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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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## JAMES GALLAHER.\*

1815—1853.

JAMES GALLAHER was born in what is now Washington County, Tenn., on the 8th of October, 1792; to which place his grandfather, James Gallaher, who was of Scotch Irish extraction, had removed from Pennsylvania, about the year 1779. He was the eldest son, and second child, of Thomas and Mary (Greene) Gallaher, who were the parents of ten children, three of whom became ministers of the Gospel. Soon after the birth of James, his father removed from Washington to Blount County, where he was incessantly annoyed by the Creek, and especially the Cherokee, Indians. For several years the people lived in block houses, and cultivated their little farms,—some labouring, while others were watching the approach of danger. When James was an infant, not more than six months old, an incident occurred in one of these block houses, which had well nigh terminated his earthly being. A large feather bed had been placed by some of the inmates of the fort upon the pallet where the child was sleeping, and was discovered by the mother just in time to prevent life from becoming extinct—an interposition of Providence which might remind one of that by which was accomplished the preservation of the infant that was destined to be the deliverer and lawgiver of Israel.

The County of Roan to which James Gallaher's father ultimately removed, embraced a portion of the territory purchased by the United States from the Cherokee Indians in the year 1798. Here James was occupied chiefly in assisting to cultivate his father's farm till the autumn of 1811, when he was sent to Washington College, then under the Presidency of its Founder, the Rev. Dr. Doak. Up to this time, his advantages for education had been but limited, though he had lived in the midst of a Scotch Irish population, by whom the Bible was highly prized, and he, in common with most of the other children in the neighbourhood, had been carefully instructed in its sacred contents. This part of his education had doubtless much to do in rendering him in future life, as he was acknowledged to be, "mighty in the Scriptures."

It was not till the year 1800, during the early part of the great revival that occurred at that period, that the parents of James Gallaher were hopefully converted; but from that time they lived an eminently Christian life, and were favoured with many tokens of the Divine presence in their dwelling. This son was deeply exercised with a sense of his sinfulness from the year 1800 till 1810; and not unfrequently was the subject of the most appalling terrors; but in the last mentioned year or about that time, he seems to have gained the joy and peace in believing.

Young Gallaher remained in College through the entire course,—accomplishing the whole, however, in four sessions of five months each,—and graduated in the fall of 1813. The next spring he opened a high school in Knoxville, which he continued five months. During this time he formed an intimate acquaintance with some of the members of the Bar, and through their influence it became for some time a question with him whether he

\* Presbyterian Recorder, 1855.

should not make the Law his profession; but, upon further reflection, in connection with the earnestly expressed wishes of his father, he dismissed the idea, and formed a definite purpose, which he never subsequently regretted, to preach the Gospel.

He prosecuted his theological studies under the direction, partly of the Rev. Edward Crawford, and partly of the Rev. Stephen Bovell, D. D., and resided during the time in their respective families. Having completed his course of study, he was licensed to preach the Gospel by the Presbytery of Abingdon, in December, 1815, and immediately after was invited by the Church of New Providence, in Hawkins County, Tenn., and by the *people* of Rogersville to become their Pastor. In a few months after, a call having been laid before the Presbytery and accepted, he was ordained to the office of the Gospel ministry, and entered at once upon the broad field of labour to which he was thus introduced. His call to Rogersville was dated June 10, 1816, and was signed by fourteen persons. It was contemplated that he should preach one half of his time in Rogersville, and the other half in New Providence, twelve miles distant, for which he was to receive four hundred dollars a year—two hundred from each church. He lived in Rogersville, and continued in charge of these churches for fourteen years. In the spring of 1830, he was settled over the Third Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati, (a colony from the Rev. Dr. Wilson's,) which he had been instrumental of organizing a short time before. In 1835, he removed with his family to Marion County, Mo., to become a Professor in the Theological department of Marion College: he remained here about four years, during a part of which time he was occupied in collecting funds for the institution, and in preaching, through a wide range of country, as an Evangelist. In 1839, he removed with his family to St. Charles, Mo., where he had his home till the close of life. During the first year of his residence there, he acted as stated supply to the Church in that place, making occasional missionary tours through the surrounding country; but, after the division of that Church in the spring of 1840, he preached there only occasionally, and spent nearly his whole time in preaching to the destitute in different parts of the Valley of the Mississippi.

