

THE
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HISTORICAL ALMANAC,

AND

Annual Remembrance

OF THE CHURCH,

FOR

1863.

BY

JOSEPH M. WILSON.

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1863.



Engraving of J. H. Mornwell, Moderator of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in 1847.

Most truly yrs

J. H. Mornwell.

PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, COLUMBIA S. C. LATE PRESIDENT OF THE S. M. E. C. S. CONFERENCE MODERATOR OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE 1847

Engraved by Joseph M. W. South, South Carolina, U.S. No. 10, Chestnut St. Philadelphia, Pa.

gered upon his placid face. The whole impression produced was that of peace. The great crowd of pastors and people were as silent as he. 'The peace that passeth all understanding,' which were among his dying words, and the reflection of it which beamed upon his features, and settled upon the mourning masses, seemed to produce a stillness which might almost be heard, as it was touchingly felt.

"He was then, as it was most meet, borne to the church within whose walls his entire ministry had been spent, and from this to his last resting-place hard by, where his predecessors 'sleep the sleep that knows no waking;' and just as we laid him down and left him, the broad and blessed sun was sinking clear and bright in the western horizon, throwing a rich golden pall over his grave; a reflection, though a dim one, of that heaven of golden glories in which his soul was enthroned.

"In this hallowed resting-place of the dead we left him, in close neighborhood with the Rev. Malachi Jones, who came here, as the first pastor, in 1714; and of the Rev. Richard Treat, D.D., who was ordained here in 1731, and during whose ministry the people were accustomed to hear such men as the Tennents, and McWhorter, and Brainerd, and Whitefield; and we left him in the close grave-companionship too of the Rev. William M. Tennent, D.D., who was installed pastor here in 1781; and of the Rev. William Dunlap, son of the Rev. Dr. Dunlap, President of Jefferson College, who was Dr. Steel's immediate predecessor. Hard by, also, among the group of the pious and illustrious dead, lie the remains of the great and good Dr. Gilbert Tennent, along with the ashes of the Rev. Dr. Finley, President of Princeton College. Such are his companions in the grave!"

He was the brother of Samuel Steel, D.D., pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Hillsboro', Ohio.

THORNWELL, D.D., JAMES H.—Was born in Marlborough District, South Carolina, December 9, 1812. His father was an overseer on a South Carolina Plantation, and was highly esteemed for his energy and decision of character. His mother was a woman of strong mind, and quite intelligent. He went to school in a log-cabin, such as are found in the southern portion of our country, over which a Mr. Smith presided. Some time after this he went to another school, under the care of Mr. McIntyre, who seems to have been an improvement upon the class of persons usually employed in such schools, as he is represented to have been a classical scholar and taught the elements of Latin and Greek. Being a quick and intelligent lad, several persons interested themselves in his education; first among these friends was Mr. Robins, a lawyer, afterwards Mr. James Gillespie and General Samuel W. Gillespie, till finally he was prepared for college at the Cheraw Academy, South Carolina. His fondness for knowledge had been noticed by these persons, and they were thus led to aid him, and his subsequent career fully justified their highest anticipations. He entered the Junior Class in South Carolina College, January 4, 1830, and graduated the following year with the highest honors.

He was licensed by Bethel Presbytery, and, in 1834, was ordained and installed pastor of the church at Lancaster, C. H., and soon after the churches of Waxhaws and Six Mile were added to his charge, preaching to them as Stated Supply. This relation existed until 1837, when he was elected to the Professorship (made vacant by the death of Professor Nott) of Logic, Belles-Lettres, and Criticism, to which Metaphysics was soon added.

A writer in *The True Presbyterian*, published at Louisville, Ky., refers to him thus:—"In the department of Belles-Lettres and Criticism, though he lacked the fine perception of the beautiful, the taste for fictitious writings and the knowledge of the realms of fancy and imagination which are possessed by many others, he nevertheless taught with uncommon ability and success. But it was in the department of Logic and Metaphysics that his genius shone forth most brightly. The whole structure of his mind fitted him for those studies. To Logic he was devoted, and being devoted to it himself, he could not fail to awaken an interest in the minds of the students, so that the study, which had heretofore been considered as the most abstract and repugnant of

all, soon became under his charge a favorite. Not only was he thoroughly acquainted with the whole theory and principles of Logic, but also with its practical utility, as is fully exemplified in his writings. In short, in America he fully deserves the distinguished title which his admirers have long bestowed upon him of 'the Logician.'"

