

Nineteenth Century Southern Presbyterians: Some Theological and Pastoral Distinctives

By C. N. Willborn

Back in the twentieth century, Martyn Lloyd Jones gave a series of addresses before the faculty and students at Westminster Theological Seminary. Those addresses were subsequently published as *Preaching and Preachers*. In that work Lloyd Jones said concerning an eighteenth century American, Samuel Davies, “You Americans do not know one of your greatest preachers.” For an assorted number of reasons that was true then. Equally true today is the ignorance concerning any number of fathers of the faith. Included would be a host of nineteenth century stalwarts for the faith. One of the reasons for the lack of knowledge concerning a certain sector of that century’s faithful has to do with racism. Recognizing this truth, the faculty of the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary invited the present author to address both the theological and pastoral contributions of “the Southern Presbyterians” for their fall theological lectures in 2019. These were delivered in two lectures. The content is offered here in hopes of edifying the entire church as we rediscover men who are too often and too long neglected. It has been said that Lloyd Jones’s statement about Samuel Davies sparked renewed interest in the eighteenth century figure and lead to a republication of his sermons and subsequent articles and monographs on his life. Perhaps this modest survey of a few nineteenth century servants of Christ will bring these men into our everyday vocabulary for the building up of the church.

By necessity we must limit our attention to some of the leading representatives of the nineteenth century in the southern United States. Included are names of the stature of Charles Hodge and B. B. Warfield in the northern sector—James Henley Thornwell, John Lafayette Girardeau, and Robert Lewis Dabney. Of Dabney it was said, by Warfield no less, that he was one of the greatest teachers of theology in the United States. No small claim. The Scottish philosopher, Sir William

Hamilton, had similar thoughts concerning James Henley Thornwell and his contributions to theology and moral philosophy. John L. Girardeau, in addition to being a philosophical theologian of renown, was known as “the Spurgeon of America,” for his preaching prowess.

These men were lovers of truth, defenders of truth, and practitioners of the truth they mined from God’s Word and from the generations of men who walked before them. In this cursory treatment of their theological and pastoral contributions, it is the desire of the author to help us move beyond petty dismissals of men who sinned and benefit from sinners saved by God’s grace. To that end, we begin with the man reckoned as the greatest of the Southern Divines, by most estimates, James Henley Thornwell and his theological emphases and distinctives.

Southern Presbyterian Theological Distinctives

JAMES HENLEY THORNWELL (1812–62)

Thornwell was born into a poor family in the Pee Dee region of South Carolina. His father died when he was quite young and his mother assumed all responsibilities to rear her children. In the case of James, two local men of means came along side Mrs. Thornwell to aid her in his education, even providing him a scholarship to attend the South Carolina College (now University of South Carolina). He proved the ever-precocious child

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and completed his work, which originally pointed toward the legal profession. However, at some point he decided he was not so interested in law as in the metaphysical. As college concluded another change of heart and mind came when, overnight, he read through the Westminster Confession of Faith and the proof texts. He subsequently confessed his faith in Christ Jesus and set out in pursuit of the ministry of the gospel. After an aborted enrollment at Harvard (he found them less than impressive academically and lacking in Christian virtue) and a brief time at Andover Seminary, he returned to study with the men at Columbia Seminary. Ordained as a young man he pastored two rural churches in his home district of Lancaster County before returning to the College as a professor. He would spend the bulk of his adult life serving the state and the church in academic education at both the college and the seminary.

His adult life of labors was spent in the pursuit of and dissemination of truth. Like the early Reformers, he was an *ad fontes* man. The fount or spring from which all truth flows he determined was the Scriptures. He was eminently a biblical theologian. His biblical and theological convictions led him to certain theological emphases, which in his day were controversial. While controversial, I would submit they were all positive or constructive in their design. We shall consider four general headings—*jure Divino* Presbyterianism, the spiritual independence of the church, a biblical theological approach to ecclesiology, and inerrancy of the Scriptures.

We begin with *jure Divino* Presbyterianism. In a previous article in this journal,¹ we have addressed ecclesiological matters such as the use of boards to handle church affairs, the parity of eldership, and the likes.

1. To consider the theological controversies and contributions of the man see C. N. Willborn, "Hodge and Thornwell: Princes in Israel," *The Confessional Presbyterian* 8 (2012): 44–54; and C. N. Willborn, "James Henley Thornwell: An American Theologian," *The Confessional Presbyterian* 9 (2013): 5–20.

2. John L. Girardeau, "The Discretionary Power of the Church," in *Sermons*, ed. George Blackburn (1916; repr., Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, n.d.).

3. Also see Alan Strange, *The Doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church in the Ecclesiology of Charles Hodge* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2017).

4. Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 1, which elaborates the reformed view of the Bible, gives helpful insights to Thornwell's viewpoint.

5. Minutes of the General Assembly of the PCCSA (1861), pp. 51–60. The text of the "Address" is also available in *A Digest of the Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States* (Atlanta GA: Office of the General Assembly, 1966), 26–35; and *The Distinctive Principles of the Presbyterian Church in the United States*, 3rd ed. (Richmond, VA: PCP, n.d.).

Thornwell believed strongly that God gave His precious church, the Bride of His dear Son, clear instruction on how she is to be governed. In plain English, this means that the Bible sets forth a representative or Presbyterian form of church governance. The rationale is this simple: If Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her (Eph 5:25), if the Father loved those whom He justified, and adopted them into the household of faith, then surely He would not leave those chosen, regenerate, justified and adopted children to "figure it out on their own." He loved the church so much He provided all she needed to glorify and enjoy Him as the church. This is a topic over which Thornwell and Charles Hodge disagreed at various levels. For Hodge there was more discretionary power given the church than was allowable for the Southern metaphysical theologian. A representative expression of Thornwell's view can be seen in his junior and successor theologian in the Columbia Seminary, John L. Girardeau.² For Hodge's viewpoint see his *Church Polity*.³

Thornwell believed that Presbyterianism was given by divine law. It was established in the Bible explicitly, by example, and by good and necessary consequences.⁴ The church does not have to go outside the Bible to know how to organize her order, governance, worship, or mission work. To do so would deny the very sufficiency of Scripture, according to Thornwell.

