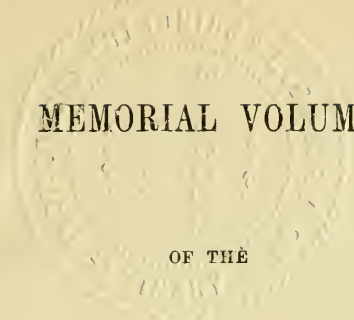




MEMORIAL VOLUME

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MEMORIAL OF THOMAS GOULDING, D. D.

BY REV. F. R. GOULDING.

THOMAS GOULDING, the subject of this sketch, was born March 14, 1786, in Liberty County, Georgia, and died June 21, 1848, at Columbus, Ga. His parents were Thomas Goulding and Margaret Stacy, of the same County and neighborhood. He had no brothers.

It has been published as a remarkable fact, that "at the time of his death he was the oldest of fifteen Presbyterian ministers from one church, occupying usefully and honorably various important and responsible stations in the South. He was the first native licentiate of the Presbyterian Church in Georgia."¹ What makes this fact still more remarkable is, that this church should have furnished a greater number of Presbyterian ministers than all the rest of the State together, when it is not now, nor ever has been, Presbyterian, but Congregational.

About the year 1804 he went to New Haven, Conn., for the purpose of entering Yale College, but he became so disgusted with "the fagging system" introduced from Europe, requiring members of the lower classes in College to obey the behests of the upper, that he declined to apply for matriculation until the system should be abolished. The result was that he never entered College, but pursued his studies in private, keeping pace with his intended class until circumstances in life rendered a connexion with College no longer desirable, even if practicable. In seeking a place in the country for the better prosecution of his studies, he was led by a remarkable providence to the little town of Wolcott, Conn., and to the family of Rev. Mr. Woodward, where he met (as otherwise he probably would not) Anne Holbrook, who, not long afterwards (November, 1806) became his wife. After the birth of their first child—a daughter, in 1807—he returned to Georgia; and although he had already begun the study of law

¹ Article by Rev. S. K. Talmage, D. D., in "Sprague's Annals of the American Pulpit."

as a profession, he resorted to teaching school as the means of meeting the expenses of a now increasing family. It was while he was thus engaged, first at Sunbury, Liberty County, then at Bairden's Bluff (or Sapelo Main), McIntosh County, that he was called to a spiritual knowledge of God as rightfully entitled to all his powers, and to whom he joyfully consecrated himself by a public profession of religion in Midway church, April, 1810, then by conducting prayer-meeting, and by such other modes of winning souls to Christ as were within his reach. He had already chosen the law as his profession, and had made a partial preparation for its practice, without seeing any reason as yet for a change as to his life business; but about this time—probably early in 1811—two highly esteemed friends, without any collusion or knowledge each of the other's intention, came on the same day, from a distance, to ask if he had ever inquired as to his duty to prepare for the gospel ministry, and to urge this upon his attention. Hitherto he had had no other expectation than to make a practice of the law his life business; but when this other question came thus before him, his heart, all burning with love to God and souls of men, left him but one answer to give.

Toward the close of 1811, he was received under the care of Harmony (S. C.) Presbytery as a candidate for the gospel ministry, by whom he was licensed at Augusta, Ga., October 31, 1813. A few months after licensure, he commenced preaching as stated supply at Whitebluff, a settlement of Saltzburghers, about seven miles southwest of Savannah, and January 1, 1816, he was ordained and installed pastor of that church. Here he labored for about six years, during which the warmest reciprocal attachments were formed between him and his flock; so warm, in fact, that he more than once referred the origin of the disease which terminated his life twenty-six years afterwards, to the pain he endured in parting from them.

In 1822, after much severe sickness, both in his person and family, he removed to Oglethorpe County, where he had purchased and stocked a small farm; then, in 1824, to Lexington, the County-seat, where also he remained about six years, taking charge, for a time, of the academical interests of the place, but

devoting himself primarily to his work as a minister of Christ. "Here," to quote again from the article in *Sprague's Annals*, "he exerted an influence over some of the first minds of the State, which is now telling, and will for ever tell, on the best interests of men. Many a community is now reaping rich spiritual blessings, the source of which, unknown to themselves, is in the honored instrumentality of this faithful man of God. On the establishment of the Theological Seminary of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia,¹ he was elected by the Synod its first, and for a time its only, Professor.

"In 1829 he was honored by the University of North Carolina with the degree of Doctor of Divinity. During this same year, 1829, he instructed a theological class² at Lexington, in connexion with his pastoral labors, and was then transferred, by direction of Synod, to Columbia, S. C., the present site of the Seminary. After serving the Church laboriously in the department of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government for several years, in connexion with others associated with him, he resigned his chair as Professor, and removed (January, 1835,) to his late charge in Columbus, Ga. For thirteen and a half years he was the laborious and faithful pastor of that church. He found it comparatively weak, and by his persevering fidelity raised it to influence and strength.

"For many years in succession he was elected President of the Board of Trustees of Oglethorpe University, which office he held at the time of his death.

"He died, as was his often expressed wish, 'with his harness on.' On the evening of June 21, 1848, he attended his usual weekly lecture. He was in a state of great bodily debility when he left home, and was attacked during service with a paroxysm of heart disease, under which he had been laboring at intervals ever since 1822, when he parted with his first charge, the Whitebluff church. With great effort he finished the services. The subject of his lecture was Psalm lxiii. 1-4: 'O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh longeth

¹ In the year 1828.

² This class consisted of five persons, viz.: H. C. Carter, Isaac Waddel, Farwell Jones, James Beattie, and Wm. Moultrie Reid.

for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is. . . . I will bless thee while I live. I will lift up my hands in thy name.' It was a suitable topic to present in his last address to his loved parishioners. And happy were they who did not allow themselves to be detained from the service.