After performing the duties of Professor two years, he was called to the Presbyterian Church, at Columbia, South Carolina, as pastor, which he accepted. He resigned his Professorship, and was installed pastor, January 1, 1840, by Charleston Presbytery. At the end of this year he was again elected to a Professorship, in South Carolina College, that of Sacred Literature and Evidences of Christianity. During the year 1841, owing to failure of health, he visited Europe, and on his return, entered with vigor, upon his duties, he remained in this Professorship ten years, when he accepted a call as pastor of Glebe Street Church, Charleston, South Carolina. This relation existed but a few months, when he accepted the Presidency of South Carolina College, and returned to Columbia, South Carolina. He entered upon his duties, January, 1852, and remained in this position until the autumn of 1854, when he was elected Professor of Theology in the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. Soon after entering upon his duties as Professor in the Seminary, he became pastor of the church in Columbia, and thus he continued to labor until his death.

In 1860 he made another visit to Europe, and on his return he found the elements of disunion coming to a head, and taking his recognized position as leader, he infused additional life and vigor into the movement. In 1850, in his discourse on the death of John C. Calhoun, he announced himself as a firm supporter of the Government of the United States, but ten years had made sad havoc with his love of country, and being a firm believer in slavery, having married a lady owning a large number of colored human beings, when the slaveholders' rebellion broke out, he gave it the benefit of his labors, his eloquence, and his prayers.

S. IRENEUS PRIME, D.D., in *The New York Observer*, speaks of him thus: "One of the brightest lights of the Southern Church has thus suddenly expired. Dr. Thornwell was endowed with genius of an exalted order, a clear, penetrating, logical mind, which was cultivated by profound study, and consecrated to the advancement of learning and religion. He has for many years been a leading man in the (o. s.) Presbyterian Church, almost every year being a member of the General Assembly, and always the most prominent debater in the body. In 1847, when the Assembly met at Richmond, Va., he was Moderator. He was a pupil in the political school of John C. Calhoun, and was pronounced by that statesman to be the greatest man of his acquaintance. In his theological and ecclesiastical discussions, Dr. Thornwell discovered that acute subtlety and tendency to abstract speculations which marked the mental developments of Mr. Calhoun. This habit of thought and action made him tenacious of opinions and policies that to others seemed of comparatively little importance, but which to him were vital to the prosperity and even existence of the church itself.

"His opinions on the subject of slavery were not in harmony with those of the South generally. He denied the idea of 'property in man,' and held that the State or the master could lay claim only to 'service,' while all the rights of the servant as a man were to be respected. Fearless in the expression of his opinions, he set forth his views on this subject with great boldness and earnestness, and he was able to do so without fear of provoking the people among whom he lived, for he was as warm a supporter of the institution as any man in the South.

"A champion of the Southern doctrine of 'State rights,' he was one of the leading spirits in promoting the foul work of secession; and he was one of the Synod of South Carolina who promised the people of South Carolina their prayers and benedictions, if they would go forward in that unhallowed and disastrous deed.

"It is sad to think that so gifted a man has been cut down so soon—he was scarcely fifty years old—and more sad to know that the last efforts of his splendid intellect were spent in upholding the suicidal policy of revolution and disunion."

SAMUEL HENRY DICKSON, M.D., Professor in the Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia, Pa., a life-long friend, gives expression to his views, as follows:—"There are few men so favored as to enjoy the universal esteem and respect of their associates. Fewer still are they who have gained this elevation deservedly, who have attained it without conscious purpose, without having sought for or purchased it by some sacrifice of true principle or independent opinion. Dr. Thornwell was one of these rare and most fortunate individuals. His whole life was embellished by the sunshine of popular favor, unasked for and unbought, and only valued as it enhanced his power to do good, and widened his sphere of usefulness. Frank and fearless in thought, word, and action, he never modified in any degree the expression of an opinion that might be unacceptable or distasteful to those about him, nor by suppression allowed any of his views to be questioned or doubted of. His reasoning powers were acute and active, and he delighted in their exercise. Readily forming precise conclusions, his wonderful facility of speech enabled him to give them clear and precise utterance. Seeking earnestly for truth, he did not shrink one moment when satisfied with the results of his research, from announcing them, nor pause to consider the results of a possible conflict in ardently advocating them. Nor could his hearers ever fail to be enkindled by his warmth and impressed by his somewhat aggressive vehemence. Yet he combined this utmost freedom of out-spoken zeal with such obvious benevolence of feeling and such unquestionable sincerity, that his keen argument in support of whatever doctrines was listened to without offence, even by those who differed most widely from him.

