

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.

*B. B.*  
BY WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

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VOLUME IX.

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NEW YORK:  
ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,  
530 BROADWAY.  
1869.

His views of the relations between Christianity and Civil Government, and of the duty of nations to own Christ as King, naturally led him to comment on civil constitutions and the conduct of public men, so that many would have charged him with bringing politics into the pulpit. Those who heard him only on such occasions might have gone away with the notion that his preaching was too polemical and political to be edifying. If so, I am sure they would have done Dr. Willson injustice. The staple of his preaching, as I have reason to believe, was the simple Gospel, and though his fine fancy might sometimes carry him into the region of speculation, when treating matters pertaining to "the Church of the future," yet his sermons were, in general, and in a high degree, scriptural in structure as well as sentiment.

His published discourses, if collected, would make a handsome volume. Most, if not all, of them were written out for the press, after their delivery in the pulpit. None of them, however, would give the mere reader a proper conception of his abilities as a Preacher. Though he wrote a great deal on various subjects, scientific and theological, the style of his sermons is somewhat stiff and dry, as if the author was not much accustomed to handling the pen,—a fact all the more remarkable, considering his copious command and felicitous use of language on the platform and in the pulpit. I will only add that the savour of his ministry still survives in this region, and his memory is cherished by many who "for a season rejoiced in his light," though they were never under his pastoral care.

Believe me, very affectionately yours,  
JOHN FORSYTH.

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### GILBERT McMASTER, D.D.\*

1807—1864.

GILBERT McMASTER, a son of James and Mary (Crawford) McMaster, was born in the Parish of Saintfield, a few miles from Belfast, Ireland, on the 13th of February, 1778. His ancestors, who held a respectable standing in both civil and religious life, and who were distinguished for their uncompromising adherence to the system of doctrine, worship and Church polity, of the period of the Westminster Assembly, and for their hatred of all political usurpation and oppression, removed from Scotland to Ireland about forty years before his birth. His father was a man of intelligent and earnest piety, and of singular and even scrupulous probity of character. His mother was very respectably connected, was a person of superior intellect and great force of character, of fine womanly virtues and graces and of an exemplary religious life.

The subject of this sketch enjoyed the advantages of a most faithful Christian education; and the appropriate fruits of this culture began, in due season, to appear. From an early age he was the subject of serious thoughts and impressions which never left him. These, with the advance of years and the development of his natural faculties, became gradually more clear, constant, habitual and controlling; issuing in a settled religious character of great exemplariness, and, about the eighteenth year of his age, in a public profession of religion;—a profession sustained with much uniformity and consistency by the whole tenor of his subsequent life.

\* MS. from his son, Rev. Dr. E. D. Macmaster.

In the year 1791 his father came, with his family, to the United States, and, after a short sojourn near Wilmington, Del., settled as a farmer in Franklin County, Pa. Here Gilbert prosecuted a liberal course of study—which indeed had been commenced at an earlier period—at the Franklin Academy, then under the Rectorship of the late James Ross, LL.D., a distinguished teacher of the Latin and Greek classics, and author of the Grammars which bear his name. Here he remained about two years; then spent a year and a half as a tutor in Shipponsburg; and then (in 1801) entered Jefferson College. There he continued about two years and a half, an earnest and successful student, nearly completing the usual curriculum of studies. Some temporary pecuniary embarrassment, to which he was subjected, induced him to leave the College for a time; and, for reasons not now known, he did not return. By both Mr. Watson and Dr. Dunlap, who successively presided over the College during his connection with it, he was treated with marked kindness, of which he ever afterwards cherished a grateful remembrance. The latter gentleman sought, by the offer of a Tutorship, to engage him in the service of the College, with a view to a permanent connection with the Faculty; but he preferred other prospects.

On leaving College Mr. McMaster entered upon a course of medical studies, which being completed, he was regularly admitted to the profession in 1806, and settled himself as a Physician in the borough of Mercer, Pa. Here he was successfully engaged in medical practice for about two years and a half.

The thoughts and wishes of Mr. McMaster had been early directed towards the Gospel Ministry. But, from the very high estimate which he had formed of the sacredness of the office and the qualifications necessary to it, in connection with his own self-distrust, he shrank from the idea of assuming its responsibilities, and therefore entered the medical profession. The duty of devoting himself to the ministry had been, through a course of years, often and earnestly urged upon him by his clerical and other friends, and the subject had deeply exercised his own mind. At length, in September, 1807, the late Dr. Alexander McLeod, of New York, and Dr. Samuel B. Wylie, of Philadelphia, sought an interview with him at Pittsburg, and informed him that the Presbytery of which they were leading members, had, at an informal conference, resolved to exercise their Presbyterial authority, and require him to yield his scruples and prepare to enter the ministry. In this decision he recognized the voice of Providence; and, as his studies had always had a special direction to the various branches of theological learning, after passing the customary parts of trial, he was, in October, 1807, licensed to preach the Gospel. Having declined some other calls, he was ordained to the work of the ministry in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and settled as Pastor of the Congregation in Duaneburgh, N. Y., on the 8th of August, 1808.