"Within one short hour after pronouncing the benediction upon his hearers he was called—who doubts?—to hear the benediction upon himself from the lips of the Saviour whom he loved, Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

"On retiring from the place of worship he hastened to his chamber. Scarcely had he reclined upon his couch when a violent paroxysm of this disease came on. He rose to lean upon the mantel, his accustomed source of relief; but relief came not. The usual remedies proved unavailing. In great agony he said to a friend that he would be glad if it would please the Lord to take him away. To a beloved son, on whose shoulder he was leaning when he died, and who was overwhelmed at witnessing his suffering, he administered a gentle rebuke. He was presently heard to say, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! That prayer was heard; he ceased to breathe; his spirit was at rest.

"Dr. Goulding possessed a fine intellect and a cultivated taste. His public performances were usually far above the ordinary standard. He was a well-read and polished scholar, and had gathered rich harvests from the fields of literature.

"Attributes still more engaging were the strength and tenderness of his susceptibilities, and the sincerity and fervor of his piety. His friendships were strong, and his feelings were of the most ardent kind, while there was at the same time a childlike simplicity that won irresistibly upon his associates. If these qualities had their corresponding infirmities, they were the natural result of his rare gifts, and he would have been the last man to claim exemption from the frailties of humanity. Conscious of integrity in himself, he looked for it in others also, and was therefore peculiarly liable to be imposed upon by the crafty and designing; while, again, the strength of his attachments made him feel

the want of reciprocity even in those whose colder natures disqualified them for suitably responding.

"His favorite pursuit was the investigation of theological truth. The inspired volume was the book he loved best to study and to hold up to the admiration of his fellow-men. He was well-informed in the doctrines and polity of his own Church, and an able advocate of both; yet his heart was open to embrace all the real disciples of Christ.

"In person, Dr. Goulding was of medium stature, full habit, round contour of face, high forehead, with a countenance expressive of deep feeling and vigorous intellect. In his manners there was a graceful simplicity blended with a commanding dignity that was exceedingly winning. In the pulpit his manner was at once pleasing and impressive; its prominent elements were tenderness and earnestness.

"He left a wife and nine children, having lost one in infancy. He lived to see most of his children members in full of the Church of Christ. One of his sons and two of his sons-in-law are ministers of the gospel."

Hon. Joseph Henry Lumpkin, Chief Justice of Georgia, who was received into the Church by Dr. Goulding, and who was "for many years a member of his Session," says of him: "His character was formed of a rare combination of moral and intellectual qualities that fitted him to be at once eminently popular and eminently useful. His intellect was much above the ordinary standard, and had been cultivated by long and diligent study. . . . He was a thorough Calvinist of the Genevan school; nor could any considerations of policy induce him to relax, in public or in private, one jot or tittle of his creed. The doctrine of justification by faith he regarded as an epitome of the Christian system, and . . . formed the favorite theme of his ministrations. No one could sit under his ministry, with any degree of attention, without gaining very definite views of the system he inculcated, as well as a deep impression of the importance he attached to it. He was alike explicit and earnest."

It was a favorite rule for his own guidance, and often expressed for the benefit of those who were young in the ministry: Let

every sermon preached contain so much of the plan of salvation that should a heathen come in who never had heard the gospel before, and who should depart, never to hear it again, he should learn enough to know what he must do to be saved.

“Though Dr. Goulding had, in some respects, a woman’s heart, and was full of tender and delicate sensibilities, he was always firm to his convictions of what was true and right. In worldly matters he was the veriest child; conscious of entire sincerity himself, he seemed scarcely capable of suspecting the sincerity of others. A more unselfish man never lived. In all circumstances he showed himself the model gentleman as well as the model Christian. He had an instinctive discernment of the proprieties of life, and he practised them with scrupulous care. In the social circle he was the most genial of companions, having at hand a fund of anecdote, both amusing and instructive, which he knew how to turn to the very best account.

“That Dr. Goulding was an eminently pious man, no one, I believe, ever doubted, who knew him; yet he assured me that if ever he was regenerated, it was while he was asleep. Wearied with his burden of sin, and with his fruitless search for a Saviour, he had sunk despairingly into a profound slumber, from which he awoke praising God for his great salvation.”

As a partial offset to this may be related the fact that on recovering from an almost fatal illness at Whitebluff, he said to an aged deacon, in whose intelligent piety he had great confidence, “I fear I am no Christian.”

“Why so?” inquired the other, greatly surprised.

“Because I was so unwilling, nay, even afraid, to die. You know I have always held that when a Christian is called to die, he will be endowed with dying grace. But I had none of it. I was afraid.”

“My dear pastor,” modestly replied the deacon, “forgive the liberty, but allow me to ask a question. Were you at that time called to die?”

“Of course not,” said he.

“I suspect,” continued the deacon, “the Lord knew you would not then need dying grace, and therefore did not give it. But I

have no doubt that when the time comes you will enjoy your full share."

And so it was. That same son on whose shoulder he was leaning when he died, wrote of him: "A few days before his death, as we sat together alone, he told me that he would soon die. I asked him why he thought so, for he was looking uncommonly well and strong. He replied that all his life he had had a dread of death, not of the consequences; but that all that dread had left him. He therefore knew he should not live long. He spoke of the event as calmly as if it were only a visit to the next house."

Thus, as if by transition, Dr. Goulding, the pioneer ordained Presbyterian minister of Georgia, and the first Professor of our Seminary, passed to his everlasting rest, in the sixty-third year of his age, and thirty-fifth of his ministry, leaving with his friends a history fragrant with pleasant and precious memories.