1943

Benjamin Morgan Palmer, a Southern Divine.

Wayne Carter Eubank
Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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BENJAMIN MORGAN PALMER, A SOUTHERN DIVINE

A Dissertation

**Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

in

The Department of Speech

By

Wayne Carter Eubank

B. S., West Texas State College, 1930

M. A., Northwestern University, 1935

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ABSTRACT

The ancestry of Benjamin Morgan Palmer was largely of English extraction. The ship Fortune brought William Palmer from Nottinghamshire to America. With the landing of William Palmer at Plymouth each successive generation produced men of industry and religious zeal. Numerically, the Palmer lineage has contributed more than thirteen ministers to the church. Edward, son of Job and Sarah Palmer, and father of Benjamin Morgan Palmer, was a minister of more than average ability. He was born in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1788. After remaining in the teaching profession for nine years, he resolved to go East to Andover Seminary to prepare for the ministry. While in the Seminary, he made an excellent record and was licensed to preach in 1824. In 1827 he moved from Dorchester, South Carolina, his first pastorate, to Walterboro. For the next forty-seven years, his ministry was linked with Bethel Church of Walterboro and Stony Creek Church of Mephersonville, a small village located a short distance from Walterboro.

Benjamin Morgan Palmer was born January 25, 1818, in Charleston, South Carolina. Prior to his entry into Walterboro Academy in his early "teens," he had been tutored primarily by his mother. From Walterboro Academy he continued his classical training in Amherst College and the University of Georgia, where he was graduated with first honors in 1838. With a view to entering the ministry, he enrolled in Columbia Theological Seminary in 1839 and was graduated from that institution in 1841. Palmer's first ministerial charge was

in the Presbyterian Church of Anderson, South Carolina. Early in 1842 he accepted the pulpit of the First Presbyterian Church of Savannah, Georgia. About a year later he was called to the First Presbyterian Church in Columbia, South Carolina, where he remained for thirteen years. In 1854 he accepted the Professorship of Theology in Columbia Theological Seminary. However, after receiving numerous calls from important churches throughout the United States, he accepted the pulpit of the First Presbyterian Church of New Orleans in 1858, thus beginning a sustained ministry of forty-six years.

When the breach occurred between the Northern and Southern Presbyterians in 1860, at the request of his colleagues Palmer delivered the opening sermon before the Southern Assembly and was also elected moderator. In addition to his powerful influence in the organization of the Southern Assembly, Palmer remained one of the most influential leaders among Southern Presbyterians for the next four decades.

A South Carolinian both by birth and by sentiment, when the secession movement reached its apex in 1860, so intense were Palmer's convictions on the issue that he violated a custom of twenty years by delivering a political address from his pulpit. His Thanksgiving Sermon was a masterful effort. He declared slavery a divine trust and pronounced it the duty of the South to preserve and perpetuate the institution as it existed. This speech was followed by other notable addresses delivered throughout the South during the conflict. A price was fixed on Palmer's head by General Butler when he stormed New Orleans in 1862. However, Palmer was not captured. During the remainder of the year, he divided his time between teaching in Columbia Theological

Seminary and acting in the capacity of a sort of roving chaplain in the Southern armies. At the close of the war he returned to his pulpit in New Orleans.

During the Russian persecution of the Jews in 1882 and 1883, Palmer demonstrated the catholic spirit for which he was universally noted by strongly denouncing the Russian action as barbaric and by proposing that America become a sanctuary for the unfortunate Hebrews.

When the Louisiana Lottery neared its climax in the early nineties, Palmer delivered a masterful address before the newly organized Anti-lottery League, meeting in the Grand Opera House in New Orleans. This speech, his greatest single effort in behalf of decency in government, was a potent force in securing the final overthrow of the lottery company.

Not only was Palmer a "prince of pulpiteers" but as an occasional speaker he had few superiors either in the North or in the South. His addresses before literary societies, college and university commencements, church dedications, memorial services, eulogies, and upon other types of occasions revealed a mind not only skilled in theology but an intellect conversant with the culture of the ages.

Although small in stature, Palmer's commanding voice, mild gestures, extemporaneous delivery, amazing command of language, happy blending of logical, ethical and pathetic proof, were qualities that made him one of the South's most able and sought-after speakers. In his sermons and occasional addresses alike there is a strong appeal to idealism; a simple tug upward.

Seemingly having lost little of his power to charm and move an audience, even at the age of eighty-four, Palmer's career was out short by an accident. He was run down by a street car and after a lingering illness died in New Orleans on May 28, 1902.

CHAPTER I

ANCESTRY

The ancestry of Benjamin Morgan Palmer was rooted in England. In 1621, less than a year after the Pilgrim Fathers, seeking a "faith's pure shrine," had landed on the rock-clad coast of Massachusetts, the ship Fortune brought new settlers to the small colony. Among them was one William Palmer.¹ There is some controversy as to whether William Palmer² was accompanied by his eight-year-old son, William Palmer II, or whether the son arrived with William Palmer I's wife, Frances, on the ship Ann in August, 1623.³

William Palmer I was born in Nottinghamshire about the year 1585 and was residing there just prior to his coming to America.⁴ In 1632, he moved with his family to Duxbury, a town some nine miles from Plymouth, situated on the opposite side of the harbor. The rapid growth of Plymouth had necessitated some dispersal of its inhabitants into nearby regions to procure more accommodations, particularly additional pasture land for their cattle. However, the Palmers soon moved to Scituate, a town farther along the coast toward Boston. There William Palmer I died March 5, 1638.⁵

¹Benjamin Palmer Anson, comp., unpublished "Genealogy of the Palmer Family" (Savannah, Georgia, July 8, 1940). This genealogy is in the possession of Benjamin Palmer Anson and was loaned to the writer, Jan. 29, 1942.

²Hereafter called William Palmer I.

³Anson, cited above, records the son as having come to America with his father in 1621; whereas Thomas Cary Johnson in Life and Letters of Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 3 (Presbyterian Committee of Publication, Richmond, Va., 1908), cited hereafter as Benjamin Morgan Palmer, states that the son arrived with his mother on the ship Ann in 1623.

⁴Anson, "Genealogy of the Palmer Family."

⁵Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 3.

William Palmer II was born in England about 1613. On March 27, 1638, he was married at Scituate, Massachusetts, to Elizabeth Hodgkins.⁶ Later "he removed to Yarmouth. He was one of the purchasers of Dartmouth. Tradition says that he removed to Newton, Long Island, in 1655, had born of him a son, in 1665, who was to become the Reverend Thomas Palmer; and that he died about the time of his son's birth; but there appears to be some solid evidence that he died as early as 1637."⁷

William Palmer III, the son of the second of the name, William Palmer II, was born January 27, 1654, probably at Plymouth.⁸ "This William Palmer became the heir of 'Plymouth Estate,' and settled at Dartmouth in 1680. He died in 1679."⁹ His first marriage was to the daughter of Robert Paddock. Her name is not known. He was later married to Miss Susannah Hathway.¹⁰ His children were William IV, born in 1688, John, born May 18, 1665, and "other children" whose names are now unknown.¹¹

⁶ Anson, Genealogy of Palmer Family.

⁷ Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 3.

⁸ Anson, Genealogy of Palmer Family.

⁹ Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 3. Anson, in Genealogy of Palmer Family, gives 1675 as the date of his death.

¹⁰ Anson, Genealogy of Palmer Family.

¹¹ Johnson points out that it has been conjectured, and with some degree of probability, that one of these "other children" was Thomas Palmer, who later became known as the Reverend Thomas Palmer. If this is true, he may have been a twin brother to John Palmer, since his tombstone records 1665 as the date of his birth. It has also been thought that since William Palmer II had a son born to him in 1635 or 1636 bearing the name Thomas Palmer, who inherited his father's state at Scituate, that this Thomas Palmer was the father of the Thomas Palmer born in 1665. Although several published "records" make the Reverend Thomas Palmer the son of William Palmer II, Johnson deems it unsafe to assert such a connection. He refers to a statement received from Alfred W. Lanneau of Charleston, S. C., who had given the problem great study, saying "that the Rev. Thomas Palmer was the son of William III and not of William II;

So William Palmer III, in 1665, was born a son, Thomas Palmer. He prepared for the ministry and settled at Middleboro, Massachusetts, about 1696. In 1698 he married Elisabeth Sturvenant. Eight children were born to them.¹² After several years of preaching in Middleboro, Thomas was finally ordained May 3, 1702. He appears to have been a rather rash and stubborn man. Occasional intemperance aroused much opposition to his ordination, which was accomplished only after several years of preaching and then by surprise measures. His congregation continued its opposition, and finally, on June 30, 1708, dismissed him, in compliance with the advice of the council of twelve churches and an anniversary convention of ministers in Boston.¹³ In later life, his communion with the church was restored. In addition to his preaching, Thomas Palmer also practiced medicine in Middleboro. He died July 17, 1743.¹⁴

The sixth child, born to Thomas Palmer and Elisabeth Sturvenant August 8, 1707, was named Samuel. Samuel was graduated from Harvard in 1727. In addition to having prepared for the ministry, like his father, he was also a regular practicing physician.

Dr. [Samuel] Palmer cared not only for the souls, but the bodies of his hearers also. He was for many years a regular practitioner of medicine. I have been told that his library contained some of

and that he was a brother of John and of William IV." He continues, "My record of his life shows that he had a brother William when he moved to Middleboro." Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 4. Axson, in Genealogy of Palmer Family, also records the Rev. Thomas Palmer as the son of William Palmer III.

¹² Axson, Genealogy of Palmer Family.

¹³ Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 4.

¹⁴ Ibid., 8.

the best medical works of the day and [that he] had a respectable knowledge of the healing art. I have not been able to ascertain whether he received a diploma as a medical student.¹⁵

At a town meeting held June 30, 1730, "it was agreed and voted that Mr. Samuel Palmer shall be the town's minister. At the same meeting the town made a choice of nine men 'to consider a suitable sum of money for his encouragement.'"¹⁶ Records of the Palmouth First Church prior to Samuel Palmer's ministry are lacking; it is probable that none were kept. However, correctness in all transactions, even to the point of methodical recording, was a Palmer characteristic. On the day of his ordination Samuel commenced a systematic church record which has continued to the present time.¹⁷

Samuel Palmer was married twice: to Miss Mercy Parker of Boston in 1736, and to Miss Sarah Allen of Martha's Vineyard in 1751. Eleven children were born to these marriages.¹⁸

For forty years Palmer performed the duties of minister and doctor to the townsmen of Palmouth. It is believed that his fatal illness was the result of exposure to extreme weather while administering to a patient. A severe cold, attended by fever, resulted in his death, April 13, 1775.¹⁹ Peace and harmony prevailed in the church during his ministry. His passing was a severe loss to the Palmouth community. Two days after his burial a day of fasting and prayer was observed in reverence to his

¹⁵Charles M. Jenkins, Early History of the Town of Palmouth, Three Lectures Delivered in the Year 1843 (L. F. Clark, Palmouth, Mass., 1893), 69-70.

¹⁶Ibid., 69. For a more complete resume of Palmer's ministry at Palmouth, see ibid., 69-76.

¹⁷Ibid., 71.

¹⁸Ibid., 68-69.

¹⁹Ibid., 70.

memory. In further appreciation, his widow and children were allowed the use of certain public lands. The following epitaph appears on his tombstone:

His Virtues would a monument supply,
But underneath this stone his ashes lie.²⁰

Job Palmer, the fifth of the eleven children, was born to Samuel Palmer and Meroy Parker at Falmouth, August 15, 1747. Little is known of his early training. Although without college education, through travel and self-improvement Job Palmer became a man of considerable cultivation. By profession he was a contractor and builder.²¹ Much information concerning his life is contained in a letter written to his son, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, Sr., dated Charleston, South Carolina, July 11, 1833.²² The notable events of his life after childhood, as he conceived them to be, are recorded in the following summary of the letter:

Just prior to Job Palmer's arrival at the "age of majority," a "traveling singing master" conducted a school in Falmouth. Job was one of his "scholars." He entered upon this diversion with much zeal and achieved considerable proficiency. Nor was he long in converting this training into practical gain, for he states that "the two winters after I was of age, before I left home, I kept a Singing School in the suburbs of Falmouth and near there." During the lean years that followed the

²⁰Ibid., 75-76.

²¹Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 13.

²²This letter, now in the possession of Benjamin Palmer Axson of Savannah, Georgia, was loaned to the writer by Mr. Axson, January 29, 1942. Johnson, speaking of Job Palmer in his Life and Letters of Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 9, states that "when ninety-three years of age he prepared a paper for his descendants, to which he made subsequent additions." The writer has been unable to procure this document. However, the portion of it quoted by Johnson contains information similar in most respects to that contained in the letter now in the possession of Mr. Axson.

Revolutionary War this ability supplied a sorely needed addition to the family income.

In the spring of 1770, having arrived at the age of twenty-three, Job Palmer resolved "to see something of the world" before settling anywhere. He secured passage on a vessel bound for New York where he had been informed "there was much wickedness, snares and temptations for young people." Unable to find immediate employment, he moved up the North River to New Windsor, New York. Here he enjoyed fellowship with the congregation of a small Presbyterian church "built a little back in the country." About a year later, he returned to New York, the Reverend Mr. Blair of New Windsor having given him a letter of introduction to a certain Reverend Rogers of New York. He attended worship in the church of Rogers and his colleague, the Reverend Treat. In this association, his "religious impressions were repeated and deepened. On December 1, 1771," less than two years after leaving Falmouth, he "was admitted to full communion in their church." At a "meeting for singing," Job Palmer met a Mr. Willigen of Charleston, South Carolina, who informed him that the Congregational Church there needed a clerk. He departed at once for Charleston, and in July, 1773, "took charge of the Congregational Church as clerk and sexton at a salary of about \$50.00 per year."

The following year Job Palmer married Miss Sarah Morgan of Bermuda. Of this union he says:

Our pecuniary circumstances was [sic] small, I had been working at journey work from the time I arrived at Charleston....She [his wife] was respected I believe by all who were acquainted with her. We lived in harmony and I believe there was seldom an unkind expression towards each other passed between us. We agreed in disposition, in respect to appearance in the world, neither of us ambitious to make an appearance beyond what our circumstances would warrant....

In the spring of 1781, Job Palmer was placed on board a British prison ship in Charleston harbor, where he remained until a general exchange of prisoners was made. Meanwhile, at the request of the British commander, a group of women and children (Palmer's wife, Sarah, being among them) had left Charleston. These secured passage to Philadelphia. There Sarah Palmer was joined by her husband, October 9, 1781, fourteen days after the birth of their son Benjamin Morgan Palmer. The family returned to Charleston in the spring of 1783.

Near the end of the letter, in summarizing his "pilgrimage," Job Palmer states:

having obtained a knowledge of vocal music before I left home to travail, was the first link in the chain of Divine providence which led me to Charleston, where I have been exempt in a great degree from the most laborious part of my business which I should have had to perform if I had settled in the Northern States. Again, my having a desire to travail disposed in my mind to leave home as I did, and go to where I went, where I hope it pleased God to meet with me by the influence of his Holy Spirit, and I would humbly hope to bring one a saving knowledge of his Redeemer!...I heard some pungent preaching, and was introduced into company less dissipated than much of the young company at Falmouth at that time. I believe it was by such preaching that the religious impressions were firmly fixed in my mind.²³

Further reference is made to his connection with, and love for, the Congregational Church in Charleston in the document recorded in Johnson's

Life and Letters of Benjamin Morgan Palmer:

My dear descendants, I think you will believe that I have come to feel a strong attachment to the Church where I have performed the duty of clerk and sexton thirty-nine years, excepting the time the British Army held possession of Charleston, in which I have been a deacon for twenty-six years, and in which I have enjoyed the privileges of a member in full communion for sixty-eight years.

If I have discharged my duty faithfully in the situation I have occupied, I desire with gratitude to ascribe all the praise to God, who had disposed and enabled me thus to perform them.²⁴

²³Ibid.

²⁴Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 11.

From the documents quoted above, it is evident that Job Palmer was a frugal, pious and religious man. On March 27, 1798, he married his first wife's sister, Mrs. Esther Miller, likewise of Bermuda. Filled with honor, he died in Charleston, South Carolina, January 20, 1845, at the ripe age of ninety-seven.²⁵

Two of his eleven children became noteworthy ministers, the Reverend Benjamin Morgan Palmer, Sr., of Charleston, and the Reverend Edward Palmer of Walterboro. Benjamin Morgan Palmer, Sr., "was a man of learned and deep piety; dogmatic and conservative; aggressive and masterful; somewhat of a pope in Charleston. But he was greatly beloved by his people. He was not without a glowing imagination and oratorical talent. His sermons, always written, were logical, concise and of a practical rather than a theoretical method."²⁶

Edward Palmer, the eighth of sixteen children, was born in Charleston, South Carolina, December 25, 1788. He was in the process of receiving an excellent education when at the age of fifteen he entered his father's business. After working with his father for eight years, he entered the teaching profession, in which he remained for nine years. After several unsuccessful attempts to "surrender his heart to God," finally, in 1819, at the age of thirty-one, the decision was made. Immediately he decided to prepare for the ministry. There being little opportunity for such training in the South, Edward resolved to go to the East and pursue his training at Andover, Massachusetts. Prior to entering the seminary, it was necessary for him to do work at Phillips Academy, a preparatory school

²⁵ Anson, "Genealogy of Palmer Family."

