

ENCYCLOPÆDIA
OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
IN THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

INCLUDING THE NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN ASSEMBLIES.

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AND OTHER EMINENT MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH.

Including a Description of the Historic Decorations of the Pan Presbyterian Council of 1880,

By REV. HENRY C. McCOOK, D. D., LL. D.

Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following—PSALM XLVIII, 12, 13.

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Dr. Breckinridge was of a noble presence, and was gifted with a voice of great sweetness and compass; his mind was of unusual force, strengthened and enriched by careful culture and generous learning; his heart was as tender, and his affections as strong, as a woman's; his religion was a constant, animating principle, present in all his intercourse with men; he was always dignified, courteous, just and courageous; and he possessed a rare fascination of manner, which, both in private and in public, made lasting impressions on all who saw him.

As a pastor, the memory of his abundant labors, his untiring zeal, his absolute forgetfulness of self in his efforts for the good of souls, and his surpassing eloquence, is as vivid as if his brilliant and laborious life had just ended. When he entered upon his work



JOHN BRECKINRIDGE, D.D.

as Secretary and General Agent of the Board of Education, there were but sixty candidates for the ministry under its care. But the noble enthusiasm he brought to its service so roused the Church to its forgotten duty, that very speedily the number of its beneficiaries exceeded one thousand. He brought the same unconquerable energy and fiery zeal to his work as Professor and as Agent for the Board of Foreign Missions, and the results in both were no less remarkable.

He was a great preacher; an orator; seeming sometimes almost inspired by the grandeur of his theme; heard eagerly everywhere, and in his varied services to the Church, heard by unusual numbers in all parts of the land. But, perhaps, his greatest service resulted from his unparalleled skill in organizing, and his inde-

fatigable zeal and energy in directing the operations of the great benevolent agencies of the Church, and his fervid eloquence in presenting their claims to Christian affection and support. Here, if he had an equal, he had no superior; and the Church has had no servant, since his death, more faithful, and few as fruitful, in all labors for her advancement.

Dr. Breckinridge's active and busy life left him little leisure for labor as a writer or author. During his first pastorate, in Lexington, Kentucky, he was Editor of the *Western Luminary*, a religious periodical. He published a number of occasional sermons, and contributed at times to various religious publications. While Secretary of the Board of Education he published an Annual, devoted to the interests of that Board. These, with his debates in the Catholic controversy, comprise all of his published writings now recalled.

Breckinridge, Robert Jefferson, D. D., LL. D., third son of the Hon. John and Mary Hopkins (née Cabell) Breckinridge, was born at Cabell's Dale, Ky., March 8th, 1800; was graduated from Union College, N. Y., in 1819, and entered the Bar at Lexington, Ky., in 1824. In 1825 he was elected to the Lower House of the Kentucky Legislature, and was three times subsequently re-elected. During the winter of 1828-29 God converted his soul, at Frankfort, as he humbly trusted; and he immediately determined to quit the practice of the law, which neither the state of his health nor his feelings permitted him to pursue, and also to take final leave of public life. He made public profession of faith in the Spring of 1829, connecting himself with the McChord Presbyterian Church, at Lexington, Ky., but soon afterwards removed his membership to the Mt. Horeb Church, Fayette county, where he was elected ruling elder, late in 1829. In the Summer of 1830 he felt bound to appear once more before the people of his native country, to defend and commend the laws of God and Christian morality in the matters of the abolition of negro-slavery and the transportation of the mails on the Sabbath day. He honestly, in the fear of God, pleaded with his countrymen in behalf of these great interests of God and men, and when the cause which was dear to him met with defeat, publicly and privately retired once more from public life. He did not, as yet, however, feel called to preach the gospel; that work was first done in him through the instrumentality of a great woods-meeting, held on his own farm, in the Autumn of 1831. He had been urged, indeed, to the step, by his friends; but he had some false notions and many false feelings, and (he writes) it was not "until this woods-meeting that I fully determined to preach the Word." He immediately put himself under the care of West Lexington Presbytery, and six months later, April 5th, 1832, was licensed by that body, at its meeting at Walnut Hill. After the meeting of the Assembly of 1832 (in which he sat as Ruling Elder) he retired to Princeton to complete