In 1852-53, he was Chaplain of the House of Representatives in Congress. At the close of the session, he resumed his labours as an Evangelist, and was thus employed when death overtook him.

He had just closed a protracted meeting of several weeks' continuance at Brunswick, Mo., and was about to proceed to another place to hold a similar meeting, when he was suddenly prostrated by dysentery, which, after about five weeks, came to a fatal termination. He died on the 19th of October, 1853.

Mr. Gallaher was married in or about the year 1816, to Lucinda Houston, by whom he had eleven children,—five sons and six daughters. Mrs. Gallaher died at St. Charles on the 21st of November, 1850.

Mr. Gallaher's only publications, except what appeared in periodicals, are the Pilgrimage of Adam and David, 1845, and The Western Sketch Book, 1850.

FROM THE REV. FREDERICK A. ROSS, D. D.

HUNTSVILLE, Ala., Dec. 19, 1856.

My dear Sir: In compliance with your request I give you this familiar letter containing some recollections of my intimate friend, the Rev. James Gallaher, deceased.

They begin in, I think, the year 1819, and in Hawkins County, East Tennessee. I was a mere youth about twenty-two years of age,—a stranger in that country, attending to the estate of my deceased father, who lived, and had recently died, in Eastern Virginia.

My young bachelor home, while in the duties mentioned, was a romantic and beautiful spot, at the junction of the two branches of the Holston River not far from the village of Kingsport. I was a gay young Virginian; and felt myself buried there. I had no society. To spend time, I was wont to attend the occasional ministrations of the Methodist itinerant, and to visit an old Presbyterian and his wife, a few miles away, who took much interest in me,—a Mr. and Mrs. David Kinkeade. This old gentleman and lady were called Hopkinsians, a phrase of Presbyterians who then and for a long time before had divided East Tennessee with the Old School; and ultimately became the New School in that region. It was hard to tell whether the husband or the wife was the most thoroughly versed in Edwards, Hopkins, and Emmons, and strange, their society, wholly of this metaphysical tone, became a perfect charm to me. I spent days with them contesting the extremes of Hopkins and Emmons. I see now the little old man with his very short legs, waddling to get the candle-stand, and piling it up with Hopkins' huge volumes—then seated in his great old-fashioned chimney corner, spectacles in one hand, pipe in the other, he would look at me with his piercing little black eyes, and press some "*nice pint*" of disinterested benevolence. The old lady, tall and angular, on the other side of the hearth,—with pipe and spectacles too, would nod assent to the hardest paradoxes of Emmons, and hope and believe from her very heart that some day I would see the beauty of these "*new ideas*." It was on one such occasion after little Davy, as he was called, had read to me with exquisite delight, a sheet of his own poetry,—in which he made Satan before he fell, consent that God might for his glory influence him to sin—that Polly the wife said with real affection for me, "I wish, Mr. Ross, you would just ride down to New Providence next Sunday and hear Mr. Gallaher. *He is my preacher, and you can't help liking him.*" "Yes," added the old man, "you must—Gallaher is not quite up to these "*nice pints*" yet; but he is a great preacher."

This was my first introduction to the name of one with whom I was afterwards for a time so intimate. I yielded to this request; and went with some young men a Sabbath or so, thereafter, to the church intimated; which was one of two in which Mr. G. laboured, and about twelve miles from my residence.

It was a small brick school-house, seated for preaching. The pulpit was in the middle of one of the long sides—a door was in the opposite wall, and one in each end; giving four blocks of seats—sufficient for an hundred and fifty persons.

This was the congregation which soon became four hundred church members, and from that number to one thousand hearers. The pulpit was a mere box, with what was called a breast board without cushion, Bible or Hymn Book. On one corner of this board, however, there was a large brown pitcher of water, but no tumbler. The speaker had to drink out of the pitcher,—and it once helped me to recover a lost train of ideas when preaching a memorized sermon.