²⁶ Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 13.

attended largely by "teen-age" boys. After eighteen months, he entered the seminary at Andover. In view of his excellent record, the Andover faculty succeeded in inducing Yale College to grant him the Master of Arts degree. He was licensed to preach in 1824.²⁷

Immediately following his ordination in 1824, he became minister of Dorchester Church.²⁸ After three years there, he accepted a call to Bethel Church at Walterboro, South Carolina. For the next forty-seven years his ministry was linked with Bethel Church²⁹ and Stoney Creek Church,³⁰ located at McPhersonville, some thirty miles from Walterboro. He accepted the ministry of first one and then the other and for a number of years held the two charges simultaneously.

Edward Palmer was married to Miss Sarah Bunch, January 1, 1812. Miss Bunch was born in Weathersfield, Connecticut. Her father, Captain Jared Bunch, "could trace his ancestry back to an Alderman Bunch, who lived in London in the time of Cromwell."³¹ Sarah was a woman of excellent character and keen intellect. Having absorbed the culture of a splendid parentage and home, she further prepared herself for motherhood

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

²⁸ E. T. H. Shaffer, History of Bethel Presbyterian Church (The Press and Standard, Walterboro, South Carolina, 1928) (Pamphlet). The town of Dorchester, located about eighteen miles from Charleston, is now decadent.

²⁹ Records of Bethel Church only date back to 1857. They are now in the possession of Mr. Robert Ludie Fraser, Sr., of Walterboro, present Secretary of the Session. For the most complete history of Bethel Church, consult Shaffer, History of Bethel Presbyterian Church.

³⁰ Records of the Stoney Creek Church, from its beginning May 20, 1743, to date, have been preserved and are now in the possession of the Secretary of the Session, Mr. Hutson of McPhersonville, South Carolina. For the most complete history of the Stoney Creek Church, consult F. M. Hutson, Brief Historical Sketch of McPhersonville and Her Two Churches (Pamphlet, n.p., c1882).

³¹ Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 16. Johnson says that Captain Bunch was a man of "great independence and vigor of thought and expression." He was the descendant of a distinguished line and had transferred

by wide and intensive study. She conceived it her duty to acquaint her children with the culture of the ages. Her sunny disposition, enhanced by a love for the beautiful, endeared her to her friends and children.³² She was a remarkable woman and an ideal mother.³³

For almost five decades, the Reverend Edward Palmer was the patriarch and saint of Walterboro and Kephersonville communities. "Rarely has there been a man so much beloved within the circle of his acquaintances. He was loved by every class of society and by representatives of every type of religious belief. He was an excellent preacher, a man of vast energy, singularly pure in his dispositions, and ever ready to go, like the Master, to the lowliest of the people with the everlasting Gospel."³⁴

In 1874 Edward Palmer resigned from his pulpit and retired to Barnwell, located a short distance from Walterboro, where he died September 30, 1882, at the age of ninety-three. He was buried at Barnwell, but later his body was reinterred in "Live Oak" Cemetery at Walterboro. "And so the aged shepherd, having guided his beloved people for nearly half a century, in all time of their prosperity, in all time of their adversity, departed,

to his children enviable ancestral qualities. See Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 15-17, for additional material.

³²Ibid., 16.

³³According to Mrs. George R. Fraser of Walterboro, S. C., whose family lived next to the Palmers, Sarah Palmer died in 1846 from burns received when her clothing caught on fire while burning trash. The following episode regarding the Reverend Edward Palmer was given the writer by Mrs. Fraser, Jan. 29, 1942. A few months after Mrs. Palmer's death, the Reverend Palmer called upon Miss Frances Perry, a very close friend of his wife's, and "addressed" her (the term "address" signifying marriage proposal). In amazement Miss Perry stopped him short and expressed her extreme shock at his having addressed her so soon after the death of his wife. Having refused him, she hastened to add, as he went down the steps, "but Reverend Palmer, you may come back at the end of the year." He did and she accepted him in marriage.

³⁴Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 15.

followed by the love and the prayers of his 'bereaved children.'³⁵

On a stately shaft of marble which marks his resting place is engraved the following Latin epitaph written by his illustrious son, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, the subject of this study.

Christi, Senitor, bene ac beate,
 Nec pauper, neque dives, eruditus
 Satis, et satis eloquens, valens
 Semper corpore, mente sana, amicis
 Jucundus, pietate singulari.

With reference to the genealogy of Benjamin Morgan Palmer, the following observations are noteworthy. With the landing of William Palmer I at Plymouth in 1621, each successive generation produced men of honor, men of industry, men with unwavering religious zeal. Beginning with Thomas Palmer in 1665, three of Benjamin Morgan Palmer's direct ancestors were ministers and the fourth a loyal member and officer in his church for sixty-eight years. Numerically, the Palmer lineage has given more than thirteen ministers to the church.³⁶ This spiritual impulse, rooted in England and transplanted to the New World through William Palmer I, widened with each succeeding decade into an ever broadening growth reaching its full maturity in another of South Carolina's illustrious sons, Benjamin Morgan Palmer.

³⁵Shaffer, History of Bethel Presbyterian Church.

³⁶For complete list, see Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 2.

CHAPTER II

EARLY ENVIRONMENT AND TRAINING

In early colonial times, Carolina suffered a peculiar isolation from the other colonies. The three major settlements, namely, Jamestown in 1607, Plymouth in 1620 and Charles Town (now Charleston) in 1670, were accomplished primarily by the English under Royal Grants. Marked differences characterized the development within these colonies, particularly between Charles Town and the other two.¹ Although the three settlements were about equidistant from each other, the territory between Virginia and Massachusetts, already to some extent peopled by the Dutch, was soon filled by the settlements of the provinces of Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland, forming a chain of colonies linked together by neighboring influences and conveniences, thus begetting something of a common American colonial sentiment.

Almost three quarters of a century elapsed before similar progress was noticeable between Virginia and Carolina.² McCrady points out that

the colonists at Charles Town, more than three hundred miles south of the James River, were practically much farther than that distance from Virginia, the nearest established colony. Batteras projecting into the ocean rendered communication between the first settlers in Carolina and the other colonies, in their small vessels, more dangerous almost than that with England....There were no roads nor means of transportation....A post office was established in Charles Town as early as 1698, but this was for European and West Indian correspondence. Peter Timothy, postmaster, gives notice in the Gazette, August 19, 1756, nearly sixty years after, that the first mail from Wilmington (North Carolina) is hourly expected.³

¹Edward McCrady, The History of South Carolina under the Proprietary Government, 1670-1719 (Macmillan Co., New York, 1901), 1.

²Ibid., 2.

³Ibid., 2-3.

This separation of Carolina from the other colonies was not only recognized but acted upon by the English Government.⁴ "This treatment at home, and constant exposure to attack from St. Augustine by sea and by Indians on land, instigated alike by the Spaniards in Florida and the French from Mobile, had great influence upon the organization of its government and its social structure."⁵

The first characteristic developing from this constant danger of attack, due to Carolina's isolated position, was a sense of independence in regard to the other colonies which, in reality, necessitated a reliance upon the colonists' own initiative for maintaining a necessary defense.⁶ For protection from the Indians, Spanish and French, "A parliament was held, in Charleston, at the close of 1692, when laws were enacted for establishing a militia system...."⁷ By 1704 the colony had founded a military police organization, composed of the entire citizenry, to maintain order among the Negroes.⁸ "Under this system the province, and afterwards the State, was divided into military districts, the chief of each of which was a colonel, and these again into other districts, or beats, under captains."⁹

Second, it led to the development of the "centripetal" character of the colony. In New England colonial growth resulted from continual separation into different communities, each with its local organization

⁴Ibid., 4-5.

⁵Ibid., 5.

⁶William Gilmore Simms, The History of South Carolina (Redfield, New York, 1880), 84-85.

⁷Ibid., 88.

⁸McCady, The History of South Carolina under the Proprietary Government, 1690-1719, 9.

⁹Ibid., 10.

and administration.¹⁰ This was not the case in Carolina, where "For many years Charles Town practically embodied all of Carolina....Until 1716 elections were generally held in the town for all provinces....No court of general jurisdiction was held outside of it until 1773.... There was thus from the inception of the colony in 1663 to the overthrow of the State in 1865...only one government in South Carolina."¹¹ "The localism of South Carolina," says Phillips, "in fact, had their affairs focused in Charleston in such degree as to make the whole district in some sense a city-state. Not only were commerce and shipping centered there, but for a long time all activities of government. As a serious evidence of this, until the upheaval of 1719 the town constituted the only polling place."¹²

A third result of the early isolation of Carolina from the other settlements was her inclination to look to England for support rather than to her sister colonies.¹³ This condition "developed and intensified the Carolina conception of the entity of the State and of its absolute sovereignty."¹⁴

Basic racial dissimilarities constitute the fourth medium of differentiation between Carolina and the other colonies. McCrady asserts that "all the other colonies, except New York, were peopled by immigrants in the main directly from the British Islands...."¹⁵ However, in addition to the "large Huguenot element in her population, Carolina

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 7. Also see David Ramsey, History of South Carolina (W. J.

¹² Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, Life and Labor in the Old South (Little, Brown, and Company, Boston, 1930), 52.

¹³ McCrady, The History of South Carolina under the Proprietary Government, 1670-1719, 8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

was settled in a great measure from Barbadoes and the other British India.¹⁶ These Barbadoes immigrants brought with them a colonial system which had the institution of African slavery as the basis of its social system.¹⁷ In addition to the large body of French and Barbadoes, the settlement at Charleston gained "permanence and expansion" through occasional immigration from England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, New England and New York.¹⁸

Finally, to the characteristics that differentiated South Carolina from the other colonies must be added the sanctity of the family relation. For in no other state has marriage, the intrinsic foundation of all society and government, been so vehemently guarded and so adequately preserved.¹⁹ "It has been a part of the Constitution of the State--unwritten, it is true, until 1865--but nevertheless fully recognized and enforced--that divorce shall never be allowed. There has never been a divorce in South Carolina...except during the Reconstruction...under the government of strangers, adventurers, and negroes, upheld by Federal bayonets."²⁰

These qualities, born of necessity and nurtured through conflict, were pre-eminently Carolinian; they became the birthright of her citizenry. In view of this fact, the import of Benjamin Morgan Palmer's stock phrase,

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 8-9. "The attempt to engraft upon this social order," says McGrady, "a legally recognized aristocracy...helped much in the formation of the peculiar characteristics which were to mark the political and social organization of South Carolina, giving to it on the one hand a strong aristocratic tone with a party for sustaining prerogative, while on the other it developed in the very outset a party of the people who based their rights upon the dogma of a strict constitution of chartered or constitutional provisions." *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁸ *Remedy, History of South Carolina*, 1-14.

¹⁹ McGrady, *The History of South Carolina under the Proprietary Government, 1670-1715*, 10-11.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

"I am a South Carolinian, you know," often uttered in defence of his singular views and actions, is at once perspicuous. Not only was he a Carolinian, but a South Carolinian of the "low country"²¹ where these traits were first "cradled and defended." For Charleston, the nucleus of the low country and the city of his birth, had been the birthplace of his father, Edward Palmer and the home of his grandfather, Job Palmer.

What were the dominant characteristics of the culture of this unique city, Charleston? "The nucleus of South Carolina," says Phillips, "was duly planted in 1670 on Charleston Harbor, though the first site of 'Charles Town' soon gave place to the sandy neck across Ashley River where the city now stands."²² From 1670 until well into the nineteenth century, Charleston dominated the cultural and economic life of the state. By 1700, rice culture had proved so successful and profitable that it became the chief reliance of the low country and was destined to play an important role in the state's development.²³ In 1724, 16,000 barrels of

²¹"The low country," as the phrase was understood in 1700, consisted of a belt about sixty miles in breadth along the coast. It was a land of large slave-holders, great plantations, and hereditary culture. Though there were, of course, thousands of poor whites, the landed aristocracy completely dominated here. In the more exclusive parishes there was, as a member of the upper class describes it, 'a veritable Chinese wall' which shut the whites of the overseer and lower classes off from the planters.

"The up country contained four fifths of the white population of the state in 1750; but the low country paid almost that same proportion of the taxes. The aristocratic minority was protected in its special privileges by complete control of the government, a control that was perpetuated by a provision prohibiting amendment of the constitution or the calling of a new convention without the consent of two-thirds of the Legislature, in both houses of which the one-fifth of the citizens in the low country had a majority.

"The situation involved bitter antagonisms. There was the struggle of the up country as a section against the privileged low country. There was the danger, which only gradually disappeared, of the nonslave-owning farmer and townsman to the institution of slavery." Yates Snowden, ed., History of South Carolina, 5 vols. (The Lewis Publishing Co., Chicago and New York, 1926), I, 508.

²²Phillips, Life and Labor in the Old South, 47; also see Phillips, American Negro Slavery (D. Appleton and Co., New York, 1927), 87-91.

²³Ibid., 46.

rice were exported. This amount had increased to 91,000 barrels in 1749, and to 104,682 barrels by 1754. At the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, the annual export amounted to approximately 142,000 barrels. The ravages of the war decreased the amount to 61,974 barrels in 1783, but with the return of peace, the cultivation of rice was resumed, the export by 1792 totalling 106,419 barrels.²⁴

Rice is a very heavy commodity to transport; therefore, planters endeavored to have their plantations front on navigable water accessible to the ocean.²⁵ Meriwether states that along "the streams that fell into Charleston harbor, or through the inland passage from Charleston to Savannah, boats from half the tide water area could reach the town without touching the ocean."²⁶ Rice production was not an easy task. "The work of clearing the ground, cultivating the plant, and cleaning the grain from the husk was arduous in the extreme, and in the hot wet swamp land only negroes could well endure it. Therefore the importation of slaves kept pace with the increase of the crop and made South Carolina a region of large plantations...."²⁷ During the opening decade of the Seventeenth Century, the number of Negroes equaled the white population, there being about four thousand of each."²⁸ "There after for a lifetime or two the whites tended to double but the blacks to treble, every twelve or fifteen years."²⁹

²⁴Ramsay, History of South Carolina, 115-116.

²⁵Robert L. Meriwether, The Expansion of South Carolina, 1729-1785 (Southern Publishers, Inc., Kingsport, Tenn., 1940), 4.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Phillips, Life and Labor in the Old South, 49.

²⁹Ibid.

About the middle of the eighteenth century another staple, indigo, appeared in South Carolina. In 1764, 216,924 pounds of this commodity were exported. Just prior to the Revolutionary War this amount had increased to 1,107,680 pounds. However, due to large importations of indigo from the East Indies into England, the price dropped so low that cotton soon took its place, the same land being suitable for the production of both commodities.³⁰ Not only was the introduction of cotton to sound the knell of indigo production, but the long-established rice industry was soon to feel the effects of the rapid expansion of "king" cotton. In describing the city in 1800, Wallace says that "Charleston was instinct with life as one of the country's chief commercial centers with exports almost equal to those of Massachusetts or Pennsylvania. The already astonishing expansion of cotton culture seemed to promise her the third place among American cities...."³¹

"The gross cotton output [of the United States] in which the upland crop greatly and increasingly outweighed that of the sea-island staple, rapidly advanced from about forty-eight million pounds in 1801 to about eighty million in 1806; then it was kept stationary by the embargo and the war of 1812, until the return of peace and open trade sent it up by leaps and bounds again."³²

In addition to the rice and indigo exportations, much of the mounting cotton export trade passed through the port of Charleston. Citing

³⁰ Ramsay, History of South Carolina, 118-119; Phillips, American Negro Slavery, 81-83.

³⁰ Ramsay, History of South Carolina, 118-119; Phillips, American American Negro Slavery, 81-83.

³¹ D. D. Wallace, The History of South Carolina, 4 vols. (The Ann:

the Harbor Master's report, Charles Fraser states that on January 2, 1797, there were "sixty-seven square-rigged vessels in port [Charleston] thirty four schooners and sixteen sloops; and on the 2d February, of the same year, ninety-one square-rigged vessels, and fifty-eight schooners and sloops. All the retail business of the state was then centered in Charleston, and every part of it depended on her for supplies."³³

Although the population of Charleston was only about 15,000 in 1790, and one half of that number Negroes, it was probably "the most urbane of American cities, with a notable semi-public library, thriving bookstores, excellent newspapers, mantua makers and milliners in touch with Paris fashions, a thronged race course, dancing assemblies, and easy-mannered men's clubs."³⁴ A portion of the elite society was composed of rich planters, who

fell early into the practice of resorting thither [Charleston] for the summers to escape the curse of malaria which awaited all non-immunes in the vicinity of the rice fields; and those of pronounced wealth added a winter sojourn to patronize the balls and races and participate in the manifold private activities of an urban social season. Thus the greater planters erected town houses and occupied them for perhaps the larger half of the year, contributing a polish of manner and a conservatism in public policy which a mere commercial population would hardly have developed.³⁵

³³ Charles Fraser, Reminiscences of Charleston (John Russell, Charleston, 1764), 12.