Directly associated with this topic is another distinctive of Thornwell, which is referred to as the spirituality doctrine of the church. It was Thornwell's firm conviction that the Scriptures gave the church her marching orders—go make disciples, baptizing, and teaching all that is commanded (Matt. 28: 19, 20). She was not to wield the sword. She was not a legislative body. The sword and national legislating was given solely to the civil magistrate. The doctrine is succinctly set forth in a statement penned by Thornwell and adopted by the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church CSA (1861):

The power of the church is exclusively spiritual; that of the state includes the exercise of force. The constitution of the church is a divine revelation; the constitution of the state must be determined by human reason and the course of providential events. The church has no right to construct or modify a government for the state, and the state has no right to frame a creed or polity for the church. They are as planets moving in different orbits, and unless each is confined to its own track, the consequences may be as disastrous in the moral world as collision of different spheres in the world of matter.⁵

Thornwell would apply this definition to the corporate work of the church so as to disabuse churches from entering into political rhetoric, legislative peddling, and social trend setting or, more often, following the cultural hot topics. In other words, where it is perfectly fine for individual Christians to be involved in civil politics, labor for legislation that is morally good for society, and actively engage the social sphere of the world in which they live, it is not the place for the pulpit.⁶ The church corporate is about ministerial and declarative powers alone that are aimed at gathering the elect through evangelism and edifying the gathered saints through the teaching and preaching ministry of the church.

Briefly, we draw your attention to two final distinctives of Thornwell and his theology. His was preeminently a Biblical-theological approach to ecclesiology. He was keen to draw his theology and practice from the Bible alone. So when he studied the biblical qualifications for bishops in 1 Timothy 3:1–7, he concluded there was one set of qualifications for elders. The elder is also called pastor and overseer (1 Peter 5:1–5 and Acts 20:17–28). He found the three terms—pastor, bishop/overseer, and elder—to be synonyms, not distinct offices. Therefore, he concluded the age-old practice, even within his own communion, to be misleading. Rather than drawing a hard line between pastors and elders, he saw the two as one. One office with distinct emphases.

His biblical theological commitment also led him to establish a complementary view of the offices of elder and deacon. The eldership is given the keys of the kingdom and the deacon the purse of the church. To confuse or commingle the two injures and hinders the church. It should be noted as well that Thornwell supported the use of deacons in the missionary enterprise, not limiting them to the jurisdiction of the local church. Rather he saw them as instrumental at all levels of the church courts—local, presbytery, and general assembly—as they exercised their role over fiscal and physical matters of the church. To put elders of either class—ruling or teaching—in charge of fiscal and physical concerns of the church was to take them from their natural and ordained ministry of prayer and word. To do so is to confuse “the purse and the keys.”⁷

As just introduced, Thornwell was careful to exalt *Scripture* over reason and tradition. This drove his writings on the offices of the church—elder and deacon—but also his polemic against Rome and Romish superstitions. For instance, he was a participant in a not too uncommon ecclesiastical exercise of the nineteenth century and that concerned debating Roman Catholicism. Was Rome a true church? What about

her many sacraments, which included a baptismal rite? What about the very nature of Scripture? In all this we see the first-generation Reformation and the Scottish Reformation’s influence upon Thornwell. The *Confessio Scoticana* or *Scots Confession* of 1560 states well his position, a position he argued against Hodge and others:

Two things are necessary for the right administration of the sacraments. The first is that they should be ministered by lawful ministers, and we declare that these are men appointed to preach the Word, unto whom God has given the power to preach the gospel, and who are lawfully called by some Kirk. The second is that they should be ministered in the elements and manner which God has appointed. Otherwise they cease to be the sacraments of Christ Jesus. This is why we abandon the teaching of the Roman Church and withdraw from its sacraments; firstly, because their ministers are not true ministers of Christ Jesus (indeed they even allow women, whom the Holy Ghost will not permit to preach in the congregation to baptize) and, secondly, because they have so adulterated both the sacraments with their own additions that no part of Christ’s original act remains in its original simplicity (*Scots Confession* Chapter 22).⁸

[1871?]), 5–23; and James Henley Thornwell, *The Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell*, ed. J.B. Adger and John L. Girardeau (1875; repr., Edinburg: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 4:449.

6. A not so careful reading and understanding of public addresses by Thornwell, B. M. Palmer and others has led some to claim that these men did not maintain this viewpoint of the church and the ministerial work, which is only ministerial and declarative. See Christopher Cooper, “Binding Bodies and Liberating Souls: James Henley Thornwell’s Vision for a Spiritual Church and a Christian Confederacy,” *The Confessional Presbyterian* 9 (2013).

7. Thornwell, *Collected Writings*, 4:155.

8. The words are James Bulloch’s modern English rendering (*The Scots Confession 1560*, ed. G. D. Henderson [1960], p. 76); cf. *John Knox’s History of the Reformation in Scotland*, ed. William Croft Dickson, 2 vols (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 2:269–270. It should be noted that five years later, the general assembly that year had to deal with the question of rebaptism. When the young, who had been baptized by a priest prior to 1560, were examined for partaking of the Lord’s supper, and they had learned to and did actually reject the Roman Catholic teaching on the sacraments, baptism was not to be re-administered, “for no papists ministers baptism without water, and some form of words, which are the principals of the external sign. We ourselves were baptized by papists whose corruptions and abuses now we damn, cleaving only to the simple ordinance of Jesus Christ, and to the virtue of the Holy Spirit, which makes baptism to work in us the proper effects thereof, without any reiteration of the external sign” (spelling updated, *The Book of the Universall Kirk of Scotland*, ed. Alexander Peterkin [Edinburgh, 1839], p. 75). This may remove somewhat the discontinuity that is sometimes posited between the

Thornwell wrote extensively showing how Rome denied and denigrated the Holy Scriptures. His premise at every point was “what does the Scriptures say?” Because Rome added to and took away from the Bible, she had no sufficient Word, she was given to elevating their tradition. Perhaps worse than anything, they elevated fallen human reason to a place of authority. Once reason and/or tradition takes authoritative status, of any degree, Scriptures are not perspicuous, not sufficient, and certainly not perfect. Thornwell’s arguments against Rome’s view of authority continue sound to this day for they are based on the necessity, authority, perspicacity, and sufficiency of the holy Scriptures.