From his settlement at Duaneburgh he continued to minister to that church for a period of nearly thirty-two years; holding a distinguished position in his own community and in the friendly and respectful regards of other denominations, building up a large and flourishing congregation, and exerting a benign and powerful influence over the region. In 1828 he was honoured with the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Union College. In 1840 he accepted a call from the church in Princeton, Ind., and removed to that place, leaving his former charge, for what appeared to him sufficient reasons, amidst the universal and strongly expressed regrets, not only of his own congregation, and others of the same

ecclesiastical connection with himself, but of the whole community, of all denominations and classes. At Princeton he continued usefully and pleasantly employed in his pastoral work for six years. In no period had he more evident tokens of the blessing of God than he enjoyed during the whole time of his residence there, in numerous accessions to the full communion of the church, in the edification of a more than usually religious people, in the establishment of kindly relations among the different churches of the place, and the extending of a strong moral and religious influence over the whole region far beyond the immediate sphere of his personal labours. An enfeebled state of health compelled him, in 1846, to withdraw from the quiet scene of these pleasant and fruitful labours, and to demit the pastoral charge of a warmly attached, grateful and affectionate people. From the time of his leaving Princeton, he resided, until his decease, with his son, the Rev. Dr. Erasmus D. MacMaster, first at Oxford, Ohio, and afterwards in the city of New Albany, Ind. He died, after a painful illness of nine days, on the 17th of March, 1854, closing a consistent Christian life with Christian dignity and composure.

In June, 1863, Dr. MacMaster was married at Cannonsburg, Pa., to Jane, daughter of Benjamin Brown, belonging to a family of high respectability. With this lady, who entered with the deepest interest into all his views, and was every way suited to the place she occupied, he lived most happily till the end of his days. He had eight children,—four sons and four daughters. Two of his sons\* are distinguished ministers in the Presbyterian Church. One is a farmer, and one an editor.

Mrs. MacMaster died, greatly lamented, at the residence of her son, the Rev. Algernon Sydney MacMaster, D.D., in Poland, Ohio, March 15, 1860. Of his daughters, the eldest died in infancy; the other three in mature age, after adorning their Christian profession by a most exemplary Christian life.

The following is a list of Dr. MacMaster's publications:—

The Duty of Nations: A Sermon on a Day of Public Thanksgiving, -  
 The Embassy of Reconciliation, with its Occasion and Ministry: A Sermon delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. James Milligan in the Church of Coldenham, N. Y., - - - - - 1812

\*One of them, the Rev. ERASMUS D. MACMASTER, D.D., has died since this sketch was written. He was born in Mercer, Pa., in February, 1804; was graduated at Union College, Schenectady, in 1827; studied Theology under the direction of his father; was licensed to preach in the Reformed Presbyterian Church in 1829, and was ordained to the full work of the ministry in the Presbyterian Church in February, 1831, when he became Pastor of the Ballston (W. Y.) Presbyterian Church. Here he continued, an eminently faithful and acceptable Minister, until 1838, when the great interest which he felt in the cause of Western Education, led him to resign his charge and accept the Presidency of the College at Hanover, Ind. This office he held until 1845, when, in consequence of some unexpected embarrassments in connection with the College, he resigned his place and accepted the Presidency of Miami University, Oxford, O. After more than four years of intense and complicated labour in this institution, he reluctantly accepted a call to the Professorship of Systematic Theology in the Seminary at New Albany, Ind. After a few years this Seminary, owing to various unpropitious circumstances, ceased to exist, and in place of it came two others,—one at Danville, Ky., and one at Chicago, Ill. To the Professorship of Theology in this latter institution he was appointed by the General Assembly of 1866. He was inaugurated in September of that year, and entered upon his labours with great zeal and fidelity, and with every prospect of the best success; but before the close of the year his earthly course was finished. He died in perfect peace, after a brief illness, on the 11th of December. He possessed a massive intellect,—clear, acute, powerful; an unwavering fidelity to his own convictions of right; a kindly and benevolent spirit, and an earnest and devoted piety. In any community in which his lot might have been cast he would have been a man of mark.

† JAMES MILLIGAN, a son of John and Margaret Milligan, was born in Dalmeilington, Ayrshire, Scotland, August 7, 1785. His early tendencies were decidedly religious

An Essay in Defence of Some Fundamental Doctrines of Christianity, (an octavo volume,) . . . . .	1815
The Shorter Catechism Analyzed, with Proofs from Scripture, (three editions,) . . . . .	1815
An Apology for the Book of Psalms: in Five Letters, addressed to the Friends of Union in the Church of God, (a duodecimo volume, four editions), . . . . .	1818
Ministerial Work and Sufficiency: A Sermon preached at the Ordination of the Rev. John McMaster, in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Schenectady, . . . . .	1832
The Moral Character of Civil Government: Considered with reference to the Political Institutions of the United States; in Four Letters, . . . . .	1832
A Brief Inquiry into the Civil Relations of Reformed Presbyterians, according to their Judicative Acts: Addressed to those of that Communion, . . . . .	1833
Speech in Illustration of a Report on the Doctrine of Civil Government: in the General Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the city of Pittsburg, . . . . .	1835
The Obligations of the American Scholar to his Country and the World: An Address delivered at Hanover College, . . . . .	1841
Thoughts on the Union of the Church, . . . . .	1846
Speech in Defence of the Westminster Confession of Faith against the Charge of Erastianism: in the General Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Pittsburg, . . . . .	1847

