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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.

but little of language, while your mind was carried away by his *thought*. His voice was another mode of expressing his emotions, and the deep tones of solemn earnestness, indicative of pent up feeling, would awaken in his hearers emotions far more correspondent, than any amount of even the most appropriate gesticulation. He seldom resorted to any irregular modes of arresting attention. His was the farthest from the least appearance of an eccentric manner. Yet I well remember the solemnity produced by his closing a very impressive service with a benediction on *those only*, who had determined at once to enter on a Christian life.

His preaching was almost uniformly *extempore*. He used notes, (often very brief,) sometimes covering perhaps a sheet of *foolscap* paper. His letters will compare favourably with the best specimens of English composition, in the best days of English literature. He had no time to *write* sermons. His pen was never idle. But had he occupied it in writing sermons, he would not have had time for other writing. However, he no less, perhaps the more, studied his subjects for pulpit discussion. His prayers, both in public and in his family, and among his students, were fervent, humble and comprehensive. He was, on all occasions, deeply impressive and often affecting, praying with unaffected devoutness for "all kinds and conditions of men."

Next to his desire for the prosperity of Zion, was his ardent wish for the welfare of his country, and especially of his native State. Two great evils, threatening the future, were ever before his mind; and among my earliest recollections of his preaching, are my impressions of the warnings he uttered relative to the increase of Intemperance and the Papacy. He had, years before his death, with almost prophetic sagacity, warned his countrymen of the dangers of popular ignorance on religious subjects, especially among the slaves, and depicted, in most remarkably correct colours, the career of such a "crisp-haired prophet" coming as a messenger of Heaven, with blood-thirsty and demoniacal passions, as actually signaled the autumn of his death, by the memorable "Southampton Massacre."

I remain yours truly,

B. M. SMITH.

BENJAMIN MORGAN PALMER, D. D.*

1803—1847.

BENJAMIN MORGAN PALMER was the grandson of the Rev. Samuel Palmer, who was a native of Barnstable, Mass., was graduated at Harvard College in 1727, was ordained at Falmouth, Mass., in 1730, and died April 13, 1775, aged sixty-eight. He was the eldest son of Job Palmer, originally of Falmouth, who emigrated from Massachusetts to Charleston, S. C., previous to the Revolutionary war, where he died January 30, 1845, in his ninety-seventh year. He was born at Philadelphia on the 25th of September, 1781, while his parents were sojourning there, having been driven from their own home by the storm of the Revolution. He was a pupil of the College of Charleston, while it was a grammar school under the charge of the Rt. Rev. Bishop Smith; but in 1797, he was removed to Princeton College, where he was honourably graduated in the year 1800.

* History of the Circular Church, Charleston.—Charleston newspapers, 1847.—MSS. from his family.

After leaving College, he studied Theology under the joint direction of the Rev. Doctors Keith and Hollingshead, the co-pastors of the two Congregational Churches in Charleston, known as the Circular and Archdale Street Churches, and united in the same Corporate Body. He was licensed to preach on the 7th of June, 1803, by "the Congregational Association of ministers in South Carolina," and by the same Body was ordained and installed Pastor of the Church at Beaufort, S. C., on the 28th of April, 1804. His connection with this Association continued until the year 1822, when the Association was merged in the Charleston Union Presbytery.

On the 4th of May, 1807, Mr. Palmer was married to Mary S., daughter of Capt. Jared Bunce, of Philadelphia, who was a native of Wethersfield, Conn. The marriage took place in Charleston.

With the congregation at Beaufort he laboured for several years with much fidelity, but not without serious embarrassment for want of an adequate support. His friend, Dr. Keith, had long urged him to leave the place, and come to Charleston, and open a school for his immediate support, until some favourable opportunity should occur for the regular exercise of his ministerial functions. On the 15th of November, 1813, Dr. K. wrote to him a very earnest letter on the subject, which found him just recovering from a severe illness; and, in consequence of this letter, Mr. Palmer immediately went to Charleston to confer with his venerable friend, in the hope of being able to satisfy himself in respect to the course of duty. After much consultation and some mental conflict, he resolved, in accordance with Dr. Keith's recommendation, to open a school; and, on the morning of the 14th of December, 1813, he sent off to his church in Beaufort a letter resigning his pastoral charge. In two hours after this was done, Dr. Keith was struck with apoplexy, and in seven hours more, breathed his last.