³⁴ Phillips, Life and Labor in the Old South, 53.

³⁵ Ibid. "To the low country planter Charleston was indebted for much of its gaiety, and the liberal expenditure that fed the streams of industry and currents of business. He, in fact, imparted a tone of refinement to this section of the State. Many of them being men of leisure and education, visited Charleston during the summer months, and had their charming residences in the suburbs or on Sullivan's Island. The pervading spirit of Charleston society was therefore that of refined intercourse." J. N. Cardoso, Reminiscences of Charleston (Joseph Walker, Charleston, 1866), 8-9.

Fraser, speaking of the Charleston elite, declared that "Many of these men were the remnant of a peculiar race of people. Born under a royal government and early impressed with those exclusive feelings which rank and fortune create, they were characterized by a high and gentlemanly bearing. Most of them had been educated in one or another of the English Universities, and had become familiar with the highest standard of manners in that country."³⁶

The first theater in Charleston was established in 1793.³⁷ All classes stormed its doors long before opening hours. For a time the stage became the topic of general conversation, and "so enchanting was its influence, that the ladies were heard to say that they could live in the theatre."³⁸ Appreciation for music was also an early characteristic of the Charlestonians. Concerts, arranged by "music societies," were well attended by the most fashionable society. A public library was established as early as 1708,³⁹ and although books were difficult to secure, by about 1754 the Charles Town Library contained some six or seven thousand volumes.⁴⁰ In addition to the city libraries, many of the substantial families maintained adequate libraries. In 1803, the intellectual and cultural prestige of the city received impetus when "Ebenezer S. Thomas, one of the four book dealers in Charleston... brought from England 50,000 volumes in every department of science, art and literature...."⁴¹

Steeped in such culture, well might Henry Adams declare that

³⁶ Fraser, Reminiscences of Charleston, 52.

³⁷ Ibid., 20.

³⁸ Ibid., 21.

³⁹ Mrs. St. Julien Ravenel, Charleston, the Place and the People (The Macmillan Co., New York, 1928), 64.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 254.

⁴¹ Wallace, The History of South Carolina, II, 360-361.

Charleston compared favorably "in refinement with that of any city of its size in the world, and English visitors long thought it the most agreeable in America."⁴² The Duc de Liancourt, having visited Charleston in 1796, declared in his published travels, "whatever praise may be due to our European gentility, yet in no part of the globe is so much hospitality practiced as in America, or can it anywhere be better excoriated than in South Carolina."⁴³

However, beneath this surface of elegance, an undercurrent of intemperance and general vice was prevalent. "William J. Grayson's manuscript autobiography," says Wallace, "relates that well into the nineteenth century it was the custom for the host to lock the doors and refuse to permit any guest to leave the table until he was drunk."⁴⁴ Although churches were well attended on the Sabbath, to many of the so-called members the occasion was "a day of formal visiting and for the display of equipages and horses...."⁴⁵ With the exception of those engaged in the learned professions, the connotations of the term "work" were beyond the comprehension of the Charleston gentlemen, for no pursuit that yielded income from individual effort or employment was rightly respected.⁴⁶ Thus dwelled the citizenry of Charleston, proud and content in their little, soft, self-centered world, proclaiming in their revelry, "nothing like us ever was," as they cast disdainful glances at their brothers who lived in the "crude" and "barbaric up country."

⁴²Henry Adams, History of the United States, 9 vols. (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1903), I, 149.

⁴³Fraser, Reminiscences of Charleston, 53.

⁴⁴Wallace, The History of South Carolina, II, 362.

⁴⁵Fraser, Reminiscences of Charleston, 65.

⁴⁶Wallace, The History of South Carolina, II, 363.

Into the environment of this unique city, Charleston, South Carolina, Benjamin Morgan Palmer was born January 25, 1818. As previously stated, his father, Edward Palmer, suffused with the conviction that he had received the "divine call," departed in 1821 for Andover, Massachusetts, to pursue his preparation for the ministry, his family remaining in Charleston. Young Benjamin was three years old. His frail, anemic appearance belied the probability of his reaching manhood. "On taking leave of his children," says Johnson, "Mr. Palmer is reported to have long held the frail little Benny in his arms, and to have said, 'My poor little Benny I suppose I shall never see you again in this world. You will hardly live to pass your fifth year.'"⁴⁷

During Palmer's first two years of study at Andover, "Mrs. Palmer and her sister, Mrs. Edward Axson, took a large house in the Southern part of Charleston, perhaps on Lambell Street; and there kept a small boarding school....During this period Mrs. Palmer seems to have kept a few sturdy and reputable young men as boarders also."⁴⁸ However, misfortune soon befell the family. Early in 1823, within a week, two of the four children died. Upon receiving word of his children's death, Edward Palmer immediately resolved that his wife and two remaining children, Benjamin and Sophronia, should come to Andover and remain with him until the completion of his study. Again united with her husband, Mrs. Palmer directed her attention to the education of her nine-year-old daughter, Sophronia. Sophronia was introduced to portions of Locke's Essay on Human Understanding and other "useful" books.

⁴⁷ Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 38.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

According to Johnson she had been able to read the New Testament at the age of four.⁴⁹ Imbued with that ability which enabled her to get inside the minds of her children and look out through their eyes, Mrs. Palmer developed toward her children a sympathy and understanding which freed the learning process of boredom. In speaking of Mrs. Palmer's personality and her adroitness in winning the admiration and obedience of her children, Johnson states:

It is worth while to notice again this young matron, slender, and graceful in movement, with a rather lofty and beautifully moulded forehead, penetrating but sweet steel blue eyes, a well shaped nose, a flexible mouth of sufficiently generous proportions, a strong but not a stubborn lower face, and a high purposefulness in all her carriage. She understands and sympathizes with all her children and secures their obedience with tactfulness and ease. The mothering of her children, their noblest development, she makes her high and holy business.⁵⁰

In 1824, the Reverend Edward Palmer returned with his family to South Carolina. He secured a pastorate at Dorchester, a small town about eighteen miles from Charleston, in the district of Colleton. There he and his family lived for the next three years.

Meanwhile, the behavior of young Benjamin was similar to that of most six-year-old boys. He enjoyed playing with hoop, ball, and kite with his sister Sophronia. However, that Benjamin was a rather independent and headstrong child is illustrated by two incidents which occurred during the Dorchester years.

His father had allowed his faithful horse to graze on the little lawn around the cottage in which he was living. He had warned his son Benjamin to keep away from the animal, but the imp of mischief was incarnated in him; he delighted in creeping up to the animal and startling him with a smart cut, or other means, into a run.

⁴⁹Ibid., 39.

⁵⁰Ibid.

Unfortunately, on one occasion he got too near, the horse landed a kick on the face of his tormentor, bruised and cut his lips not a little, and slit one side of a nostril to such an extent that he bore the marks, slightly disfiguring that side of his face, to the day of his death.⁵¹

The second and more important incident concerned itself with young Benjamin's experience in lying. Johnson records the following account of the story:

A paternal measure, an account of which has not been preserved, had provoked the boy's resentment. Now his father was a man of great neatness and order about his writing as about all his work. Valuable belongings on his writing table were a neat pen-knife for sharpening his quill pens, scissors, paper cutter, etc. It seems that Mr. Palmer valued very particularly these articles. To "pay" his father for the paternal measure just referred to, Benjamin took them and deposited them in a brook hard by. Pretty soon Mr. Palmer missed them, made a search, questioned his household, and amongst the rest Benjamin, who evaded the question for a time and then boldly "lied" about the matter....He joined with apparent sedulousness in the hunt for them. He kept up the pretense for several days....But the burden was too heavy for so ingenuous a nature. It was his "first lie" or series of lies, for in his old days he said, "I lied straight through for a week." He was all the while most miserable. Child though he was, appetite and sleep were going from him. At the end of the week he rushed one morning into the house, crying, "Where is father?" Receiving the reply, "He is in his study, you must not interrupt him," he exclaimed, "I cannot help it, I must interrupt him"; and rushing in, he confessed the whole matter. When nearing eighty he could say that since that day he did not know that he had ever been guilty of a lie.⁵²

That the Reverend Edward Palmer exercised rigid discipline over his children there is little doubt. On one occasion Benjamin had been over at the Glovers⁵³ playing with some of the boys. He returned home with a hoop. His father noticed the plaything, and not recalling Benjamin's

⁵¹Ibid., 40.

⁵²Ibid., 41.

⁵³One of the old, reputable families of Walterboro, South Carolina.

owning one, inquired as to where he got it. When Benjamin answered that he had brought it from the Glovers, his father replied abruptly, "Ben, get your hat and return it at once."⁵⁴

The extent of Benjamin's educational training prior to his entering Walterboro Academy in 1828 is not definitely known. "It was the custom of the planters in the early days to employ tutors on their estates for the education of their children...."⁵⁵ However, it is certain that he received no tutelage except that given him by his father and mother. The evidence indicates that this task was assumed primarily by his mother. According to the Martin sisters,⁵⁶ Mrs. Palmer was a "very remarkable woman, endowed with a keen intellect and affable disposition. She was Ben's tutor and following her practice with Sophronia, in his sixth year read him Locke's Essay on Human Understanding."⁵⁷ In reference to the teaching of Benjamin by his mother, Johnson says:

Up to [the time of] their leaving Dorchester, she seems to have been almost his only teacher. In addition to teaching him the rudimental learning usually given boys of his age, she read with

⁵⁴This narrative was given the writer by Mrs. George R. Fraser of Walterboro, South Carolina, January 29, 1942. Benjamin was about ten years old. The Palmers had recently moved from Dorchester to Walterboro.

⁵⁵John R. Todd and Francis T. Hutson, Prince Williams Parish and Plantations (Garrett and Massie, Richmond, Va., 1936), 95.

⁵⁶Four unmarried sisters, Elena Elizabeth, Anna Calcock, Eliza Calcock, Mary McCloud, of McPhersonville, South Carolina, now probably between the ages of 55 and 70. Edward Palmer accepted the call to Stony Creek Church at McPhersonville in the autumn of 1831 where he remained until his return to Bethel Church at Walterboro in 1844.

⁵⁷This reminiscence was given the writer by the Martin sisters, January 30, 1942.

him the whole of Shakespeare's plays, Milton's "Paradise Lost", and Scott's novels, thus helping him to that luxuriance, beauty and precision of style for which his own pen was to be remarkable. Moreover, she grounded him deeply in the noblest principles of character and conduct. She, more than anyone else, gave the primal shaping to a character which was to develop into unusual splendor.⁵⁸

From his mother, Benjamin seems to have derived a love for the beautiful; an intense and penetrating intellectual capacity; a desire for good literature; an aggressive, dynamic independence tempered with a pleasing degree of sociability. From his father's lineage he appears to have inherited a sense of orderliness and discipline; an unyielding tenacity; a tendency toward courtesy, common sense and unrestricted charity; a finely balanced measure of egotism rooted in stubborn Calvinistic principles.

Such were the features of the civilization that surrounded the young Benjamin Palmer. A culture that had supplied the pioneer fires of Americanism with a steady flow of patriots; a singular culture whose ethos its champions and commoners alike personified with indefatigable stateliness. This dynamic energy permeated and pricked the awakening consciousness of Benjamin Palmer. The time was approaching when he was to begin the answer to this challenge of heritage.

⁵⁸ Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 40.

CHAPTER III

FORMAL EDUCATION

Walterboro Academy

The "low country" of South Carolina was settled in large plantations, which, because of the heat and fever, were very unhealthful in the summer. Many of the more wealthy planters resided in Charleston during the summer months. In answer to the necessity for a dry, healthy spot in proximity to their plantations in which to pass the summer, Walterboro came into being as a resort for the planters of Colleton County. It became necessary for the planters either to provide a means of educating their children or send them away to school. Often the early ministers combined their calling with that of schoolmaster.¹ The Reverend J. B. Van Dyk exemplified such a combination. Upon graduating from Amherst College in 1826, Van Dyk entered Princeton Seminary, where he remained until completing the ministerial course. "He was received as a member of the Charleston Union Presbytery by dismission from the Second Presbytery of New York on the 9th of November, 1830. On the 8th of April, 1831, he received a call from Salthatcher Church."² Since his charge was only a short distance from Walterboro, he resided in the resort center during his ministry at Salthatcher Church.

According to available evidence, the Reverend Van Dyk, upon his

¹Boulah Glover, Education in Colleton County--Schools of Yesterday (Undated Pamphlet, n.p.), 1.

²George Howe, History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina (W. J. Duffie, Columbia, S. C., 1883), 463.

own initiative, commenced a school in Walterboro between the fall of 1831 and the spring of 1832.³ Benjamin Palmer, at the age of twelve, was a student in Van Dyck's Academy. Actually this training was the first Benjamin had received from teachers other than his parents. In speaking of Van Dyck's ability as a teacher, Daniel J. Pope, of Columbia, South Carolina, who entered the school about the time Benjamin left, states:

The Rev. J. B. Van Dyck was not a great scholar. He was a rather poor mathematician; a good Latin scholar. He knew enough to prepare men well for college. While not a great scholar, he was a great teacher; he could tell what he knew so as to make a boy understand it. He could, and did, excite the ambition of his boys. In addition, Mr. Van Dyck established a debating society into which he introduced the boys. He sometimes presided. "While in other schools the boys were playing, in his school they were learning to debate and to speak."⁴

In referring to Benjamin Palmer as a student in Walterboro Academy, Pope and James Glover, a contemporary of Pope and a resident of Walterboro, agree that "Ben Palmer" was "a good boy," "played little," and "studied hard." Pope adds that "Palmer stood at the very head of this school, had learned all to be taught there by the time he was fourteen, and went at that age to Amherst thoroughly prepared."⁵ "Tradition also says that

³Glover states that Van Dyck was an influential teacher at Walterboro in 1827. However, this was impossible since he was in Princeton Seminary at that time and was not released to the Charleston Presbytery until the fall of 1830. In his History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina, Howe gives 1836 as the approximate date of the establishing of Van Dyck's school in Walterboro. This date is obviously incorrect, since Palmer departed for Amherst College in the winter of 1832. He must have had about a year's training in Van Dyck's school since he entered Amherst as a sophomore. Therefore, it is logical to conclude that Van Dyck's school at Walterboro was founded between the fall of 1830 and the spring of 1832.

⁴Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 43. See also Glover, Education in Colleton County, 1; Howe, History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina, 463-464.

⁵Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 43.

Ben Palmer was the prince of debaters and speakers in that little debating society organized by Mr. Van Dyck."⁶

There appears to be no specific record available of the type of work done in the Walterboro Academy during its early years. The first available printed record seems to be an announcement in the Colleton and Beaufort Sun (county paper) of an oratorical exhibition by the "pupils" of the Academy, November 30, 1859. The titles of some of the orations were: "Cicero against Catalina," "South Carolina and Massachusetts," "Battle the only Alternative," and "Vindication of South Carolina." In the next issue of the Sun the following account of the exhibition was given:

The performances of the young gentlemen were highly creditable to themselves, and gratifying to the patrons and friends of the school; and as such exhibitions not only act as a stimulus upon the scholars, but also bring the Academy before the Community, and interest the citizens in it. We hope they may be continued. The exhibition was divided into two parts--first, the oratorical, and secondly, the dramatic. "Throughout the whole, the young scholars played their respective parts with much aptitude, spirit and applause."

Thus the facts indicate that Benjamin Palmer began early the study and practice of the art of speaking which was soon to elevate him among his associates.

Amherst College

The years between 1820 and 1832, which marked a crucial period in the history of South Carolina, exerted a strong influence over Palmer's thinking. By the middle twenties South Carolina's trade had decreased enormously. The price of cotton had dropped from twenty-five cents per

⁶Ibid., 43-44.

⁷Walterboro (S. C.) Colleton and Beaufort Sun, December 7, 1859.

pound in 1825 to eleven cents in 1826.⁸ Not only was she losing in capital but also in population. The awakening West was drawing upon her manpower. Hitherto, South Carolina had been the "melting pot" of the South, receiving from both the East and the Continent men and women of more than ordinary caliber. But now she was rearing her sons and daughters at great cost and giving them to the rising West and Southwest.⁹

The slavery issue, reasonably dormant for some time, raised its ugly head when that "fire bell in the night," the Missouri Controversy, aroused South Carolina to an attitude of alarmed self-defense.¹⁰ Although a temporary victory for South Carolina, as well as for the South generally, the Compromise was charged with ominous foreboding. Henceforth, she was increasingly resentful of any encroachment upon the institution of slavery.

In addition to the economic threat inherent in the slavery alteration, South Carolina's economic difficulties were further aggravated by the reappearance of the obnoxious tariff controversy. The protective policy, which worked a hardship on the raw producing South, was "begun tentatively in 1816, and carried out more vigorously in 1824, 1828 and 1832."¹¹ Although displeasing to South Carolina, the tariff of 1824 provoked little opposition in comparison to the "tariff of abominations" in 1832, which threw the state into immediate and violent resentment.¹²

"It was reported that the meeting of the South Carolina delegation after

⁸Wallace, History of South Carolina, II, 418.