and, at the age of fourteen, he was a communicant in the Established Church. At sixteen he migrated to America, on account of being dissatisfied with the Government of his native country. He made his way to Westmoreland County, Pa., where he had a half-brother settled, and he became a partner with him in a mercantile establishment. Though he had belonged to the National Church in Scotland, he was led now, as the result of diligent inquiry, to cast in his lot with the Covenanters; and, by the advice of Dr. Black, and some others in whom he was disposed to confide, he determined to abandon his secular employment, and, if possible, obtain a liberal education. He, accordingly, entered Jefferson College; but his funds were very quickly exhausted, in consequence of which he went to Greensburg, and opened a school there, which he taught with good success for eighteen months. He then resumed his place in College, joining the same class he had left, and graduating in 1809 with the first honour. On leaving College he went to Philadelphia, and placed himself, as a theological student, under the care of the Rev. Dr. Samuel B. Wylie, and, at the same time, was a Teacher of Languages in the University of Pennsylvania. He was licensed to preach by the Northern Presbytery in 1811, and was ordained Pastor of Coldenham Congregation, Orange County, N. Y., by the same Presbytery, in 1812. During his residence here he performed much missionary labour in the State of New York, and organized many congregations which have since become large and influential. In 1818 he resigned his charge, and was installed Pastor of the Scotch Covenanter Congregation in Ryegate, Vt. Here he continued labouring with great diligence, and encountering many hardships, for nearly a quarter of a century. During this period he laboured throughout the whole region, and made many tours into Canada to visit poor Covenanters scattered through the Provinces. He was intensely Anti-slavery in his views, and was always ready to show his faith by his works. He was translated from Ryegate to New Alexandria, Pa., in 1839; thence to Eden, Ill., in 1848; and, in 1855, he demitted his pastoral charge, and, from that time till the close of life, resided with his sons in Pennsylvania and Michigan. He died at the house of his son, in Southfield, near Detroit, Mich., on the 2d of January, 1862, aged about 77. In 1820 he was married to Mary, daughter of Robert Trumbull, a soldier of the Revolution. They had six children,—five sons and one daughter. Three of the sons are in the ministry of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and the daughter was married to a minister of the same communion. He was honoured with the degree of Doctor of Divinity; but when or by what College I am unable to ascertain. He published a Defence of Infant Baptism, in a volume of three hundred pages; A Narrative of the Secession Controversy in Vermont; and a Sermon on Grace and Free Agency, and another on the Prospects of a True Christian in a Sinful World. He was a man of decided ability, intense industry and extensive usefulness.

- The Great Subject of the Christian Ministry: A Discourse at the Opening of the General Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the city of Philadelphia, . . . . . 1852
- The Upright Man in Life and at Death: A Discourse delivered on the Occasion of the Decease of the Rev Samuel Brown Wylie, D.D., 1852

In addition to the above, he published various ecclesiastical papers, articles in several periodicals, &c.

I quote from the tractate on Civil Government the author's statement of the fundamental principles of his theory, which may serve both to indicate his habit of thought, and to exhibit his views on a subject which he held to be one of great moment,—the application of Christianity to the constitution and administration of political society. It is as follows:—

“POSITION I.—Civil Government is the ordinance of God, as the Creator and Governor of the world, for good to man, founded in the law of our social nature, the principles of which law are the standard of its actual constitution and administration.

“POSITION II.—Political and Ecclesiastical society are essentially different from each other, in their nature, government, and immediate ends.

“POSITION III.—It is not the mere fact of the existence of a political power, but the possession by it of those attributes which fit it to answer the ends of its institution, that makes it the moral ordinance of God.

“POSITION IV.—Mere defects in high and ultimate moral attainments, if fundamental attributes be in conformity with, and in nothing contrary to, moral principle, will not render illegitimate a constitution of government.

“POSITION V.—Every nation in its civil character, to which the Revelation of the Son of God as Immanuel, is made, and which, according to that revelation, is summoned to submit to Him, is bound to confess his name, not merely in words, but substantially really, and practically, as Lord of all.

“POSITION VI.—In perfect accordance with the last position, it is held that until a nation make it so by its own deed, the recognition of no principle peculiar to the system of grace can be considered as necessary to the validity of its actual constitution as a moral ordinance of God.”

Each of these positions is illustrated in a clear and concise discussion. This is followed by like discussions under the three subsequent heads:—“The Moral Estimate of the Political Institutions of the United States”; “Character of the Federal Government”; “Objections Considered”;—the object of the whole being the vindication of the political institutions of the country from the charge of irreligion and immorality.

I had some personal acquaintance with Dr. McMaster during the latter years of his life, which has left upon my mind a deep impression of his superior worth and ability. The qualities which seemed to me most patent in his character were his great modesty and utter absence of all pretension; his thoughtful and benevolent spirit, disposing him to all kind offices; his intellectual vigour and comprehensiveness, and large and varied resources; and a perfect simplicity of thought and feeling and manner, that gave complexion to all his external demonstrations. I never heard him preach but once—his discourse then, as I remember it, was of a highly evangelical type, was constructed with logical accuracy and full of weighty, consecutive thought, and was delivered with characteristic simplicity, showing that the dependence for its effect was upon the matter rather than the manner. He impressed me altogether as a man of mark, and fully justified to my mind the high estimate of his character which I had formed from living in the same region with him, and from the testimony of those with whom he had been in intimate relations for many years.

## FROM THE REV. ERASMUS D. MACMASTER, D.D.

NEW ALBANY, December 31, 1855.

Reverend and dear Doctor: While I am duly sensible of the delicacy of the task which your request has imposed upon me, I am prompted to comply with it, as well by a feeling of filial reverence and affection as by an unwillingness to decline what you so kindly desire. I confess I do this the more willingly, as there are some things touching my father's relation to the Reformed Presbyterian Church which require to be specially noticed in order to a correct appreciation of his character.