After Dr. Keith's death, at the close of 1813, the attention of the vacant church was turned towards Mr. Palmer as a suitable person to succeed him; and notwithstanding he had been brought up in the midst of them, and laboured under the disadvantage of being a prophet in his own country, yet so high was their estimate of his talents and character, that, after a short time (in 1814) they gave him a call to become their Pastor, as colleague with Dr. Hollingshead,—which he accepted. On the death of Dr. H. in January, 1817, Mr. Palmer remained co-pastor of the same Churches, in association with the Rev. Anthony Forster, until July following, when the separation of the two Churches took place. From that time, he continued sole Pastor of the Circular Church, until July, 1835, when his health had become so much reduced that he was compelled to resign his charge and place himself on the foundation for the support of disabled clergymen in its connection. The Society entrusted with the administration of this charity, conferred on him a pension of a thousand dollars per annum, which was continued without interruption or abatement to the close of his life. After his resignation, he still continued occasionally to preach, as his health would permit, sometimes supplying small and destitute congregations, sometimes taking a short mission, and frequently labouring in the Seamen's cause, or in aid of the Temperance Reformation. Many of his summers, especially after he resigned his charge, he spent at the North, where he became well known, and had many friends from whom he always received a warm greeting. For two years previous to his death he had resided in the village of Orangeburg, S. C., where he greatly endeared himself to the whole community.

His last sermon was preached in the Methodist Church at Orangeburg, a short time before he died. His death took his friends by surprise. He had been labouring under a severe attack of influenza for a few days, but was considered decidedly convalescent until the day of his death; when, in consequence, as was supposed, of an imprudent use of cold water after a powerful anodyne, he became suddenly very ill, and fell into a lethargic slumber from which he never awoke in this world. He died on the 9th of October, 1847, in the sixty-seventh year of his age. Not only the Congregation to which he had formerly ministered, but the Charleston Union Presbytery, as well as some of the Benevolent Associations of which he had been an active member and patron, passed Resolutions expressive of their high sense of his extraordinary worth.

The degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him by the College of South Carolina in 1815.

At the time of Dr. Palmer's death, his wife was suffering severely from an attack of neuralgia in the head, and was not able fully to realize his death until the day after it occurred. She then seemed composed and tranquil; but on the Saturday following, the 16th of October, she too fell into a profound sleep out of which she awoke, as was confidently believed, in a better world. Thus in their deaths the husband and the wife were scarcely divided.

They left behind them two daughters, Mrs. Lanneau and Mrs. Shindler, (formerly Mrs. Dana,) both of whom still (1857) survive. They had buried seven children.

The following is a list of Dr. Palmer's publications:—Believing Baptism, no argument against Infant Baptism: A Sermon preached in Beaufort, 1809. Gratitude and Penitence recommended from the united consideration of national judgments: A Sermon delivered on a day appointed for Humiliation, Thanksgiving, and Prayer, in Charleston, 1814. The signs of the times discerned and improved: Two Sermons delivered in the Independent Church, Charleston, 1816. The Dejected Christian encouraged: Two Discourses, preached in the Independent Church, Charleston, 1816. A Charge at the Ordination of Rev. Jonas King, and Rev. Alfred Wright,* the former of whom was ordained as City Missionary in Charleston, among the seamen and others; the latter as a missionary to the Choctaw Indians, 1819. A Sermon on the Anniversary of the Sabbath School Association in Charleston, 1819. Importance of the ministerial office: A Sermon preached in the Independent or Congregational Church in Charleston at the ordination of five young men as Evangelists, 1821. Religion profitable: A Sermon with a special reference to the case of Servants, delivered in the Circular Church, 1822. The three following were published in the Southern Preacher, 1824—The reasons which Christians have for mourning the sudden removal of men, who have been distinguished for the excellence of their characters, and the usefulness of their lives; A Sermon delivered on the death of Dr. David Ramsay. A Sermon on the consequence of unbelief. A Sermon on the admonition administered to Elijah. Good men the protection and ornament

