thing of this world; they appear to me altogether trifling now. My happiness is of another kind, I look up to my

Savior and my God for peace and happiness." And it was evident to all around her that she took no interest in the things of time. Her soul was filled with love and joy.

On repeating her fears that she was not good enough to die and go to heaven, it was remarked to her—"No one is good enough to go to heaven. We do not hope to go there for our goodness, but through the Savior's merits. Are you not willing to be saved by the righteousness of Christ? You know his life, his sufferings and death for the salvation of sinners. He calls you to repent—that you have offended him; and promises to receive you, if you place all your dependance upon him. He has said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." "Put your trust in him, and call upon him in trouble, and he will give you pardon and peace."

She replied, "I will try."

She often expressed her conviction that she should not get well, and the tear would sometimes start in her eyes.

A pious aunt coming to see her about this time, gave her much pleasure. She observed, "I always loved aunt —, but I love her much more now, for being a Christian.

Upon expressing some concern about her case, she was asked if she had not yet learned to trust her Savior?

"Yes," said she, "but I should like to get well again—though I will pray to be more resigned."

Soon after she said, "I am happy. I have prayed to the Lord that he would love me, and I love him very much.—He has given me every thing that I want, and more than I want. When I have been distressed with my cough, and called upon him, he has answered me, and I am now willing that he should do as he pleases with me." She desired a description of heaven, and being gratified in this respect, among other things remarked, "I used to think it very hard to be pious, but I find religion very pleasant;" and added,

"The more I strove against its power,
I sinn'd, and stumbled but the more ;
At length I heard my Savior say,
Come hither, soul, I am the way."

Then she remarked, "I could not have thought I should feel so reconciled to die."

She now made a very appropriate disposition of her little possessions. She manifested a strong desire for the welfare of all around her, and was very particular in exhorting a female domestic.

She mentioned her brother and sister with much interest, and desired that they might be brought to love the Lord as she did. Calling her mother to her, with a face illuminated with happiness she began to speak of the goodness of God. "Every thing I ask him for, he gives me. To-day I prayed for a little strength to speak of his mercy to me, and see he has answered me! I am very happy.— Now I feel as if I would be willing to die to-night. I love my Savior very much,"—and repeated her admiration that she could feel so happy in the view of death.

It was remarked to her, "God has promised strength according to our day."

"Yes," she said, "I find it true."

The next day she observed, "I have not been so happy to-day. The tempter has been troubling me with fears, that I shall not go to heaven—that God will not accept me: but I think I can say that I do love my Savior, and believe in him. I prayed, and God gave me peace again. And now, what a delightful evening I have!"

She now manifested an ardent desire to do some good before she died, saying, "If it should please the Lord to spare me a little longer, I would try to be useful."

She was very sensible of the attentions of friends, and always blessed God for their kindness to her. She was concerned that she occasioned her attendants so much trouble, and expressed her gratitude to God for parents and friends capable of instructing her in religion.—“For what,” said she, “should I do now, if I did not know and love my Savior?”

To the aunt before mentioned, about to leave her, she said, “As I may never see you again, will you pray for me?” Her aunt asking her what should be the special subject of her prayer, she answered “That I may have a new heart and be prepared for death.” Her request was complied with, and she was much affected.

A clergyman spent a night with the family and prayed for her particularly. She afterwards said “Tell Mr. ———, I am as happy as he could wish me to be.”

Her disorder became more painful, but tribulation wrought patience, as she became more patient and more grateful for her mercies. When it was remarked to her that the flies must be very troublesome, she said, “I can bear them now”—alluding to some previous impatience under the same annoyance. When astonishment was expressed that she had

not signified how sore her mouth was, she said with a smile, "I can bear it."

A youthful relation came to visit her, for whom she was much engaged in conversation and prayer that she might become pious, arguing from her own case the happiness of religion.

Her sister in conversation with her expressed a wish to be as good as she was. "But," said she, "I must be better, before I go to heaven."

On going to sleep at night, she said "I am very comfortable—the Lord is good to me."

She usually expressed her gratitude, upon awaking in the morning, for the mercies of the past night. One morning when, she awoke, she said she had been very ill in the night. But upon being asked if she did not find the Savior near to sustain her, she answered, "Yes." Upon a further inquiry whether she had had any gloomy doubts or fears, "Some," she replied; "but I looked to my Savior."

Brought now to say that she was almost as willing to die as get well, it was inquired of her, Whether she was not quite as willing? "Think," it was said to her, "of the sins and sorrows so thick about our path through this world. Do you not fear, that, if you should get well,

you might lose your religious impressions?"

She answered, "If it should please the Lord to restore me, he could keep me from sin. But it would be better for me to die, and then I should not be tempted."

