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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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WILLIAM MORRISON, D. D.*

1782—1818.

WILLIAM MORRISON, a son of Daniel and Janette (McFarland) Morrison, was born in Perthshire, Scotland, in the year 1748. He early cherished a strong desire for the Christian ministry; but the circumstances of his father were so straitened as to forbid the idea of giving him a liberal education. In consequence of this, the son determined to migrate to this country, hoping that he should here find the requisite means for accomplishing his favourite object; and he accordingly came hither at the age of seventeen. As he brought with him letters of recommendation from ministers in Scotland, addressed to several ministers in New York and Philadelphia, he was received with kindness, and encouraged to pursue the design which had brought him hither. Resuming the humble employment in which he had been originally engaged, he soon acquired a sum sufficient to defray the expenses of a collegiate education. But his faith was destined to encounter other difficulties still. The College of New Jersey, to which his eyes had been fondly turned, had its operations suspended by the war of the Revolution. Being repelled by similar embarrassments from other scenes of collegiate education, he was constrained to have recourse to academic and private instructors. Having thus attained a competent share of classical and general knowledge, he placed himself under the care of the Associate Presbytery of New York. By their advice, he pursued and completed a course of theological study under the Rev. Robert Annan, then living in the vicinity of Philadelphia. He was soon licensed as a candidate for the Christian ministry, and entered with great delight and characteristic ardour on the duty of preaching.

Shortly after he was licensed, Providence directed his way to Londonderry, N. H. It was a congenial spot; for he found in the place a great number of his own countrymen and their descendants. The congregation to which he preached had enjoyed, for a long period, the labours of the excellent Mr. McGregore, under whom they had become well instructed in the truths of Christianity. Mr. Morrison's services were highly appreciated; and he soon received a unanimous call from the Church and Society to become their Pastor. He accepted the call, and was ordained and installed February 12, 1783.

The scene of Mr. Morrison's labours was extensive, and his duties were arduous. The energy and activity of his mind found ample scope among his numerous flock. But his ministerial services reached much farther. In various towns, both near and distant, which were settled in considerable measure by emigrants from Londonderry, his services were eagerly sought, and they were freely and frequently rendered, especially on Sacramental occasions. As these occasions were attended with a variety of public exercises, he often returned home, exhilarated indeed in mind, but labouring under great bodily exhaustion.

The degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him by Dartmouth *University*, about the year 1816.

He continued to occupy till the close of his life the same field of labour to which he was first introduced. But eight days before his death he preached

* Dr. Dana's Fun. Sermon.—MS. from Rev. J. W. C. Bartley.

a Funeral Sermon for one of his congregation, from Psalm xxxix. 4, "Lord, make me to know mine end," &c. On Wednesday, the 4th of March, 1818, while visiting a school in one of the districts of his parish, he became suddenly indisposed; and this proved to be the commencement of his last illness. Within two or three days, it became apparent that his life was in serious danger. On Sabbath morning, he said to his wife—"You know that the Sabbath has always been my best day, and my employment then my best employment. But this is the last Sabbath I shall spend on earth. In a short time, I shall be spending an everlasting Sabbath." He added with a smile,—"Will not that be a blessed exchange?" In the evening of that day, he seemed quite exhausted; but in his bed, with his family around him, he uttered a most solemn and affectionate prayer, in the course of which he intimated that it would be the last prayer he should ever offer. After this, he took each of his family affectionately by the hand, and when he had so far recovered himself as to be able to speak, said,—"Now Lord, what wait I for?" Such was a sample of his death-bed exercises. He expired just as the words—"Come, come, Lord Jesus," had passed from his lips,—on the 9th of March, 1818, at the age of seventy. His Funeral Sermon was preached by the Rev. Dr. Dana of Newburyport, and was published.

Dr. Morrison published a Sermon preached before the Honourable General Court of New Hampshire at the Annual Election, 1792; a Sermon at the installation of the Rev. John Giles,* Newburyport, 1803; and a Sermon occasioned by the death of John Pinkerton, Esq., 1816.

He was married on the 28th of June, 1784, to Jane Fullerton, of Pequea, Pa. They had eleven children: two of the sons were graduated at Dartmouth College, and entered the profession of Law, and both of them died of consumption in Savannah, in the year 1831.

FROM THE REV. DANIEL DANA, D. D.

NEWBURYPORT, April 16, 1851.

My dear Sir: I was intimately acquainted with Dr. Morrison for many years, and feel perfectly free to render my testimony concerning his character for the purpose for which you ask it. Many years have passed since his departure, but they have done little to diminish the vividness of my impressions concerning him.

Dr. Morrison ranked well with the excellent preachers of his day. It was in the pulpit that his perceptions, his acquisitions, and the energies of his mind had full scope, and the affections of his heart poured themselves forth in a tide of devout and benevolent feeling. His sermons were full of Gospel truth; were luminous and instructive; faithful and searching; awfully alarming to the wicked, yet encouraging to the sincere, and tenderly consoling to the mourner in Zion. His prayers were no less impressive than his sermons. Replete with reverence and affectionate devotion; the breathings of a soul apparently in near communion with its God; full yet concise; adapted to occasions and circum-

* JOHN GILES was born in England; was ordained Pastor of a Dissenting Church in Wellington, (Somerset,) where he remained nine years; then had the charge, for a few years, of a church in Exeter; came to this country from his love of Republican institutions in 1793; preached for a short time in Elizabethtown, N. J., and Trumbull, Conn.; and on the 20th of July, 1803, was installed Pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Newburyport, where he continued till his death, which occurred in November, 1824. He published an Oration delivered at Newburyport on the Fourth of July, 1809; and Two Discourses delivered at Newburyport on occasion of the National Fast, 1812.

stances; they could scarcely fail to impress and edify the hearers. His manner in the pulpit was peculiar. It had something of patriarchal simplicity; something of apostolic gravity and authority. Yet it was mild, affectionate and persuasive. It indicated a mind absorbed in Heavenly things, deeply conscious of its awful charge, and anxiously intent to fasten eternal truths on the hearts and consciences of men.

