

**A BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR OF
RICHARD JORDAN, A MINISTER OF
THE GOSPEL, IN THE SOCIETY OF
FRIENDS; LATE OF NEWTON, IN
GLOUCESTER COUNTY, NEW JERSEY**

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A Biographical Memoir of Richard Jordan, a minister of the gospel, in the society of friends; late of Newton, in Gloucester county, New Jersey by Richard Jordan

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“And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament;
and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever.”
Dan. xii. 3.

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NOTE.

THE design of the following Memoir is not to panegyze Richard Jordan, but to exhibit his real character: to magnify the power of Divine Grace, through obedience to which, he became what he was; and to incite others to emulate his Christian example in the pursuit of holiness. Having for several years enjoyed the privilege of his friendship, and received from his lips the narration of many remarkable occurrences in his chequered life, the writer believes it a tribute due to the memory of his departed friend, to put them into a form that will ensure their preservation. At the same time, he apprehends that the record of them, however humble its pretensions, will not be unacceptable to the numerous friends and acquaintances of the deceased, who were attached to him by the ties of sincere affection.

A BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR, &c.

RICHARD JORDAN, the subject of the following Memoir, was born at Elizabeth, in the county of Norfolk, Virginia, the 19th of the 12th month, 1756.

His parents, Joseph and Patience Jordan, were members of the religious Society of Friends, and though not wealthy, were descended from an ancient and respectable family: his ancestors on his father's side, emigrated from France early after the colony of Virginia was founded.

The occupation in which his father was engaged, frequently called him away from his family for a considerable length of time, and his mother dying when he was quite young, his education was much neglected; not only as regarded literary instruction, but also the more important concerns of a religious life. The whole period during which he remained at school was only a few months, and the instruction he received whilst there, was in the simplest elements of literature.

But being naturally of an active, inquisitive mind, and capable of appreciating the value of useful knowledge, he afterward applied himself to study during the hours of relaxation from manual labour, and by his own exertions made some proficiency in several branches of learning, so as to become qualified for teaching school; an occupation in which he several times engaged, when the winter season suspended agricultural employments.

His father's residence was remote from any settlement or meeting of Friends, and among a people who evinced but little regard for piety or religion; and being exposed to the pernicious influence of evil company; and in great measure deprived of the tender, watchful care of parental love, he was almost wholly left to follow the corrupt propensities of human nature, and to choose his own course; having never been at a religious meeting more than two or three times until after he was twelve years of age.

But in this dangerous and exposed situation, it pleased the Saviour of sinners in his wonted loving kindness and mercy, to visit his youthful mind with the secret influences of his Holy Spirit, impressing him with an awful sense of his accountability and the certainty of future rewards and punishments, and at seasons, raising earnest desires after purity and holiness; that when his immortal spirit should put off its earthly tenement, he might be prepared to enter into a state of never ending felicity among the redeemed and sanctified in heaven. The influence of these solemn impressions he often experienced, in the condemnation and fear which attended his mind after having been guilty of any sinful conduct; and also in the sweet peace and serenity which clothed his spirit, when through heavenly assistance, he was enabled to exercise greater watchfulness over his words and actions.

About the twelfth year of his age his father removed into the neighbourhood of Richsquare, in North Carolina. Here he had the opportunity of associating with the members of his own religious society, and also of attending their meetings for divine worship. But for want of a close attention to the operation of the Spirit of Christ upon his mind, which in time past had been so powerfully felt, the benefit of this invaluable privilege was in great measure lost upon him; he yielded to many temptations, became more and more alienated from God, and giving the rein to his corrupt appetites, was swiftly running in the broad way which leads to destruction.

While pursuing this course of folly and wickedness, it pleased Infinite Mercy, once more to visit him with his righteous judgments and to awaken his mind to an awful sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and of his undone condition without the availing interposition of an omnipotent Saviour. He was brought under deep condemnation and remorse for his past transgressions, and made to feel that nothing less than an entire change of heart and a thorough refinement from every pollution could prepare him for an admission into the kingdom of heaven. Sensible of the corruption and depravity of human nature in the fall, and the purity and holiness of the Divine

Being, he had many fears that he should not attain to a state of complete redemption. The fire of the Lord's jealousy was now kindled in his soul, to consume every thing that was high and lifted up, and all that was defiled. The purifying operation of this baptism of the Holy Ghost was painful to endure, under the feeling of which, his exercised mind was ready to sink, and to give up all prospect of ever beholding a brighter or a better day, often lamenting bitterly over himself and his mispent time, and stréwing many tears in secret places before the Lord. Great indeed was the conflict of his spirit, and many were the strong temptations which the adversary of man's happiness presented, persuading him to despair of the mercy of a gracious God, through his dear son, Jesus Christ our Lord, and to give himself up, as one utterly cast off and forsaken.