Finally, and while it is not unique to Thornwell, we should note that Thornwell was thoroughly Calvinian. In his collected works you will find an extensive outline and analysis of Calvin’s *Institutes*.⁹ This will distinguish the old Columbia Seminary theology from both Princeton and Union in Virginia where R L Dabney reigned for many years. In the cases of both Hodge and Dabney, Francis Turretin’s *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* dominated.

JOHN LAFAYETTE GIRARDEAU (1825–98)

Like Thornwell, Girardeau was a son of South Carolina. Named for his father and the Marquis de Lafayette, and being of French Huguenot descent, Girardeau was a thorough going Scottish Presbyterian. His publications included a defense of the Reformed practice of “no instrumentation” in corporate worship. While by

first Scottish Reformers and their later theologians who defended the validity of Rome’s baptism in their disputes with the Separatists.

9. *Collected Writings*, 1:597–650.

10. For a recent reconsideration of this topic see Oliver Crisp, “John Girardeau: Libertarian Calvinist?”, *Journal of Reformed Theology* 8 (2014): 284–300 and “Libertarian Calvinism,” in *Deviant Calvinism* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 71–96.

11. William Cunningham, *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation* (1862; repr. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1989), 483 and Richard Muller, “Jonathan Edwards and the Absence of Free Choice: A Parting of the Ways in the Reformed Tradition” *Jonathan Edwards Studies* 1, no. 1 (2011), <http://jestudies.yale.edu/index.php/journal/article/view/63>. The abstract to this latter article says: “Jonathan Edwards, frequently identified in modern discussions of his thought as the “greatest American theologian” and often regarded as an epitome of Calvinism for his teaching on the freedom of will, was, in his own time and for a century after his death, a much-debated thinker whose views had a polarizing effect in Reformed circles. Scholars have examined the reception of his ideas in America and have noted a rather pointed opposition both in New England and in the American South. The reception of Edwards’ thought in Britain, however, has received far less attention, even though it offers a rather significant perspective on Edwards’ place in the Reformed tradition.”

his time this case was widely dismissed for instrumentation, even among American Presbyterians, he did garner considerable support from a number of hefty hitters like R L Dabney. Another of his books that garnered no little debate was his treatment of philosophical necessitarianism, particularly as branded by Jonathan Edwards. It was Girardeau’s thesis that the Standards of the church were committed to what is known as a libertarian view of the fall of mankind.¹⁰ For instance, the WCF reads: “Our first parents, being seduced by the subtilty and temptation of Satan, sinned, in eating the forbidden fruit. This their sin, God was pleased, according to his wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to his own glory” (6.1). The Larger Catechism likewise reads: “Our first parents being left to the freedom of their own will, through the temptation of Satan, transgressed the commandment of God in eating the forbidden fruit; and thereby fell from the estate of innocence wherein they were created” (WLC 21). And, as you might imagine, Girardeau argues for support on this point from Calvin. Additionally it is worth noting that a contemporary of Girardeau was the Scottish don, William Cunningham. He brought forth the same case, while admitting like Girardeau that a philosophical necessitarianism was arguable. Of note, the Scotsman said: “1st, there is nothing in the Calvinistic system of theology, or in the Westminster Confession of Faith, which *precludes* men from holding the doctrine of philosophical necessity. 2d, There is nothing in the Calvinistic system of theology, or in the Westminster Confession, which *requires* men to hold the doctrine of philosophical necessity.”¹¹

Cunningham believed, however, the case more proper for Biblical scholarship was the will in its theological relations. Girardeau took this angle and gave his book of 485 pages a title which expressed Cunningham’s sentiment, *The Will in its Theological Relations* (1891). One of Girardeau’s arguments centers on the covenant of works. Namely, was the probationary offer of life for perfect obedience a genuine, *bona fide* offer on God’s part? If so, then Edward’s necessitarian view was defeated. That, of course, was his position.

While on the topic of covenant and covenant theology, I’ll mention another of Girardeau contribution. He was in the line of Thomas Boston, John Brown of Haddington, and John Dick when he held the covenant of redemption as distinguished from the covenant of grace to be superfluous, to use Turretin’s conclusion. Rather than bifurcating the two, he held with his forerunners that the covenant of grace is an eternal covenant that God then expressed in successive *berith*-makings (to

anticipate Vos) in history,¹² thus, keeping the decree between God the Father and Son connected to the elect from eternity through time and space. In Girardeau's words: "It is one and the same covenant. Which, regarded in relation to the means employed and the end contemplated, is denominated the covenant of redemption, that is emphatically designated the covenant of grace when conceived in reference to its source, and to its unmerited application to sinners as the recipients of its benefits. It is peculiarly a covenant of grace to them, since its legal condition was fulfilled, not by themselves, but by another for them, guilty and corrupt."¹³ He develops his argument in *The Federal Theology: Its Import and its Regulative Influence* (1881) and again in *Calvinism and Evangelical Arminianism* (1890). Once again, Girardeau found his position to be that of Westminster as expressed for example in WLC 31: "With whom was the covenant of grace made? The covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him with all the elect as his seed."

Girardeau's commitment to covenant theology is notable in that he was, like his fellow southern Presbyterians, an international Calvinist. I have said already he was a devotee to the Scottish brand of Presbyterianism by conviction, but he was not parochial. This is seen in the opening paragraph of *The Federal Theology* when he laments a decline of interest in covenant theology.

The theologians of the Dutch School, in their massive works, subjected it to a full, if not exhaustive, consideration; and their example was followed by some of the most illustrious divines of England and Scotland. And while Cunningham, Hodge, and our own Thornwell have trodden in their footsteps, and evinced in their discussions their sense of the importance of the federal system—a fact for which the present generation Calvinists should be devoutly thankful—it is to be feared that indications are beginning to manifest themselves of a growing tendency towards a departure from this type of theology" (*The Federal Theology*, 15, 16).

Notice first that he tips his hat to the Dutch School. That would be a reference to the seventeenth century leaders such as Wilhemus à Brakel, Johannes Cocceius, Gisbertus Voetius, and Hermann Witsius. Second, notice that he is concerned that even among Calvinists, and here he is mainly speaking of Presbyterians, there is a decline in interest. Thus, the title of his work, *The Federal Theology: Its Import and Its Regulative Influence*. Finally, Girardeau connects the dots for us between theology and preaching. If covenant/federal theology

is lost or not properly understood and applied, preaching will also suffer.

