

THE  
LIFE AND LETTERS  
OF  
BENJAMIN MORGAN PALMER

BY

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its preservation and continuance. (2) We make our appeal to Him who ruled beneath the rainbow, on the ground that, touching this controversy between us and our foes, we are blameless. (Through five and eighty years of our united history we have never broken the covenant sworn for us by our fathers; though a partial and unjust legislation has discriminated against us, turning the products of our fields into their coffers, and draining our wealth to build up the palaces of their merchant princes, etc.) (3) I derive consolation from the marked interpositions of God in our favor, during the present struggle; coupled with his frequent disappointment of some of our reasonable expectations. (4) The North cannot succeed against the South except through the perpetration of a double crime without a parallel in the annals of the race,—the extermination of both the white and the black race upon our soil. (5) Our cause is preëminently the cause of God himself, and every blow struck by us is in defense of his supremacy.”

The sermon makes pathetic reading now; but under the magic of his voice and port it could hardly have failed to make heroes of all who heard it. He preferred death to subjugation; and he believed that he and his compatriots were fighting God's battles as well as those of his dear Southland.

The reader will recall that years back Dr. and Mrs. Palmer had shown much kindness to Mr. R. H. Reid, then a College and Seminary student in Columbia. They were now in relatively narrow circumstances. Mr. Reid's people seized the opportunity to do them a kindly service, by making a gift of homespun for clothing. The following letter from Mrs. Palmer both notes the fact and throws a light on their family history which justifies its insertion here:

“BRAMWELL COURTHOUSE, April 18, 1863.

“MY DEAR FRIEND: I am here with Fanny, who is very feeble, hoping that change will improve her health. I intended to have written to you before I left Columbia, begging you to thank the ladies of your congregation who were kind enough to send me the homespun. I can assure you it was a very acceptable present and I have made up the dresses for the three oldest children and they have been very much admired. The children feel quite proud to wear a dress spun and woven in South Carolina and they mean to keep them as mementos of the Civil War.

“I am glad to be able to tell you that Mr. Hutson is in better health

than he has been and I hope it will not be long before he is entirely well. They feel the death of their little boy very much.

"I expect to leave this place for Savannah on Monday to spend a week or two. I was obliged to leave the other children and of course I will not stay away any longer than I am obliged to, but I feel it to be my duty to do everything in my power to restore Fanny's health. Sometimes I fear we will not have her long, she looks so very feeble. But I can only leave her in the hands of our Father in heaven who does all for the best.

"If we were keeping house I would insist on your coming down to the Assembly and bringing Mrs. Reid and the children. I sigh to have a home of my own once more.

"Give a great deal of love to Mrs. Reid and kiss the children for me, especially my namesake. I often think of his fat, round face. I will send the likeness you asked for some of these days. I had a good many in New Orleans like the one you saw on the mantelpiece at mother's but they will be of no use now.

"Yours very truly,

"M. A. PALMER."

May, 1863, the General Assembly of our Church met in Columbia, S. C. Dr. Palmer was a member of the body and the man of paramount influence in it. He was the chairman of many important committees and acquitted himself with his usual dignity and ability. To that Assembly came the news of the great Stonewall Jackson's death, of whom "it has been tersely and truthfully and therefore beautifully said, that in the army he was the expression of his country's confidence in God and in itself." Palmer's hand drafted the minute, at once exquisite and noble, which the body adopted on the occasion. He took an earnest hand in the conference held by the Assembly upon the subject of the religious wants of the army. Having offered to do service in the West, on his own charges, if he should be left to some measure of discretion as to the length of time, he was made a Commissioner of the Assembly to the Army of Tennessee. This Assembly also elected Dr. Palmer to fill the chair of Didactic and Polemic Theology, in Columbia Seminary, provisionally, for a year. A party would have elected him without conditions, but he had a body of followers who thought of New Orleans and of his obligation to those people in case the way should be opened for his return. From the reports of the debate on the subject it is clear that some members of the Assembly were not without hope that the Confederate forces would again soon be in possession of the place.