⁹Ibid., 419; Frederic Bancroft, Calhoun and the South Carolina Nullification Movement (Johns Hopkins, Baltimore, 1928), 22-23.

¹⁰Wallace, History of South Carolina, II, 415.

¹¹F. W. Taussig, The Tariff History of the United States (G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York and London, 1914), 108.

¹²Snowden, History of South Carolina, I, 563.

the adoption, May 24, of this 'tariff of abominations' was to concert secession and indoctrinate with this their constituents."¹³ Following the meeting, the members of the South Carolina delegation hastened home to test the tenor of public opinion on the issue. Calhoun also returned to South Carolina the latter part of May. Doubting that Jackson would secure relief for the South, Calhoun began drafting a remedy in the form of a treatise on nullification. William C. Preston, a prospective member of the South Carolina committee on federal relations, asked Calhoun to submit his paper in the form of a report for that committee. Calhoun consented and in December, 1828, the committee, having altered the treatise considerably but not sufficiently to change the content, submitted it as their own, together with a protest to the United States Senate which was also secretly written by Calhoun. Although the report was not approved, the lower house ordered the printing of five thousand copies under the title of "The South Carolina Exposition and Protest on the Subject of the Tariff."¹⁴

However, in spite of wide-spread agitation, South Carolina actually was not ready to withdraw from the Union for she hoped for relief through Jackson's election to the presidency in 1828.¹⁵ But upon election, Jackson showed no great concern over the tariff situation. The Hayne-Webster debates in 1830 created additional friction between South Carolina and the Union, and gave wide publicity to Calhoun's doctrine of

¹³Wallace, History of South Carolina, II, 426-427. The delegation referred to was composed of the members in the national congress from South Carolina.

¹⁴Bancroft, Calhoun and the South Carolina Nullification Movement, 38-40.

¹⁵Wallace, History of South Carolina, II, 427.

nullification.¹⁶ For the next two years a foreboding lull pervaded South Carolina. The storm broke in 1832 when Congress passed a new tariff, which was probably more equitable than the previous acts but a compromise which was unsatisfactory to the country in general. In immediate response to the tariff of 1832 a state convention was held in South Carolina which passed an ordinance declaring the new tariff act and the tariff of 1828 to be null and void within the state after February 1, 1833.¹⁷ However, on January 21, 1833, eleven days before the nullification ordinance was to become effective, "A large meeting of nullifiers, mostly citizens of Charleston, virtually suspended the ordinance pending congressional action on the tariff...."¹⁸

Meanwhile, Jackson had been re-elected president in 1832. Although ready to engage South Carolina in open conflict, he sought to avoid bloodshed by aiding in the joint passage of the "Force Bill" and a "new tariff measure," the compromise tariff of 1833, which conceded some of the Carolinians' demands. Reluctantly South Carolina resolved to be content with what she called "her victory." Thus for the time being the crisis was averted. However, "From 1832 to 1860," says Wallace, "South Carolina was in effect not so much a part of the country as a dissatisfied ally, for the last thirteen years of the period only waiting a favorable opportunity to dissolve the alliance."¹⁹

¹⁶It was not generally known until about a year later that Calhoun was the originator of the doctrine of nullification expounded by Hayne. Bancroft, Calhoun and the South Carolina Nullification Movement, 49.

¹⁷Wallace, History of South Carolina, II, 442-443; Bancroft, Calhoun and the South Carolina Nullification Movement, 127-129.

¹⁸Ibid., 150-151.

¹⁹Wallace, History of South Carolina, II, 453.

It was in the midst of such political and economic controversy that the childhood years of Benjamin Palmer were passed. That he was poignantly cognizant of the significance of these events is clearly demonstrated by his willingness and agility in upholding the traditions of his home state upon his arrival as a sophomore at Amherst College in 1832. For upon the completion of his study at Walterboro Academy, his father had resolved to send Benjamin East to Amherst for further training.

There were several considerations which led to the selection of Amherst as the college where Benjamin should receive his higher education. Although a relatively young institution, having been established in 1821, Amherst was becoming noted for its superior faculty. The cost of attendance was exceedingly low, for an economical student was not expected to spend more than a total of one hundred and fifty dollars per year.²⁰ It should also be remembered that Benjamin's father, a year earlier, had received his training at Andover, located a short distance from Amherst, and therefore, was familiar with the "piety" of that locality. Also the Reverend Van Dyck, Benjamin's instructor at Walterboro Academy, was an Amherst graduate. But most important was the fact that Amherst had been founded primarily for the education of young men for the ministry. Edward Palmer hoped that his son would there be converted to the ministry and thus follow in his footsteps.²¹

In the summer of 1832, Benjamin Palmer would have appeared to the casual observer much like any undersized boy of fifteen. But to the skilled reader of personality, some rather distinct characteristics

²⁰ Catalogue of the Faculty and Students of Amherst College, 1833 (Northampton: Thomas W. Sheppard and Co., 1827). Cited hereafter as Catalogue of Amherst College.

²¹ Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 47.

commanded immediate attention. Although small in stature for his years, his movements were lithe and rhythmical, denoting excellent poise and grace. The sensitive mouth and strong chin gave evidence of an indomitable will.²² The most charming feature of a medium-sized, well proportioned head was the eyes. Panoramic they were in their ability to portray ostensible or evanescent emotions with acuity. To these attractions must be added a voice that was beginning to reveal those attributes that were soon to charm and magnetize the multitude.

No doubt it was with reticence that the fifteen-year-old Benjamin said farewell to his stern, pious father and his charming, companionate mother. But the gains involved were far in excess of the momentary anxiety. From his home in Walterboro, he set out alone for Charleston, where he secured passage on a vessel bound for New York. Had he suspected the misfortunes that were soon to assail him in his new environment, he doubtless would have gazed to the Northeastward with less complacency, after watching Charleston, the city of his birth, fade from the horizon.

Upon arriving at New York, Palmer made his way to the little village of Amherst, soon to become famous with the growing fame of Amherst College.²³ The Sophomore and first term Junior course of study, which Palmer completed during his stay at Amherst, contained many subjects and exercises conducive to a further development of his abilities as a speaker. In addition to two weekly rhetorical exercises--Declamation, Debate or English Composition--the curriculum contained several standard courses in Rhetoric; namely, Horace, Satires, Epistles, and Art of

²²*Ibid.*, 45.

²³The faculty of 1833 was composed of the Rev. Heman Humphrey, Pres., and Prof. of Divinity and Mental Philosophy; the Rev. Edw. H. Pitchee, Prof. of Chemistry and Natural History; Samuel M. Worcester, Prof. of Rhetoric and Oratory; Ebenezer S. Snell, Prof. of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy and Hebrew Literature; and the Rev. Nathan W. Fiske, Prof. of Latin and Greek Language and Literature. Catalogue of Amherst College, 1833.

Poetry; Gracea Majors, Orators; Newman's Rhetoric; Hodge's Logic;
Cicero's De Oratore and Philosophy of Rhetoric.²⁴

Notwithstanding his extreme youth, Palmer stood first in his class.²⁵ By reason of his marked capacity for leadership, which he at once exercised, Palmer became the champion defender of the Southern cause. In his unpublished manuscript on Dr. Stuart Robinson, one of his classmates from the South, Palmer gives the following account of his surroundings at Amherst:

A small group of Southern students nestled like birds in a nest, in that far-off New England clime. Five of the number hailed from Virginia, four from Georgia, and one poor speckled bird from South Carolina. The heart lingers a moment over this little coterie, trying to keep itself warm in that cold region by building close together in the bonds of a special friendship. It was an uncanny time for Southern men to trim their sails for Northern seas. The Nullification storm had just burst over the country, and was not yet appeased. The abolition fanaticism was rising to the height of its frenzy. The elements of conflict were gathering in the theological world, which a little later resulted in the schism rending the Presbyterian Church asunder. The sky was full of portents, and the air screamed with war cries on every side. The unfortunate South Carolinian, whom fate reserves to record in these pages his own disaster, was too young and unformed in character to steer his bark over such tempestuous billows, and was soon wrecked upon a treacherous reef.²⁶

In the classroom and on the campus Palmer ardently upheld the policies of the land of his birth. This course provoked repeated verbal assaults. "I was baited," says he, "until I was as cross as a brown bear."²⁷ No doubt this constant irritation was an important factor in determining his course of action during his crisis with the Faculty in the spring of 1854. With reference to this unfortunate episode the

²⁴Ibid., 13-14.

²⁵Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 49.

²⁶Quoted in Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 47-48. The writer is unable to locate this manuscript.

²⁷Martin sisters to the writer, January 30, 1942.

facts indicate that Palmer was a member of a literary society, the members of which were solemnly pledged not to divulge the secrecy of meetings. One of the practices of the organization consisted in the reading, by the secretary, of anonymous papers dropped into a box at the door of the meeting hall. A paper, containing some caustic but humorous criticisms of the professors, was read at one of the meetings. It was no less a personage than Henry Ward Beecher who betrayed his fellow-members by informing the faculty of the incident. At the next meeting a motion was submitted forbidding the continuance of the practice. Palmer, then about sixteen years of age, moved that the motion be tabled indefinitely and stated further that the only way the faculty could have known of the paper was through the treachery of some member of the society and that it was unworthy of the dignity of the faculty to accept perjured testimony as evidence. The president of the society, reluctant to put the motion to a vote, was bodily held in his chair while the question was placed and carried. Beecher immediately informed the faculty of this action. Endeavoring to discover the author of the critical essay, the faculty decided to force all who could do so to state their guiltlessness, thus, by the process of residue, arriving at the offender. Several of the members of the society were indignant about the manner by which they were being forced to break their pledge of allegiance to the society. Palmer was their leader and spokesman. When called before the faculty and requested to state his innocence, he replied that he was honor bound to take no part in disclosing the affairs of a society where each member was pledged to secrecy. When the faculty threatened to expel him for not complying with their demand, Palmer replied, "I will take expulsion at your hands rather than trample upon

my sense of honor." Because of Palmer's extreme youth, together with his display of ethics, the faculty offered to reinstate him. But "owing to the irritation he had suffered at the hands of the critics of his state and section and to his dislike of the spirit of the college as illustrated in the occasion of his expulsion, he was determined to leave the institution and return to his own people." When he left Amherst, his New England fellow students expressed their admiration for his course. The entire undergraduate student body assembled and Palmer departed amid ringing cheers.

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After leaving Amherst, Palmer proceeded to New York, where he obtained passage on a vessel bound for Charleston. During Benjamin's stay at Amherst College, his father had moved from Bethel Church in Walterboro to Stony Creek Church, a distance of some twenty-five miles. The church at Stony Creek was located about seven miles from Mophersonville, in the midst of rice plantations. During the winter, the planters whose families worshipped at Stony Creek Church lived on their plantations and their minister lived in a manse near the church. But in the summer, to avoid the heat and fever, everyone moved to Mophersonville, located on the sand hills under the long-leaved pines. When the parsonage at Stony Creek burned in 1852, the congregation rented the plantation house of "Laurium," into which Edward Palmer and his family moved in the winter of 1853. This plantation home was most impressive and ostentatious for a minister. "The original Laurium house," says Johnson, "had been of the usual plan, a two-story house with hall and stairway midway between

²⁸ Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 49-50. See also Confederate Veterans, I, 362.

the two ends, a plain square room on either side of the hall in each story, and broad piazzas on North and South. The preceding owner had added a very large room on each end, the rooms being as long as the breadth of the original house and of the two piazzas, and fashioned in front in octagonal form."²⁹ Edward Palmer and his family were still enjoying these comfortable surroundings when Benjamin returned from Amherst.

Certain that reports from Amherst had already reached his father, and uncertain as to whether he would be welcomed at his father's house, Benjamin decided to depart at an adjoining plantation, owned by William G. Martin, an elder in the Stony Creek Church. After Benjamin had acquainted Martin with the facts of his dismissal from Amherst College, the kind old gentleman went to the Laurium house and informed the Palmers of their son's arrival. Benjamin was greatly relieved when Martin announced upon his return that he was to proceed home. ³⁰

Reports vary widely as to the manner in which Benjamin was received by his father. Johnson states: "Some say that he forbade his son the house telling him that he would henceforth have to shift for himself. Others say that he simply expressed plainly his own view of his son's course, suppressed his son's attempted explanation and justification of the same and refused to extend to him the hand of welcome."³¹ According to the Martin sisters, "Edward Palmer was very indignant over Ben's behavior, believing that he had gone against the respectful authority of

²⁹ Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 51-52.

³⁰ Ibid., 52.

³¹ Ibid., 52-53.

the faculty and therefore, was not to be excused on any ground. Whether Ben's father refused him admittance to the house is not certain."³²

Regardless of what the actual conduct of his father was, Benjamin's mother came to his aid in this crisis. She was quick to recognize that there was much in his behavior to admire. Furthermore, she appreciated her husband's attitude and explained to Benjamin that it was only natural that his father should feel as he did toward his son in whom he had placed supreme confidence. Although the breach between father and son actually was not spanned until Benjamin's return from the University of Georgia. Mrs. Palmer's understanding and sympathy were salient factors in alleviating her son's situation. In later years, when speaking of her loyalty to him during this period, he would say, "Under God she was at this time my savior."³³

Immediately upon Benjamin's return from Amherst, William G. Martin, the gentleman who had befriended the lad, engaged him to tutor his children. The following summer, 1834, Benjamin taught in the village school of McPhersonville, located on Bender Plantation adjoining Stony Creek. In addition to Benjamin's sister and brother, Sarah and Edward, Jr., many of the children of the parishioner planters attended his school.³⁴ Johnson indicates that "the winter of 1835-1836 he seems to have spent teaching in the family of Mr. Hibbens, at Mt. Pleasant, across the Cooper river from Charleston. He may have taught again in McPhersonville in the summer and autumn of 1836."³⁵

³²Martin sisters in interview with writer, January 29, 1942.

³³Johnson, Benjamin Morison Palmer, 53-54.

³⁴Martin sisters in interview with writer, January 29, 1942.

³⁵Johnson, Benjamin Morison Palmer, 53-54.

Although reared under strict Christian influences, Benjamin had given little thought regarding his relation to the church and God prior to his return from Amherst. Actually, he appears to have been hostile toward religion. Without doubt the unfortunate Amherst episode intensified his lack of respect for the Gospel as applied by Christian people. Referring to the irreligious tendencies that characterized his conduct during this period, Benjamin frankly proclaimed:

When I was seventeen years of age, I was thrown into a large city as much given to gaiety as this [New Orleans], without being subject to any control. I was irreligious, May, worse than that, I was hostile to religion, in decided hostility to God and the Gospel, in such evil posture that, had I fallen into the hands of scuffers, I might have become as infidel as they.³⁶

In a lecture on the "Formation of Character," Palmer alluded to his struggle against the authority of Christ: "Accept the testimony of him who is now addressing you, who once fought against the convictions of conscience rather than submit to the authority of Christ. Believe me, it is no professional utterance I bear to you tonight. It is not so long ago I held up my hand against God and warred against all the principles of Grace...."³⁷ Again in one of his published sermons Palmer states: "I have no idea that there is one in all this assembly who has ever been, in the worst crisis of his history, the guilty and blasphemous wretch that he was at eighteen years of age who this morning addresses to you the Gospel of the Grace of God."³⁸

It was one of Palmer's own kin, the Reverend I. S. K. Axson, who,

³⁶ Benjamin Morgan Palmer, Formation of Character (E. S. Upton, New Orleans, 1889), 123-126.

³⁷ Ibid., 61.

³⁸ Palmer, Sermons, 3 vols. (New Orleans: Clark and Hofeline, 1876), I, 596.

finding Benjamin in doubt and confusion, induced him to settle the problem of his salvation. In a memorial address to Axson, who was pastor of the Independent Presbyterian Church of Savannah, Georgia, Palmer relates the incident which led to his conversion.

In journeying from Dorchester to Liberty County, his second pastoral charge, (referring to the Reverend Axson) his path lay before my father's door. It was my office to light him to his chamber at night; when placing the candle upon his table it was natural to pause a few seconds before parting. He seized the opportunity to address me on the subject of personal religion. There was a persuasiveness in his tone that soothed me as he said: "My cousin, you are growing up fast to manhood; is it not a good time to give yourself to the Savior, when you are soon to choose the course in life which you shall pursue?" Subdued by his gentleness, I replied: "Cousin Stockton, I am doubtless regarded by all around me as thoughtless and flippant, because I turn the edge of every appeal with a jest, but I am free to confess to you that for eighteen months I have lived in the bosom of as fierce a storm as ever swept over a human soul." When this gentle Nathanael said to me, "Close it up, my cousin, close it up, and be at peace with God," before reaching the door of his chamber, I took the solemn vow that I would make the salvation of my soul the supreme business of my life....³⁹

Finally, after several months of struggle and indecision, Palmer joined the Stony Creek Church, July 10, 1836.⁴⁰ Palmer's acceptance of Christ as master set in motion forces that were soon to determine the course of his later life.

University of Georgia

The University of Georgia, claimed by some to be the oldest state university in America,⁴¹ had its legal inception in an act passed by the Georgia legislature, February 26, 1784, whereby 40,000 acres were set

³⁹Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 56.

