

“The Dead of the Synod of Georgia.”

NECROLOGY:

OR

MEMORIALS OF DECEASED MINISTERS,

WHO HAVE DIED DURING THE FIRST
TWENTY YEARS AFTER ITS
ORGANIZATION.

PREPARED IN OBEDIENCE TO THE ORDER OF THE SYNOD.

WITH A

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION.

BY

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The memory of the just is blessed.—Prov. x: 7.

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REV. SAMUEL KENNEDY TALMAGE.*

Major THOMAS TALMAGE, the father of Dr. Talmage, was a native of New Jersey, born at Basking Ridge on the 24th of October, 1775, and grew up amid the scenes of the Revolution. His early religious training was under the ministry of the Rev. Samuel Kenneday, † for many years the faithful and successful pastor of that ancient Church, and after whom he named his son, the subject of this memorial. He united with the Church in his twentieth year. His piety is represented as being *intelligent* and *ardent*. His views of doctrinal truth and religious experience, having been formed in the school of one, who was almost an immediate disciple of the early puritans, had all the depth and warmth which characterized those holy men. He was one of the few remaining Christians of a former age. No one could converse with him, even an hour, without perceiving that his thoughts and feelings were assimilated to those of Bunyan, Bates and Howe.

* MSS. from the family and Board of Trustees, Oglethorpe University.

† Rev. Samuel Kenneday was a Scotchman, born in the year 1720, and educated at the University of Edinburgh. He studied Theology in this country, and was received under the care of the Presbytery of New Brunswick in December, 1749. He was licensed in May, 1750, to preach the Gospel, was ordained to the work of the ministry, and installed pastor of the congregation of Basking Ridge, N. J. in June 1751.

Mr. Kenneday was in many respects a remarkable man. He was, at the same time, a minister and a physician. He was distinguished for the purity and elevation of his Christian character. He was a thorough scholar—accurate theologian—and a vigorous defender of the Calvinistic system. In appearance and manner one of the most simple and most untutored of men,—his great modesty kept him very much out of the range of public observation; but in the pulpit his power of thought and fervor of manner sometimes rendered him perfectly overwhelming.

His piety, although partaking largely of the deep-toned, and contemplative cast of the last century, had, nevertheless, all the ardor and activity of the present time. During a revival enjoyed at Somerville in 1822, he seemed to be animated almost with apostolic zeal, going from house to house commending the Saviour to all men.

At different times he exercised the office of Ruling Elder, in the Churches of New Brunswick, Boundbrook, and Raritan; and sustained it with honor to himself and advantage

A circumstance has been told of him, by the Rev. Dr. Talmage, which he learned from his father, and which we beg leave here to relate. It left a deep impression on the minds of those who heard him; and displayed the wonderful grace of God.

"There had been a season of unusual coldness in the Church at Basking Ridge, and the pastor had become not a little discouraged in view of the apparent fruitlessness of his labors. On a certain Sabbath, at the close of the public services, he resolved to spend the whole of the following week in earnest prayer and devout study, with a view to prepare a sermon that, by God's blessing, might rouse the congregation from their spiritual torpor, and bring them to feel the importance of eternal realities. He fulfilled his purpose—immediately selecting his text for the next Sabbath, and devoting the whole intervening week to maturing and arranging his thoughts upon it. The Sabbath came, and he felt strong in the belief that he had produced something that would move his people, and he expected confidently to witness some special tokens of the Divine presence. After singing and prayer, he gave out the second hymn, and took his Bible to open to the text. But strange to tell, he could not call to his mind, text, chapter, book—even subject, had deserted him. The congregation had finished singing, and in a half-bewildered state, he rose and gave out another hymn. He turned over the leaves of the Bible to find some passage on which to found an extemporaneous discourse, and his eye lighted repeatedly on one text upon which he thought he might say something. If my memory serves me, it was: "The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God." The singing being again concluded, he rose, overwhelmed with agitation and distress, and preached a sermon which melted down the whole congregation, and was the commencement of a wonderful revival of religion. He said, never had he before in his life, enjoyed so much freedom or exercised so much power in the pulpit. He went home alone, weeping and rejoicing.

