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ANNALS

OF THE

AMERICAN PULPIT;

OR

COMMEMORATIVE NOTICES

OF

DISTINGUISHED AMERICAN CLERGYMEN

OF

VARIOUS DENOMINATIONS,

FROM THE EARLY SETTLEMENT OF THE COUNTRY TO THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR  
EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FIVE.

WITH HISTORICAL INTRODUCTIONS.

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BY WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

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VOLUME IV.  
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By ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern  
District of New York.

was childlike in its perfect simplicity and naturalness. He spoke extempore always; but the pathos, the unction, the impression, of his preaching were amazing. His matter was compact; his words as few as could express what he meant; his tones low rather than high; and he could hardly be said to have any action. But such word-pictures were hardly ever surpassed by man—such insight into man and into Divine things—such love and pity for lost men—such conviction of eternal realities—such sublime exhibitions of a Gospel able to save sinners, and of a Saviour who had given Himself for them!

When Nelson entered the ministry, he has told me that all his friends derided him for thinking of preaching,—believing he had not a single qualification for the work. And that the Presbytery, which licensed him, viewed the matter as so singular, that all the examination they made of him was to ask him to read a chapter of the Greek Testament to them; after hearing which, and asking him a few questions, they licensed him on the spot; their notion seeming to be, that he would continue the practice of medicine, and merely preach once in a while. Yet he became one of the greatest preachers on earth!

His labours in the ministry covered an immense field, and were attended everywhere with the mighty power of God. Tennessee, Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, Illinois,—nearly all the great Eastern cities—most especially, perhaps, Baltimore—witnessed as glorions and as repeated revivals of religion in connection with his labours as have been vouchsafed by God to any minister of his day.

I knew this man as well as I ever knew any one, out of my immediate family; and that for a period of nearly twenty years; and I can truly say I never knew a more godly man, a more noble gentleman, or a more illustrious example of a great pulpit orator. All this did not prevent him from having eccentricities, and from falling into errors and mistakes, and from being misled by persons far inferior to himself; and what is worst of all by far, from despising the Gospel, and deriding Christ, for the first half of his life. But, oh! he was a living monument of Divine grace!

In great haste,

Your brother in Christ,

R. J. BRECKENRIDGE

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### JOHN WATSON ADAMS, D. D.\*

1825—1850.

JOHN WATSON ADAMS, a son of the Rev. Roger Adams, was born in Simsbury, Conn., December 6, 1796. When he was five or six years of age, his father removed with his family from Simsbury to Granville, Mass. In 1805, he removed to Sherburne, Chenango County, N. Y.; in 1810, to Lenox, Madison County; and the year following to Sullivan, near the Oneida Lake. In this latter place they remained till after Mr. Adams was settled in the ministry.

In the spring of 1816, he became deeply and permanently interested in the subject of religion, and shortly after made a public profession of his faith in Christ. In May, 1817, when he had nearly reached the age of twenty-one, he commenced a course of classical study with a view to enter College. In due time he joined Hamilton College, where he was grad-

\* Memoir by Joel Parker, D. D.—MSS. from Rev. Daniel Waldo, and Rev. E. D. Maltbie.

uated in 1822. During his collegiate course, he developed a character, both intellectual and moral, of rare excellence; and when he graduated, he delivered an Oration on "Dignity of Character," that was received with general admiration.

On leaving College, he became the teacher of a select school in Manlius, N. Y. At the close of this engagement, he went to the city of New York, and commenced his professional studies, availing himself of the instruction of Dr. Spring, and two or three other Presbyterian clergymen of the city. Here he profited by the opportunities which his residence furnished of listening to many of the prominent preachers of the day; and some notes that he has left make it evident that he heard with much discrimination and to excellent purpose. After a residence of somewhat more than eight months in the city, he returned to his friends in Lenox, and shortly after joined the Middle class in the Theological Seminary at Auburn. Here he took the first rank for talents, and diligent and successful study; though his naturally contemplative turn of mind and retiring habit rendered him less active than some of his fellow-students, in endeavouring to promote the interests of religion in the surrounding country.

In the middle of his Senior year, the Second Church of Rochester, on the recommendation of the Rev. Dr. Lansing, at that time a Professor in the Seminary, invited him to preach as a candidate for settlement. Having previously received license from the Presbytery, he complied with this request, and preached at Rochester the first two Sabbaths in the year 1826; after which, he returned to the Seminary. He subsequently spent four Sabbaths in Syracuse; and then, agreeably to a previous engagement, returned and spent five Sabbaths in Rochester; after which, he received a call from each place. Notwithstanding the salary offered him at Rochester was larger, and the prospects in some other regards more promising, than in Syracuse, his preference was for the latter; chiefly, it would seem, on the ground that his modesty led him to shrink from what he considered the more prominent station. He was accordingly ordained and installed Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Syracuse, on the 28th of June, 1826. He continued in this relation till the close of his life.

Mr. Adams was married on the 3d of May, 1826, to Mary, daughter of Col. Thomas W. Phelps of Lenox, N. Y. They had two children, (both daughters,) who, with their mother, still (1853) survive.

In 1840, he was honoured with the degree of Doctor of Divinity by Columbia College, New York. In 1841, he was chosen a member of the Board of Overseers of Hamilton College, and continued to hold the office till his death.

Dr. Adams, though seldom taken from his labours by ill health, was yet subject to some bodily affections incident to a bilious temperament, that rendered his labours somewhat burdensome to him. In the spring of 1849, his health began decidedly to fail, insomuch that he realized a sensible diminution of ability to discharge his professional duties. He, however, remained at home during the summer, performing as much service for his people as he could; but, as the autumn approached, it became apparent that the state of his health was such as to require at least a suspension of his public labours. He preached for the last time to his own congregation on one of the Sabbaths in September; though he preached once afterwards, by urgent request, while on a visit to his friends in the neighbourhood of.

