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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.

Jesus Christ. I love to call up his venerable image, and to recount the substantial and manifold services which he rendered to the cause of Christ, as a fellow-labourer with some who are still clad in their armour, and some who have entered into their rest.

Believe me ever fraternally yours,

J. H. JONES.

JAMES M'CHORD.*

1809—1820.

JAMES M'CHORD, a son of John and Isabella M'Chord, was born in Baltimore, Md. March 29, 1785. His parents, it is believed, were both of Scotch Irish descent. His father was a mechanic in very moderate circumstances. In the year 1790, he removed with his family to Kentucky, and settled in Lexington.

His son James, at a very early period, discovered a decided taste, and an uncommon capacity, for acquiring knowledge. He had a great fancy for drawing and painting; and to the gratification of this taste many of his leisure hours were devoted. Some of the portraits which he sketched at this early period, still remain among his relatives, and they evince very considerable native talent for the arts. At the age of twelve, he was quite a proficient in Geography, Arithmetic and History, had considerable knowledge of the politics of the day, and had read Shakespeare and a number of the most eminent poets.

He commenced the Latin language when he was thirteen, in the Lexington Academy, where he gave decisive evidences of superior genius. One of his class mates writes thus concerning him:—"From his thirteenth year, every thing about the Academy, except the instruction and discipline, was managed by him. All our sports, all our preparations for exhibition, the selection of the plays and speeches, and the persons by whom they were to be spoken and acted, were all directed by him. Nobody assigned to him that business, and nobody charged him with assuming it, but he was always consulted, and his judgment was generally decisive."

In 1801, he completed his course in the Academy, and entered the Transylvania University. Here he continued from eighteen months to two years, when he commenced the study of the Law under Henry Clay. The numerous engagements of the teacher allowed him no other time for the recitations of his pupil than the Sabbath. Against this his conscience, which had been enlightened by a religious education, earnestly remonstrated; and, after a few months, his mind took a decidedly serious turn, and all the powers of his mind were roused into vigorous action to secure the salvation of his soul. This was in the spring and summer of 1803, when he was in his eighteenth year. The result was that he made a profession of religion, abandoned the study of the Law, and resolved to devote himself to the Gospel ministry.

* Sketch of his Life, by Rev. John McFarland.—Preface to his Sermons.—MSS. from Rev. R. H. Bishop, D. D., and Rev. R. J. Breckenridge, D. D.

In September 1803, he put himself under the care of the Kentucky Presbytery of the Associate Reformed Church,—after which, he continued his literary course for about two years. In the autumn of 1805, he became a student in the Theological Seminary established by the Associate Reformed Church in the city of New York. Here he pursued his theological studies under Dr. Mason, for nearly four years. At the close of this period, he returned to Kentucky, and, on the 3d of November 1809, at a meeting of the Presbytery in Lexington, was licensed to preach the Gospel. His preaching, from the first, was highly acceptable, especially to the more intelligent classes; but he was soon brought into collision with the Presbytery, and he rendered himself to some extent unpopular, by taking strong ground against preachers having double and triple charges, and against the prevailing disposition to turn them off with a very inadequate support. For about a year, he was employed in visiting vacant and feeble churches of his denomination, in Kentucky, for which he received, as a compensation, much less than was necessary to meet his current expenses.

In the year 1809, he was married to Mary, daughter of David Logan, of Fayette County, Ky. They had three children, one of whom, *John Mason*, is a minister of the Presbyterian Church.

Sometime after his licensure, he was invited to visit a Congregation in Baltimore, whose minister had professed an intention to resign his charge; but the minister having subsequently changed his mind, the Congregation were obliged to withdraw the invitation.

In April, 1811, he was ordained, and sent as a delegate to the General Synod. He had intended also to preach a short time to a Congregation in New York, that had intimated a wish to give him a call; but, on account of some untoward circumstances, the contemplated arrangement did not take effect. Mr. M'Chord returned to Kentucky; and, as the subject of intercommunion with other churches was now agitated in the Associate Reformed Synod and Presbyteries, and as his views on this subject and some others differed from those of most of his brethren, there grew up a state of things between him and them, adverse alike to his comfort and usefulness. He was prosecuted for his alleged errors in 1813, but escaped without censure, owing, as it was said, chiefly, to the influence of Governor Morrow.