⁴⁰Stony Creek Church Session Records, McPhersonville, S. C., 106.

⁴¹University of Georgia, The Red and Black, January 10, 1942.

aside for the purpose of endowing a "college or seminary of learning." These 40,000 acres were equally divided into two counties, Washington and Franklin.⁴² The following year "a bill was introduced to complete the establishment of a 'public seat of learning,' which was approved January 27, 1785, and constitutes the Charter of the University of Georgia."⁴³ However, it was not until 1801 that buildings were erected and Josiah Meigs, "a Yale graduate and former tutor there," assumed the presidency of the University. Under his supervision, Franklin College, as it was then called, enjoyed rapid development. In 1805, with an enrollment of seventy students "a new departure for an American College was taken when the study of the French language was added...."⁴⁴ However, this initial prosperity was short lived. Owing primarily to financial difficulties, the college was suspended in the summer of 1811 until the following December. This procedure occurred again in 1816. As a last resort, the college turned to the sale of its lands in order to raise capital with which to operate. At this critical stage the legislature offered assistance by agreeing "to give the University \$100,000 in state bank stocks, to be fully paid for from the land sales. With the state bank prosperous the University received \$8,000 annually in interest, and thus gained its first element of permanency."⁴⁵

In the fall of 1819, fortune smiled upon the languishing University. The Reverend Moses Kaddel, who had taught and preached himself

⁴²E. Herton Coulter, College Life in the Old South (The Macmillan Co., New York, 1928), 4-5.

⁴³A. L. Hull, A Historical Sketch of the University of Georgia (The Feste and Davies Co., Atlanta, Ga., 1894), 4.

⁴⁴Coulter, College Life in the Old South, 22.

⁴⁵Ibid., 30.

to fame throughout the Southeast, was elected president.

He [Naddel] had taught John C. Calhoun...and had started William H. Crawford and George McDuffie on the road to learning, as well as many other South Carolinians and Georgians. He had been born in North Carolina, had been educated for the ministry in Virginia, had preached in Georgia, and was at the time of his election to the University, conducting his famous academy at Wellington, South Carolina.⁴⁶

In addition to Naddel, Ebenezer Newton, and Alonzo Church, who was to become a salient part of Franklin College for the next forty years, were employed. With this triumvirate in authority, the University was ready to make a notable contribution to the culture of Georgia and the southeast.

Not only was the University interested in imparting knowledge to the students, but moral discipline was considered of supreme importance. To insure the cultivation of this "moral discipline," a prolix system of rules and regulations governing student conduct was enforced. "Higher education," says Coulter, "was a new thing in the Lower South when the University of Georgia began its existence. Yale men brought the idea in, and Yale men made the machinery and set it in motion. As already noted, how Yale College did things was of much importance in Georgia. The inspiration for the laws governing the students was also of Yale origin and was Puritanical and puerile after the most approved fashions of the age."⁴⁷ Beginning with the first set of regulations drawn up by President Heigs and adopted by the governing board in 1803, these "laws" were supplemented from time to time. Of this stringent system of control, Coulter states:

⁴⁶Ibid., 44.

⁴⁷Ibid., 77.

These rules were the law of the land as far as the University was concerned and just as sacred. The students' passport to classes was a set of laws signed by the president; he was given ten days to digest them and thereafter he fell hard under their innumerable pains and penalties. His every action was guided by them. No one by them, he studied by them, he recited by them-- they were with him always. He kept them close at hand, hardly knowing until he should consult them what he could do next.⁴⁸

With the resignation in 1829 of Waddel, who had "left behind an appreciation for learning and religion that had not existed before,"⁴⁹ Alonso Church was elected president. For the next thirty years the University was dominated by this stern and pious Presbyterian. Church, a native of Vermont, had come to Georgia to teach after graduating from Middlebury College. Endowed with a "rather Puritanical disposition," he held that rules were to be obeyed.⁵⁰ He controlled his faculty and trustees alike. Students inclined toward mischief remembered him with fear and anxiety. Church's keen and piercing black eyes were ever on the alert for misdoers that immediately provoked his fiery temper.⁵¹

However, from 1829 to 1865 the University prospered under his direction.

Perhaps the most remarkable member of the faculty during Palmer's years at the University was C. P. McKee, Professor of Civil Engineering. "He was a great Mathematician, an admirable English scholar, and all

⁴⁸Ibid., 77-78. For a rather complete discussion of student regulations see Ibid., 77-84.

⁴⁹Ibid., 78.

⁵⁰Johnson, citing Pope of Columbus, S. C., who enrolled in the University as a Freshman when Palmer was a Junior and was his roommate during his senior year states: "...Dr. Alonso Church, like a good many able teachers, could not preach, but was a man of great executive abilities and a superb mathematician....He had no superior as a manager of young men. He was courtesy and dignity personified. He was delightful in conversation. He had a delightful voice and lectured to his classes with wonderful ease. He possessed great facility in calling out a discussion of a point on the part of the class and delighted in so doing." Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 57.

⁵¹Coltner, College Life in the Old South, 248-249.

round, one of the most remarkable men I ever knew."⁵² Shortly after leaving the University of Georgia in 1853, McKay became president of the University of South Carolina. Thus when Benjamin Palmer appeared before the portals in January, 1837, to resume his formal education, the University of Georgia ranked well among the better colleges of the country.

Having completed approximately two years of college training at Auburn, Palmer entered the University of Georgia as a junior. The school year was divided into three terms. The course of study for the junior and senior years was as follows:

Junior Class

- I. Term. Surveying; Navigation; Levelling; Natural Philosophy; Logic; Eschenburg Concluded; Homer's Illiad.
- II. Term. Conic Sections; Spherical Geometry; Cicero de Oratore; Evidences of Christianity; Natural Philosophy; Rhetoric.
- III. Term. Application of Algebra to Geometry; Differential and Integral Calculus; Use of the Globe; Natural Philosophy; Moral Philosophy; Chemistry; Cicero de Oratore continued.

Senior Class

- I. Term. Mineralogy; Chemistry continued; Political Economy; Mental Philosophy; Astronomy; Greek Testament.
- II. Term. Geology; Mental Philosophy continued; Political Economy continued; Law of Nations; Forensic Disputation.
- III. Term. General Review.⁵³

From an examination of the course of study for the junior and senior

⁵²Quoted in Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 58.

⁵³Athens Southern Banner, March 24, 1838.

years, it is evident that in addition to a major emphasis on mathematics and philosophy, there were basic courses conducive to the development of speaking ability, namely, logic, forensic disputation, rhetoric, and Cicero. However, the University's "proving grounds" for "impassioned speakers" were the platforms of two literary societies. Regarding the founding of these societies Hull states:

While we are upon the subject of buildings, it may be said that the Democritian Society, which was organized in 1803, and had for twenty years been holding its meetings in the old school-room, now being in a flourishing condition, both as to members and funds, built the hall north of the chapel which for seventy years has echoed the clarion notes of impassioned speakers. A new stimulus was given this old mother of debaters by the organization of a rival, the Phi Kappa Society, by Joseph Henry Lumpkin in 1825. For many years these two vied with each other for the honors of the college, and swore their members with great and inviolable oaths to secrets which might not even be thought of in the presence of another.⁵⁴

In less than a month after his arrival at the University, Palmer was initiated into the Phi Kappa Society.⁵⁵ The society convened regularly each week. In addition, call meetings were frequently held. At each regular meeting, a question, usually stated in the form of a proposition, was debated by two or four members followed by a decision of the society. That the propositions were both timely and provocative is illustrated by the following examples: "Is a nullification of an unconstitutional act of Congress by a state the rightful remedy?" "Is it probable that our Republic will last as long as did the Roman Empire?" and "Ought slavery be abolished in the United States?"⁵⁶

⁵⁴Hull, A Historical Sketch of the University of Georgia, 38.

⁵⁵Phi Kappa Society Minutes, 1836-1864, January 10, 1837, 66, University of Georgia Library, Athens, Georgia.

⁵⁶Ibid., Feb. 11, 1837, 69; May 6, 1837, 69; April 8, 1837, 66.

In order to promote thorough preparation and dynamic presentation, those speakers who lost three successive debates or declamation contests without adequate excuse presented the society by a fellow member, were fined.⁵⁷ There is no record of Palmer's having been fined for losing too many debates or declamations. In pointing out Palmer's excellence as a debater, Daniel Joseph Pope, who was his roommate, says:

But the place in which I knew him best was the Phi Kappa Society, a debating society which met every Saturday and put in a large part of the day. He was himself wont to regard the training he derived in this society as of the first importance to his subsequent career. Palmer was never absent, and always took part in debate. He was as fluent then as he ever became, as eloquent then as he ever became. I have never seen a youth of his age who could surpass him as a debater. I remember one occasion on which the question was, "Is Napoleon Bonaparte entitled to be called great?" He took the affirmative, and brought tears to our eyes as he pictured the eagle soared on St. Helena.⁵⁸

Palmer was elected librarian of the Phi Kappa Society, April 3, 1837.

He resigned the office June 3, but was elected president on August 12,

1837.⁵⁹ Regarding his first day in office as president, the minutes of the society report: "Society met this morning at the ringing of the bell. Bro. Palmer in chair---this being the first day of his office. Society was favoured with a very fine and ornate practical address."⁶⁰ In addition to holding these two offices, immediately after his induction into the society, Palmer's name appears continuously as member and chairman of numerous committees.⁶¹

⁵⁷Precedence of this practice is found in the minutes for May 14, 1837. Bro. Irving was arraigned for three successive failures in debates--and on having his excuse he was voted culpable and on motion of the first mover he was fined the sum of two dollars. He was also arraigned for three successive failures in declamation. He was fined as in the other instance.... *Ibid.*, May 14, 1837, 70.

⁵⁸Quoted in Johnson, *Benjamin Morgan Palmer*, 58-59.

⁵⁹Phi Kappa Minutes, 66, 73, 85.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, August 18, 1837, 89.

⁶¹Examples: Chairman of Committee to examine Secondary Essentials (a part of the constitution of the society); Chairman of Committee to draw up annual report of society; Member of standing Committee, Phi Kappa Minutes, 60, 126, 128.

On February 22, 1836, the Phi Kappa Society celebrated its thirteenth anniversary. The occasion necessitated the election of a "public orator" to deliver the anniversary address in the University Chapel. Palmer was selected by his fellowmembers to perform this important task. He spoke upon the subject "What is the true end of National Existence?"⁶² Referring to the occasion, the records of the society state:

Society convened this morning at 10 o'clock. After initiating NoFraser, Society moved in procession to the chapel, where Mr. Palmer delivered a chaste and appropriate address...on motion of Bro. Wm Beald. [sic] that Society return thanks to the orators (another member delivered an address before the society after the members had returned to their own hall from the chapel) for their chaste and elegant addresses; and that a Com be appointed to wait on the public orator, and request a copy for publication....⁶³

As has been indicated previously, the student's every action was virtually prescribed and directed by a labyrinth of rules and regulations. Not only was attendance to recitations imperative, but a record of church and prayer absences was also kept. Only the first ten months of Palmer's record is available.

The Juniors from January to April, 1837. Palmer, absent from recitation, one. Absent from room two, no fines for this period.

Juniors absent from April to August, 1837. Palmer, prayer case, recitation once, and room, once. Total, three.

Seniors from August to November, 1837.⁶⁴ From prayer, Palmer, case, from recitation, seven. No fines.

There is no record of Palmer's academic work in the University except that he was graduated in 1838 with first honors.⁶⁵ However, Pope gives the following description of Palmer as a friend and scholar:

⁶²Athens Southern Register, March 17, 1838. Palmer's address appeared on the front page of the newspaper.

⁶³Phi Kappa Minutes, 101.

⁶⁴A weekly Board of Absentees from Church, Prayer, Recitation, together with all fines imposed by the faculty of Franklin College, beginning January, 1837, University of Georgia Library, Athens, Ga.

⁶⁵J. W. Reed, Registrar, University of Georgia, in interview with writer, January 17, 1942.

Though two years ahead of me in college, he showed for me the greatest consideration and sympathy, putting himself on a level with me. He would converse on all sorts of subjects. His mind was always clear and his use of language remarkable. Almost as soon as I entered he persuaded me to join the College Temperance Society. He delivered about this time the finest temperance lecture it has ever been my privilege to hear, though he was at the time only about twenty years old....I know he was an elegant Latin scholar, a good Mathematician, and stood first in all studies.⁶⁶

The graduating class of 1838 was a very distinguished group. Notable among Palmer's classmates were John Mason Giles, lawyer and member of the Secession Convention of 1861; William Hope Hall, lawyer, attorney of Georgia Railroad and Banking Company, member of legislature, solicitor of United States Treasury, and trustee of the University of Georgia; Ferdinand Phinizy, capitalist, (the richest man in Georgia at one time) and trustee of the University of Georgia; William Rutherford, professor of mathematics in the University of Georgia; Shelton Palmer Sanford, professor of mathematics in Mercer University, and author of a series of mathematics textbooks; John Le Conte, physician and surgeon, professor of physics and chemistry at University of Georgia, professor of physics at South Carolina College, professor of physics at University of California, superintendent of Nitro Works, C. S. A., president of University of California, and author of many scientific papers.⁶⁷

Among Palmer's associates in other classes were a host of men who later became notable lawyers, ministers, physicians, and professors. In the higher court systems alone five names were to become conspicuous, namely, Dr. James Jackson, Colonel Alexander M. Speer, and Robert Trippe,

⁶⁶Quoted in Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 58.

⁶⁷Catalogue of the Trustees, Officers, Alumni and Matriculates of the University of Georgia, from 1788 to 1901 with a Historical Sketch by A. L. Hall (E. D. Stone, Athens, Ga., 1901), 76-77.

justice of the Supreme Court; Judge Benjamin P. Pressley, of the Circuit Court of South Carolina, and Judge John S. Shorter, of the Superior Court of Alabama.⁶⁸

While attending the University of Georgia, Palmer virtually supported himself by acting as private tutor in the homes of Oliver H. Prince and Thomas W. Baxter of Athens. In fulfilling his duty as tutor, Palmer not only advanced the students in learning but won the respect and affection of both parents and children. It appears that Mrs. Baxter became a sort of second mother to Benjamin. In later years he spoke of her, saying:

Her equable temper, early sweetened by divine grace, breathed around her an atmosphere so sincere, that to be near her was to be "at rest." Her gentle patience broke the edge of sorrow, leaving it nothing but its pathos. Her step in life was so noiseless that even duty seemed eased of its burden. Her unselfish sympathy plucked the grief from many, an aching heart, whilst an unobtrusive charity lighted many a soot home with her beneficence.⁶⁹

Mrs. Baxter's daughter, Sally Catherine, who later became Mrs. Edgeworth Bird of Baltimore, Maryland, states that while in the University, Benjamin Palmer "wrote regularly for the 'Lyceum,' formed by the young ladies of Athens, and to which many of the students were invited; that his papers were full of charming witticisms."⁷⁰ In addition to pointing out that Palmer was a favorite socially and led his class intellectually, Mrs. Bird indicates that he was extremely faithful to religious duties:

He had a Sunday School in the country, two or three miles from town, and in summer's heat and winter's cold was faithful in attendance, generally walking to and from school. My father would often say, "Ben, order one of the horses, and drive, or ride to your school this afternoon." With loving thanks, he usually declined, saying the walk would do him good.⁷¹

⁶⁸Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 58.

⁶⁹Ibid., 60.

⁷⁰Ibid., 61.

⁷¹Ibid.

The facts indicate that Palmer's career in the University of Georgia was spectacular. Not only had he proved himself the intellectual superior of his classmates, but had achieved a singular distinction by incurring no animosity in the process. He had sat at the feet of teachers, great teachers, who left deep imprints upon the lives of their students. Palmer had moved among a body of young men who were soon to wield an unmistakable influence upon the plastic culture of their age. The harassing recollections of his "near failure" at Amherst were now quiescent beneath the approval of his faculty, his classmates and the entire University community. Of no small concern to Palmer was the knowledge that it would not be a stern, reproachful father who welcomed him home, but a father proud in the successes of his son. Thus with the experience afforded him by his training in the University of Georgia, Palmer was now fully prepared to direct his attention to widening spheres of influence.

Columbia Seminary

Upon the completion of his degree at the University of Georgia, Palmer was faced with the task of choosing a profession. His mastery of debating, together with his love for the platform, pointed toward the legal profession and ultimately statecraft. Had not George McDuffie, Charles Pinckney, Robert Y. Hayne, and John C. Calhoun glorified public office with their eloquence, loyalty, and statesmanship? Furthermore, many of Palmer's most brilliant college friends had chosen the legal profession. However, since the day he had accepted "Christ as Master," the legal profession had a rival in his conscience, the more humble calling of minister of the Christian religion. Convinced that Christ had called him to the ministry, Palmer entered Columbia Seminary,

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Columbia, South Carolina, January, 1839.