Rochester. In the course of the autumn, he became an inmate of the Water-Cure establishment at Graeffenburgh, near Utica, and remained there until the last of January. He returned then to Syracuse; but shortly after went to another similar establishment at Glen Haven. Here his health declined more rapidly, and, towards the close of March, it was manifest that he was fast approaching his end. The melancholy tidings reached his people, when they were assembled for the usual service on Friday evening, preparatory to the Communion; and he became at once the subject of their special prayers, while the occasion seemed invested with an almost funereal gloom. On the 28th of March, he was removed from Glen Haven to Syracuse, to die in the bosom of his beloved flock. He lived nine days after his return, and, during this time, (as indeed he had been during his whole illness,) was a most edifying example of Christian resignation and composure. He died on the 6th of April, 1850. His Funeral Sermon was preached by the Rev. E. D. Maltbie.

Dr. Adams published a Discourse delivered June 18, 1835, at the inauguration of the Rev. Samuel H. Cox, D. D., as Professor of Sacred Rhetoric and Pastoral Theology in the Auburn Theological Seminary; and a Sermon entitled "The Crisis," preached July 22, 1832, during a time of extraordinary commotion in the Old World, and the prevalence of Asiatic cholera. After his death, there was published a duodecimo volume of his Discourses, including those just mentioned, in connection with a Memoir of his life and character by the Rev. Joel Parker, D. D.

FROM THE REV. ROBERT W. CONDIT, D. D.

OSWEGO, 2d August, 1852.

My dear Sir: Doctor Adams of Syracuse and myself were in intimate relations, living in the same neighbourhood, and often meeting both in public and in private, from 1831 till the close of his life,—a period of nearly twenty years. As I knew him well, so I esteemed him highly, and am glad of an opportunity to bear my testimony to his excellent character and useful life.

He was rather a tall person, of a sedate expression of countenance, without much vivacity of manner, and somewhat deliberate in both his conversation and his movements. But the moment he opened his lips, you saw that he was a sensible and well-informed man. He always spoke intelligently and to the purpose; indicating, at once, a sound judgment and a quick moral discernment. He was modest perhaps to a fault,—even diffident; was always disposed to retire from public observation rather than put himself forward; and it may be doubted whether, if he had had less of this spirit, his usefulness would not have been greater. He was one of the most unambitious men whom I have ever known in the ministry: he was indeed ambitious to do good, and promote the honour of his Master, but for the applauses of men I never could see that he cared a rush. He had a remarkably affectionate temper; and though he was inclined to be taciturn with strangers, yet, to his particular friends he unbosomed himself with a degree of confidence and freedom that was truly delightful.

As a preacher, he had deservedly a high reputation. He could not be considered as eminently popular, but his sermons were always rich in evangelical truth; and written in a style of great perspicuity and precision; so that it was the fault of the hearer if he was not profited. His discourses were generally short; and yet you always felt, when he came to a close, that he had done, and well done, what he had undertaken. His manner was almost entirely without passion; but its great propriety and solemnity could not fail to impress you.

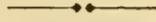
Dr. Adams was a great favourite with his people, both as a minister and a man; and they used sometimes to complain of the infrequency of his visits among them, and of the frequency with which he introduced other men into his pulpit. Indeed I am inclined to think that these were the two most vulnerable points in his ministerial character. It was, however, doubtless to be accounted for very much from the fact that he was almost always an invalid, and was really unable to perform the full amount of service which would have satisfied his own aspirations, or the wishes of his people. But, notwithstanding this, his general influence was felt in great power, but in a quiet and silent way, not only through his own congregation, but through the entire surrounding community.

He had little taste, and perhaps I may say, as little tact, for mingling in deliberative bodies or Church Courts. His great modesty led him to shrink instinctively from every thing of this kind; while yet he was not wanting in vigour or firmness, when he saw, or thought he saw, any great principles in danger of being sacrificed.

The volume of Dr. Adams' Sermons, published since his death, is highly creditable, not only to his talents as a preacher, but to the American pulpit. They are written with great purity and precision of style, and though not remarkable for any dazzling or startling qualities, cannot fail to be read by intelligent Christians with high interest.

Very faithfully yours,

R. W. CONDIT.



## HENRY WHITE, D. D.\*

1826—1850.

HENRY WHITE, a son of Jeremiah and Matilda (Howard) White, was born in Durham, Greene County, N. Y., June 19, 1800. His earliest years were spent partly in labouring on his father's farm, and partly in attending a district school; but after he had reached the age of about seventeen, his winters were occupied chiefly in teaching. In the winter of 1818-19, he became deeply concerned in respect to his spiritual interests, and, after a season of intense anxiety, was brought, as he believed, to a cordial acquiescence in the Gospel plan of salvation. Shortly after this, he made a public profession of his faith, and united with the Presbyterian Church in Cairo, a few miles from his native place.

He was fitted for College in the Academy at Greencastle, N. Y., under the instruction of Mr. Andrew Huntington, a graduate of Yale College in 1815, and joined the Junior class in Union College in 1822. While a member of College, he was engaged for some time in teaching a school at Cox-sackie. He graduated with high honour in 1824, having been especially distinguished, during his college course, in the departments of Mathematics and Philosophy. He entered the Theological Seminary at Princeton the same year that he graduated, and continued his connection with it two years. He was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Columbia in 1826; and almost immediately after, entered upon an agency for the American Bible Society,—his field of labour being in the Southern States. He continued

\* Dr. Smith's Fun. Serm.—MS. from his son, Rev. T. F. White.