Soon after this, with something like supernatural strength, she rose up, and with a most animated and happy countenance expressed her greater willingness to die than live; adding, "I love my Savior more and more, and the more I love him, the more he loves me. Oh! I am so happy!" She spoke some time of the joys of heaven, and mentioned several whom she expected to see there, who had gone before. "The dear Savior is all my comfort, and all my hope. I am *sure*, quite sure I shall go to him."

The effort she had made obliged her to submit to lie down. But her joy was too great for her to be quiet long. After a short rest, she desired to see two little girls with whom she used to associate. When they came to her bed-side, she took them by the hand and seemed pleased to see them. Addressing the eldest, she said, "You must give your heart to the Savior, dear, and when you die, you will go to heaven, and meet me there."

Her mother being unwell, and affected, by her situation, she addressed her, and said, "My dear mother, see, I am happy, and that ought to make you so. O, we shall soon both meet in heaven!"

Being asked "Do you think yourself near your end?" "Yes," said she, "and I am ready to go—I wait now the Lord's time. I can even leave you, my dear mother." She then expressed her gratitude to her heavenly Father for her peace of mind.

Growing weaker daily, she desired portions of Scripture to be read to her, and was particularly pleased with the 14th chapter of John, and the 23d psalm. From the latter she often repeated, "My cup runneth over."

She now related some circumstances in her experience which she before had not spoken of to any one, and said, "I began to pray earnestly for a new heart when I was sick with the measles, being then between four and five years of age. I have prayed at night ever since I was first taught to pray. My sister and I always prayed for each other. But," she added, "I have often been a naughty child," and mentioned instances in which she had been gently corrected, and in every instance justified her parents and took blame to herself.

After this she revived, and expressed much gratitude for the improvement in her feelings. "I have prayed," said she, "for the use of my speech, and the Lord has been so good as to grant my request." A momentary gleam of hope animated the hearts of her friends. "It may please the Lord," she said, "to spare me a little longer to be a comfort to my parents.— How happy we should be to talk together, and to go to church together! I am sure I should always love the Lord. I would tell all my friends how good the Lord is."

Soon, however, the scene changed, but she was composed, saying, "I will pray to be resigned." To her father, taking leave of her for the night as usual, she said, "The Lord has favored me with a happy day. I am comfortable in mind and body, excepting my cough."

After this, remarking on the certainty of her death, she said, "When I think of lying here in a shroud, and being carried to the grave in a coffin, it is a gloomy thought." On being reminded that when the soul was happy such things no longer affected it, she became composed.

On a Sabbath morning she awoke before the light, and inquired the hour; and being told it was three o'clock,

"Then the Lord's holy day is begun," she exclaimed. The Sabbath was exceedingly joyous to her. In view of the Sabbath that remains, she repeated,

"This life's a dream, an empty show;
But the bright world to which I go,
Hath joys substantial and sincere—
When shall I wake and find me there?"

and

"What have I in this barren land?
My Jesus is not here."

Upon an intimation by one of the friends who came to see her, that the subjects kept before her were too gloomy, she remarked, after the friend withdrew, "These things are all my comfort. I am quite happy—I am not afraid of death."

She now requested her sister to sing,

"The hour of my departure's come,
I hear the voice that calls me home;
I come, I come at thy command,
I give my spirit to thy hand"—

and

"Lo! on a narrow neck of land."

On being told that the next day would be her birth-day, she answered, "I shall spend my next birth-day in heaven."

Her birth-day arrived—it was her last day. Respiration became difficult. She was fully convinced that her end had come. Calling her mother to her, she caught her hands and kissed them with

great affection, exclaiming, "Dearest mother!" and requested her to pray for her. She could now scarcely speak; but to the question, "Is it peace?" She replied, "Yes." When the happiness of the state upon which she was about to enter was spoken of, she smiled triumph. She departed without a struggle, a sweet smile remaining upon her countenance, an expressive emblem of the serenity of her spirit. She died, September 15, 1830, aged nine years.

My dear young reader, remember Elizabeth. Would you be loved by your parents, and your friends, and the Lord your Maker and Savior; like Elizabeth, be obedient to your parents, be gentle towards your brothers and sisters, and above all, love the Savior, and give your heart to him. Read the Bible, that you may know what the Lord will have you to do, what he promises to good children, and how happy he makes them. You, like Elizabeth, may die while you are young. But if you love Christ, he will love you, and will take you to heaven, where he is, where the holy angels are, and where you will see your pious parents, and all your pious friends, at last. Like Elizabeth, pray to the Lord to give you a new heart, that you may love him, obey him, and enjoy him for ever.

THE END.

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