

*J. D. Witherspoon*

THE  
PULPIT TREASURY.  
AN EVANGELICAL MONTHLY.

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VOL. III.

NEW YORK, JUNE, 1885.

NO. 2.

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→\*SERMONS\*←

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THE GOD OF JESHURUN.\*

BY T. D. WITHERSPOON, D.D., LL.D., FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, LOUISVILLE, KY.,  
MODERATOR OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIANS IN THE  
UNITED STATES.

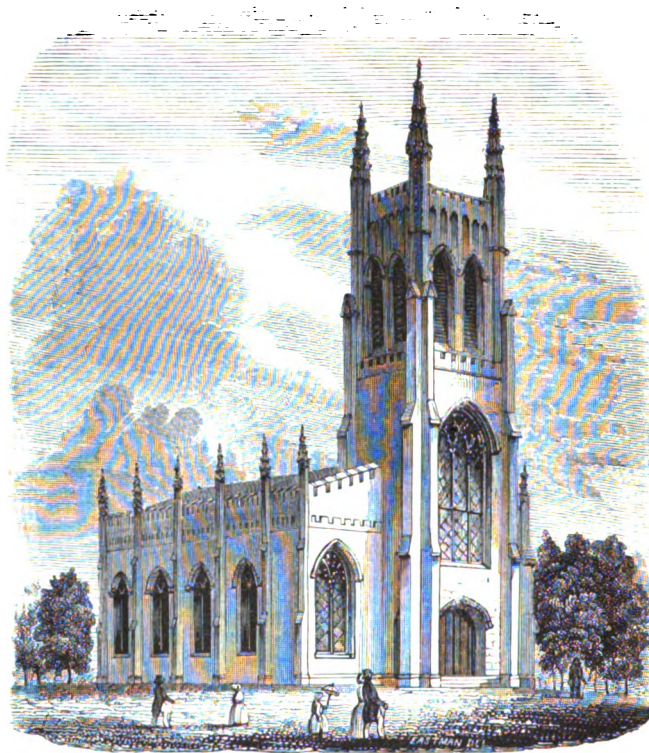
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*The God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help.*—DEUT. xxxiii., 26.

THESE are farewell words from the parting benediction with which Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel ere he took his final journey into the land of Moab, where the divine hand laid him to rest in a sepulchre of which "no man knoweth unto this day." The form of the language seems to indicate that the twelve tribes passed successively in review before him, and as each standard approached he pronounced upon its tribe a benediction, suggested partly by the device upon the standard and partly by a prophetic foresight of the future history of the tribe. The concluding words, however, of which the text forms a part, seem to have been spoken, not to a particular tribe, but to the whole camp of Israel, and through that ancient and typical encampment to the vaster and more spiritual one of all ages constituting the true Israel of God.

Viewing these words in this light, the character of the blessing pronounced is eminently instructive. You will observe no promise of exemption from the fatigues and hardships, from the trials and conflicts of the desert way.

\* Preached before the General Assembly at the opening of its Sessions in Houston, Texas, May 21st, 1885.



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, LOUISVILLE, KY.**  
**TIMOTHY DWIGHT WITHERSPOON, D.D., LL.D., Pastor.**

## →\*NOTED PREACHERS\*←

**Thomas Dwight Witherspoon, D.D.,  
LL.D.**

BY RICHARD H. COLLINS, LL.D., LOUISVILLE, KY.

Rev. Thomas Dwight Witherspoon, D.D., LL.D., pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Louisville, Ky., was born January 17th, 1836, in the village of Greensboro', Hale County, Alabama. He is now forty-nine years of age, just in the maturity of his powers.

His was a godly family; for his father and his father's fathers for six generations were elders of the Presbyterian Church. And away back yonder, in the never dim but ever brightening distance, some of the gentle blood that now courses in his veins gave life and zeal and boldness and energy and vehemence and power unwonted to John Knox, the great leader of the Protestant Reformation in Scotland, 1505-1572, more than three hundred years ago.