And as surely as the pulpit drifts away from [covenant theology], will it more and more cast its instructions in the mould of a wretched legalism; or losing the influence of this pervading genius of theological truth, and so lapsing from any thoroughgoing inculcation of doctrine, it will more and more neglect its heavenly call to be an instructor of Christ's people, and sink its high didactic office into that of a vapid and sensational haranguer (16).

Anyone who has read late nineteenth century sermons, but particularly early twentieth century products from Presbyterians in the United States, will recognize that Girardeau was rather prophetic. Indeed, our churches still suffer from a lack of proper doctrinal preaching. The result is too often "wretched legalism" and more often "vapid and sensational" harangue.

Another aspect of covenant theology is, of course, ecclesiology, and under this *loci* Girardeau developed a robust doctrine of the diaconate. Whereas Thornwell had done large work concerning the office of elder, Girardeau supplemented the Columbia ecclesiology with his writings on the office of deacon. Girardeau was working in the current of Thomas Chalmers' diaconal renaissance in the Church of Scotland and subsequently the Free Church of Scotland. His elder churchman and pastor as a college lad, Thomas Smyth, had reintroduced the deacon to a Presbyterian church that had largely obscured the office with a heavily ministerial/elder influence. Girardeau's contemporary and fellow scion of South Carolina, Thomas Peck, also wrote an excellent article on the office (see *Notes on Ecclesiology*). Numerous other Southerners, not the least being James Ramsey¹⁴ of Virginia, devoted much ink to the office

12. For a thorough treatment of the Southern Presbyterians use of biblical theology before the age of Vos, see C. N. Willborn, "Biblical Theology in Southern Presbyterianism," in *The Hope Fulfilled*, ed. Robert Penny (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008).

13. John L. Girardeau, *The Federal Theology: Its Import and its Regulative Influence* (1881; reprinted Greenville, SC: A Press, 1994), 17, 18. This was originally delivered as a address for the 50th anniversary of Columbia Seminary being in Columbia (it was begun in Georgia in 1828) and the 50th anniversary of George Howe's professorship at the same institution. You may find the original in Memorial Volume of the Semi-Centennial of the Theological Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina (Columbia, SC: Presbyterian Publishing House, 1884), 96–130.

14. See James Ramsey, The Deaconship, *The Southern Presbyterian Review* 12 (April 1859): 1–24. Cf. <http://www.pcahistory.org/HCLibrary/periodicals/spr/v12/12-1-1.pdf> [accessed October 31, 2019].

and its duties. None, however offered more insight than Girardeau in his 200 pages of articles in *The Southern Presbyterian Review*.¹⁵ If one wishes to see a working statement of his contribution, one only has to consider chapter 9 of the Presbyterian Church in America Book of Church Order. A practical consideration of the office will be seen below when we present Girardeau's pastoral contributions.

One final aspect of Girardeau's theology was developed from a thread found in James Thornwell's work, and that is a beautiful treatment of the doctrine of adoption.¹⁶ At the same time he was writing on the "apex of the gospel" (ala Professor John Murray), the topic was also a point of broad interest among our Scottish brethren. Namely, James Smith Candlish and Thomas Crawford were laboring to great lengths on the doctrine of the fatherhood of God and included therein the doctrine of adoption. To summarize, Crawford's contention was that Adam was created as a servant and son of God. Like Adam's righteousness/justified state, adoption was his created status, yet defectible, contingent on the covenant of works. Had Adam obeyed God (for however long the probation was set by God in eternity), he would have been confirmed indefectibly in his righteousness and sonship. Crawford displayed then the parallel we have in the second creation or new creation or regeneration where God declares believers just and adopted indefectibly. Furthermore, while we are both just and adopted, on the ground of Christ Jesus's work, we are forever servants of God. That is, we are *simul servus et filius* just as the first Adam in his created, prelapsarian condition.

As you can see thus far, there are some wonderful doctrinal treats hidden away in these men. Treats worthy of mining and enjoying. To this end we commend one last theologian from this period and geographical region and that is Robert Lewis Dabney.

ROBERT LEWIS DABNEY (1820–98)

As staunch a Carolinian as was Girardeau, Dabney was equally or more so a Virginian. A Presbyterian son, he

would serve the church as a pastor before settling into a lengthy and esteemed academic career. Teaching for many years as church historian and then as systematic theologian at Union Seminary in Virginia before moving to Austin, Texas, where he was on the founding faculty of the University of Texas, Dabney was a widely respected theologian and philosopher.

One of the most significant theological influences upon Dabney was the Swiss-Italian Reformed Scholastic, Francis Turretin (1623–87). Those familiar with his theology lectures will recognize Turretin's influence, but also that of George Hill of St Andrews and John Dick of the United Secession Church. Throughout his theological lectures he referenced vast numbers of past scholars as well as his contemporaries like James Thornwell and Charles Hodge.

Dabney was no blind follower of any man, however, for it was often the case that he took umbrage to positions held by highly revered men. Charles Hodge and Jonathan Edwards, Sr. were among those with whom he disagreed on various issues. Examples include Edwards's view of man's ability. Suffice it to say, Dabney thought Edwards gave fallen man too much credit. Like Archibald Alexander and Hodge, Dabney criticized Edwards' view of virtue and natural ability and believed it opened the door to the positivist school of the nineteenth century and the revivalism that so burdened the land. With the Hodges (Charles and A. A.) he criticized the mediate imputation of Adam's guilt and corruption which Edwards held. This view is "that we are condemned with Adam only mediately through, and in consequence of, our having, by natural generation, corrupt natures like his."¹⁷ More often we will find Reformed theologians upholding the immediate imputation of Adam's guilt and corruption. Thus, without reference to our own actions, we are condemned. Therefore, "every human soul is born into the world under forfeiture resulting from our just legal responsibility for Adam's action as our federal head and representative" (Hodge, 110).