* ALFRED WRIGHT was a native of Columbia, Conn.; was graduated at Williams College in 1812; entered the theological seminary at Andover, but was recalled to Williams College as Tutor in 1814; held the Tutorship for one year; and then entered the ministry, and became a missionary under the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to the Choctaw Indians, among whom he spent his life in the most arduous and self-denying labours. He was a most amiable man, an excellent scholar, an earnest and consistent Christian, and a devoted and efficient missionary. He died in the year 1855.

of a community: A Sermon delivered in the Circular Church, Charleston, on the death of Josiah Smith, Esq., eldest Deacon of the Church, 1826. The children of professing believers, God's children; or the right of the children of God's people to the initiating seal of the covenant asserted and maintained: A Sermon delivered in the Circular Church, 1835. A Sermon published in the National Preacher, entitled "The Sinner arraigned and convicted," 1836. The Family Companion, with an Appendix containing a Sermon delivered on the Sacramental occasion that terminated his pastoral relation to his people, in July, 1835; and the last Sermon he ever delivered to them—only a few weeks before his death. This volume was posthumous.

FROM THE REV. WILLIAM C. DANA.

CHARLESTON, S. C., April 10, 1857.

Rev. and dear Sir: My introduction to Dr. Palmer was not till the later period of his life,—some time after his connection with the Circular Church, as Pastor, had ceased. But there was no mistaking the broad outlines of his character, and I am happy to give you such an account of him as my recollections may furnish.

The great charm of his character was *transparent simplicity*. "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" It was refreshing to meet with one whose vigorous and affluent intellect commanded the respect of the most intellectual, who was yet in character and manners unsophisticated as a child. He lived for God and Truth, apparently free from all thought or care as to what effect the free utterance of his honest opinions might have on his personal interests. Truth, moral and spiritual, was the element in which he lived and moved, singularly abstracted from worldly cares, and indifferent to worldly pelf and worldly opinions. He was thoroughly a minister of the Gospel, and could have been nothing else.

Out of his singleness of purpose grew his remarkable *moral courage*. To the same source might be traced another distinguishing and attractive feature of his character,—namely, his singular exemption from all feeling of jealousy in respect to those whose popularity might come in competition with his own. He rejoiced in every good blow that was struck for truth, no matter by whom, with as cordial and jubilant delight as if the whole reputation of it inured to himself. He was wholly uninitiated in those arts by which, in advancing public interests, a wide margin is left for personal notoriety and aggrandizement. He had a generous appreciation of all fellow-labourers in the good cause to which his life was devoted. If there was work to be done, he was always ready, when called upon; but he never put himself forward in the slightest degree; and if the just claims of his character and position were sometimes, in consequence of this facility and modesty, ignored by others, he never seemed to notice or to know it. He arrogated nothing to himself.

Another very attractive feature of his character was the absence of all tendency to *dictate* to others. Free and independent in his own judgments, he wished others to be equally so. Although, in the maintenance of great principles, he had the courage and the tenacity which in other days might have led to martyrdom, he was nevertheless, in all lighter matters of opinion, singularly facile. A proposition which he had advocated, he would withdraw at the suggestion of the youngest member of Presbytery, without the slightest hesitancy, when an objection which he had not thought of was intimated. He had an exuberant candour in estimating opinions opposite to his own. The impression which they made upon him at the moment, I think sometimes misled those who were not intimately conversant with his mental traits. They knew not how solidly his mind

settled down on its mature convictions,—the breath of an adverse opinion having but transiently ruffled its surface.