In this day of darkness and distress, when every pleasant prospect was clouded, and all hope of deliverance seemed to stand afar off—when he was reduced to the last extremity of anguish, He who remains to be the compassionate Friend of sinners, was graciously pleased to cast an eye of tender pity on his mournful condition; to draw near to his afflicted soul, and by the calming influences of his own blessed spirit to bind up his wounds and bid him live. Under an humble sense of this unmerited mercy and condescension, he was enabled in great humility to cast himself at the feet of his dear Redeemer, and surrender body, soul, and spirit, into his divine hand; entering into solemn covenant that if he would be pleased to grant him an evidence of pardon and reconciliation, he would, through his blessed assistance, follow him whithersoever he might lead. This act of dedication was graciously accepted, and his distressed mind was sweetly consoled in the renewal of a humble hope, that through the merits and mediation of a crucified Saviour his sins were blotted out as a cloud and his transgressions as a thick cloud.

Soon after this, he was impressed with a belief that he was called upon by his divine Master to declare to others the wonderful dealings of the Almighty with his soul, and to publish the glad tidings of the gospel of peace and salvation. But

so awful was the prospect of this solemn engagement, and so deep and abiding the sense of his own unworthiness, that he forbore to enter upon it, even after the impression of duty became indubitably clear. Oftentimes he was ready to yield obedience when the call would be sounded in his spiritual ear, but not cherishing the grain of living faith which accompanied it, the weakness of human nature would get the ascendancy; once in particular, in a small meeting, the impression that it would be right for him to speak, was so forcible, that he put his hand upon his knee to rise; but giving way to reasoning, he lost strength, and the opening on his mind was soon quite removed. Thus he passed on for several years, still withholding from the Lord's service; which proved the means of retarding him in his heavenly journey, and at times introduced him into much mental suffering.

During this time of trial, he accomplished his marriage with Phrabry Knox, daughter of Thomas Knox, a respectable planter in the neighbourhood, and an approved minister in the religious Society of Friends. Her father had not much earthly treasure to confer upon his daughter, but he had endeavoured to imbue her mind with that which is more valuable than riches, by giving her a religious education and training her up in the fear of the Lord. Previous to entering into the important engagement of marriage, Richard Jordan was concerned to ask counsel of the Lord; being desirous not to take a step which so intimately affected his present and future happiness without first obtaining some evidence of Divine approbation. This evidence was graciously vouchsafed, and he has often remarked to the writer of these pages, the gratitude he felt for the favour; and the support they derived, under many trials which afterwards fell to their lot, from the reflection that in this important concern they had sought to act in conformity with the Divine will.

Their pecuniary resources were at that time quite limited, but they had learned to be content with a little, provided it was accompanied with the Divine blessing. They were cautious of contracting debts which they had not present ability to

discharge, and, therefore commenced the world with few of the conveniences and none of the luxuries of life. Although their habitation, and the furniture of it, might be accounted mean, and perhaps by some scarcely comfortable, yet they enjoyed under its homely roof, that peace and contentment, which the most costly and sumptuous accommodations could not procure. Impressed with the infinite importance of the things which belong to the soul's peace, over all the pleasures or treasures of this world, their primary concern was to seek the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness, and He who laid this injunction upon his followers, fulfilled in their experience, the annexed promise, "all things shall be added unto you."

At this time Richard Jordan rented a farm not far from the meeting at Richsquare, and laboured industriously with his own hands, for the maintenance of his family. The Society of Friends in those parts had not generally been convinced of the injustice of negro slavery; and his father amongst many others, held a considerable number of slaves: a part of these he offered to convey to his son, to assist him in cultivating his farm, and urged the acceptance of them with some earnestness. But his mind had long been exercised under a conviction that it was an unrighteous act, to hold our fellow men in unconditional bondage, and a belief that he was called upon to bear his testimony against the practice. With these views, and after much serious reflection, he modestly declined accepting the offer which his father had made him. Not being prepared at that time, fully to appreciate the motives which actuated him, his father was somewhat displeased with his refusal, which was an additional trial to Richard Jordan.

The scantness of his own means, and the assiduity with which he was obliged to apply himself to labour in order to provide for his family, rendered his unwillingness to accept the offered aid, a subject of surprise and ridicule to some of his acquaintance; who were rather disposed to ascribe it to improper motives, than to a conscientious scruple respecting negro slavery. These circumstances produced considerable effect upon his mind, and he felt constrained to labour with increased in-