A notable point where Dabney followed both his contemporary Charles Hodge and Turretin was on the doctrine of adoption. Here he demurred from the position of a host of scholarship, including John Calvin, William Ames, John Owen, Thomas Boston, and contemporaries like Breckinridge, Thornwell, and Girardeau. His position was simple: adoption is part of the legal act of God which justifies a sinner. Justification is "both a pardon and an adoption."¹⁸ Westminster Confession of Faith 12 presents Adoption as a second, albeit concurrent, legal act of God and, thus, a *loci* distinct from

15. For an exemplary and helpful article from this series see John L. Girardeau, "The Importance of the Office of Deacon," *The Southern Presbyterian Review* 32 (January 1881): 1–29. Cf. [http://www.pcchistory.org/HCLibrary/periodicals/\\$pr/v32/32-1-1.pdf](http://www.pcchistory.org/HCLibrary/periodicals/$pr/v32/32-1-1.pdf) [accessed October 31, 2019].

16. See John L. Girardeau, *Discussions of Theological Questions* (1905; repr., Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1986).

17. A.A. Hodge, *The Atonement* (reprint; Memphis, TN: Footstool Publications, 1987), 109.

18. Robert L. Dabney, *Systematic Theology* [hereafter ST] (1871; rpt. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1985), 627.

Justification. Despite Dabney's dismissive air toward the doctrine, the nineteenth century saw much published on the doctrine and so a development of the biblical theological importance of it for the Christian life. Examples would be those mentioned above in Scotland, James Candlish and Thomas Crawford, and Girardeau in the States. Additional contributions came from R. J. Breckinridge, uncle to B. B. Warfield, and the Scots-Irish Presbyterian, Thomas Houston.

One other doctrinal area in which Dabney is known is his position on Adam's sin and how it was communicated to his progeny. B. B. Warfield termed Dabney's view as the "agnostic" view. Dabney set forth his view in articles which challenged Charles Hodge's *Romans* commentary on Romans 5. Dabney's position is that the "guilt (obligation to punishment) of his first sin" alone was imputed to his progeny. On the subject of corruption that followed Adam's first sin, Dabney believes we cannot say. Thus, the "agnostic" accusation or label. We don't know if Adam's corruption was imputed, but we do know his guilt was. This flows from Dabney's demurring at a radical denial of mediate imputation in favor of a solely immediate imputation. Guilt and corruption are ours by virtue, says Dabney, of both a "natural and federal union with their fallen head" (Dabney, 344).¹⁹

Finally, we would present four areas where Dabney continues to have abiding relevance for the church. Certainly one could argue for more than four, but these appear to be of critical and abiding weight.

First, we shall simply state his incisive views into economics and education. In Dabney we find a renaissance man in the purest sense of the word. He was an architect and builder. His handiwork can be seen in a number of buildings standing today.²⁰ But particularly we see his breadth of knowledge displayed in his writings on economics, education, philosophy, and theology. He was greatly distressed about industrialization at the expense of agriculture. Further, he remonstrated against the leveling effect in education. That is, governmental provision of a lowest-common-denominator education for scholars concerned him. His prophetic voice resounds today, though he be dead.

Second, briefly consider his view of worship. The influence of revivalism was inordinate in his day and continues to wield disproportionate influence today. The question of "for whom is worship designed" is always a critical consideration. For Dabney the answer was God. God is the audience. Yes, worshipers receive blessings from God from and through the act of worship, but God is the only proper object of one's worship. Therefore, the church is behooved to submit to the

instruction of God when it comes to worship. Dabney was a careful adherent to the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 21. It is God's prerogative as to the elements of worship. Thus, worship is regulated by God alone. Personal preferences must be acknowledged and checked. God's preferences are to be acknowledged and followed. God's word as the sole guide to our worship and as it is preached were priorities for Dabney—a lesson for the church today.²¹

A third area of relevance relates to doctrinal fidelity. In 1897 Dabney delivered an address which was published as "The Doctrinal Contents of the Westminster Confession of Faith."²² He believed a confession could be had for the church because of the very nature of Scripture. Because the Scripture is perspicuous and sufficient for doctrine and life, it is then capable of composition and distribution. Indeed, it is by nature a communication from God to man. A confession is nothing more than the Bible in summary fashion. Because the Confession of Faith is a statement of what the Bible teaches, it is then trustworthy. This truth is essential if we are to be able to live in peace with one another and make progress toward uniformity in the worship and work of the church of the living God—another lesson for the church today.

The final emphasis of Dabney's theology which serves the church well in every generation, concerns the doctrine of sanctification. The church always struggles with "the Christian life." There is the tension between antinomianism and legalism. To put it another way, is there a role for the law of God in our daily growth in grace? Another way to ask that same question is do you believe in good works and perseverance of the saints? Today the trend is to fear the words "good works" and "perseverance." Both suggest something we are required to do. So, in our effeminate church age, we prefer to settle for "grace" and "preservation" rather than a grace that saves and perseveres in and through the redeemed. The word law is lumped in with works and perseverance, and

19. For an extended treatment see Robert L. Dabney, *Discussions* (1891; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), 1:143–68. Also, see George Hutchinson, *The Problem of Original Sin in American Presbyterian Theology* (1972; repr., Toccoa Falls, GA: Sola Fide, 2014).

20. Examples include Tinkling Spring Presbyterian Church in Fishersville, Virginia and the College Church on the campus of Hampden-Sydney University, Farmville, Virginia.

21. For a number of articles that relate to worship see *Discussions* by Robert L. Dabney, vol. 5, ed. J.H. Varner (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1999).

22. *Ibid.*, 119–42. This address was presented to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States in 1897, in commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the Westminster Assembly.

for some the minute one mentions law, then the determination is made that one is no longer a proponent of grace. Our doctrinal standards on this state: "Although they that are regenerate, and believe in Christ, be delivered from the moral law as a covenant of works, so as thereby they are neither justified nor condemned; yet, besides the general uses thereof common to them with all men, it is of special use, to show them how much they are bound to Christ for his fulfilling it, and enduring the curse thereof in their stead, and for their good; and thereby to provoke them to more thankfulness, and to express the same in their greater care to conform themselves thereunto as the rule of their obedience" (WLC 97, emphasis added). Our Lord Jesus was more straightforward when he said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (Jn 14:15).