John Witherspoon, D.D., LL.D., President of Princeton College, New Jersey, 1768-1788, a sturdy Scotch minister, theologian and statesman, whom readers of American history remember as a signer of the *Declaration of Independence* and a leader in the dark days of the American Revolution, was also in the line of direct ancestry; and a man of whom his children's children to the latest generation may speak with honest pride. This pride of illustrious descent is with many people an excuse for lack of energy and personal excellence and success; but all those who have the root of the matter in them may well be thankful for God-fearing ancestors, who in their day and time were men of great excellence and boldness in the faith.

Robert Franklin Witherspoon and Sarah Agnes, his wife, were Presbyterians from principle, Christians of ardent piety. They were Bible readers and Bible scholars, and fond of theological inquiry; and in their admiration of the

writings of the great theologian, Timothy Dwight, deemed it a graceful acknowledgment of the great things constantly found therein to name their boy Thomas *Dwight*—indulging a presentiment that the babe would some day grow to the stature of a theologian and leader in the Church. The training of the boy by the death of the father when he was only four years old, devolved upon the mother, and right bravely did she stand up to the responsibility thus cast upon her. At the early age of ten, her little boy gave beautiful proof of pious training, by publicly confessing Christ, one of a number brought into the fold under the preaching of Rev. Robert Nall, D.D., the evangelist of the Synod of Alabama.

In 1853, when seventeen years old, young Witherspoon entered upon his college course in the sophomore class of the University of Alabama; but in 1854 transferred his connection to the University of Mississippi, where he graduated in 1856 with the highest honors of his class. The same fall he entered the Theological Seminary at Columbia, South Carolina, where under the professorships of Doctors James H. Thornwell, Aaron W. Leland, George Howe, and John B. Adger, he completed the course, and in May, 1859, received his theological certificate or diploma.

The Presbytery of Chickasaw, of the Synod of Memphis, on June 6th, 1859, licensed him as a probationer for the Gospel ministry; and the same Presbytery on May 18th, 1860, ordained him to the full work of the ministry, and installed him as pastor of the Presbyterian church at Oxford, Mississippi.

This call to the church (*his first church*) in the town of the University from which he graduated with high honor in 1856, less than four years before, was a high compliment to him personally, and practically a high eulogy upon the character of his preaching—its warmth and earnest-

ness, and attractiveness to the young, of whom so many were gathered in the university and female schools of the town. His labors here were owned of God, in abundant blessing.

But in a twelvemonth a great change came over this quiet scene of peace and love between pastor and young people. The young men of his congregation and neighborhood, with the deep courage of their convictions, hesitated not for an hour when the tocsin of war—the War of the Rebellion—was sounded all over the land. The young preacher, no longer only their friend and pastor and spiritual adviser, became their fellow-soldier, enlisting as a private in the Lamar Rifles of the Eleventh Mississippi Volunteers. Thus the first year of the war passed; and thenceforward to the final surrender at Appomattox Court House, he was their chaplain, sharing in their hardships, nursing them in sickness, administering the consolations of the Gospel to the dying, and sending to the loved ones at home the messages entrusted to him at the last and painful parting.

The war was over at last, and the scene changed again. Laying aside the soldier and the chaplain, he entered upon another field, to preach again the Gospel of peace and love and mediatorial sacrifice. In August, 1865, he became pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church at Memphis, where he labored with marked success and blessing for five years—until August, 1870, when his health broke down under excessive exertion in a malarial climate, and forced him to resign a pastorate which had shown the ripe fruit of growth from 160 to 410 in membership, and became the strongest and most influential of that denomination in the city. And this, too, through epidemics of both cholera and yellow fever!

In the mountains of Virginia, as supply to the church at Christiansburg, Dr. Witherspoon spent the next years; and during the succeeding two years was chaplain of the University of Virginia, near Charlottesville.

In the summer of 1873, as a further means of restoring his impaired health, Dr. Witherspoon crossed the ocean, and

travelled extensively in Europe. On his return, in October, 1873, he accepted the pastorate of Tabb Street Presbyterian Church, in Petersburg, Va., one of the largest in the South. After nine years of marked usefulness here, a unanimous call to the old First Presbyterian Church of Louisville, Ky., opened up a wider field, and which he felt it duty to accept.