"Courteous and amiable, he was everywhere welcome. No man was ever confided in with a more perfect trust. Whatever post he occupied, his fitness for it was at once admitted, and he never failed to gain the approbation of all concerned. Thus, when he was first proposed as President of the South Carolina College, it was curious to observe how promptly every other nominee withdrew or was withdrawn, and with what unanimity the public voice demanded that he should accept the place, the highest in honor and responsibility known in that entire community. And when after a brief but most brilliant course of unexampled success and usefulness, he conceived it to be his duty to withdraw from that high station, and devote himself for the rest of his life to exclusive theological instruction, the loud outcry and tenacious reluctance with which his resignation was received, afford the best evidence of the value attached to his administration of the grave and exacting functions of the office. Of his devotion to the duties of the Professorship, in his late relations to the church and the world, we need not speak; his colleagues and pupils still bewail their loss, and his brethren everywhere deplore the sudden and premature termination of his conscientious, unremitting, and efficient labors.

"Take him for all in all, we shall seldom see his equal. As a pastor, kind, affectionate, and worthy of all reliance; as a pulpit orator, a model of glowing zeal and fervid eloquence; as a teacher, gifted with peculiar ability in the communication of knowledge, unexcelled in disciplinary prudence, exemplary in personal conduct and demeanor, humble and indefatigable in his search after truth, and utterly fearless in announcing and maintaining it. Such was the character of Dr. Thornwell, and such his life, useful and happy in a degree almost unexampled. His early death was indeed a severe infliction, a public calamity, darkly overshadowing a large circle of loving friends, and a community whose profound sorrow under the bereavement is mingled with grateful and reverential remembrance."

Rev. HENRY WARD BEECHER, in *The Independent*, gives the following expression of opinion concerning him:—"By common fame, Dr. Thornwell was the most brilliant minister in the Old School Presbyterian Church, and the most brilliant debater in its General Assembly. This reputation he early gained, and never lost. Whenever he was present in the Assembly, he was always the first person pointed out to a stranger. A grave-looking, elderly gentleman with a boy's stature, pale and cadaverous face, hair black as a raven, and floating about his neck almost like a woman's; shoulders round, and crowding his chest forward; a frail frame, plainly carrying the burden of an over-active brain—this is the exterior portrait of the little, great man, who, after the death of Calhoun, was esteemed the first citizen of South Carolina."

The most singular point in his history is the earliest—his origin. For strange as it may seem, the chiefest of South Carolinians sprang not from “the first families,” nor from the blood of the “cavaliers,” but from the lowest class in the social order of the South—from a level even beneath the slave, known in the social scale as the strata of the “white trash.” He was born not in a house, but in a cabin; not under a roof, but under a thatch; not, that this is any discredit to him; not at all! Only when he afterwards turned unrighteously against those of his fellow creatures whom God likewise had set in obscure and lowly stations, he ought not to have forgotten the “rock whence he was hewn, and the hole of the pit whence he was digged.”

On entering the “college” he began immediately to make a young man’s fame; devouring books with passionate appetite; outstripping his mates in all studies; conquering in all debates; running through his course with such distinction that the Student left the college to return as Professor and as President. The presidential chair—the chief literary post in the whole range of Southern Institutions—he retained until he accepted the Professorship of Theology in the Presbyterian Theological Seminary at Columbia, S. C. In addition to her professorship he served the pulpit of the Presbyterian Church, and it was in the pulpit that his abilities had their best display. His voice, though hardly well-modulated, was nevertheless as fascinating as a song; his gestures, though consisting of little else than throwing out both arms and drawing them back again, were never ungraceful and always impressive; his eyes, which he never took off his audience to look upon a manuscript, and seldom to glance at a note, had a strange power of riveting attention; his whole manner of speech had the peculiarity, that while seldom exciting the speaker to any apparent enthusiasm, it always kindled the assemblage into a glowing fervor of feeling.

He took the palm for conversation. He was the talking centre of almost every circle where he entered. His confident manner, his facility of expression, his ability to seize an idea and make the most of it on the spot, compensated largely for a natural barrenness of humor. He was master of a peculiar sarcasm which, somewhat like Shelley’s, was sharp on occasion, yet which, to cut clean, needed to be edged with wit. But in describing something which he had seen, he was a rare narrator.

His chief power of mind—a power which he was constantly strengthening, like a gymnast, by exercise in these studies—was, logical deduction. He constructed an argument with rare skill, and presented it to an audience with winning fervidness. This was his forte.

But this man chose to cast an inefaceable shadow upon what might have been a shining name. Born to no inheritance but poverty, to no station but obscurity; belonging to a low class who looked up from their degradation to envy the negro slave above them—he afterwards rose to the level of the oligarchy only to look down with ungenerous contempt upon the dusky multitudes who once were his superiors by social caste.