Mr. Kennedy died on the 31st of August, 1787, in the sixty-eighth year of his age, and thirty-seventh of his ministry.

to the house of God. He died on the 2nd day of October 1834, in the seventy-ninth year of his age.

His wife, and mother of Dr. Talmage, was Miss Mary McCoy. She united with the Church in her sixteenth year. "They lived together in the greatest connubial happiness for the space of fifty-seven years, and became the parents of twelve children, all of whom they had the happiness of seeing arrive at maturity, and walking in the way of righteousness." Two of the r sons consecrated their lives to the service of the Church of Christ, in the ministry of the Presbyterian Church, namely: the Rev. Jehiel Talmage and the subject of this memorial. She died the 15th of November, 1832, in the seventy-fourth year of her age, preceding her husband to the kingdom of glory about two years, having been a member of the Church of Christ about fifty-eight years. Such were the parents of him, a brief sketch of whose life we are now to write.

Samuel Kennedy Talmage, the sixth son of Thomas Talmage, senior, and his wife Mary McCoy, was born near Somerville, in the State of New Jersey, on the 11th day of December, 1798.

Early in life they devoted him to God in baptism, as they did all their other children, and trained him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. He was always a pleasant lad, and grew up to manhood, admired by all who knew him. He was prepared for College at the classical school in Somerville. At the age of seventeen he was thrown entirely upon his own resources. During the year of 1815, he taught at Georgetown, D.C., as assistant of the Rev. Dr. Carnahan, and during the years 1816 and 1817, he taught in the State of Maryland. He entered Princeton College, (Nassau Hall,) 1818, and was graduated with honor to himself, in 1820. In 1821, he united with the Presbyterian Church at Basking Ridge, N. J. then under the care of the Rev. W. C. Brownlee, D. D. He was at that time usher of Dr. Brownlee's Classical School. He

was then chosen Tutor to Princeton College, and this position he filled for three years. In the meantime, he entered the Theological Seminary, pursuing his divinity studies, and attending to his College duties at the same time. He was licensed to preach the Gospel by the Presbytery of Newton, in the spring of 1825. In the fall of the same year, he was ordained as an Evangelist, by the same Presbytery, and coming South, he labored as a missionary for one year at Hamburg and other points in Edgefield District, South Carolina. In January, 1827, he was united with the Rev. Dr. S. S. Davis, in supplying the Presbyterian Church at Augusta, Ga. to the pastorate of which he was called in the early part of 1828. In this relation he continued until January, 1836, when he was elected to the Professorship of Languages in Oglethorpe University. This chair he filled until the close of 1841, at which time he was chosen President of that Institution. The Doctorate of Divinity was conferred upon him by Princeton College.

The duties of the Presidency he continued to discharge until his health began to fail in the fall of 1862, and he died whilst still at the head of the University. He departed this life at Midway, Ga., on the 2nd day of September, 1865, in the sixty-seventh year of his age, and the forty-first of his ministry.

Such is a brief record of the life of an able and good man. Its perusal simply inspires the conviction that he was from youth to old age an earnest worker. He lived for no holiday purpose. He lived to declare the glory of God, and to bless his fellow men. He filled profitably a wide field of usefulness. Entering life as a teacher, he was at an early age set apart to the sacred ministry, and closed his pilgrimage, a laborious, self-sacrificing preacher, and a successful exponent of the educational interest of his adopted State. It is natural and just to contemplate the character of this eminent man in a three-fold point of view, as a citizen, as a teacher, and a Christian minister.

How few in these aspects of character present so little to censure and so much to commend? Duty to him was made easier, by a vigorous constitution and a cheerful temperament. In these respects *Providence* was bountiful to him. The greater part of his life he knew but little of the drawback of debility upon intellectual effort, and experienced the comfort and solid advantage of a sound, enduring, and elastic physique. Doubtless that uniformity of temper which his friends were accustomed to find in the Doctor, was a conscience at peace with God. Piety is the fountain of Christian cheerfulness; yet the causes stated, may contribute to its graceful and benignant flow. His manners were easy and cultivated, and in the society of ladies, soft and winning. He was a pleasant companion and an instructive talker. Christianity in him wore no repulsive garb, and he made no divorce between the sanctity of his vocation and the amenities and pleasures which it both allows and commends. His example was, therefore, a continuous and eloquent presentation of the Christian gentleman. He had the faculty of adapting himself pleasantly to the company he chanced to be in, without for one moment compromising the claims of religion. Few, indeed, were blessed like him, with the capacity of uttering a word of religious counsel, without offence, even in circles of thoughtless gaiety, or of absorbed worldliness. In this sense he was a man of the world, and all things to all men.