In the fall of 1838, just prior to Palmer's entry into the Seminary, the following incident, related by the Reverend Professor W. T. Hall of Columbia Seminary, which illustrates Palmer's ability as a speaker, occurred:

A temperance meeting was held one evening in a public hall in Columbia, S. C. When the audience assembled there was great disappointment at the absence of some distinguished lecturer, who had been advertised for the occasion. As the situation was becoming painful a gentleman arose to explain and closed by making a call for anyone present who would volunteer to make an address. A young man came forward to relieve the embarrassment. When he finished his remarks everyone was inquiring, Who is this? It came to the ears of some good ladies in the city that the young orator who had spoken was a candidate for the ministry, and on his way to one of the upper districts to teach school in order to pay his way through the Theological Seminary. They told him he must go at once to the seminary and they would pay his way.⁷²

When Palmer entered Columbia Seminary, the faculty was composed of Professors George Howe and Aaron W. Leland. These teachers were soon to take rank among the greatest names in southern Presbyterianism. Leland was a New Englander. Upon graduating from Williams College in 1808, he chose the South as his future home, teaching for a time near Charleston. However, he soon became interested in the ministry and was ordained in 1812. So successful were his early efforts in the pulpit that the First Presbyterian Church of Charleston called him in 1813. Boston University honored him with the M. A. Degree in 1814, and the following year, at the early age of twenty-eight, he was granted the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity by the South Carolina College. In 1838 he was elected Professor of Theology in the Seminary at Columbia.⁷³ His service to the seminary was described in a memorial

⁷² *Ibid.*, 63.

⁷³ *Mr. Childs Robinson, Columbia Theological Seminary and the Southern Presbyterian Church* (Dennis Lindsey Printing Co., Inc., Decatur, Ga., 1881), 18-19. See also *Semi-Centennial of the Columbia Theological Seminary* (Presbyterian Publishing Co., Columbia, S. C., 1884), 208-209.

by the Reverend Bard Hall:

Dr. Leland was magnificently endowed with natural gifts, both mental and physical. In manly beauty, dignity, and grace, he was the admiration, in his youth and early manhood, of all who knew him; and with a mind vigorous and strong, and well stored with knowledge, and an imagination vivid and powerful, coupled with a heart susceptible of the most intense emotion, he could attract and impress all who came within the charmed sphere of his influence. His majestic form, courtly manner, a voice which was harmony itself, and a style cultivated and fervid, made an impression on those who heard him not to be forgotten.⁷⁴

Dr. Howe, a New Englander like Leland, was graduated from Middlebury College, Vermont, in 1822. He immediately entered Andover Theological Seminary and upon graduation in 1826, was honored by the appointment of Abbott Scholar. At the close of an additional year and a half of study on the Abbott foundation, he received the singular distinction of being elected a Phillips Professor of Sacred Theology in Dartmouth College. After three years in the professorship, upon medical advice, Howe sailed for Charleston.

In the fall of 1831 he was elected Professor of Biblical Literature in Columbia Theological Seminary. Thus began his service to the institution, which extended over a period of fifty-two years. Having ample background in the methods employed in existing theological institutions, Dr. Howe was prepared to draft at the outset a curriculum of study compatible with the needs of the seminary. As a teacher he started with an excellent foundation in classical scholarship and pursued with indefatigable zeal the studies which his station prompted. His learning was no less extensive than his abilities.⁷⁵ Dr. John L.

⁷⁴Semi-Centennial of the Columbia Theological Seminary, 207-208.

⁷⁵S. W. McGill, comp., Bulletin Columbia Theological Seminary (Lyon-Young Printing Co., Atlanta, Ga., 1926), 7. See also, Semi-Centennial of Columbia Theological Seminary, 387-418.

Chardron, Professor at Columbia Seminary, gives an excellent summary of Dr. Howe's attributes as a teacher in a eulogy delivered before the Alumni Association of Columbia Seminary, May 9, 1883:

Characterized by a quality of mind which irresistibly impelled him to take the path of historical exposition, his carefully prepared lectures presented critical hypotheses in a comparative view which covered the whole field over which they ranged. It was the students' fault if through negligence or inattention he did not become possessed of the complete literature of the subjects discussed. He spoke with the accuracy and fulness of an expert. He heartily and unreservedly subscribed the declaration of Paul: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."⁷⁶

There is no definite way of estimating the value of such an influence as was exerted upon young men like Palmer by Dr. Howe. His efficacy was not centered around scholarship and learning alone. For "Deeply imbued himself with the precious doctrines of Grace, he impressed them with constancy and earnestness, in the lecture-room and in the chapel, upon the minds of the students, while, at the same time, his instructions received double force from the blameless sanctity of his character and the consistent godliness of his walk and conversation."⁷⁷

Palmer was fortunate indeed in having experienced the influence of these two great personalities, Leland and Howe. It was a severe standard of piety and pulpit performance set by them for their students to emulate.

There were about thirty-two students attending the Seminary when Palmer enrolled.⁷⁸ "As to the course of study pursued by Columbia Seminary at the time, it is enough to say that Dr. Howe had been largely instrumental in planning the curriculum; that he had been educated at Andover,

⁷⁶Semi-Centennial of Columbia Theological Seminary, 407-408.

⁷⁷Ibid., 408.

⁷⁸Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 64.

in theology, and that he made the Columbia curriculum the practical equal of the current Andover course...."⁷⁹ According to the meager evidence available, Palmer was a distinguished student, maintaining the same excellent standard as a scholar and speaker that had characterized his educational career prior to Columbia Seminary.

While in the seminary Palmer again defrayed a portion of his expenses by tutoring. During the summer vacation of 1840, he acted as an agent for a temperance publication, making temperance lectures and talks on Christianity when the opportunity presented itself.⁸⁰ An illustration of Palmer's speaking ability at this time is recorded by the Reverend R. E. Reid of Reidville, South Carolina, in a letter to Johnson.

The first time I met Dr. Palmer was in 1840. He was a student in Theological Seminary in Columbia, and an agent for the Temperance Advocate, published in Columbia. My father, was an elder in the Good Hope Church, in Anderson County, South Carolina. Palmer called on him and made known his business. He was invited to make his home with us while he canvassed the congregation. He remained over Sabbath and conducted a service, the pastor, Rev. David Humphries, being absent. He made a deep impression on me. I remember his theme distinctly--Blind Bartimaeus--although more than fifty years have passed since I heard his lecture.⁸¹

During this period another tremendous force outside the seminary was exerting lasting influence upon young Palmer. In 1839, James Henley Thornwell, still Professor of Metaphysics at South Carolina College, frequently occupied the pulpit of the First Presbyterian Church of Columbia. In 1840 he was made pastor of that church. During the ensuing year, Palmer, as a member of the congregation, came to know and

⁷⁹Ibid., 65.

⁸⁰Ibid., 68.

⁸¹Ibid., 69.

greatly admire Thornwell. It is difficult to estimate the influence of Thornwell's dynamic intellect upon the young divinity student. Although Palmer possessed a strong, independent nature, "Thornwell unconsciously became, unaware it may be to Palmer, his model, yet in no cramping way."⁸²

In referring to his first impression of Thornwell as a minister, Palmer said:

From the opening of the discourse, there was a strange fascination, such as had never been exercised by any other speaker. The first impression made was that of being stunned by a peculiar dogmatism in the statement of what seemed weighty propositions; this was followed by a conscious resistance of the authority which was felt to be a little brow-beating with its positiveness; and then, as link after link was added to the chain of a consistent argument, expressed with that agnostic fervour which belongs to the forum, the effect at the close was to overwhelm and subdue.⁸³

In 1841 Thornwell was recalled to the College of South Carolina as professor of Sacred Literature. Referring to the lamentation of his congregation upon his resignation from the pulpit, Palmer states:

Never before or since was the gospel preached to them with the eloquence and power with which it fell from his lips; and in the agony of their great loss, the question was upon every tongue, "What shall the man do that cometh after the king?"⁸⁴

The probable avenues through which Thornwell influenced Palmer are disclosed by Palmer himself in the following vehement statement of Thornwell's sources of power:

To understand Thornwell's power, these several elements must be combined: his powerful logic, his passionate emotion, his majestic style, of which it may be said, as of Lord Brougham, that "he wielded the club of Hercules entwined with roses." This generation will never

⁸²Ibid., 67.

⁸³Benjamin Morgan Palmer, Life and Letters of James Henley Thornwell (Whittet and Shepperson, Richmond, Va., 1878), 154.

⁸⁴Ibid., 155.

look upon his like again; a single century cannot afford to produce his equal. It may listen to much lucid exposition, much close and powerful reasoning, much tender and earnest appeal, much beautiful and varied imagery; but never from the lips of one man can it be stirred by vigour of argument fused by a seraph's glow, and pouring itself forth in streams which linger in the memory like the chant of angels.⁸⁵

The facts indicate that as a student in four institutions of learning, Palmer was equal if not the superior to any of his colleagues. As a speaker he was unequalled. Palmer had met the crisis in his history as a student at Amherst with a display of honor and courage that would characterize his ethical standard throughout life. With inherent caution, he had chosen, and laboriously prepared himself for a profession. When he departed from Columbia Theological Seminary in 1841, his abilities and training were commensurate to the immediate task which lay before him. For in addition to acquiring knowledge, he had developed the latent ability to engender and maintain the admiration and respect of his associates. Palmer had mastered the prime requisite to leadership: the capacity of becoming the polestar of the group without agitating the harmony of the constellation.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 681.

CHAPTER IV

EARLY MINISTRY

Immediately after graduation from Columbia Theological Seminary in 1841, the young Palmer, now a licentiate,¹ was offered temporary work in Anderson, South Carolina. Anderson was the county seat of the territory in which only a few months before he had canvassed for subscribers to the Temperance Advocate. Apparently the populace had been favorably impressed by his temperance lectures and sermons delivered during the subscription canvass, and had as a result called him to their church. Although he remained in Anderson only three months, he entered upon the duties of the ministry with zealous determination. The Reverend R. H. Reid gives the following account of Palmer's work in Anderson:

After his licensure, he supplied the church in Anderson for a short time. I was a pupil of Wesley Leverett's famous classical school in that place. There was a protracted meeting in the church conducted by Mr. Palmer. A goodly number confessed Christ and united with the church. I was among the number.

In October, 1841, Palmer received a call from the First Presbyterian Church of Savannah, Georgia. Since Savannah was not in the same district as Anderson, some time elapsed before the call could be officially placed in his hands. Now assured of a reasonable income, Palmer decided to marry Miss Augusta McConnell, whom he had met and to whom he had become engaged while attending Columbia Seminary. Miss McConnell, a native of Georgia

¹Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church for 1842, 365.

²Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 73.

with excellent education and family background, was a step-daughter of Professor Howe, President of Columbia Theological Seminary. At first, Dr. Howe regarded the growing friendship between his step-daughter and Palmer with much disfavor, declining to give his consent to an engagement.³ Ultimately, however, he resigned himself to what the young couple informed him was the inevitable, and Benjamin Palmer and Augusta McConnell were married, October 7, 1841, by the Reverend Dr. Howe himself.⁴ Shortly after the marriage, the couple traveled from Columbia to Savannah in a buggy given them as a wedding gift by Dr. Howe.⁵

The First Presbyterian Church of Savannah had been organized in 1827 by a group of fourteen persons who had withdrawn from the Independent Presbyterian Church. The Reverend John Boggs, who had been supply minister for the church from its beginning, was made pastor November 30, 1828, and remained in his charge until December, 1829. For the next two years the congregation depended upon temporary supply pastors. In 1831, the Reverend Charles Calcock Jones began his ministry, but after a year and a half resigned in order to devote his entire time to missionary work among the Negroes. From 1833 to 1837 the pulpit was again occupied by a

³Ibid., 72.

⁴Ibid., 74. The date, October 7, is questionable. A "marriage contract between Augusta McConnell and Benjamin Palmer, witnessed by George Howe and Edward Palmer, bears the date, November 6, 1841. In order to protect her property, it was the custom of that time for the woman to assign her possessions to some authorized guardian. Absence of such a contract subjected the wife's property to confiscation in payment of debts incurred by her husband. These contracts were made a few days prior to marriage. The contract between Miss McConnell and Mr. Palmer begins as follows: "Whereas, a marriage is contemplated between Mary A. McConnell and Benjamin W. Palmer...." The document was prepared by the clerk of Richland District, S. C., November 6, 1841, and recorded November 10, 1841. Thus there is a possibility that the marriage did not occur until after the recording of the marriage contract, November 10, 1841. Richland County Records, Historical Society, University of South Carolina, Columbia, 417-418.

⁵Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 74.

number of supply ministers. In 1837 the Reverend Joseph L. Jones accepted the charge, which he held until his death in 1841.⁶

The congregation of the church was not large when Palmer accepted the call in 1841, but the membership was composed of a most substantial and devoted group. In an address dedicating their new church building some thirty years later, Palmer referred to the faithfulness of the group: "It would require little effort to reproduce the old session of thirty years ago; the faithful body-guard of the young pastor whose inexperience was then first learning how it should 'behave itself in the house and kingdom of God....'"⁷

On account of the necessity of awaiting the convenience of the one and only Presbytery in the state at that time, Palmer's ordination and installation as minister did not occur until several months after his arrival. On March 5, 1842, Palmer requested the

Presbytery to proceed with his Examination preparatory to his ordination to the Gospel ministry, and his Installation as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church.

Mr. Palmer's request was acceded to, and Presbytery proceeded to the examination of Mr. Palmer, on Experimental Religion, Theology, Church Government and Discipline and the Sacraments. Presbytery then appointed Mr. Palmer to preach a Trial Sermon before the Congregation this evening from John 3:3.⁸

The Presbytery met in the evening and "Divine service was performed. Mr. E. M. Palmer Junr delivered his trial sermon, which was sustained."⁹

⁶William Harden, Historical Sketch of the First Presbyterian Church, Savannah, Georgia (Braid and Euton, Savannah, Ga., 1903), 26.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Second Book of Minutes of the Presbytery of Georgia, commenced November, 1840, 60.

⁹Ibid., 61.

The following day, Sunday, March 6, 1842, the Ordination and Installation service was conducted. The minutes of the Presbytery read as follows:

Presbytery met opened with Divine Service. Reverend Edward Palmer (father of Benjamin Morgan Palmer, Jr.) preached the ordination and installation sermon of Mr. B. M. Palmer, Junr...from Ezekiel 33:7 latter clause. "Therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth--warn them for me."

The Moderator presided and stated to the church and congregation the proceedings of the Presbytery preparatory to the ordination--installation of Mr. B. M. Palmer; pointed out the nature--importance of the ordination--endeavored to impress the audience with a proper sense of the solemnity of the transaction. The candidate kneeling down the moderator prayed--with laying on of the hands of the Presbytery; according to Apostolic example, solemnly ordained him to the holy office of the ministry, and installed him as Pastor over that church...the Rev. C. C. Jones gave a solemn charge in the name of God, to the newly ordained--installed Bishop; and the Rev. P. L. K. Axson in like manner, a solemn charge in the name of God, to the People....¹⁰

Palmer entered upon the duties of his new task with zeal and determination. At once it became evident that his choice of the ministry had been a happy one, for he conducted himself in the numerous phases of his work with proper dignity. He took great delight in continued study of the Bible and other religious works. His uncompromising frankness, tempered with tact and genuine sympathy, won the confidence of his people; thus his pastoral work was a pleasure both to him and to his congregation.

But Palmer was at his best in the pulpit. Persuasion seemed to be the function best suited to his talents. He regarded the pulpit as his throne. There was vigor, determination and purpose in his speaking. Palmer's many years of college debating and speaking had developed a

¹⁰Ibid., 61-62.

mastery over language and delivery. Soon such phrases as "prince of pulpits" began to be voiced by his listeners. Even the elderly members of his congregation approved of a young minister who, in the pulpit, bore himself with such eloquence and dignity.¹¹

Palmer endeavored to maintain a high standard while in the pulpit at Savannah. He believed it his obligation to make every appearance the consummation of his splendid talents and training. Therefore, he meticulously prepared his sermons and delivered them from manuscript. In the pulpit this procedure not only limited the range of his flexible and resourceful intellect, but hampered his freedom in delivery. Nor was this all. The time consumed in this sort of preparation was so great that Palmer was unable to continue the wide study which was essential to the maintenance of the level of proficiency he had set for himself. In a short time he had depleted his initial information and was at the point of mental exhaustion.¹² His distress was poignant. How this crisis was successfully met, Palmer described some fifty years later, speaking in the Independent Presbyterian Church of Savannah.

There is an experience somewhat dark and painful, which these pastors around me will verify as occurring in the life of every young preacher. It is when he has fairly used up the elementary knowledge which prepared him for entrance upon the sacred office and he sinks under the oppressive sense of mental exhaustion. He has spoken all he ever knew without the hope of another fresh thought as long as he may live. It was in this trying crisis that the speaker took refuge in the fatherly confidence of Dr. Willard Preston, then in the fifty-seventh year of his age, and not far from the middle of his long, pastorate here of four and twenty years. Without any show of patronage or supercilious condescension, he showed how this experience must come sooner or later to every ingenuous young student; how this shallowness of present knowledge would whet the appetite for the truth lying in the unfathomed depths yet to be explored....Then tearing a leaf

¹¹Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 79-81.