Dabney held clearly that the Christian was bound by love to the holy standard, which is set forth in the law of God. This law Paul called "holy and righteous and good" (Rom 7:12). Perhaps Dabney's teaching can best be summarized in theological terms by his friend and master theologian James Henley Thornwell, when the South Carolinian wrote:

Those who deny that the law of God is the measure of duty, or that personal holiness should be sought by Christians, are those alone who can properly be charged with Antinomian principles.... The natural vibration of the mind is from the extreme of legalism to that of licentiousness, and nothing but the grace of God can fix it in the proper medium of Divine truth. The Gospel, like its blessed Master, is always crucified between two thieves—legalists of all sorts on the one hand and Antinomians on the other; the former [legalists] robbing the Saviour of the glory of his work *for us*, and the other [antinomians] robbing him of the glory of his work *within us*.²³

Dabney was no perfect man. He became embittered after the War and this led him to incorrect judgments. He was wrongheaded, for example, concerning the general incompetency of black men for service in Christ's church. Nevertheless, he and others of his generation deserve our attention for they loved a forgiving God,

23. James Henley Thornwell, "Antinomianism," in *The Collected Writings of JHT* (1871; rpt. Edinburg: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1986), 2:383, 385. This article appeared as an appendix to a republication of Robert Traill's *Vindication* which Thornwell brought to print in 1840.

24. George Blackburn, ed., *The Life Work of John L. Girardeau* (Columbia, SC: The State Company, 1916), 368.

they trusted a conquering King, and they walked in large measure with the Spirit of holiness. The effects of this conversion are seen in a tender scene just shortly before Dabney entered his heavenly rest. It occurred in Columbia, South Carolina late in 1897. George Blackburn recorded this beautiful story for our blessings. I recount it for the strengthening of Christ's church today.

When, therefore, Dr. Dabney, himself afflicted with blindness, heard of the partial paralysis of his friend [Dr. Girardeau], he came to Columbia to visit him. Their communion was sweet and in a measure the spirit of other days seemed to come back on them. On Sunday, Dr. Dabney preached to the large congregation ... on the power of love. The sermon was one of extraordinary power, and when he came in his discourse to the love of Jesus for his aged servants many in the congregation were weeping. Dr. Girardeau himself was deeply moved, while the hearty congregational singing, unaccompanied by any instrument of music, seemed to greatly affect Dr. Dabney. When the service was over the two men came down the aisle together; they were men of imposing presence, each like the son of a king; their faces showed the influence of chastening grace; their foreheads betokened the mighty intellects behind them; venerable men! dignity, goodness, and greatness sat with ease and naturalness upon them. Dr. Girardeau said: "Doctor, that was a glorious sermon this morning." Dr. Dabney replied, "This has been a sweet service to me, and the singing carries me back to old Tinkling Spring." Dr. Girardeau said: "But what will it be in heaven?" The answer of Dr. Dabney was lost in the trampling of the congregation. And so blind, and lame these princes of Israel walked on, talking of the past and future worship of God. A few months after this meeting they both joined the general assembly and church of the first born in the majestic worship of their God and Saviour.²⁴

Southern Presbyterian Pastoral Distinctions

Having concluded our survey of some of the theological emphases and distinctives of the major Southern theologians in the nineteenth century, let us turn our attention briefly to their Pastoral Contributions. The nineteenth century saw no small amount of effort devoted to the doctrine of the church and the attending pastoral labors for the bride of Christ. In Scotland we had both major and popular works on the church by men such as James Bannerman, Douglas Bannerman,

and William Cunningham.²⁵ Here in the United States a number of works flowed from the pens of Presbyterian scholars.²⁶ Alongside these general works on ecclesiology came a number of works related to the pastor and his labors in the church. Authors would include such notables as Thomas Murphy, William Swan Plumer, and W. G. T. Shedd in the United States and Patrick Fairbairn in Scotland. Aside from these monographs a plethora of men wrote in journals for the church and academy.

We could follow the writings of a recognized Southern pastor and professor at two institutions, William Plumer, and find plenty that reflected the actual work of countless ministers in the United States, including the southern portion of our country. However, in this paper we shall simply provide a pastoral theology from the life of one notable Southerner, John L. Girardeau. You are familiar with Girardeau from our above reflections on his theological contributions. In addition to tracing his pastoral, I will intersperse other contributions from his regional contemporaries.

First, his pastoral ministry spanned almost three decades. His pastorates were both rural and urban. His congregations were integrated, with a large number of the memberships of each of his churches being slaves from the low country of South Carolina. His move into Charleston in 1855 brought him to a mission work directed to the slaves of Charleston. He was preaching weekly to crowds of 500 plus on Anson Street. In 1859 a new building was built which seated 1,500. He preached to packed houses twice each Lord's day. By the way, the new building was located on Calhoun Street near Meeting Street. That was then and is now a most prominent location in the Holy City, as it was and is called today. He would remain the pastor of Zion Presbyterian Church until 1875, when federal and societal pressures brought about organic separation and segregation of the black and white memberships in the Presbyterian Church United States (The Southern Presbyterian Church).

Second, Girardeau put together a thorough going handbook for pastoral labors, which involved elders, deacons, and the overseers. The overseers were black men, members of the church, who were given responsibility caring for the "classes" to which they were assigned. The "classes" were groups of fifty (50) slave members living in various parts of town. These overseers would give regular reports on the spiritual and physical welfare of their assigned shepherding group. The elders and deacons would then act or delegate as they thought best for the members in need. The principle was taken from Jethro's instruction to Moses (Exod. 18) and Jesus's directive to the disciples to divide the

crowds into groups of fifty and one hundred (Mark 6:40; Luke 9:12ff).²⁷ If one of the flock or a neighbor were found sick, steps were taken to attend to them.

Girardeau was known to the community as well as his elders, deacons and overseers. He was loved by the masses of Charleston. In or around 1860, a young black man of Charleston was invited to attend Zion by one of the older black members. The youngster replied, "But your pastor is white isn't he?" To which the older black man, a slave in the community, responded: "Yas, he face is white, but he heart is black."

To help our present readers to understand how great was the affection between the pastor, a white man, and his flock—made up of both free and enslaved blacks, as well as white members—we insert here a copy of a letter that was mailed to Girardeau upon the conclusion of the Civil War. It was written by men who had formerly been slaves and were of recent free. Their letter was mailed from war-ravaged Charleston to the northeastern part of South Carolina. We have transcribed from the original handwritten letter, maintaining authenticity of the spelling.