The whole ecclesiastical position, standing, and, I may say, character, of Dr. McMaster arose out of, and were determined by, the idea that the Church of God is one in all times, a spiritual Body having perpetual succession, a moral person possessing personal identity; and hence that, whatever attainments may have been made in the public profession of the Christian doctrine, order and worship, and whatever obligations may have been in this behalf assumed by the Church, or by any branch of the church, in any preceding times, it is incumbent upon the Church, or such branch of the Church, in succeeding times, to recognize, to bring down, and, along with later attainments, in a progressive course of moral and religious reformation, to transmit to the generation following, and through it to the ages to come; and that it is only thus that the Church can properly realize her own high character as "the pillar and ground of the truth." To understand, therefore, the views under which he acted in his connection with the Reformed Presbyterian Church, it is necessary briefly to refer to the historical relations of this Ecclesiastical Body. †

The Reformed Presbyterians in America, though fifty years ago few in numbers, and widely scattered through the country, having only a few organized congregations, and some smaller societies not yet organized, Dr. McMaster held to be the legitimate descendants and proper representatives of that minority in Scotland, who, adhering to the principles of the Presbyterian Reformation in that country prior to 1649, dissented from the Revolution settlement of William III. on account of its Erastian assumption of dominion over and in the Church; and of those earlier witnesses for the truth, under the two preceding reigns of Charles II, and James II. who, openly and boldly denouncing the usurpation by those tyrants of supremacy in all ecclesiastical cases, spurning all "tolerations" and "indulgences" proceeding from this usurpation, and at last because of their subversion of the Constitution of the State as well as of the Church, and their oppression and persecution of the true religion, disowning, as on the same grounds did the whole nation a few years later, their civil authority, were hunted through the land and given as sheep to the slaughter. "It was felt," says Dr. McMaster, speaking of the Church in America before the Revolution in 1776, "by the consistent friends of the Reformation, that the waters of the Atlantic had neither sanctified the Erastianism of the British Establishment, nor as to themselves absolved them from the authority of Messiah's claims. To the principles of civil and religious liberty, of the Church's spiritual independence of all secular power, and to that vital truth, of such extended practical bearing, the alone universal Headship of the Christ of God, their adherence, as at other historical periods of deep interest, was unshrinking."

The American Revolution, which dissolved the political connection of this country with Great Britain, and which the Reformed Presbyterians had hailed with joy, and, according to their numbers and means, efficiently promoted, forever separated the United States from all subjection to an Erastian and immoral Crown. But, before that auspicious event, the different parties into which

the Presbyterians of the Old World had been unhappily divided had established themselves in the New. To some extent, different historical relations and traditions, different habits of thinking and feeling on religious and ecclesiastical matters, different usages, and perhaps mutual misapprehensions, had grown up; which, though all parties would have held them to be insufficient to justify the making of divisions in the household of faith, yet stood in the way of a reunion after these divisions had taken place. The principles which underlay, were embraced in, and gave character to, the Presbyterian Reformation, Dr. M. thought were best represented by the Old Dissenters from the Revolution Church of Scotland, known, from their adherence to the Solemn League and Covenant, as "the strict Covenanters." The circumstances of the several Presbyterian Bodies in this country, since the era of the American Revolution, are indeed widely different from those of their predecessors in a former age and in another hemisphere. This fact Dr. M. clearly apprehended, and has every where in his writings strongly represented. But the great principles of the Presbyterian Reformation, divested of all which is local, temporary and incidental, he held to be general in their import, and of universal application in every age and in every nation. To the course of the Covenanted Reformation his family were, from education and principle, attached. The Christian heroism of the Scottish martyrs had enkindled, at an early age, in his young mind, a burning love of religious and civil liberty. In his early manhood he addressed himself to the study of the history of the Reformation in the land of his fathers, and of the principal controversial writings of the times. "The system of Reformed Presbyterianism," says Dr. M., "appeared to me to occupy more decidedly than did any other the ground of the martyrs. By it the Bible system of doctrine, order, discipline and worship seemed to be more consistently held. Especially the great principle of the Headship of Christ over the Church, and over all things for the Church's sake, appeared to me to be more consistently exhibited in it than elsewhere. The clear, full and explicit acknowledgment of this great principle seemed to me to comprehend at once a proper recognition of the rights of God, and security for the rights of man; and to furnish a ground of assurance of the ultimate union of the divided Church upon a proper basis; and of the well-being both of the Church and of States. Such was the light in which Reformed Presbyterianism presented itself to me, and, without much of consultation with flesh and blood, I embraced it."

Dr. McMaster regarded the Presbyterian Reformation of the seventeenth century in Scotland as an inchoate movement arrested almost at its beginning; whose particular *measures*, some of which he thought marked by grave errors and mistakes, belonged exclusively to that Church and Nation and to those times. But in respect to the essential *principles* of that movement and the prevalent *spirit* by which it was pervaded, he was more than willing to be regarded as a follower of the Scottish Covenanters even of "the stricter sort."

I have thought it right that Dr. McMaster's own views of his ecclesiastical position and relations should be truly and fairly given. Of these views I am the reporter, not the critic. But I may be permitted to say that, whatever in either hemisphere there may have been of error and mistake in its management, the time draws on when "the good old cause" of the Scottish Covenanters will lift up its head in the Church and among the Nations.

The ordinary course of Dr. McMaster's pastoral ministration was in conformity with the customary order of many of the Scottish Presbyterian Churches. Usually the Sabbath morning service was an exposition of some Book of Scripture in course, with doctrinal and practical observations, accompanied by the ordinary devotional exercises. The subject of the afternoon's discourse was either some branch of the morning's exposition, selected for



fuller development, elucidation and application; some head of Christian doctrine, or some theme suggested by the various circumstances and occasions of his congregation or of the times. These services of the Sabbath he supplemented, during the week, by regular pastoral visitation and by biblical and catechetical instruction of the young at stated times. His usual written preparation for the pulpit consisted only of short notes, filling from two to four pages of a small duodecimo volume, and briefly marking the heads of his discussion, and the more important particulars, with references to apposite Scriptures for illustration, confirmation and enforcement. His subject, thus briefly noted, he carefully thought out in its matter, relying on the occasion of the delivery for the language.