Since settling there in the fall of 1882, as if the labor of that important church were not enough to tax his superabundant energy, he has been chairman of the Committee of Evangelistic Labor of the Synod of Kentucky—having the oversight of some twenty evangelists, as a result of whose labors over *four thousand communicants* have been added to the roll of the Synod!

In 1874, at the age of thirty-eight, Dr. Witherspoon took his seat for the first time in the General Assembly, at Columbus, Mississippi, only about one hundred miles east of where he began his ministerial life; and in 1884, just ten years later, at the age of forty-eight, he was elected Moderator of and presided over the General Assembly at Vicksburg, Mississippi, just two hundred miles southwest of the same beginning point, Oxford, Mississippi. And the same University that graduated him with high honor in 1856, at the age of twenty, conferred upon him in 1867, at the age of thirty-one, the distinguished honor of D. D., and in 1884, at the age of forty-eight, the more distinguished honor of LL. D. Such a succession of honors is almost unparalleled; and the State of Mississippi, while witnessing within her borders this high appreciation by the Presbyterian Church in the South of one of her favorite sons, has borne a beautiful testimony to his great energy, consecrated talent, and noble character.

As a writer in the Church newspapers, Dr. Witherspoon has written frequently, judiciously, and effectively. The following are among the larger and more important publications from his pen, in book form: "The Appeal of the South to its Educated Men" (1866); "Children of the Covenant" (1873); "Materialism in its Relations to Modern Civilization"

(1878); and "Letters on Romanism" (1882).

Among the most decided evidences of the high appreciation of Dr. Witherspoon's practical talents by the Presbyterian Church and people of the South, is the great number of calls he has had to prominent churches, his election to chairs in or the presidency of colleges and universities, and the professorships in theological seminaries that have been offered him. The latest distinction of this kind

of which we have heard is his election as president of Davidson College, at Charlotte, North Carolina. This, and all others, he promptly declined; because he felt that the great mission of his life is to preach the Gospel. In the pulpit and on the platform he is emphatically extemporaneous; always trusting to the inspiration of the moment for words to clothe the ideas and emphasize the thoughts he has diligently studied out in his room.

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## ❖ Leading Thoughts of Sermons ❖

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### Wonderful Cleansing:

BY REV. R. S. MACARTHUR, D.D., CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH, NEW YORK.

The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.—I. JOHN 1., 7.

To a world of sinners these are truly wonderful words. God's facts are more astonishing than man's fancies. These words are sweet as a strain of music. They have been singing themselves for years through my soul. The truth which they teach has been the rod and the staff on which many of God's people have leaned even down into the dark valley and shadow of death. This matchless fountain of cleansing is unexhausted and inexhaustible. Full and free it flows on; it shall never lose its power.

Attention is confined now to the part of the verse quoted as the text. The subject named is, "Wonderful Cleansing." Let us notice its characteristics, as set forth in the text: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

I. It is *Divine* cleansing. Only God can cleanse the soul. Only the "fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness," can cleanse the guilty. The fountains of earth are all polluted at their source. All blood is precious; the blood of man is the most precious of creatures. What shall we say of the blood of the "Son of God"? This blood cleanses alone, not rites and cere-

monies; not prayers and tears; not frames and feelings; but the blood of Jesus Christ, God's beloved Son—this can make us white as snow. Behold the white-robed throng! Hear their glad reply. They had come up through great tribulation, but it was in the blood of the Lamb that their robes were made white. Hear the words of God through Isaiah: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Observe the progress of the idea of the cleansing blood in the Old Testament. John had had a literal sight of the pierced side. This experience was with him an undying recollection. Systems of theology which deny the power of this cleansing blood are powerless. Reason and conscience call for the divine atonement. Would you strike down the cross? Then you would make the world sunless, hopeless, Godless? A crucified Christ is the world's greatest need and mightiest hope.

II. It is *present* cleansing. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son *cleanseth*." Many persons say they hope to be saved. The Bible always speaks of a present salvation. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." This is uniformly the language of Scripture. Those who believe not are here and now under condemnation; those who believe are here and now possessors of everlasting life. We have often