At the same time, it was quite useless for party leaders or majorities to undertake to *dictate to him*. Whilst others counted numbers, he busied himself in exploring truth and right. He was not at all reluctant to be in the minority. He had a most pertinacious and *uncomfortable* habit (as some found it) of thinking for himself, and acting according to his opinions. Hence, although naturally reserved, perhaps even diffident, he was, when inspired by his firm convictions of truth, elevated at once above all personal considerations, and more prone to be belligerent than, from mere policy, silent. He was the exact opposite of a wily politician.

His mind was saturated with the meaning, spirit, and language of the Bible. This gave distinctive character to his preaching and his prayers. In the pulpit he was always instructive and edifying. There was fresh thought in all his sermons; and, although the commonplace arts of rhetoric were entirely absent, there was that in the deep tones of his voice and the solemn earnestness of his delivery, which, though years have rolled by since that utterance was heard, is still vivid in memory. His preaching seemed not so much the result of any specific effort or aim at striking effect, as the natural outflow of a mind always full of Scripture truth. His prayers were most remarkable. All who heard them were constrained to feel that he was an eminently pure-minded, spiritually-minded man, favoured with most intimate intercourse with Heaven.

It is the testimony of one of his habitual hearers, surpassed by none in acuteness of discrimination, that it was at the sacramental table, and in the chamber or sickness, that he shone pre-eminent. None could doubt the genuineness and tenderness of his Christian sympathy.

Among the lighter traits of his character, one is pleasantly associated with his memory by those who knew him intimately. He was remarkable for *absence of mind*. In company he was often abstracted, evidently carrying on a process of thought, quite remote from things present and visible. At home, he would sometimes seem to be restlessly searching for something in the room. It turned out that he was seeking an *idea*. I have heard it said that he once rode horseback many miles in the rain, quite oblivious of the cloak and umbrella attached to his saddle. It is pleasant to me to recall his personal appearance, as I have often seen him in the streets of Charleston, erect in figure, with buoyant step, his eye, like his mind, directed rather to Heaven than earth, and too much absorbed in his own thoughts to notice the salutation of some passing friend.

I regret that I can offer you nothing more worthy of the exalted subject; but I still feel pleasure in adding my humble tribute to the memory of one whose simplicity and originality of character, and exalted moral worth, are so eminently worthy of commemoration.

I am, Rev. and dear Sir, with true respect and esteem,

Yours very sincerely,

W. C. DANA.

FROM THE REV. B. M. PALMER, D. D.

NEW ORLEANS, April 16, 1857.

Rev. and dear Sir: When, some time ago, I consented to furnish you a sketch of my venerated uncle, the late Rev. Dr. Palmer of Charleston, S. C., it was with the intention of enlisting the aid of a distinguished co-presbyter, who was for many years his intimate associate and friend. Providential hindrances having disappointed this expectation, I must, at this late day, attempt to redeem my pledge, fearing, however, that this communication may arrive too late for your purpose. It is to be regretted that this portrait is not drawn from

the memory of some contemporary, whose reminiscences would cover the whole area of his life, instead of that small section of it embraced in my own; and whose description would be received by the Christian public with less suspicion than that of one, who, in the nearness of a double relationship, is only less than a son. Since this delicate duty must at last devolve upon a kinsman, I wish there was time to remit it to others of the family, who grew up and were shaped under his influence, and not like myself, thrown off by the chances of life, enjoying only occasional intercourse. So intensely individual, however, was his character that, even under these disadvantages, I have no fear of presenting a likeness whose accuracy will not be attested by his most superficial acquaintance.