As a Preacher, he was distinguished for the clearness of his method, the fullness of his Scriptural expositions, the solidity and abundance of his matter, and the appropriateness, tenderness, and richness of his application of Christian doctrine to the diversified exigencies of the Christian life. While his presence was commanding, his manner dignified, his voice full and good, his language always correct and appropriate, and his delivery often impressive, yet he judged the enticing words of an over-wrought and excessively ornate rhetoric to be out of place in discussing the momentous themes of the pulpit, and he sought not the lighter graces of a fascinating oratory. To the serious-minded, the earnest, the inquiring, seeking to profit by the Divine Word, and to the old saint far advanced in his pilgrimage to the city of God, though often found in different ecclesiastical connections, his ministrations, especially during the last twelve or fifteen years of his ministry, were peculiarly acceptable, and to many such, in various parts of the Church, there is reason to believe that they were the means of great blessing.

In the business of the Ecclesiastical Judicatories and the general affairs of the Church, though very retiring in his disposition, he always bore a principal part. The General Synod, as well as some of the Subordinate Judicatories, expressed in strong terms their high estimate of his character, their affectionate and reverential respect for his person, and their sense of the loss they sustained in his death.

He was throughout life and habitually a man of reading and of thought. His information was various and extensive. A general scholar of good attainments in the different departments of learning, he possessed a special and intimate knowledge of Theology, the Constitution, Polity, and History of the Church, and of Ethical and Politico-ethical Philosophy. All who knew him acknowledged his worth as a gentleman and a scholar.

His character, habits, and manners were in many respects more those of an Irish or Scottish gentleman than of a Cis-Atlantic. But, brought to this country while he was yet a child and growing up under its formative influences, while he retained an affectionate regard for the land of his nativity and for that of his forefathers, in all his controlling predilections he was intensely American. The principles of the old British Whigs were part of his ancestral inheritance; and from his youth he was an ardent admirer of the political institutions of the United States, of which his tractate on that subject is a defence against the charge of irreligion and immorality; and in the political affairs of the country he always took an intelligent and lively interest.

That Dr. McMaster was capable, in a wider sphere of action and under external circumstances more propitious, of achieving as a public man more than he actually accomplished, those who knew him well, believe. The extent and the measure, however, of the influence exerted by an unobtrusive and retiring man of thought, who has not occupied the most conspicuous position in public affairs, by means of his private and quiet intercourse with other men,

cannot be known with precision. The springs of the mountain fastnesses feed the rivers and the sea.

Leaving to yourself and your other correspondents the general estimate of his character, I may be permitted to say that Dr. M. was, in all his intercourse with his fellow-men, true, just, honourable and magnanimous. In social life he was conversable, genial and very attractive. In his special friendships he was most constant, faithful and generous. In his family, while his word was law, towards the wife of his bosom, a woman in whom the heart of her husband did safely trust, he cherished a most tender and affectionate respect, and to his children he was a revered and loving father. If he had faults, as all men have faults, I had no eye to see them when he was living, and I have no heart to remember them now that they are buried in his grave.

I may say, in concluding these reminiscences, that Dr. McMaster, having in early youth, and probably in yet earlier childhood, committed himself to God as his Covenant God in Christ, was practically religious throughout life, feeding in himself and others the springs of that life which is hid with Christ in God. His piety was eminently manly, as well as Christian. During the last few years of his pilgrimage, those who were near him could not fail to observe a marked and delightful maturing in him of the graces of the Christian character. The last two or three years, the Scriptures were more than ever his daily study. The few weeks immediately preceding his last illness, he addressed himself anew to a careful study of the Prophecies of Isaiah, in which he expressed the deepest interest. The animating visions in the sixtieth, sixty-first, and sixty-second chapters of that Prophet, of the glory of the Church in the accession of the Gentiles; the great office of Christ in her redemption; and the satisfying joy of Zion in her union with Jehovah, were the last passages of the Scriptures which he read in the morning worship of the family, only a few days before his departure to enter into the joy of his Lord. His prayers in the family worship, the last few months, and especially the last few weeks, for himself and his family, for the Church and the world, were very comprehensive, fervent, solemn and impressive. His death was every way worthy of his life. Calm, self-possessed, confiding, he went home to the house of his God on high. We had the fullest confidence, when we saw him passing in dignified tranquillity through the dark valley, that it was to enter the gates of immortal life.

With great respect and esteem,

Yours most truly,

E. D. MACMASTER.

FROM THE REV. T. W. J. WYLIE, D.D.

PHILADELPHIA, November 5, 1861.

Rev. and dear Sir: The affectionate regard with which I cherish the memory of the late Rev. Dr. Gilbert McMaster overcomes the feeling that I am quite incompetent to do justice to his character, and leads me to submit the following reminiscences to your disposal. I am not without the hope that even this imperfect delineation may excite greater admiration of the power and excellence of the Spirit's sanctifying grace, and lead some one to imitate the virtues of a person so pure and noble as he was.

Dr. McMaster was a frequent and always welcome visitor at my father's house, from the days of my childhood, and I had the happiness, when a boy, of making a short visit to his own retired country home. As he was so prominent a Minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and so intimate a friend of my father, it was natural that my attention should be closely directed to him. The impression was early made upon my mind, which time

and reflection have only deepened, that he was "one of Nature's noblemen," "a holy man of God."