Soon after I was seated, Mr. Gallaher came—walking with quick nervous step—he was after the time. Not unusual, for he was lazy in every thing but thought

and utterance. He, like myself, had come twelve miles, but from the opposite direction. His saddle bags were on his arm, from which he took Bible and Hymn Book—ministers in those days being expected to provide “*the books*” for church services at home and abroad.

I have no recollections of that first sermon except my being pleased,—and still more with the man.

Mr. G. was fully six feet high, and then a spare figure. Years after, he weighed three hundred. His dress was very careless. Neither his hat or coat seemed to have been made for him. His face was eminently handsome, and full of fascination, although his forehead was nowise corroborative of phrenology. For it was very low, and his hair, black and harsh, came over it, just as in Dr. Lyman Beecher’s face,—whom in hair, brow and complexion, he very much resembled. His eyes were splendid. His mouth was large, with fine teeth, his voice rich as Henry Clay’s; and, as was well, he sang with great natural taste—and just to please, to the highest zest, his Scotch Irish hearers—all the noble, old tunes.

At that time there was an impediment in his speech;—which in him, as in a few others I have known, was not unpleasant to the hearer; for when the word did come, ’twas just the one, and the better for the delay, to your appreciation of it. This defect he overcame in a few years—and then he had the noblest stream of words in swelling tones of music.

His manners, from good sense and native tact, were free and easy,—and he attracted you at once in admiration and affection. He was about four years older than myself—our intimacy did not begin then however—for having an extended land business over the State of Tennessee, I was much from home; but in 1823, after there had been a church organized at Kingsport, under the pastoral care of the Rev. Robert Glenn, Mr. Gallaher came up from Rogersville, some twenty-five miles to assist during a protracted meeting.

It was under one of his sermons, John x. 27, 28, 29—that I was made willing to receive the “*Eternal Life.*” I was licensed to preach in 1825; and from that time until in 1830, he removed from East Tennessee, we were on terms of most affectionate intercourse.

I seldom met with him after that period, so that my personal recollections are all belonging to those seven years from 1823; but during that time we preached and were together a great deal. I married soon after I attached myself to the church; and my house was the preacher’s home. Mr. G. had already a family; so, from many motives, we were as one in plans and actions.

In the summer of 1828, in response to invitation from West Lexington Presbytery, Kentucky, we spent four months in Kentucky and Ohio. In that tour we held sixteen protracted meetings and received more than one thousand persons into the church; five hundred of whom were in Cincinnati.

Mr. G. was truly in his glory as an itinerant—he was no pastor—he was no student of books—he never reached those “*nice pints*” which my metaphysical old gentleman and his wife expected him to attain. He read little, but what he did read he thoroughly mastered—made his own, and reproduced it with wonderful power. Like Charles James Fox, without being a student in the usual sense, he was turning over all the time trains of thought for the pulpit—while riding—walking—sitting in conversation, or lying in bed—wherein be it said, he was an intolerable companion—ever tossing about, and talking to himself half asleep.

He took in his sermons the broadest, plainest, most common sense views of the Bible,—in listening to which, like unto looking upon the waves of the sea, the youngest were pleased, and the oldest felt him to be ever free and fresh—often sublime.

In his early day he frequently wrote out his sermons, and committed them to memory—soon however he used only short notes, and ultimately, in his later

day, he took no paper at all into the desk. Of course he required excitement; failed sometimes—but take him all in all, he was one of the most instructive and impressive preachers the West has ever produced.

What Mr. G. wrote, was in its day very effective; whether narrative or argument. Some of his controversial articles were never surpassed. In his other published productions, “Adam and David,” and the “Western Sketch Book,” you will find his ability in narrative, and wit in anecdote. I have not now these books, and the publishers’ names have escaped me.

Mr. G. resembled Sidney Smith in one respect. He greatly enjoyed his own humour. His laugh was glorious to himself, and most contagious to others. And like Smith, in another thing—he never wounded his friends with the edges of his wit.

I find, my dear Sir, I have exceeded your *paper* limit; and have only begun my recollections.

I felt them hardly worth your acceptance—kept them back—but send them reluctantly.

Yours very respectfully and truly,

F. A. ROSS.

FROM THE REV. ROBERT J. BRECKENRIDGE, D. D.,

PROFESSOR IN THE DANVILLE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

DANVILLE, Ky., December 8, 1856.