He was an observant and enlightened citizen; well informed upon general questions of statesmanship, and familiar with the local wants, and political divisions of the State. Nor did he hesitate, whilst studiously avoiding all partisanship, to make known his opinions upon proper occasions, and to assert them practically at the polls. Unlike some of his brethren of the ministry, he did not believe that his consecration to God absolved him from the obligations of citizenship. Hence in conversation, in the class-room, and through the

press, he advocated and elucidated the principles which constitute the foundations of good government—chief among these he held to be education and Christian morality. It is believed that no minister of the gospel contributed more to the formation and perpetuation of a sound public sentiment in Georgia, with reference to monetary, economical, agricultural, and social interests, than did *Dr. Talmage*. He might well be designated a conservative statesman, so ordering and so timing his political teachings, as to interfere not at all with higher obligations of scholastic instructions, or with the holier functions of the ministry. He lived to see the State he loved, great in population, wealth and moral power. And although now broken by the storms of war, and shattered by conquest, destined under the blessing of God to become a great and renowned commonwealth.

The *Presbyterian Church*, impressed with the importance of subjecting secular education to the influences of religion, founded *Oglethorpe University*; and to make the end practicable, it was placed under denominational control. Upon the retirement of its first President, the distinguished C. P. Beman, D. D., *Dr. Talmage* was called to the Presidency. No better man could have been selected to carry out the views of the Church. Profoundly convinced of the fact, that the Church is the safest depository of education, and of the fact, that all knowledge may be pernicious without piety—satisfied that the young should be taught, not a creed, but the truth as it is in Jesus Christ—he gave himself to the service of the College, with ardent zeal and unconditional consecration. All other objects became, with him, secondary and subservient. The Board records with pleasure, and with gratitude, the fidelity and ability with which he fulfilled the trust which they committed to him.

At the breaking out of the late war, with an able corps of instructors—with classes numerically respectable and increasing, and with the confidence of the public—the Univer-

sity stood in the first rank of Denominational Institutions at the South. It had become a decided success, and was indebted in an eminent degree for its great usefulness to the ability, and indomitable energy of its *President*. In the recitation room he was apt in communicating knowledge, and in discipline paternal, yet firm, relying more upon appeals to a sense of character than the penal visitation of law. He was patient, affable—vigilant and persistent. An accomplished classical scholar, and a finished rhetorician, he was a beautiful exemplar of polite literature. As such he became a model for the young men under his charge. Naturally he was a generous and magnanimous man. It is not surprising, therefore, that he impressed his character upon them. He was in the habit of devoting his long vacations to preaching excursions into the country; and wherever he went—at the seat of Government—in the towns and villages—before the *Presbyteries and Synods*—and through the religious and secular papers, he instantly pressed the claims of religious education, and of Oglethorpe University. Indeed, it is more than probable that excessive labor for a number of years, contributed to the disease which finally closed his life.

It remains to speak briefly of his ministerial character. His preaching was evangelical. The *cross* was the motive power of his ministry. The *atonement* was the theme where-with he sought to move sinners to repentance, and Christians to advancement in holiness—to a more implicit obedience and a more unwavering faith. Planting himself on the great truths of Calvinistic Theology, he made them practical by argument, illustration, and persuasive oratory. He delighted greatly in the devotional songs of David, and loved to repeat the resounding strains of Isaiah. He was a learned Theologian, but not a dogmatical expositor. Especially did he venerate the long avouched standards and long approved polity of his own Church. These he defended against the perversion, interpolation, and infusion of secular philosophy.

He was a regular attendant upon the judicatories of the Church, where his experience and business habits made him useful.