At the period of my earliest recollection of him, Dr. McMaster was a person of portly and commanding aspect. Though corpulent, there was nothing languid in his appearance; but the sprightliness of his manner and the firmness of his step indicated that the mental was not subservient to the physical organization, but held it in complete control. He was remarkably prompt in all he undertook. His commanding appearance was sustained by a dignity of manner which never yielded to querulousness, while the nobleness of a warm and generous mind rendered him exceedingly agreeable in social intercourse with all who enjoyed his friendship. He took great pleasure in the society of men of learning, with whom his own well cultivated mind prepared him to converse with ease and propriety. There was sometimes a reserve, and occasionally an abruptness, in his manner, among those with whom he was not very intimate; but this, I doubt not, arose from the effort to overcome his native modesty, while the unobtrusiveness of his own character caused him to view forwardness with displeasure, and repel it with severity. He was very affable with those whom he esteemed and loved, but his sound and honest heart rendered him averse to affect for any an interest which he did not feel. There was a delicacy in his kindness which required the quietude of the family circle for its exercise and evidence. On two occasions, Dr. McMaster was, for a considerable time, in our house. Both these were seasons of affliction, arising, in the one case, from a severe accident my father had met with, and which disabled him for some time from preaching, and in the other from my father's death. In both instances, Dr. McMaster manifested a warm, deep, soothing sympathy, which we can never forget. There was a simplicity and unaffectedness in his kindness, which rendered it most acceptable. He was warmly attached to my father, and, when he called to see him during his last illness, he suddenly went out of the room, and, without returning, shortly after left the house. On following him, I found him quite overcome, and he told me that he felt unable to utter any parting words, as he had the impression that he would never meet my father again on earth,—an expectation which proved sadly correct.

As a Preacher, Dr. McMaster was thoroughly evangelical in doctrine and affluent in ideas, but his style was somewhat involved, and his utterance, though impressive, was not animated. His composition was ponderous. Like a heavily loaded carriage, he moved slowly and carefully. He required the close attention of his hearers, but he richly rewarded it. He was averse to display, especially in the solemnities of the pulpit, and was reluctant to submit himself to the public gaze. "I am no *talker*," was his reply, when urged to speak on some public occasion.

As an Author, Dr. McMaster did much to benefit the Christian community which his writings reached. Several of his Sermons and Addresses were printed by request, and display the characteristics of a well-stored and discriminating mind. His Analysis of the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Divines has passed through several editions, and, notwithstanding a number of publications, of the same kind, have since been issued, it still retains its value. A Controversial work occasioned by the peculiar views of Elias Smith, issued early in his ministerial career, presents a discussion of some of the most important doctrines in Theology. His "Apology for the Book of Psalms" is undoubtedly the most valuable of his works. It is designed to show the suitableness of this portion of Sacred Scripture for the use of the people of God in singing his praise, in every age, and in every land; but it is free from the spirit which pervades many publications with this avowed object. While Dr. McMaster was strongly attached to the principles and usages of

the Reformed Presbyterian Church, of which he was a prominent Minister, he properly appreciated and applied that article in her terms of Communion, which requires "a recognition of all as brethren in every land, who hold a Scriptural testimony in behalf of the attainments and cause of the Reformation, against all that is contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness." The generous instincts of an enlightened and elevated development of Divine grace led him to love the brotherhood of saints, and to seek, on a broad and solid basis, the union in one organization of all evangelical churches. Some of the ripest and most valuable productions of his pen have reference to this subject.

During the discussions which distracted the Reformed Presbyterian Church, in regard to the moral character of the United States Government, he issued several valuable Essays in which this subject is treated with the acumen of a Lawyer, the profound thoughtfulness of a Statesman, and the conscientious, reverential spirit of the Christian. He did much to bring the Reformed Presbyterian Church to the position she now occupies on this subject, asserting the duty of the Civil Commonwealth to conform its constitution and the administration of its laws to the Scriptural standard, and recognizing in the political system of this land such elements as authorize obedient subjects of the Mediatorial Crown to participate in their obligations and advantages.

Dr. McMaster excelled as a letter-writer. His correspondence was very extensive, and embraced many persons of eminence in the religious and political world, both in this country and Europe. His views of current events, as presented in this way, are exceedingly interesting, and a collection of his letters, I am sure, would form a very valuable publication.

Dr. McMaster's last days were spent in delightful serenity in the house of his accomplished son, the Rev. E. D. MacMaster, brightened by the companionship of the wife of his youth, one of the kindest and purest of Christian women, and sustained by the respectful love of his sons, and the soothing attentions of his two amiable daughters. The habitual modesty and reserve of his character continued unaltered to the last, but his long, self sacrificing, useful and holy life was his best testimony for God.

With great respect truly yours,

T. W. J. WYLIE

FROM THE REV. WILLIAM JAMES, D.D.

ALBANY, June 28, 1854

My dear Sir: In the winter of 1831 I attended an Installation at Schenectady, in which all the services, including the Sermon and two Charges, were performed by Dr. McMaster, then in the fifty-fourth year of his age. As his residence, from the commencement of his ministry in 1808, had been within twenty miles of my native city, from my boyhood I had often heard of him as the Corypheus of his own small denomination, and at the same time as being not less remarkable for his general character, than for the zeal with which he maintained the peculiarities of the Covenanters. This was my first sight of the man, and the only occasion on which I ever saw him in the pulpit. My knowledge of him indeed was never intimate, being derived from casual and not very frequent interviews. But his qualities were of a cast which it required no nice analysis to discover, nor a special intimacy to appreciate.