Charleston So Ca. July 27, 1865

To Revd. J. L. Gerrerdeau,

Revd Sir & Pastor,

We the undersigned members of Zion Presbyterian Church embrace this opportunity as one among the many good ones we have enjoyed in the past and in doing so you have our best wishshs for you health & that of you loving family, hoping all are enjoying that blessings of good health and realizing that fulfillment of god words [:] those that put their truss in him shall never want. The past relations we have enjoyed together for many years as pastor and people are still in its bud in our every heart therefore we would well come you still as our pastor. Pastor we have been long praying for

25. James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ*, 2 vols (1869), Douglas Bannerman, *The Scriptural Doctrine of the Church* (1887); William Cunningham, *Discussions on Church Principles* (1863).

26. Charles Hodge, *Church Polity* (1878; repr., Seoul, NY: Westminster Publishing House, 2001); John Mason, *Essays on the Church of God* (1832; repr., Taylors, SC: The Presbyterian Press, 2005); Stuart Robinson, *The Church of God* (1858; repr., Willow Grove, PA: The Committee on Christian Education, 2009); Thomas Peck, *Notes on Ecclesiology* (1892; repr., Taylors, SC: Presbyterian Press, 2005).

27. For the practical outworking of this "proportioned" ministry, see C. N. Willborn, "The Gospel Work in the Diaconate: A Ministry Proportioned in Number" *The Confessional Presbyterian Journal* 10 (2014).

peace that we have together prayed for time and again [again]. God in his great mercies have sent it. The war has ended as God would have it. The civilized world will come it and the race of mankind ever rejoice over it. Masters are not very agreeable now at the church as in the past. The Acon [read "Achan" of the OT] is still in the camp striving. If the people would only agree upon forming new relations we have no will to do so until you are heard from. Now in writing our purpose to inform you that your past congregation will be the same in future and till death provide. Past relations with you are considered the same and on your part a compliance to the new order of things set forth by the general government of the United States of America and that of the Presbyterian churches of the same.

Reply is earnestly solicited by those who now would renew these wishes for you will fail.

Yours
 Revd Sir and Pastor
 Messrs. Paul Trescoat
 Wm. Price
 J[ack] Morrison
 A. G. Wend (check membership for spelling)
 H. R. Spencer
 S[amuel] Robertson (Samuel Robinson ?)
 B. Wilkerson
 S. Dawkins
 Thomas Savage
 Wm. Williams

An honest reading of this letter²⁸ confirms the love that existed between these men, as representatives of Zion Presbyterian Church and their pastor. Girardeau would return to them and help them re-establish their church, ordaining several of these very men to the office of elder in 1869. The church would continue to grow until his departure in 1875.

The same sort of reputation was garnered by B. M. Palmer while in New Orleans for forty plus years. During several outbreaks of malaria, Palmer would go house-to-house in New Orleans and visit the houses marked by the black sign in the window. He went all the while believing the disease was communicable. Only

28. A copy of this letter in its original appearance was given to the Avery Research Center of the College of Charleston by this author. Researchers can find it most readily at that institution. See the manuscript collection, Zion-Olivet United Presbyterian Church records, 1854–1991 (bulk 1960–1980) [AMN 1030].

29. Thomas Smyth, *Autobiographical Notes, Letters and Reflections*, Louisa Cheves Stoney, ed. (Charleston, SC: Walker, Evans, Cogswell Company, 1914), 198.

later would we learn it was not a communicable disease. Because of this self-sacrificial pastoral labor, he would earn the respect of the citizens of New Orleans and the state of Louisiana.

Mercy ministry was not the lone area where these men spent no little efforts. This brings us back to considering Dr. Girardeau and his labors on behalf of the soul of his parishioners.

Third, Girardeau engaged his elders in the spiritual ministry of the church—particularly the teaching of the people. They held weekly catechetical classes for the membership—black and white members alike. The Westminster Catechisms were used as the basis of the training. Here is what we read from one of his “scholars” Louisa Cheves Stoney: “Dr. Girardeau ... considered [WSC 31] the most difficult and important.”²⁹ The question and answer is “What is effectual calling? Effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit [2 Tim. 1:8, 9; Eph. 1:18–20], whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery [Acts 2:37], enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ [Acts 26:18], and renewing our wills [Ezek. 11:19; 36:26,27], he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel [John 6:44, 45; Phil. 2:13; Deut. 30:6; Eph. 2:5]. On a pastoral note, Mrs. Stoney concluded this note by saying: Dr. Girardeau ... a preacher whose sermons were never too long and can never be forgotten by the throngs of people that hung on his words. His tender kindness to the children was great; dignity forgotten, he would play games and tell B’Rabbit stories which he could do to perfection. But the children had to earn the pleasure by reciting a question from the Shorter Catechism ... (*Autobiographical Notes, Letters, and Reflections*, 198).

The black scholars (as students were called back then) were similarly taught, but often using a catechism Girardeau composed for those who were not as well educated. *A Catechism for the Oral Instructions of Coloured Persons who are Inquirers Concerning Religion or Candidates for Admission into the Church* was published in 1860. Along with questions, similar to those of a children’s catechism, he interspersed hymns and Psalms to help with the memorization and learning of the doctrines.

Additional Lesson III.
 The Law of God.

Q. Has God given us a Law?

A. Yes; God has given us a Law

...

Q. Can you keep the Law so as to be justified and saved?

A. No; I cannot keep the Law so as to be justified and saved.

Q. Can the Law ever justify the sinner?

A. No; the Law can never justify the sinner.

Q. Ho alone can you be justified and saved?

A. I can alone be justified and saved, by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Q. But are you not bound to obey the Law as a rule of life and conduct?

A. Yes; I am bound to obey the Law as a rule of life and conduct?

Q. Whose strength alone will enable you to obey the Law?

A. Christ's strength alone will enable me to obey the Law.

Q. How can you get Christ's strength?

A. I can get Christ's strength by prayer.

Let us sing—

C. M. [Rochester.]

"Oh that the Lord would guide my ways

To keep his statutes still!

Oh that my God would grant me grace

To know and do His will!