¹²Ibid.

from his own record, he exposed the secret of a like humiliation in his earlier years, and, pausing to lay his hand upon the Sacred Book, he pointed to the inexhaustible treasures hid therein, and, as answering to these, he alluded to the depths of Christian experience lying yet undeveloped in my own heart, which would be opened by the Divine Spirit to all the truth contained in the Scriptures themselves. It was another Elisha opening the eyes of the young man to behold the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about. From this time forth there lingered no fear of future bankruptcy in the ministry of the Word.¹³

Realising that he must resort to a less laborious method of preparation and a more spontaneous type of delivery, Palmer resolved to discard the practice of writing his sermons. His transition from manuscript delivery to the extemporaneous style was surprisingly successful. Palmer's previous training and experience as a debater and orator had much to do with his success in the new venture. Debate, with its emphasis upon keen, quick, and well-organized thought, now insured unity in his extempore efforts. Free from the fetters of the manuscript, his delivery became more direct, more spontaneous, more dynamic. In order to avoid reliance upon any type of manuscript, Palmer refused to employ even a written outline, depending solely upon the use of a skeleton plan, which he memorized.¹⁴ Thus, free to develop his theme in accordance with the particular occasion, Palmer's new style of speaking was vastly more stimulating and acceptable than formerly.

Freed from the laborious, time-consuming method of writing his sermons, which were usually thirty or forty pages in length, Palmer found time to read and study more extensively. "He seems," says Johnson, "to have studied profoundly Kitaeus, On the Covenants, Hodge, on the atonement and sacrifices, the Works of John Owen and John Howe,

¹³ Ibid., 80-81.

¹⁴ Dr. J. W. Caldwell of Montreat, North Carolina, Palmer's grandson, in interview with writer, January 22, 1942.

nothing by reason or persuasion, told him that he intended to call upon him as before. At an early meeting, perhaps the next one, Mr. Palmer called on him to lead in prayer. There was no response. After a little the pastor repeated his call to the brother to lead the meeting in prayer. There was no response to this second call. After a moment, the determined young pastor said: "Brother _____, we shall just sit here till you lead us in prayer." This was too much for the timid but excellent brother appealed to. He led the meeting at once, and in an uplifting prayer; and thenceforth never failed to respond when called upon.¹⁸

In contrast to the headstrong procedure exemplified by the preceding incident, Johnson records an example of Palmer's use of tact and persuasion. As a young minister, Palmer demonstrated remarkable capacity for winning souls to his Master. During a revival, one of his young friends paid him a week's visit. Upon learning of the services being conducted by Palmer, the young man appeared displeased and would have departed had Palmer not insisted that he remain, assuring him that he would not be expected to attend church. However, finding himself without anything better to do, he attended. At once he became ill-humored and petulant.

Thus, says Palmer, matters moved on from day to day, till the Sabbath came and was passed, and on Monday the conflict reached its crisis. I was writing in my study as he came in and sat beside my desk--breaking out, after a little, in the petulant remark: "You preachers are the most contradictory men in the world; you say, and you mean, just as it pleases you, without the least pretension to consistency."

Somehow I was not surprised at this outbreak; for though no sign of religious feeling had been evinced, there was a restlessness in his manner which satisfied me that he was secretly fighting against the truth. I thought it best to treat the case in an off-hand sort of way, and with seeming indifference so as to cut him off from all opportunity to coquette with the Gospel. Without arresting my pen, I simply answered, "Well, what now?"

"Why, yesterday you said in your sermon that sinners were perfectly helpless in themselves--utterly unable to repent or believe and then turned square round and said they would all be damned if they did not."

¹⁸ Ibid., 62-63.

"Well, my dear E_____, there is no use in our quarrelling over this matter; either you can or you cannot. If you can, all I have to say is that I hope you will just go and do it."

As I did not raise my eyes from my writing, which was continued as I spoke, I had no means of marking the effect of these words, until, after a moment's silence, with a choking utterance, the reply came back: "I have been trying my best for three whole days and cannot." "Ah," said I, laying down the pen, "that puts a different face upon it; we will go then and tell the difficulty straight out to God."

We knelt together and I prayed as though this were the first time in human history that this trouble had ever arisen--upon rising I offered not one single word of comfort or advice. Youth is seldom disingenuous or stubborn, and the difficulty was recognized as purely practical. So I left my friend in his powerlessness in the hands of God, as the only helper. In a short time he came through the struggle, rejoicing in the hope of eternal life.¹⁹

During his ministry at Savannah, Palmer's influence was not limited to his own congregation, which had flourished under his leadership. In the summer of 1842, when the pastor of the Independent Presbyterian Church was absent from his pulpit due to illness, Palmer held his prayer meetings, visited the sick and aided the congregation in every way possible. Such generosity did not pass unnoticed or unappreciated. His ministry at Savannah lasted less than fifteen months, but in that short time Palmer endeared himself, not only to his own congregation, but to the entire community.²⁰ His church was often spoken of as "a congregation where the people were really taught and delightfully taught."²¹ Indeed, "Dr. Palmer was much beloved by the people of the church, and when, after the lapse of a single year, he felt it his duty to accept a

¹⁹ Benjamin Morgan Palmer, "Practical Uses of the Doctrine of Inability," Southwestern Presbyterian (New Orleans, 1869-1908), 1, 34-62, August, 1869.

²⁰ Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 85.

²¹ Ibid.

call to the church at Columbia, S. C., they, with great reluctance, consented to the dissolution of the pastoral relation."²² Certainly there is no better evidence of the success of Palmer's ministry at Savannah than the knowledge that he soon received earnest requests to fill the pulpit at Columbia, the home of Columbia Seminary and the College of South Carolina, and the capital of the state.

The facts indicate that Palmer's entry into the ministry was attended with unusual success. His effectiveness as a pulpit speaker was immediately recognized. His youth, vigor, and dynamics were an inspiration to his congregation. Even in the performance of his pastoral functions, the young minister conducted himself with the ease and assurance of one much older and more experienced in affairs of guidance and consolation. Palmer's decision to discard the manuscript method of sermon preparation and delivery was most fortunate. The cultivation of the extemporaneous style gave to his sermons a flexibility, a spontaneity, a freshness that was henceforth to characterize his utterances to the end of his career.

Although uncompromising when he deemed it necessary, Palmer demonstrated a capacity for, and an ability to employ tact. His unselfish interest in, and love for people not only won the respect and friendship of his own congregation, but the admiration of the entire community. Palmer had been content to apply himself to the fullest in performing

²²Harden, Historical Sketch of the First Presbyterian Church, Savannah, Georgia, 12.

the duties of his calling in the community that he had chosen to serve. It was his faithfulness and loyalty to the task at hand that so soon insured him a position commensurate with his talents.

CHAPTER V

COLUMBIA MINISTRY

The Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Columbia, South Carolina, met October 21, 1842, and agreed unanimously to nominate the Reverend Benjamin Morgan Palmer for the pastorate of their church.¹ On November 7, at a meeting of the "Male Members and Pewholders" of the church, Palmer was unanimously elected to the pastoral office, and the Session was directed to prosecute the call.² A few weeks after assuming the duties as minister, Palmer was formally installed.

An adjournment Meeting of the Presbytery of Charleston was held in this place (Columbia) on Friday evening May 5th 1843 for the installation of Rev.d B. M. Palmer, Jr, as Pastor of this Church. The installation services took place on Sabbath of the 7.th of May, & was deeply solemn, and interesting. Rev.d Edward Palmer, Father of the Pastor elect, Preached the Sermon. Rev.d Dr Howe, Moderator of Presbytery presided & proposed the Constitutional Questions.....³

When Palmer entered the pulpit of the Columbia church, he was only twenty-five years of age. Immediately preceding him as pastors had been such eminent personages as Dr. George Howe, Dr. A. W. Leland, Dr. John Witherspoon, and the illustrious Dr. James Kenley Thornwell.⁴ Thornwell was considered by many of his colleagues as the greatest student and scholar that the Presbyterian Church had ever produced.⁵ The

¹Session Records of the Columbia Presbyterian Church, 1819-1847, 167-168.

²Ibid., 168.

³Ibid., 177.

⁴Howe, History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina, II, 658-661.

⁵Souvenir of the Diamond Jubilee General Assembly of Presbyterian Church in United States, 19 (Augusta, Ga., May 21-27, 1936). Cited hereafter as Souvenir of Diamond Jubilee General Assembly.

historian George Bancroft paid Thornwell tribute upon the "fly leaf of a fine copy of Aristotle which he sent the Southern Church leader following a dinner in his honor in New York, where he had heard him discuss some principle of Aristotle; a discussion in which he had held his own and finally convinced the whole group. Bancroft wrote on the fly leaf: 'A testimonial of regard to the Rev. J. H. Thornwell, the most learned of the learned.'⁶

Columbia, the capital of South Carolina, and second only to Charleston in influence, was composed of a citizenry of unusual merit. The membership of the state legislature, as well as of the courts of justice during their respective sessions, would be potential auditors of Palmer's church. Certainly the faculty and student body of Columbia Theological Seminary would be in regular attendance, as well as a portion of the staff and students of the College of South Carolina.

In view of these considerations, it was a high compliment the Session paid the young minister when it unanimously elected him as their pastor. Palmer was fully aware of the tremendous proportions of his task. With all of the zeal and skill at his command he immediately applied himself to the business of discharging the duties of his office. He considered it his primary duty to reveal the truths contained in the Bible, and as the minister of his congregation to see that their daily conduct was in accordance with the principles proclaimed by the Church. He also directed the efforts of his congregation into worthy missionary endeavor.

⁶Ibid., 18-19.

Immediately following his installation, Palmer prepared a sermon in which he set forth with extreme care his own conception of his relation to the new office. He chose as the text Numbers 22:38: "And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come into thee: have I now any power at all to say anything? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak." Following a historical sketch, in which were stated the conditions under which the text was originally spoken, Palmer announced the central idea of his sermon.

Beloved brethren and friends, I have selected this passage as peculiarly appropriate to the position which I occupy before you this day. At your own call, in the good providence of God, I appear to you in some sort as the prophet of God. Lo, I am here. And, if I may adopt this expression as my own in reference to my presence before you, with what emphasis may I repeat what follows! Have I now any power at all to say anything? The word that God putteth into my mouth, that shall I speak...the language of the text and the great truth inculcated in the history, are pertinent to our purpose: which is briefly "to show the nature of the ministerial office and the grounds upon which its authority and influence are based."⁷

In the main body of the sermon Palmer developed two propositions, namely: "1. That true ministers of the Gospel are specially called to their office by God himself, and their fields of labor specially designated. 2. That all true ministerial ability and authority are derived from God."⁸ Palmer closed the sermon by indicating three major points of practical application that had been disclosed during the discussion:

(1) The relation which the Gospel minister sustains to God. (To Palmer the minister was a messenger from God and should speak only what God told him to say. His only duty was to learn what God would have him say.) (2) The relation which he sustains to his people. (Palmer maintained that the contract formed between a pastor and his congregation was not merely for the pleasure and

⁷Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 88-89. The writer is unable to locate this sermon, therefore the comments upon it are confined to materials recorded by Johnson.

⁸Ibid., 89.

amusement of the hearer. The Pastor need not cater to the various whims or tastes prevalent in the congregation. His duty was to expound God's doctrines as found in his Word; to enforce its precepts, to urge its motives, to present its promises and to declare its judgments.) (3) The source from which the minister should derive his encouragement. (Palmer believed the pastor should look to God rather than man for his inspiration and guidance.)⁹

Although this conception of the sphere and duties of the ministerial office was voiced when Palmer was only twenty-six years of age, its realization became his supreme purpose not only during the Columbia years, but to the end of his career. When he appeared before his congregation, it was generally to clarify, amplify, and dignify some great theme. It was his intention to reveal all Biblical truths in their due proportion.¹⁰ A study of the sermon titles used during Palmer's Columbia ministry indicates his endeavor to instruct thoroughly his congregation upon the great Biblical doctrines.¹¹

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Johnson records the following list of titles of sermons, lectures and series of sermons and lectures belonging to Palmer's Columbia Ministry: "Apologetic Lectures on Christianity," "The Comparative Value of Moral Evidence in Support of Christianity," "The Amount of Moral Evidence in Support of Christianity," "The Father Glorified by the Son," "Folly of Atheism," "Justice of Final Condemnation," "The Gospel, the Power of God," "Sin an Evil and Bitter Thing," "Grace Superabounding," "Opposition between Law and Grace," "Inward Empire of the Gospel," "Salvation by Hope," "Darkness in the Soul," "If the Foundations be Destroyed, What can the Righteous Do?" "Righteousness and Strength," "Christ in us," "Justification of Sin," "Bearing the Cross," "Mediatorial Authority of Christ," "Human Apostasy," "Corruption of Mankind," "Man Created in the Image of God," "Practical Uses of Predestination," "Sinners Waxing Worse and Worse," "The Inward Witness," "Abounding in the Work of the Lord," "Victory over Death by Christ," "God's Justice and Afflictions," "Death to the Law and by the Law," "Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ," "God's Holiness the Basis of all Worship," "Influence of Christians on Kinred," "Foundation of the Universal Gospel Offer," "Believer's Marriage with Christ Consummated," "Future Punishment," "Brotherly Love," "Antinomianism Latent in Arminianism," "Lectures on the Larger Catechism," "Believer's Witness for God," "Christian Progress," "Spirit of Adoption," "Christ's Constraining Love," "The Lord's Supper an Instituted Ordinance," "God's Presence," "Past Feeling," "The Providence of God," "Predestination Consistent with Free Agency," "The Law a Measure of Sanctification,"

In addition to applying himself vigorously to the task of teaching his membership, Palmer was singularly loyal to the power intrusted to him as disciplinarian of his church. At this time he was "as much a believer in the efficacy of discipline and the obligation to its use as John Calvin ever was."¹² Discipline cases comprise the larger percentage of the pages of the Session Records. Although Palmer's congregation embraced a number of Negroes, who presented problems far out of proportion to their numbers, the white membership afforded ample disciplinary difficulties. Suspension was the most frequently used method of punishment; however, excommunication was not uncommon. The suspension of a Negro member is recorded in the Session minutes for April, 1844.

The Pastor reported that Charlotte a Col'd Member belonging to Mr Josiah Smith had recently of her own accord confessed to him that she had been guilty of the Sin of Fornication. It was deemed requisite for the honor of the church & for her own welfare that she be immediately Suspended from the ordinances of the church until such time as she shall fully & sincerely re-pent of this sin & afford to the Session credible evidence of the same.¹³

"Lectures on the Messianic Psalms," "Proofs of the Doctrine of Decrees," "Christ's Life the Life of the Believer," "Sanctification of Christ," "The Transfiguration," "Effects of Repentance," "Men are as they Think," "Crucify the Flesh," "A Series of Lectures to the Young," "Spirituality of Worship," "Alternation of Good and Evil," "Bicentenary of the Westminster Assembly," "Believers the Workmanship of God and Created unto Good Works," "Uses of Affliction," "God's Government over Nations," "Sanctification of the Sabbath," "God's Patience to the Reprobate," "Fatherly Discipline," "Justification and Sanctification," "Spiritual Lounges," "Sinners Self-Destroyed," "Ministers Ambassadors for Christ," "God not the Author of Sin," "Christ the Hope of His Church," "The Impossibility of Salvation by the Law," "The Doctrine of a Special Providence," "Missionary Lectures," "Office of the Law," "Pleasure in Unrighteousness," "Fear of Death a Bondage," "Christ's Commission to the Church," "Godly Sorrow and the Sorrow of the World," "Universal Salvation Disproved," "Regeneration," "The Son of Man a Savior," "Christians' Witnesses Against Themselves," "Greatness of Revealed Truth," "The Soul Lost by Attending to Trifles," "The Covenant with Adam," "Diet of Christ," "Duty of Family Instruction," "Duty of the Church to Educate the Ministry," "Infant Baptism Warranted by the Church Charter"; many briefs on phases of prayer, "Grace Sufficient." Ibid., 90-91.

¹²Ibid., 92.

¹³Session Records of the Columbia Presbyterian Church, 1819-1847, April 1, 1844, 194.

Once suspended the member remained on probation until a time sufficient for repentance had lapsed. If his behavior had been satisfactory he might, upon confession of repentance, be restored to the ordinances of the church. Such a restoration was approved in the Session meeting previously mentioned in which Charlotte was suspended.

Charles a Col'd Member who had been disciplined for engaging in a fight with a fellow servant, see minutes (page 191) appeared before Session Praying that his sentence of suspension might be removed. Upon his Professions of sincere Repentance he was restored to his standing in the church.¹⁴

The strangest case involving a Negro member appears to have been that of Ned, servant of a Mr. Quigley. The problem affords a picture of a supposedly decadent Negro social institution.