In 1814, he published a book entitled "The Body of Christ," which involved him in fresh difficulties, and, in consequence of which, he was called to answer anew for errors, before the Presbytery. The result was that, in October, 1815, he was suspended from the exercise of his ministerial functions. He appealed to the General Synod; but, being unable, on account of ill health, to prosecute the appeal at the next meeting, the case was referred to a committee, who reported unfavourably to Mr. M'Chord, and recommended to the Synod that he should not be allowed to exercise his ministry, until he appeared to prosecute his appeal. He did appear before the Synod at Philadelphia, and defended himself in a Speech of acknowledged ability, and of a degree of plainness that bordered upon severity; but the Synod confirmed the sentence of the Presbytery. Indeed, he anticipated this result; and, in consideration of proceedings on their part, which he claimed were unjust as well as illegal, he refused to recognise their authority, and appealed to churches that he thought would view his case with a different eye. He, accordingly, applied to the Presbytery

of West Lexington, the ensuing fall, for admission to their body; and they, regarding his views as *substantially* correct, granted his request, by receiving him as one of their members.

In 1813-14, a number of young persons in Lexington, not professors of religion,—from the very high estimate which they had of Mr. M'Chord's talents, undertook to build a place for public worship, on the supposition that a congregation might easily be gathered to attend upon his ministry. Their plan, though encumbered with many difficulties, was finally carried out; and, on the 30th of July, 1815, the new edifice was formally opened, and the next day a public sale of pews was held, by which the few friends who had thus far been bound for the whole expense, were secured against any serious loss. With this enterprise, M'Chord, of course, became identified; and, though the movement was not, in all respects, in accordance with ecclesiastical rule, the Presbytery did not notice the irregularity,—owing, perhaps, to the circumstance that his religious opinions were, about the same time, made a matter of discipline. When he was received by the West Lexington Presbytery, connected with the General Assembly, the Church, which he had collected and organized, was received also. Here he laboured with some success, though not without various difficulties and discouragements, until the autumn of 1819, when he removed to Paris, Ky., on an invitation to take charge of the Bourbon Academy.

From the year 1815, Mr. M'Chord had been afflicted with a fistula, which now seriously affected his general health. This, together with severe application and excessive confinement, brought on a complication of diseases, under which he sunk, May 26, 1820. In his last illness, he was overtaken with mental derangement, in which, however, he exhibited very strikingly some of his peculiar characteristics. The following account of the closing scene is from his intimate friend, the Rev. John McFarland:—

"He supposed he was in Heaven, and he talked almost incessantly. During the first twenty-four hours, he scarcely ever finished a sentence, but appeared to be engaged in important conversation with three or four individuals, who had been his particular friends in Lexington, and whose names were constantly repeated. In one of his silent intervals, a friend stepped up to his bedside, and, having looked him full in the face, was recognised. He raised his arm, held out his hand, grasped the hand of his friend, gave it a hearty shake, uttering these words,—‘Brother B— when did you die? I died yesterday at eleven o'clock,’—the hour of the preceding day at which he had become deranged.

"A few hours after, he recovered the full use of his mind, and talked with his friends for a short time as usual, and then sank back into his former state of derangement, but with this remarkable difference—his discourses were now generally not only coherent, but lucid and argumentative. He discussed, for instance, at considerable length, the theological points on which he had been accused of heresy, and maintained their agreement with the word of God. He pronounced also, while in this state, a long and animated discourse on the national advantages of the United States, closing every paragraph with these words:—‘And men call this fine land their land, but it is God's land, yea, it is God's land.’ Towards the close of the dissertation, after a pause of a few minutes, he called the name of his wife three times, who was also then on her death-bed, and said—‘Come here—look down yonder towards Lexington. See what a glory is all round Lexington.’ Some two or three hours before his death, he again recovered the full use of his mind, and continued in possession of it, till he joined the general assembly of the spirits of just men made perfect."

His remains were deposited under the front of the Church in Lexington, which had been built specially for his use.

His publications were a Sermon on the Divine Forgiveness, 1812; a Sermon on the Signs of the Times, 1813; the Body of Christ, being a series of Essays on Federal Representation, 1814; a Sermon before the

Legislature of Kentucky, entitled "National Safety," 1815; a Plea for the Hope of Israel, being the substance of his Defence before the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Church, 1817; a Last Appeal to the Church and Congregation of Market Street: a Volume of Sermons, 1818; a Volume of Posthumous Discourses, 1822.