his preparation for preaching; but had been there only some five months when he received and accepted a call to the Second Church of Baltimore, by which act he became the successor of his brother John, and accepted a call declined by his brother William. He was received by the Presbytery of Baltimore, November 23d, 1832, ordained and installed, November 26th, 1832, and after a remarkably successful pastorate of over twelve years, was dismissed, April 17th, 1845, to the Presbytery of Ohio, in order to become President of Jefferson College, Pennsylvania. On September 16th, 1847, he accepted the pastorate of the First Presbyterian Church, Lexington, Ky., which he retained until September 7th, 1853, during which period he also discharged most ably the duties of Superintendent of Public Instruction for the



ROBERT JEFFERSON BRECKINRIDGE, D. D. LL. D.

State of Kentucky. He was elected Professor of Exegetic, Didactic and Polemic Theology in the new seminary at Danville, and began his duties there at its opening, in September, 1853; his formal inauguration took place on October 15th, 1853. His resignation of this position was offered on September 17th, 1869, to take effect the following December; and he died, after a long illness, December 27th, 1871.

Dr. Breckinridge has almost equal claims to be remembered as a devoted and successful pastor, an eloquent and impressive preacher, a profound theologian, a wise administrator, a brilliant journalist, and an unequalled ecclesiastical debater. He was practically the leader of the Old School party through all the troubles which accompanied and followed the division, in 1837. He was the author of the "Act and

Testimony," and of its defence as put forth by the Philadelphia Convention of 1837. He participated in all the great discussions which agitated the Church for forty years, from 1831. He first appeared in the Assembly, as an Elder, in 1831, but after that was a very frequent member, and was made Moderator in 1841. A collection of his debates would fill volumes, and would comprise thorough discussions of nearly the whole range of great ecclesiastical questions. The exigencies of his position at Baltimore, where he was publicly assaulted by Romanist controversialists, and denied the columns of the public press for reply, forced the establishment, in January, 1835, of "*The Baltimore Literary and Religious Magazine*," which, under the care of Mr. Cross and himself, did a good work under that name, and subsequently under the name of "*The Spirit of the XIX Century*," until 1842. His share was also very large in the management of "*The Danville Quarterly Review*" (1861-65). His theology may be judged of by his printed works. But the immense power of his preaching, and his untiring devotion as a pastor, are in the hands of unstable tradition. The labor with which he burdened himself was excessive; but the success of his ministry was correspondingly great. The spring of his whole life was an unfeigned piety, which wrought in him a burning love for souls, and great depth of personal humility, which was all the more marked in its contrast with his great acquirements and the occasional pain-bred irritability of his temper. The brief manuscript notes for his sermons seldom fail to be crossed with a prayer, evidently from the heart: "Lord, add thy blessing, for Jesus' sake!" "Oh, Lord, own and bless thy truth." "Oh, Master, give me utterance." "Oh, Lord! help me to preach." "Amen! Help, Lord Jesus!" "Oh that I may be owned and blessed by the Lord Jesus Christ," and the like. His private diary is full of marks of the same perfect humility and dependence on God. No wonder that the gospel from his lips seemed burning fire. In private life he was as delightful a conversationalist as he was a beloved husband and parent, and a trusted adviser and friend. He exhibited here, as in public affairs, that marvelous readiness and unexpected preparation which was the most striking characteristic of his genius.

Prominent among Dr. Breckinridge's publications were, "Papism in the XIX Century," "Memoranda of Foreign Travels," "The Knowledge of God, Objectively Considered" (first part of his System of Theology), "The Knowledge of God, Subjectively Considered" (second part of his System of Theology). Besides these were numerous pamphlets on ecclesiological subjects, numerous printed sermons, a lecture on "The Internal Evidences of Christianity," delivered at the University of Virginia, a series of Kentucky School Reports, from 1848-53, and political articles and addresses, mostly printed in the *Danville Review*.