While South Carolina was organizing the Great Outbreak, such was Dr. Thornwell’s influence among the masses of the people, such was the prestige of his name, such was his power of appeal, that, during the few critical days before the Ordinance of Secession, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that he held in his own hands the decision of peace or war for the whole land. For if South Carolina had not rebelled, no other State would have followed: and one man might have saved South Carolina. But when the Legislature met to pass the treasonable ordinance, who was the man who rose in the capitol to inaugurate the revolution with public prayer? It was Dr. Thornwell!

What shall be his reward? Shall a man to whom God gave brilliant gifts; to whom a broad culture added rare facility in their use; to whom the ears of the multitude were always open waiting for his words; to whom every golden opportunity for usefulness which a man could ask was ready at his hand; shall such a man, after voluntarily lending his whole life to the service of an organized national crime, now at last, on going down into his grave, leaving his mischiefs at work behind him, secure his memory from just execration by all loyal and Christian men? After giving for thirty years the best energies of his mind to finding reasons for an institution that destroys the most sacred

rights of human nature—turning manhood into merchandise—making bargain and sale of the chastity of woman—daily turning little children into orphans before the eyes of their parents—himself a buyer and seller of the poor for whom Christ died! Can the Church of Christ, charged to keep herself unspotted of the world, afford to claim for such a man a place in her remembrance as an honored and faithful minister of the Gospel of good-will and peace? Bringing discredit upon religion; casting a shadow of dishonor upon the church; helping to bind heavy burdens grievous to be borne; shutting his ears to the cries of the oppressed; hurrying the nation into civil war. This is his true record, which no man will say is overstated. In loyalty to justice, we give his name its true place in the history of the times. Beyond this, we add no comment; for beyond this, not man but God is the judge!

M. LABORDE, M. D., Professor of Metaphysics, Logic and Rhetoric in South Carolina College, prepared a history of South Carolina College, which was published by P. B. Glass of Columbia, S. C., in 1859, from which the following estimate of Dr. Thornwell is taken:—"He has but little appreciation of the beautiful whether in nature or art. He has *his* taste, but it has no great sympathy with the common standard of the world. He is essentially a man of truth, and though none is more addicted to sober, philosophical speculation, still he is always in search of the real. He will accept no ideal, he will rest upon no counterfeit. He wants the thing itself. He revolts at the imaginative, the fictitious, and instinctively turns away from what Scott calls 'forging the handwriting of nature;' of the world of fancy he knows but little. His mind is logical, argumentative, metaphysical, and it is in this field of exertion that his genius has reaped its highest rewards. He has a love for ancient thought and speculation amounting almost to reverence, and his chosen companionship is with his great masters Plato and Aristotle, with whom he wanders, as Milton styles it, 'in the shady spaces of Philosophy.' The most interesting aspect, therefore, in which he is to be regarded as an instructor is in the department of logic and the metaphysical and moral sciences. As a moral teacher he has made the most profound impression, commencing with the great masters of ancient times. He has digested every ethical system, every important moral speculation of every nation and period. He long taught in the department of the evidences of Christianity and sacred literature.

"As a preacher he has by common consent a most exalted position. He must be judged, however, according to a peculiar standard. From the character of his mind his sermons must be logical, argumentative, and metaphysical, always in search of a reason, of principles that are eminently analytic in their nature, and addressed to the understanding, as contra-distinguished from the emotional parts of our being. He has no art to stimulate sentiment or to arouse the affections. With the great truths of Christianity he deals as with other truths. His purpose is to exhibit their reasonableness, prove them, and by logical processes to enforce conviction. In this respect he has no superior. And there is too an ardor and vehemence which will not fail to impress the most indifferent.

"In declamation, in rhetoric, in fancy he is surpassed by others; but in closeness of logic and power of argument he is unequalled."

Rev. Dr. B. M. PALMER, of Columbia, S. C., in an article in *The Southern Presbyterian Review*, in which, after speaking of Dr. Thornwell in the highest terms, thus refers to his dying hour:—"Upon his dying bed, the Holy Spirit placed his last seal upon his brow. Lying apparently unconscious for hours, most delightful smiles played over his countenance like the flashings of a summer evening's cloud. His last broken words, upon which the departing soul was borne into the bosom of God, were ejaculations of wonder and of praise. 'Wonderful! beautiful! nothing but space! expanse! expanse! expanse!' And so he passed upward and stood before the throne."

His widow and several children survive him.