FROM THE REV. JOHN M. DUNCAN, D. D.

BALTIMORE, March 9, 1848.

Rev. and dear Sir: It would afford me pleasure to comply with the request contained in your letter, but unfortunately my information is too limited to do justice to the subject. When I entered the Theological Seminary, I was little more than seventeen years of age. Mr. M'Chord was much older, and had preceded me two years. Of course my association was chiefly with those who were near to me in years and standing. But I can say he was considered among the first, if not the first, in the institution, in my time. He was so regarded by his Preceptor, Dr. J. M. Mason, and by all his fellow students. He seemed to be an object of almost unlimited confidence by those of the students who came from the same part of the country,—Kentucky.

After he left the Seminary I personally knew little of him; but have understood that, in his native State, he was highly admired by all classes, and principally by the intelligent, as a man of very superior talent, and of thrilling pulpit eloquence. I never heard him preach but once or twice; and the discourses he then delivered were "trial pieces," called for by the Superintendents of the institution. On these occasions, I was charmed; but, as I said before, I was then young. I know, however, that he commanded the applause of a large audience, as well as the decided approbation of his official superiors.

He certainly was a man of uncommon talents, and in some respects pre-eminently fitted for the calling he had chosen. It was unfortunate for him that he was exceedingly sensitive. His morbid feelings impaired or hampered his judgment, and were, I apprehend, the great cause of the premature and unhappy close of his career. He had, by his habit of close thought, and quick observation, perceived some objects peeping over the horizon, which have since filled the world with their magnitude, and whose corruseations have since entered almost every mind, great and small. Perhaps the vision was indistinct to himself, and he premature in his discovery. Others did not see, or would not, or could not, see what he saw. They thought they saw what he did not see. He consequently became the object of remark and cutting criticism. Whether his scholarship was called in question or not, I do not know. He, however, thought himself injuriously treated by his ministerial brethren and intellectual companions, and his overly sensitive mind sank under the oppression. He fell an early martyr in consequence of the two causes I have stated: his fellow students sympathized with him, his Preceptor wept for him; and, like the prophet of old, I could have written on his grave, 'Alas, my brother!'

In this I find no fault with him, nor would I put a stain on his memory. In my own career, I have seen cause most sincerely and tenderly to sympathize with him.

Yours most respectfully,

JOHN M. DUNCAN.

FROM THE REV. JAMES M. MATHEWS, D. D.

NEW YORK, December 27, 1852.

My dear Sir: Your request for my recollections of James M'Chord carries me back into the scenes of my early days; but he was my intimate friend, and

though so many years have passed since my last meeting with him, he is still fresh in my remembrance, and I have no fear of mistaking in respect to any of the prominent features of his character. I first knew him at the opening of Dr. Mason's Seminary in 1805, where we met as students, and prosecuted together our theological course. I was in habits of daily intimacy with him for two years, and, during several months of the time, we were boarders at the same house.

Mr. M'Chord's personal appearance had little that was attractive. He was of a spare habit, and somewhat under the ordinary stature. His limbs were wiry and flexible in a remarkable degree; and, I remember, on one occasion, in a playful exercise that we had, his winding himself around me like a serpent. His features were not marked by any thing like refinement. He had a large mouth and uncommonly thick lips, but a piercing black eye that lighted up his whole face with intelligence. The engraved portrait prefixed to a volume of his Sermons published in 1822, does very good justice to his face, except that it makes it too long. His motions were very rapid, and he always looked and spoke and acted like a man in earnest. His manners, though characterized by nothing like rudeness, were yet far from being graceful or polished; but there was nevertheless an air of honesty and straightforwardness about him, which more than made up for any lack of artificial refinement.