In person he was large, well formed, and of a full habit, with an open countenance and ruddy, the effect of which was heightened by contrast with the whiteness of his hair, a full head of which he retained to the last. He had large eyes, of a dark, hazel colour, with a grayish tinge; and a bass-toned voice, which added sensibly to the weight of whatever fell from his lips. The

impression made by the nobleness of his person and countenance was increased by a natural urbanity, which (though any thing but a modish man) appeared even in the general neatness of his dress, and equally in the style of his social intercourse. Underneath the antique sentiments in which he had been educated, and the professional tendency of his mind to subjects of grave import, there was a large vein of masculine sense, and of sympathy with the common ideas of mankind, which made him quite at home in general society; and indeed there was about him such an air of secular respectability, that a person, not knowing him to be a clergyman, might easily suppose he was some eminent civilian.

Next to these more obvious traits of manner and appearance, the orderly method and discipline of his mind, as apparent in his conversation, could not fail to attract the notice of a stranger. He soon discovers that he is talking with a person of scholarly aptitudes and liberal acquirements; with one who is critical in his use of language, ever ready for a discussion, and particularly versed in the conduct of one. All things considered, person and voice, as well as style and matter, he concludes very certainly that this portly and high-minded gentleman, buried all his life in an out-of-the-way country parish, is very far from the position which nature designed for him. The remark probably was common among his acquaintances that he was a man far more in himself than he had opportunity to show in action. Accomplished in all that pertained to the literature of the Bible, and an adept in Ecclesiastical History, his conversation frequently discovered that civil studies also, and particularly those of Law and Politics, were not alien to him. It was probably his interest in physical inquiries which led him to adopt the Medical as his first profession. But our esteem of the man did not arise so much from his actual attainments as from the native character of his mind, which, though not distinguished by the remarkable development of any particular power, was admirable for two things;—for its general strength, and for its happy combination of the speculative with the practical, the latter decidedly predominating. Thoroughly ratiocinative, yet not particularly analytical, while it spared no pains to reach general principles, it wasted none in pursuing refinements. If he wanted originality or brilliancy of conception, he possessed the more important power of clearly comprehending the whole of a subject, and of seeing the relation of all its parts to each other. In reading any of his pieces, you may not be delighted by novelty, but you are always satisfied both with the clearness and the fullness of the general representation. In addition to this, a good classic taste gave a form to his sentiments, which made his conversation as graceful as it was edifying. If he had any natural humour, the disposition to indulge it was generally repressed. Though of a buoyant, cheerful temperament, and very communicative, he was not at all given to anecdote, nor to talk about small things. He was always upon subjects which invited discussion, and which reflected the truth-loving earnestness of his nature. A predominant logical tendency, always doing service to some elevated practical end, is the best idea which can be given of his intellectual character.

But if, as a man of ideas, he won the respect of his acquaintances, that sentiment was greatly heightened by his natural virtues, which were as strongly distinguished, and seemingly as finely balanced, as the powers of his mind. That he was a man of striking virtues was obvious enough, but the crown of these was their symmetry. There was in him especially a remarkable combination of self-reliance with deference to the wisdom of others, of firmness with moderation, of warm and generous instincts with the power of regulating their action. But the word which best expresses what was most noticeable, not in his character alone, but in his very physiognomy, is magnanimity. You could not believe that a man of such a countenance could be capa-

ble of any kind of meanness ; and this was the report which he obtained universally. It was the common remark of those who were frequently associated with him in engagements of a public nature, that, however trying the occasion, he was never known to falter between principle and expediency, and yet that he was always among the first consulted in any emergency which peculiarly required the exercise of wisdom. The same superiority to selfishness and sophistry is seen in his controversial writings, in reading which one is at a loss whether most to admire the firmness with which he maintains his own convictions, or the fairness with which he treats those of his opponents. He was singularly free from those vices, both of mind and character, which one rather expects to find in the representatives of peculiar or unappreciated opinions. It seems almost a solecism—but it is true—that while he was a most loyal servant of one of the smallest religious bodies in Christendom, the unity of the Church seemed about as dear to him as its purity. Witness the following extract from one of his charges to a Pastor, which recalls the spirit of much of his conversation : “For the factions and schisms which deform, weaken and perplex the Church of God, you and I, my brother, are not responsible. They exist independently of us, and most of them had their origin before we were born. But for their evils we shall be held accountable, should we employ our influence, whatever that may be, to perpetuate them. Our actings should be directed to the healing of the wounds of the daughter of Zion,” &c. The explanation of the solecism is, that whilst Dr. M.’s convictions made him zealous for the principles of his own Church, he was by nature a man of the most capacious sympathies. His persistent maintenance of tenets, so little appreciated, only proved that truth was more to him than all temporalities, and that he served his Master for no earthly reward. For one, I should have honoured him less, considering the catholic tendencies of his nature, had he been less decided in his attachment to the principles of his own Church. It is not exactness of opinion on the one hand, nor liberality of feeling on the other, but the union of the two, which constitutes Christian magnanimity ; and it was this, in a rare degree, which distinguished our venerated friend, and which, in connection with his mental endowments, gave him the large place which he held in the estimation of the religious public.