Make me to walk in Thy commands,

'Tis a delightful road;

Nor let my head, nor heart, nor hands,

Offend against my God."³⁰

His model was so successful, a loud number of Charles-tonians were convinced that he was breaking state law by teaching slaves to read and write. He was breaking the spirit of the law, but not the letter. This emphasis on catechism, with the Psalms and hymns added in, proved to enhance the worship of this segment of the congregation. For one thing, they were able to sing those very Psalms and hymns with gusto in the context of corporate worship although a number of them could not read.

Their growing knowledge of the teaching of the Scriptures also provided them with greater ability to engage the preaching of the word from their pastor. By the way, this would have been true in a number of sectors of the South where others utilized the same approach. Examples would include James Smylie in Mississippi, Charles Stillman in Alabama, and C. C. Jones and his successors in Georgia. This brings us to the last aspect of pastoral care I wish to address and that is preaching.

A number of men were known for their pulpit prowess. Benjamin M. Palmer (1818–1902) is best known for his ministry at First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, SC (1843–55) and First Presbyterian Church, New

Orleans, LA (1856–1902). James Henley Thornwell, of whom we have spoken already, was also known for his sermons, which were described as "logic in ignition." In addition to Thornwell's renown academic career at Southern Carolina College (now University of South Carolina) as a philosopher and rhetorician, he pastored three churches, including First Presbyterian Church in Columbia after Palmer's departure. But, of most special note among the Southern Stalwarts, as Douglas Kelley has labeled them, was John L. Girardeau.

Here is a sample of Girardeau's pulpit power taken from his sermon from Psalm 23, "Christ's Pastoral Presence with His Dying People."

It is true that the believer must die; but in dying he is privileged to suffer with his Master, that he may rise and reign with him. It is true that the believer must die; but death now constitutes part of a wholesome discipline which prepares him for glory; it is a process by which he is purged from dross, casts off the slough of corruption, and is purified for his admission into the holy presence of God and the sanctified communion of saints. It is true that he must walk through the dark valley; but the Conqueror of Death descends into it by his side, illuminates its darkness by the radiance of his presence, protects him from the assaults of a now powerless foe, and bearing in his hands the keys of death and the invisible world, peacefully dismisses the departing saint from sin to holiness, and from the stormy trials of earth to the joy and peace of an everlasting rest.

Once again from this masterpiece:

The Sufferer, who, for us, expired on the cross of Calvary, endured a species of death which was as singular as it was comprehensive and exhaustive. In body, he suffered the keen and protracted tortures of crucifixion; and in spirit, reviled by foes, deserted by friends and abandoned of God, he descended alone into the valley of the death-shade, which was not only veiled

30. John L. Girardeau, *A Catechism for the Oral Instruction of Coloured Persons who are Inquirers concerning Religion, Candidates for Admission into the Church* (Charleston: Printed by Evans & Cogswell, 1860), 24, 25–26. The song is the eleventh part of Psalm 119, first and last stanzas, as printed by the PCUSA. Cf. *Psalms and Hymns, adapted to Public Worship* (1830; Philadelphia: Published for the General Assembly by Solomon Allen, 1833), 210–211. The tune is not assigned in the PCUSA hymnal in editions through 1860. While it may or may not have been customary by the time, Rochester is assigned to this section of Watt's rendition of Psalm 119 as early as 1830. Cf. James Hastings, *The Christian Psalmist: Or, Watts' Psalms and Hymns, with Copious Selections* (1830).

in impenetrable gloom, but swept by the tempests of avenging wrath. Furnished with such an experience, the Good Shepherd ministers with exquisite sympathy at the couch of the dying believer. He knows his doubts, his apprehensions, his fears; and, moved by a compassion which naught but a common suffering could produce, he makes all the bed under the expiring saint, smooths his last pillow, and “wipes his latest tear away.”³¹

Perhaps no sermon was every preached more often upon request within the Southern United States than Girardeau’s “The Last Judgment.” Here I quote from the conclusion:

The judicial process ends; the books are closed, the Judge rises, and the Supreme Court of the world adjourns. The separate destinies of human beings are now evolved. Collected around the person of their glorious Lord, the jubilant saints begin their triumphal march to the portals of their heavenly home. Onward they sweep in majestic array, hallelujahs are bursting from every lip, and as they come in view of the shining gates, hark! They sing: “Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in!” And, again, as in the ascension from Olivet of the victor of sin, death and hell, the challenge of angelic sentries is shouted from the battlements of heaven: “Who is the King of glory?” And then the response is rolled back in thunder from ten thousand times ten thousand voices: “The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, the Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in!”

...Then rising and waving their palms of victory in the morning air of an endless day, with a sound like the noise of many waters, or the voice of mighty thunders,—hark, they chant again: “Glory and honor and power, and might and dominion, and wisdom and thanksgiving and blessing be unto Him that sits upon the throne and unto the Lamb forever!” Redemption is completed, and the pauseless chorus of everlasting praise begins.

...Would that we could say this is all: this is the glorious destiny of an unsevered and un mutilated race!

But from the left hand of the judgment-bar a funeral procession of lost human beings, in the train of devils, slowly and reluctantly wend their way to the frowning gates of hell. They defile through those gloomy portals over which despair reads the fatal legend: “Those who enter here leave hope behind.” The irrefragable bolts of the eternal jail are shot by penal justice behind them; and between them and a lost and irrecoverable paradise yawn the terrific jaws of an uncrossable chasm—a gulf wide, deep, and dark as starless midnight, save as the profound abyss is gilded by some mocking rays that may straggle into it from a far distant and inaccessible glory (Sermons, 38).

So ends the most famous of nineteenth century Southern sermons preached by the “Spurgeon of America.”

I could move to Thornwell or certainly Benjamin Morgan Palmer for more examples of powerful and effectual preaching that marked the Southern landscape, but time is our enemy.³²

Conclusion

These men were powerful in the pulpit. They were pastoral in their tender mercies to the poor, needy, and sick. Their contributions to theology and its teaching continue to have abiding relevance. Time and anachronistic history have not treated them well, but they deserve better. Men of clay feet? Yes. Like you and me. Men of God? By all means. ■

31. Southern Presbyterian Pulpit (Richmond, VA: The Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1896), 80, 82

32. See Benjamin Morgan Palmer, *Sermons of Rev. B. M. Palmer* (reprint; Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 2002).