Both his intellectual and moral constitution were strongly marked. In respect to the former, perhaps the most distinctive feature was the power of analysis. Dr. Mason would sometimes give us a whole chapter in one of Paul's Epistles to analyze at once; and it was wonderful with what facility and rapidity M'Chord would develop the Apostle's meaning. His mental vision was at once remarkably clear and remarkably acute, and perhaps he was never more at home than in endeavouring to draw the line between the true and the false in metaphysical speculation. Indeed, so prominent was this characteristic, that I remember his stating in a letter to me, after he had entered on his ministry, that he found it necessary to exercise great vigilance and some self-denial, in order to avoid giving his sermons too much of a metaphysical complexion. But with this uncommon power of discrimination, he united also a bold and vigorous imagination, and many of his conceptions were marked by uncommon originality and splendour. I ought, perhaps, to add that his gorgeous creations were sometimes at the expense of good taste.

His voice was naturally full, clear and loud—indeed he never spoke in a low tone, even in common conversation. As a public speaker, he was not graceful, but he was earnest, rapid, ready and effective: he evidently spoke, as he did every thing, out of the depths of a thoroughly convinced mind and honest heart. He was a vigorous, diligent student, and his acquisitions, at the time of his entering the ministry, were greatly above the ordinary standard. I never heard him preach after he left the Seminary, but he gave promise there, which I believe was subsequently fulfilled, during his brief course, of being one of the most eloquent men of the day.

He had a large and generous heart, though he had some infirmities of disposition, which were troublesome alike to himself and his friends. He was a thoroughly devout man, and yet he was cheerful, and enjoyed a hearty laugh as well as any of his fellow students. He was subject to alternate elevation and depression of spirits,—an infirmity which was undoubtedly aggravated, during his residence at the Seminary, by a diseased state of body. Dr. Mason, in hearing our theological recitations, was accustomed, in order effectually to drill us in polemics, to take the attitude of an opponent, and meet us with objections to the doctrine we wished to maintain; and sometimes he would run us into difficulties, which were extremely embarrassing. I remember, on one occasion, when M'Chord had, for some reason, neglected to make the due preparation for

one of these theological encounters, the Doctor pushed him into a place in which he did not care to be found; and, after we left the recitation room, he said to me, with an impatient air,—“I really believe that Dr. Mason has a spite against me.” It was, however, only a momentary impression, and he had scarcely said it before he venerated and loved the Doctor as much as ever.

I have adverted to the fact that M'Chord was afflicted, while at the Seminary, with ill health. The nature of his disease was such as to incline him much to drowsiness; and he would sometimes fall asleep, where he would most wish to avoid it. At the house where several of the students boarded, we were accustomed to take our turns in officiating at the family devotions. One of our number was specially given to making long prayers; and, in the course of a prayer, he would have several long pauses. M'Chord, under the influence of his malady, would sometimes fall asleep during the prayer, and would have the mortification to find himself on his knees, when all the rest had risen. On one occasion, one of these long pauses occurred, after my friend had begun to drowse, and the silence awoke him—he sprang up while all the rest of us were upon our knees, and said, with an air of exultation,—“Well, I was not caught sleeping this time.” As I was next to him, I gave him a gentle hint, admonishing him of his mistake, and he immediately fell upon his knees again. This movement so embarrassed the officiating brother that he almost instantly brought his prayer to a close, so that M'Chord had but just returned to *his* kneeling posture, when we were getting out of ours. You can easily understand that it was an incident not very favourable to the devotions of any of us. His mortification in the case was extreme; and for the moment only, he blamed me, as if I had had some part in bringing it about.

On the whole, though he certainly was not without infirmities, I consider him as having been a fine specimen of intellectual, moral and Christian character. He died before he had reached his full maturity, as a minister, but not before he had attained to high distinction.

I am, my dear Sir, faithfully yours,

J. M. MATHEWS.



THOMAS BARR.*

1809—1835.

THOMAS BARR, a son of Colonel Alexander Barr, was born in Derry, Westmoreland County, Pa., April 2, 1775. While he was yet in early childhood, his father was called to serve in the Revolutionary war, and took his family to his wife's father's, near Fort Loudon, Franklin County. Here Thomas enjoyed the advantages of a common school, in connection with which he seems to have received a good deal of religious instruction, the effect of which was felt by him in after life. The absence of his father in the war, the fact of his being subsequently murdered by the Indians, and the many barbarous outrages constituting a part of the history of the times, which were detailed in his hearing, awakened in his youthful bosom an abhorrence of tyranny and a love of his country, that were as enduring as his life.

* Autobiography.—Kennedy's History of the Plan of Union.—MS. from his son, John Barr, Esq.