I have not known many clergymen who were so well fitted, both by mental and moral constitution, for exercising a commanding influence in religious society as Dr. McMaster. And I have always regretted that one whom nature seemed to have designed for a leader of men, should have had to pass his life in comparative obscurity. The reason, however, of this comparative seclusion will be obvious enough, if we consider the peculiarity of his ecclesiastical position. Sympathizing profoundly with the ideas and principles of the Scottish Reformation of the Seventeenth Century, believing in the Sovereignty of the Messiah for the Church’s sake over States, as such, as over all other things, he believed also in the corresponding duty of States to acknowledge this Sovereignty in their political constitutions and administrations, and that public covenanting is an ordinance of God to be observed on proper occasions both by Churches and Nations. It was indeed one labour of his life to divest his own Church of a certain exotic character which belonged to it from its historical connection with Scotland, and to bring it, unembarrassed by any thing of a foreign nature, to the maintenance of its own standards in their application to the actual circumstances of our own time and country. But the principles embodied in the Transactions of the Scottish Reformation on the National Covenant of 1580–81, and in the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643–48, divested of all which is merely local, temporary and incidental in their application, he believed to be of universal obligation and of momentous importance ; and therefore, although, as already intimated, no one

could have a more delicate sense of the relations which ought to exist among Christian brethren, or feel more keenly the evil of multiplied divisions, or pray more earnestly for the period when all shall be one, yet, with a view to the revival, in a more auspicious age, of these great "Reformation Principles," he chose to dwell within that enclosure of the great Presbyterian fold, which, with the smallest prospect, perhaps, of any immediate enlargement, was most redolent of the spirit of the Past, and most pregnant, as he doubtless thought, with the destinies of the Future. Though not expecting the extensive prevalence of these principles in his own day, yet believing their general prevalence to be the indispensable condition both of the security and well-being of States in reference to their appropriate ends, and of the reunion of the broken and divided Church, as well as of her proper efficiency in her great mission to the world, while fully acknowledging the fidelity of other and larger churches to other parts of the doctrine of Christ, and rejoicing in their prosperity and usefulness, yet, for the sake of maintaining the above principles, so generally neglected, if not impugned, he chose to abide with that section of the Church universal, which was alone distinguished by their formal and explicit maintenance. In the hope that in a future and better age these principles should obtain a general acceptance, and that over the whole field of God's husbandry their fruit should shake like Lebanon, our venerated friend lived and died—not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, he was persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that he was a stranger and pilgrim on the earth.

Yours very truly,

WILLIAM JAMES.

FROM THE REV. JAMES C. MOFFAT, D.D.,

PROFESSOR IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AT PRINCETON.

PRINCETON, April 29, 1868.

Rev. and dear Sir: My acquaintance with the Rev. Dr. Gilbert McMaster pertains to only the latter part of his life. For a few years—between 1845 and 1849—we both resided in the town of Oxford, Ohio. His son, the Rev. Dr. E. D. MacMaster, was then President of Miami University, where I was a Professor. During that time I saw him often and familiarly. The recollection of his venerable appearance is peculiarly agreeable to me.

In person Dr. McMaster was portly of stature, rather above the medium, and of gait, even in old age, firm and erect. The prevailing expression of his countenance was solemn and tender, which, in social intercourse, frequently relaxed into kindly playfulness.

The feature of his character first to arrest my special notice, was that whereby, although then quite advanced in years, he entered into cordial sympathy with the tastes and enterprises of young men. The world of toiling minds, from which his own efforts were gradually being withdrawn, had not ceased to be the object, not merely of a lingering interest, but of a warm and genial affection.

Neither had he outgrown a love of nature, nor of things beautiful therein. And they always seemed to have a message from God for him. A garden, in those days, one of my favourite recreations, was occasionally the scene of our interviews, where the conversation, by his guidance, would ascend, through the most natural transitions, from fruit, and trees and lawn, to the blessedness of the spiritual life, and of that land of promise, in which even our vile bodies shall be changed into the likeness of Christ's glorious body. Several delightful summer evenings are thus in my mind associated with him. His soundness of mental and bodily health maintained, even unto old age, the best feelings of young and hearty man-

hood. And in full accordance with this feature was the considerate tenderness which he always evinced for the feeble and suffering. I should be ready to believe that he might be stern in discipline, inflexible in defending the truth and repelling error, but the severer manifestations of his character fell not under my observation.

He also kept up acquaintance with the progress of literature and science, and the general intelligence of the time. I never knew a man more free from unreasonable prejudice, or more willing to consider the claims of the new, while intelligently maintaining the respect presumptively due to the old. He undoubtedly had, as all men have, more or less, his bias, which, in some directions, usurped the place of judgment; but the character of his mind was eminently open and liberal.

A favourite field of discussion with him was that department of Philosophy, which underlies Systematic Theology. Here his conversation was most instructive and entertaining, and when circumstances favoured, was sometimes considerably prolonged. In one instance which fell within my knowledge, where he met with a congenial spirit in that respect, an amicable discussion was carried on by two or three hours at a time, from day to day, for several weeks, with Socratic good-humour and urbanity on both sides, and on his, throughout, with a view to spiritual edification.

His style in conversation was remarkably copious and complete in structure. Had it been printed from his lips there would have been little to alter in the proofs. And yet there was not the slightest appearance of effort at precision. Its entire fitness to the man was one of its beautiful properties.

Although not largely endowed with the gift of humour, his enjoyment of it in others was quick and hearty, and added much to the light and kindliness of his manner.

I never heard him preach but once, and that effort, in those advanced years, could be no fair specimen of his pulpit abilities. He appeared in the black silk gown and bands, after the Scotch fashion; and delivered his sermon entirely without notes, in a full deliberate flow of language of impressive solemnity. His voice was still unbroken, rich, deep and harmonious. I should think that, in earlier years, it might have been one of great power. He always dressed well and his deportment and manner were at once dignified and cordial.

Upon the whole, the impression which remains to me of the Rev. Dr. Gilbert McMaster is that of a venerable and warm-hearted Christian gentleman of the old style.

With sentiments of the highest esteem,

Yours truly,

JAMES C. MOFFAT.

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## JOHN REILY.

1809—1820.

FROM THE REV. SAMUEL WYLIE.

EDEN, ILL., April 21, 1863

My dear Sir: My grateful remembrances of the Rev. John Reily, of whom you ask me to give you some account, predispose me to comply with your request; and yet I fear that my information concerning him is hardly sufficient to avail to