As a Pastor, Dr. Morrison was faithful, assiduous and tender; instant in season and out of season; watching for souls as one that must give account; and finding his delight in the discharge of the most laborious and exhausting duties of his office. Little did he spare himself, even in those closing years of life, in which his emaciated form proclaimed the ravages of disease; and infirmity, combined with age, seemed to demand repose. Without exaggeration, it may be said that he was truly the father of his beloved people. He rejoiced in their joys, sympathized in their sorrows, counselled in their perplexities, adapted himself to their infirmities, and, without sacrificing dignity, or independence, or faithfulness, "became all things to all men," that he might promote their spiritual good.

But his cares and labours were by no means confined to his flock. The general interests of Zion, the peace and welfare of churches, near and remote, engaged his feelings, and frequently employed his exertions. In addition to his abundant solitudes and efforts as a member of the Presbytery, he was frequently resorted to, in cases of difficulty, in Congregational Churches. Nor had he any reluctance, when requested, to unite in council with his ministerial brethren of those churches. And few have been so successful in promoting the interests of peace and order. His deep knowledge of human nature, the quickness and accuracy of his perceptions, his sound judgment, his consummate prudence, his unaffected kindness united with energy and independence, were eminently fitted to render him successful in mediating between contending parties, and becalming the agitated spirits of men.

He took an interested and energetic part in the variety of plans and institutions, which were commenced in his day, for disseminating the Scriptures and religious tracts, for extending the knowledge of the Gospel, for educating poor and pious youth, for promoting the power of godliness, and effecting a reformation of manners. Every design connected with the glory of God and the best interests of man, engaged his cordial concurrence, his active patronage, his fervent prayers. He was much animated and delighted with the signs of the times. He considered the multiplied revivals of religion in our country, and the unexampled exertions of Christians on both sides of the Atlantic, to evangelize the heathen, as intelligible and delightful indications of the approach of the promised Millenium.

Dr. Morrison had much of the spirit of genuine and exalted patriotism. Looking abroad on the country which he had made his own, he cherished the delightful hope that its institutions were destined, not only to conduct to exalted happiness its own inhabitants, but to elevate and bless the world. In an Election Sermon delivered by him before the Legislature and principal officers of the State, he manifested how pure and enlarged were his views of the nature of civil government and of its ultimate design. He watched with untiring and anxious assiduity the course of things in the Federal and State Departments, and gave his most cordial approbation to the measures of wise and disinterested rulers. The character and course of Washington early secured his entire confidence; nor was it ever withdrawn from the public men who followed in his path.

In the private walks of life, Dr. Morrison exhibited a character consistent and uniform, estimable and lovely. His piety was strict without austerity, and fervent without enthusiasm. If there was a trait in his character conspicuous above the rest, it was benevolence—a benevolence which prompted him to unwearied

and self denying exertions in promoting the real happiness of his fellow creatures; which inspired candour for their failings, and compassion for their distresses; which could forgive the injurious, and overcome evil with good. It is scarcely needful to add that in the social and domestic relations he was signally exemplary and amiable; that he was a most affectionate husband, a most tender father, and a most faithful friend.

Such are my impressions of the venerable father of whom you have asked me to give you some account.

Very sincerely and affectionately yours,
DANIEL DANA.

WILLIAM McWHIR, D. D.*

1782—1851.

WILLIAM McWHIR was the son of James and Jean (Gibson) McWhir, and was born in the parish of Moneyrea, and County of Down, Ireland, on the 9th of September, 1759. His father was a farmer in comfortable circumstances, and both his parents were exemplary professors of religion. In his early childhood, he lost the sight of one eye, and came very near losing his life, by means of the small-pox. His father and grandfather had both been elders in the Presbyterian Church; and his parents were desirous that one of their children should be a minister; and contrary, as it would seem, to his own better judgment, they conferred the honour upon *him*. After having, for some time, attended a school in the neighbourhood of his father's residence, he was transferred to another school, of a higher order, in Belfast, to be prepared for College. Here he was brought into intimate relations, for some time, with an unprincipled and profligate young man, whose influence upon him, temporarily at least, was very disadvantageous. He remained at this school until 1778, when he was sent to the University of Glasgow, being then about nineteen years of age. Here he passed three sessions, which was the period prescribed to their candidates, by the Synod of Ulster. It does not appear that, even at this time, his mind was at all awake to a sense of Christian obligation, notwithstanding he had made a profession of religion, and his studies were directed with particular reference to the ministry.

Immediately after leaving the University, he put himself under the care of the Presbytery of Killlileagh, in the County of Down, and having gone through with his trials and examinations, was licensed to preach the Gospel on the 24th of December, 1782. He was ordained by the same Presbytery on the 25th of September, 1783.

Having, from the age of about twelve years, been deeply interested in America, by reading Carver's Travels, he early formed a purpose, with the consent of his father, (his mother was now dead,) to find a home on this side the water. Accordingly, immediately after his ordination, he sailed from Belfast for Philadelphia, where, on his arrival, he received from various distinguished individuals a cordial welcome to the country. After a

* MS. Autobiography.—MS. from Edward J. Harden, Esq.