In few men did the outward presence so perfectly harmonize with the intellectual and moral character, as in Dr. Palmer. He was of medium stature; though a spare habit and an erect figure added to his apparent height. Pre-eminently composed in manner; dignified, if not graceful in his carriage; with a deep sonorous voice; and a countenance singularly placid, yet strongly furrowed by thought:—an air of repose rested upon his whole person, indicating habitual self-communion and meditations that were not of earth. In the midst of society, he was often sunk in reverie, wrapt up in the seclusion of his own thoughts: and this abstracted air, supported by the acknowledged sanctity of his life, secured to him the homage of universal reverence. This characteristic trait, indeed, very naturally gave rise to many amusing *contretemps*, richly enjoyed by his intimate friends around the fireside, and the recital of which he would himself, with a genial humour, often relish. Wonder was sometimes expressed that a man, whose senses were apparently so locked up to the passing world, should yet evince in his discourses so practical a knowledge of mankind. But the secret would often transpire in quaint and humorous observations, which showed that beneath the arch of those heavy eye-brows, and behind that abstracted mein, searching and comprehensive, though unsuspected, glances of human life were taken by this quiet man of thought.

Dr. Palmer's mind was distinctly formed upon the stern and classic models of antiquity. I cannot say whether his acquaintance ranged over the entire circle of ancient literature; but I well remember the frequent surprise of his juvenile kindred at the ease and evident unction with which he would recite, not the usual excerpted phrases, but fresh and unfamiliar passages, from Roman authors; showing the depth of his sympathy with those old writers who had formed his taste. Hence was derived the Doric simplicity of his style, which continually extorted the praise even of critics. As a speaker he was proverbially calm and self-contained; never vehement and never swept away by currents of passion. This is not mentioned as a blemish, but rather as proof of the perfect symmetry of the man. His whole appearance and bearing reflected precisely his intellectual and moral constitution. The chaste simplicity of his style—only tinged a little with the quaintness of his favourite religious authors of the seventeenth century—was exactly suited to the easy and equable flow of his thoughts; while the grand monotone of his voice, swelling like a deep note of the organ through the spacious dome of his church—and his calm, impressive and measured action, the very impersonation of pulpit solemnity and awe,—exactly harmonized with that reflective and thoroughly meditative cast of mind which distinguished him as a Christian man and teacher.

I would not myself assign to my honoured kinsman the highest rank as a scientific theologian: perhaps the peculiar circumstances of his life induced him to undervalue the black-letter lore of his profession. His pulpit instructions were, however, always rich in evangelical truth, full of unction, and getting at the doctrines of grace in their concrete form, as imbedded in the hidden experience

of God's children, rather than as abstract dogmas, richly articulated in a stereotyped creed. The searching and experimental character of his preaching was rather adapted to aid the pious in examining their own hearts, and to build them up in the hopes and comforts of the Gospel, than to arouse the careless. He was eminently "a son of consolation." In the chamber of sickness, or in the house of mourning, the veil of his natural reserve seemed of itself to drop; and by distilling consolation into wounded hearts, he bound to himself the people of his charge, as it is the fortune of few pastors to do.

But if inferior to some of his compeers in the dialectics of Theology, he surpassed them all in his minute knowledge of the Bible itself. He was, beyond dispute, the greatest textuary of his age,—a living Concordance of the Scriptures. His Bible, and other most familiar books,—with every blank leaf and the margin of nearly every page filled with parallel texts, written like hieroglyphics, in a microscopic hand,—are treasured by his descendants as among the most precious of his relics. His memory, too, was literally saturated with the language of the Bible, even as his heart was steeped in its spirit. This sacred dialect became indeed so familiar to him that he never opened his lips in pious discourse, but it formed the readiest vehicle of his thoughts, imparting an almost Apostolic authority and richness to his utterances. To this cause, as well as to the variety and depth of his Christian experience, must be ascribed his astonishing gift in prayer. He always impressed you with the belief that he was consciously talking with God; and as petition and thanksgiving poured themselves forth in the very language of inspiration, you almost felt as though you stood behind the High Priest of old, when, with Urim and Thummim, he was receiving responses from the oracle within the veil.

Had not grace fitted him to receive the higher and purer honours of a preacher and a pastor, Dr. Palmer had many attributes which would have caused him to shine as a polemic. The earnestness of his convictions, united with great singleness of purpose; the concentrativeness of his mind, associated with a constitutional fearlessness of character; and the ready use of invective and a certain cool and taunting irony;—all these combined to render him a formidable antagonist in the field of debate. It was his lot indeed to pass through more than one bitter and protracted controversy, to the emergencies of which he always proved himself equal; and his friends are still fond of recalling instances of the almost reckless intrepidity with which, not pausing to measure consequences, he threw himself single-handed into the encounter with vice or error.