In the fall of 1862, his health began to fail. He was at first seized with something like paralysis. Renewed attacks were attended with convulsions, which, for a few days after each attack, left his fine intellect clouded to such an extent as to make it necessary to place him under the care and professional skill of his friend, Dr. Green, at the Georgia State Asylum, with the hope that isolation, treatment and rest, might restore him. But his hope proved to be vain. At irregular intervals the convulsions returned, each one of them followed for several days by a disordered action of his mental powers. This continued gradually and surely, undermining his constitution, till on the second of September, 1865, this long and painful disease terminated his life.

The loss of the mind of a man so great and so good, is one of the mysteries of Providence which inspires awe and trembling, and the solution of which, it were folly to undertake. We only know that the Lord of all the earth will do right, and that it is our duty, humbly to submit to the most inscrutable of His dispensations. He died suddenly and without pain; and whilst his death is a great loss to the Church, the College and the country, it is to him ineffible gain. His work was done. God called him; and whilst we are bereaved, he is transferred to the upper Sanctuary. We rejoice in the conviction of his acceptance by God, through the merits of his Son. The fruits of his life are proofs quite sufficient for this conviction. His example lives, and we hope to emulate his virtues.

He left a widow, Miss Ruth Sterett, to whom he was united in marriage, July 11th, 1834. They had no offspring.

In addition to the preceding memorial. The Board of Trustees of Oglethorpe University, at their first meeting subsequent to his decease, adopted the following note and resolutions:

“We would not intrude into the presence of his heart-stricken wife with unavailing condolence, and would leave her rather to the soothing influence of time, to the sweet memories of her husband, and to the healing grace of God. We cannot, however, forbear to express our sympathy for her in the time of her deep affliction. We would lay our hand gently upon her aching heart and say: ‘Peace bestill—he is not dead but sleepeth—his spirit is in the bosom of God, and his body shall rise again glorified at the last day.’”

“*Resolved*, That in the death of Dr. Talmage, the Church and the State have sustained the loss of a wise and patriotic citizen—a laborious and successful teacher—a distinguished patron of letters, a devout Christian, and an able and evangelical minister of the Gospel. His removal was an act of Divine Sovereignty, at which we feel no spirit of murmuring, and in which we desire humbly to acquiesce. ‘God only is great’ and He alone is merciful. The crowning mercy of Dr. Talmage’s life was his death.

“*Resolved* that this *Testimonial* be entered upon the minutes of the *Board of Trust*, and that the Secretary furnish Mrs. Talmage with a copy of the same.”

The Synod of Georgia at its annual Sessions in Augusta, Ga., October, 1865, adopted the following minute in reference to this afflictive event:

“This Synod, in the Providence of God, is called upon to perform the painful duty of recording the death of the Rev. Samuel K. Talmage, D. D., who departed this life on the 2nd day of September, 1865, in the sixty-seventh year of his age. This event has filled the heart of the Church with emotions of unmingled grief and sorrow, and deplored as a public calamity by the intelligence and virtue of the country. His high social qualities as a gentleman, displayed in the affability of his manners, and the charms of his conversation, his fine classical attainments, and extensive erudition as a scholar, his signal administrative abilities as

President of Oglethorp University, the depth and fervor of his piety as a Christian, his fidelity, diligence and popularity as a pastor, and his rich instructions and fervid eloquence as a preacher of righteousness ; these are a few of the leading facts and features in the life and character of our honored father who has entered upon his rest and reward. It being impossible on this occasion to discuss the rare combinations of gifts and graces, which belonged to our lamented and beloved brother, therefore,

“*Resolved*, 1st, That this Synod devoutly recognize the sovereignty of God in this painful affliction, and in the final change of this eminent and faithful minister of the Gospel.

“*Resolved*, 2nd, That an expression of profound gratitude is due from us to the Great Head of the Church, for sparing so long this laborious and devoted servant in the field of usefulness which he occupied, and that we will ever cherish his memory, and emulate his pure and exalted virtues.

“*Resolved*, 3d, That all the members of this Synodical Assembly interpret this providential dispensation as a solemn call from the skies to greater sacrifices and more abundant labors in our Master’s vineyard, that we may be ready always to render up our account with joy.

“*Resolved*, 4th, That we unitedly tender our warmest sympathies to the widow of the deceased ; and that our prayers will ever ascend for grace to comfort and sustain her in this hour of deep affliction.”