My dear Sir: I knew James Gallaher very well; have been a great deal in his company; have heard him preach often; have conducted powerful meetings with immense results with him. The period of my particular acquaintance extended from about 1827 to 1847, in the fall of which year I saw him for the last time. After 1837, my intercourse with him was less frequent, as we lived far apart, and were members of different portions of the Presbyterian Church. We had a mutual friend, David Nelson, by means of whom our relations were closer than they would probably have been otherwise.

He was a man of small attainments and poor early opportunities; but of remarkable gifts in many respects—a great wit, and of infinite complacency and affluence of kindly emotions; an actor of wonderful power; one of the sweetest singers in the world; pathetic, violent, vociferous, pointed, earnest, as a speaker; possessing a fervid imagination, and an intense desire to save souls. He was, besides, of immense activity in his work, and could work without limit; and did work with great results in revivals for many years.

He was no mean writer of fugitive poetry; and published a volume of Theology, in some respects very curious, under a curious title which I now forget. The last time, nearly, that I ever saw him, he entertained a stage full of us, all day, over some of the worst roads in Kentucky, repeating, with great pathos and beauty, some of the finest narratives in it.

He knew very little about doctrinal controversies of any sort, except as they passed before him. But he had been raised a Presbyterian, and though he united with the New School, he was not even tintured, so far as I ever discovered, with a single dogma of that School. He was, for substance of his sermons, a fair Presbyterian preacher; and for manner, a very popular, and occasionally a most touching and impressive, one. His companionship was extremely agreeable—his friendship warm and lasting. Out of the pulpit as well as in it, he seemed never content, but when excited about something, and trying to excite others; whether to work—to laugh—to walk—to pray—any thing. Every thing like repose, self-concentration, or any of those lofty and quiet and intense states of soul, which belong to the strongest natures, (which David Nelson had so grandly,) were alien from his nature. Take him all in all, he was a man easy to

love, who had himself a loving heart; a man who worked long, hard, with great delight, and great success for his Master: was a man free of all bad and malignant passions, and strongly confided in by some of the best and wisest men of his day.

This is my impression of the man.

With best wishes, your brother in Christ,

R. J. BRECKENRIDGE.

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## THOMAS CHARLTON HENRY, D. D.\*

1816—1827.

THOMAS CHARLTON HENRY was the eldest son of Alexander and Sarah Matilda Henry, and was born in Philadelphia, September 22, 1790. His father was distinguished for his wealth and benevolence, and was for several years President of the American Sunday School Union. At his birth, and during his childhood, his father repeatedly devoted him to the ministry, in the hope that, in due time, he would have the requisite qualifications for the work. But his early years were passed in great buoyancy of spirit and love of pleasure, though he had withal a considerable fondness for books. His father was disposed to indulge his literary tastes by giving him the best advantages for improvement; but he became satisfied ere long that his lighter propensities were so predominant that there was little hope of his becoming a vigorous and successful student. Accordingly, at the age of about eighteen, he placed him at mercantile business. This, however, proved so distasteful to him that, after a short trial, he resolved, with his father's consent, to return to the pursuit of learning.

Up to this time there had been nothing on his part to indicate the probability of his ever being any thing more than a man of the world. But his excellent father, ever intent upon the promotion of his highest interests, omitted nothing that seemed to give any token of a favourable result. Having heard of a remarkable attention to religion in Middlebury College, he sent him thither, in the hope that he might be a sharer in the spiritual blessings with which that institution was then so highly favoured. The revival into which he was thus introduced passed away, without leaving upon his mind any permanent impression. Another revival, however, subsequently occurred, which, at its very commencement, numbered him among the anxious inquirers, and ultimately among its hopeful subjects. He immediately engaged with great earnestness in the promotion of the work, and his labours in College, then and afterwards, were thought to have been eminently useful to many of his fellow students.

Soon after he believed himself to have felt the power of religion, his mind became deeply exercised in regard to what should be his future course of life; and the result was a full conviction that it was his duty to devote himself to the work of the ministry. He was graduated with high honour in 1814; but he had commenced his preparation for the pulpit before the

\* Chr. Adv. v.—MSS. from his family.