The trait which conspicuously adorned him as a man, was sterling honesty both of mind and heart. Since the day that Nathaniel sat under the fig-tree, there never lived on earth a more guileless Israelite than the subject of this sketch: and to the predominance of this single quality, I refer the few actions of his life that were open to criticism or censure. Indeed, I cannot more emphatically represent the transparent purity and more than Roman integrity of Dr. Palmer, than by saying that if I were called upon to pronounce his eulogy, I would as soon choose his faults as his virtues for my text. It would soon appear how the two eventually resolve into one. His errors always arose from the overlapping of some virtue, exercised disproportionately for the time, and disturbing the beautiful symmetry of the man. Incapable of finesse, immaculately truthful in word and deed, his whole life being but the incarnation of his principles, his virtuous indignation at whatever he construed as a dereliction from honour and truth would sometimes break over conventional restraints, and perhaps lead him to offend against the amenities of life. This is the worst that can be charged upon him by his bitterest enemy, if such he ever had; and it was this profound conviction of his honesty, which secured to him the confidence, esteem, and love even of those against whom he was controversially arrayed.

Dr. Palmer deserves to be reported to posterity as one of the great men of his times. Great, not in the reach and grasp of his intellect, in the depth or variety of his learning, in power of invention, or of philosophical analysis; but great, first of all, in his pre-eminent goodness; and great, next, in the rare combination of his intellectual and moral qualities. Great in the intense individuality of his character, by which he impressed himself upon all with whom he came in contact, and which made him like a tall cliff, or jutting promontory, observed and known of all men.

Deprived of health in his later years, he laboured, void of ambition, in small and remote churches, preaching with increasing unction and power to the last; when, suddenly, yet gently, he fell asleep on his Saviour's breast. Many throbbing hearts must lie beneath the sod, before he is forgotten on earth; yet even then will his memory be green in Heaven, where he will be hailed by many as a spiritual father, whom he has begotten through the Gospel.

Very respectfully and truly yours,

B. M. PALMER.

ELISHA YALE, D. D.*

1803—1853.

ELISHA YALE, a son of Justus and Margaret (Tracy) Yale, was born at Lee, Mass., June 15, 1780. His parents, however, shortly after his birth, removed to Lenox, where he was brought up under the ministry of the late Dr. Shepard. His father was a farmer, and he was himself accustomed to labour on a farm till he was nineteen years old. He became, as he believed, the subject of a renewing influence in 1799; and from that time, or shortly after, he meditated the purpose of becoming a minister of the Gospel. He taught a school in Richmond, Mass., in 1798 and 1799, and in Lenox in 1800.

In May, 1800, he commenced a course of study under his pastor, the Rev. Dr. Shepard, but, after a short time, went to West Hartford, Conn., where he pursued his studies, both classical and theological, under the Rev. Dr. Perkins. Here he continued till February, 1803, when he was licensed to preach by the North Association of Hartford County. In April following, he went to preach at Kingsborough, N. Y., the place of his ultimate and only settlement. Having remained there a few Sabbaths, he passed on to Oneida County, and spent a month at Augusta, and then returned to Kingsborough, and remained there during the summer. A revival of religion commenced immediately under his labours, and continued without any perceptible abatement a whole year. In the autumn of that year, and while the revival was still in progress, he went to Becket, Mass., and preached a short time; then returned to Kingsborough, and went back to Becket again in the early part of 1804, when he received a call to settle there in the ministry. He declined the call, and in April of the same year, received one from Kingsborough, which, in due time, he accepted. He was ordained

* Memoranda furnished by Dr. Yale.—Memoir by Rev. Jeremiah Wood.—MS. from Rev. Edward Wall.