A request was presented by Ned a Servant of Mrs Quigley & a member of this church, that he might be allowed to take a wife in Town notwithstanding his separation from a woman in Fairfield with whom he has heretofore been living, different members of Session having made diligent inquiries into this case, the following facts appeared. That Ned had never been lawfully married to the woman in Fairfield, though at the time of his joining the Church he re-garded her as his Wife, that they were now permanently & effectively separated by the wish of the respective owners. & that the woman had been unfaithful to his bed. upon these grounds, in regard to which the Session had been at pains to gather evidence & in consideration of the temptation / to sin / which beset Ned in his single state. & in consequence of the desire to do right manifested in his taking counsel of the Session, it was agreed to grant him the desired permission....¹⁵

Dancing seemed to be the most universal of the "sins" that beset Palmer's congregation. The Session was kept busy reminding wayward members of their vows. The most striking example of participation in this vice occurred in connection with a ball given in honor of General James Shields. Immediately after the close of the Mexican War, General Shields visited Columbia and paid high tribute to the famous Palmetto

¹⁴Ibid., April 1, 1844, 196.

¹⁵Ibid., July 19, 1847, 266.

Regiment, which had served in his brigade during the Mexican campaigns. He was received with wild enthusiasm and a ball was arranged in his behalf. Several members of the First Presbyterian Church attended. Palmer called a meeting of the Session and the facts were presented.¹⁶

It was brought to the notice of the Session, that at a Public Ball given recently in compliment to Gen. l Shield four of the Members were in attendance, besides the Children of several other members: also that at a Fair re-cently held by the order of Odd Fellows, raffling was countenanced and participated in by several members of the church.

It appeared in conversation that considerable diversity of opinion prevailed among the Members as to the impropriety of dancing & the sin under certain circumstances, of attending public balls. In view of this fact, & the fact that some of these irregularities, as for instance raffling, had probably been committed, thoughtlessly, perhaps ignorantly, it was deemed inexpedient by the Session to enter upon any immediate & active course of discipline.¹⁷

Following this action by the Session Palmer submitted a paper, which was, in reality, a testimony against the previously stated evils. He urged that the paper be adopted and read from the pulpit as an expression of the views and the course of discipline to be pursued thereafter by the Session. The document was rather stringent as well as very binding on the Session; therefore it was decided, after much consultation, to postpone a decision in order to allow ample time for reflection by the members of the Session.¹⁸

At the next meeting of the Session, December 24, 1847, the

Pastor reported that he had conversed with the four Members who attended the late Ball, that two of these D. r & W. rs Fair, justified themselves, and were somewhat offended with him for the plainness of his remonstrance and that the two others, W. r & M. rs Shepherd, acknowledged that they had attended thoughtlessly & regretted that they had done so.

¹⁶At a fair under the auspices of the Odd Fellows, raffling, which had been engaged in by some members of the congregation, was considered in conjunction with dancing as a part of the new tide of vices descending upon the community.

¹⁷Session Records of the Columbia Presbyterian Church, 1847-1874, December 22, 1847, 4-5.

¹⁸Ibid., 8.

Conversation was then resumed upon the Paper submitted at the last meeting; and while the members of the Session agreed upon the principles of the document & upon the necessity of taking some action in relation to the alleged evils, yet the majority could not agree upon the expediency of reading it in public.¹⁹

Johnson declares that "Upon this adverse action by his session, he [Palmer] promptly resigned, giving as his reason that his conscience would not permit him to be pastor of a dancing church. Such at any rate tradition affirms to have been his course."²⁰ Regardless of Palmer's action during the controversy, the Session met December 25, 1847, for further conference upon the advisability of reading the paper publicly. The document was modified somewhat and adopted as a public testimony to be read from the pulpit on the following Sabbath morning. The main points of the document were:

In the first place we testify, against the iniquitous practice of raffling at fairs.....

In the second place, the Session delivers its testimony against fashionable worldly amusements, such as dancing parties, balls, the Theatre, the Race course and such like....

In the third & last place, the Session delivers its most mature and earnest remonstrance to those Christian Parents who permit their children, so long as they are minors and under their control, to attend such places of amusements as are prohibited to themselves. It is bitterly to be lamented that the Standard of Christian/Education is so deplorably low; and one aspect of this is the little restraint thrown upon youth as they grow up and plunge into the world.²¹

Following the reading of the document to the congregation the Session requested Palmer to preach a sermon on dancing. He delivered the address June 17, 1849, under the title, "Social Dancing Inconsistent

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Johnson, Benjamin Norman Palmer, 94. The writer is skeptical of this account by Johnson since no indication of such a break between Palmer and the members of the Session appears in the records.

²¹ Session Records of the Columbia Presbyterian Church, 1847-1874, December 25, 1847, 6-8.

with a Christian's Professional and Baptismal Vows."²² The alleged evil of social dancing was close to the heart of the minister and he spared no pains in exhausting the possibilities of his subject. Palmer contended that social dancing was an exercise of the flesh and that, contrary to the belief of some, had no Biblical grounds upon which to support its practice. To substantiate this basic premise, he analyzed each instance in the Bible where the word dancing appeared or where people engaged in the activity. Palmer distinguished between individual dancing, either singularly or in groups and dancing between the sexes. He also emphasized the distinction between social dancing and dancing resulting from spiritual exultation. The sermon is a masterpiece of logic, logic designed, through the technique of residue reasoning, to obliterate the opposing contention completely. The address is a splendid example of Palmer's ability to hold an idea up and attack it from all possible angles.

In later years, Palmer became increasingly noted for his congeniality toward all sects, creeds and denominations. His warm heart reached out to include all those in need, and his brilliant intellect respected genuine convictions wherever he found them. The Session records of the Columbia Church evince the appearance of this tendency which was soon to become a Palmer characteristic. For example:

The Pastor reported that M. R. Bonhomme a converted Jew. in the employment of the American Society for the ameliorating the conditions of the Jews. desired to preach and take up collection in behalf of his mission. It was decided to afford him the use of the Lecture room on Sabbath night.

²²At the request of the Session the sermon was printed in pamphlet form. A copy is available in the library of the University of South Carolina at Columbia.

²³Ibid., 219-220.

Palmer's energies were not only directed toward maintaining the morale of his congregation by insisting upon the enforcement of proper disciplinary measures, but also in the discharging of his pastoral duties. The success which attended his efforts was gratifying. A system was arranged whereby the congregation was divided into wards, "each of which was subjected to pastoral visitation by the pastor and one elder working together."²⁴ Palmer was rapidly developing the capacity to administer Christian guidance to his membership with remarkable unobtrusiveness. During his ministry at Savannah, Palmer had not confined his pastoral services to his own congregation. He continued the practice of extensive and unselfish service in the Columbia community.

The poise and self-confidence which Palmer displayed in the pulpit characterized his manner when offering consolation to those in distress. Although young in years, his understanding of, and compassion for those in sorrow had been deepened by two personal tragedies. In June, 1844, his son, scarcely two years old, succumbed, and in November, 1847, his mother died. Thus in the school of sacrifice Palmer learned the futility of defying the inexorable law of the universe. He knew he must rise above the world's high concerns; imperturbable and serene he must stand before the multitudes in pain, touching their "troubled flesh" with a mantle of "cool tranquillity." This was good for Palmer and good for his congregation.

By 1845 there had arisen a desire on the part of the Presbyterian

²⁴Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 97.

²⁵ibid., 101-106.

leaders in Columbia to establish a publication devoted to a thorough, scholarly and unhampered discussion of themes related to the various fields encompassed by the Church. Intellectual giants like Howe, Thernwell and Palmer "had messages from the Lord to their bretheren which they yearned to deliver and they liked not Princeton's disposition to put a gag in their mouths."²⁶ In 1846 the Synod of South Carolina "endorsed and commended the proposed plan of a Southern Theological Review, as important to the true interest of the Southern Church, as suited to subserve the cause of Christ, and to promote sound learning and doctrinal knowledge among us."²⁷ Immediately, an "association of ministers, in the town of Columbia established the very able periodical, the Southern Presbyterian Review; the first issue of which bears the date, June, 1847. This association conducted the Review for about a score of years; then the governing body was reorganized on a wider geographical basis and continued the publication of the periodical down to 1868."²⁸

According to Dr. W. F. McPheters, often referred to as the "Rector" of Columbia Seminary, the founders of the Review were "Dr. Thernwell and Dr. Palmer; and the managing editor, for many years, was Dr. James Woodrow."²⁹ A glance at the alphabetical index, found in the

²⁶ Ibid., 126.

²⁷ Robinson, Columbia Theological Seminary and the Southern Presbyterian Church, 149.

²⁸ Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 126.

²⁹ Robinson, Columbia Theological Seminary and the Southern Presbyterian Church, 149. Johnson states that Palmer was one of the first editors of the Review until the close of his pastorate in Columbia in 1854. Johnson's statement must be true since Dr. Woodrow was not called to Columbia Seminary until 1861. Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 126-127.

thirty-fifth volume of the Review, gives an indication of the wide range of subjects covered by the contributors: theology, missions, civics, philosophy, history, education, science, worship, exegesis and criticism, christian conduct, church government, ecclesiology, etc. "Thornwell and other writers in the Southern Presbyterian Review mined as deeply into the underlying principles of theology, as ever did Calhoun into the underlying principle of civil polity."³⁰

As one of the first editors of the Review,³¹ Palmer devoted much of his time and talent to insuring the success of the enterprise. "There has come down, amongst his loose papers, lists of subjects carefully framed by his hand, on which he, as editor, wished to have articles from contributors. This suggests that he conducted a share of the correspondence, and probably supervised such articles as he secured, as they were going through the press."³² In addition to aiding as editor, Palmer was a regular contributor to the Review. An examination of the articles from his pen reveals an unbelievable range of study and comprehension. Although Palmer was still in his twenties, when the first issue of the Review appeared in June, 1847, it contained an article by him entitled, "The Relation between the Work of Christ and the Condition of the Angelle World." The essay attempted to clarify the meaning of the "principle of grace" as introduced into religious dogma by Christ's atonement.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Thornwell and Hove were the other two. Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 126.

³² Ibid., 126-127.

We are persuaded that the scheme of grace revealed in the Bible should be regarded from a higher point of view than this low earth on which we dwell; that its relations are more vast and extensive than is supposed by those who would confine it to any one district, class, or order of beings. Taking, indeed, the narrowest view of it, it is sublime beyond all human conception. The redemption of a single soul from death, its deliverance from the bondage of sin and the power of Satan, its entire sanctification, and its introduction into heaven, are all events of the most startling and impressive kind. The passage of even one redeemed saint from the deep pit and miry clay of sin to a throne with Christ in his glory, unfolds a history which might command a listening senate of angels.³³

At the close of his introduction Palmer presented the theme of his discourse: "Jesus Christ by his atonement, has introduced into the moral government of God the 'principle of Grace,' which avails to the confirmation of beings who are holy, as well as to the redemption of beings who are fallen."³⁴

In developing his central idea, Palmer exhibits a remarkable knowledge of the choice literature, both past and present, on the subject. Although his language is clear and exact, he approaches the sublime in style. "The imagery is so lofty that it reminds the reader of Milton's...."³⁵ Aided by a keen insight into his subject, Palmer skillfully maintained a balance between lofty imagination and reason. Indeed, this first contribution to the Review by the young minister gave promise of a literary development of rare merit.

This newly discovered talent was not allowed to remain idle, for in

³³ Benjamin Morgan Palmer, "The Relation between the Work of Christ and the Condition of the Angelic World," Southern Presbyterian Review, I, 34-62, June, 1847.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 128.

the December issue of the Review for 1847, a discourse by Palmer appeared under the title, "The Intellectual and Moral Character of the Jew." In the analysis he attempted to set forth the dominant characteristics of the Jewish race: "a superhuman tenacity," "a singular elasticity of constitution," "an incorrigible worldly-mindedness and consecration to the service of Mammon," "a comparative freedom from the gross vices of other races" and "their intellectual activity and shallowness." It appears that Palmer's primary interest in the Jewish people³⁶ was born of a desire to see them converted to Christianity, for he says:

Whoever, then, feels a lively sympathy with Christ in his present humiliation and prays to see him Lord of the whole earth, must be ill instructed if he does not feel a corresponding anxiety for the salvation for the House of Israel. It is not improbable that God is now reserving this people for a distinguished service in the way of evangelizing the world. Perhaps the future history of the church will reveal many a son of Abraham with Abraham's faith, doing the work of Paul, preaching the faith which he once destroyed. And the conversion of the Jews, accomplished in fulfillment of a hundred predictions, will probably be the grand fact argument by which the truth of Christianity, in the latter days, will be attested.³⁷

After submitting an essay on "An Inquiry into the Doctrine of Imputed Sin" to the March issue of the Review for 1848, Palmer attacked a subject that was very close to his heart, the necessity for doctrinal preaching. From his earliest appearance in the pulpit he had demonstrated a tendency toward doctrinal preaching. With the advance of time he became a firm advocate and practitioner of this principle. The discourse, which appeared in the July issue of the Review for 1849, was called, "A Plea

³⁶This interest was frequently demonstrated during Palmer's ministry in New Orleans.

³⁷Palmer, "The Intellectual and Moral Character of the Jew," Southern Presbyterian Review, I, 30-55, December, 1847.

for Doctrine as the Instrument of Sanctification." In the beginning of the article Palmer expressed his regret that so many professing Christians objected to doctrinal religion.

That a deeply seated prejudice exists in many parts of the church against the systematic exposition of the doctrines of the Bible, is too obvious a fact to be questioned. It probably falls within the experience of every pastor, to see the gathering frown, the averted shoulder, and the drooping head, as soon as certain doctrines are announced as the theme for discussion. It does not excite our surprise that the world of the ungodly should manifest this displeasure: for the same "carnal mind" which is enmity against God, is enmity likewise against doctrinal religion, and that even ministers of the gospel should sigh over the earnest proclamation of its truths, and accuse the faithful witness of "daubing with untempered mortar," is certainly a most afflictive and atrocious scandal.³⁸

After maintaining the necessity of guidance through doctrine in all religious progress toward sanctification, Palmer concludes with an appeal for an understanding and application of the Calvinistic Standards.

Indeed, we utter a long cherished conviction, when we say that, next to the Bible, from which all that relates to God and the soul must be drawn, there are no books we should sooner recommend for an experimental and developmental use than the Calvinistic Standards. We place them in the hands of children and think their office discharged when the "form of sound words" is transferred to the memory. Many a Christian will devour a whole library of books of devotion and pious biographies, trying to draw on a ready-made experience, as he would a glove, when a better manual of practical religion is almost thumbd out in the hands of his child. Let him take the doctrine which he conceives most remote from practical life, and most hidden among the deep things of God—let him ponder it over till his mind has taken a deep and firm grasp of it—let him trace its relations to other doctrines, and to the whole scheme with which it harmonizes—above all, let him pray over it, until it is so revealed that he feels its power over his own spirit.³⁹

"Church and State" was the subject of Palmer's discourse in the Review for October, 1849. With skill and completeness he reviewed the

³⁸Palmer, "A Plea for Doctrine as the Instrument of Sanctification," Southern Presbyterian Review, III, 32-53, July, 1849.

³⁹Ibid.

theories held by leading authorities on the proposition. He continued his discussion in the Review for April, 1850, attacking the primary arguments for a union between Church and State. After disposing of the contentions supporting a union, he advocated a relationship of reciprocal independence between Church and State. The second article on the "Church and State" was followed by a treatise entitled, "Christianity Vindicated from the Charge of Fanaticism," appearing in the Review for October, 1850.

In view of the magnitude of his task as minister of the Columbia church, it is surprising that Palmer found time for other activities. During the major portion of his tenure there, he preached three times each Sunday. He finally gave up the afternoon service.⁴⁰ However, the performance of his regular duties, in addition to his frequent contributions to the Review, did not exhaust his energies. Before Palmer had been at Columbia long, he became a well-known occasional speaker and was eagerly sought after by organizations and institutions even in adjoining states. During this period, literary societies were enjoying great popularity and prestige. Much greater significance was attached to commencement occasions than today, and the funeral oration was almost an institution. Palmer had occasion to engage in all these forms of occasional address. As early as August, 1845, he delivered an oration before the Demosthenian and Phi Kappa Societies of his alma mater, the University of Georgia, on the "Influence of Religion upon National Character."⁴¹

⁴⁰Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 92.

⁴¹A pamphlet edition of this address is available in the library of the University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia.

A letter written by Basile Edward Lanneau, June 22, 1850, refers to an address given by Palmer at Barhamville, South Carolina.

The exhibition at Barhamville on Wednesday night was quite brilliant....The crowning exercise of the occasion was an address to the graduating class, after they received their diplomas, by the Rev. B. H. Palmer, whose merits as universal speech maker are just beginning to be discovered. The object was to delineate the "perfect woman," in which he struck all the tones "from grave to gay," from lively to severe. It was beautiful, witty and solemn, all by turns, and seems to have given universal satisfaction.⁴²

In August, 1852, Palmer delivered an address, "Baconianism and the Bible," before the literary societies of Davidson College, North Carolina. The substance of this speech appeared in the October issue of the Review for 1852. Although one may not be ready to accept Palmer's endorsement of the Baconian philosophy, he will doubtless be charmed by the rhythm and splendor of the author's vehement style exemplified in the conclusion.

This discourse gives in two words--Baconianism and the Bible--a portable argument paralyzing the skeptic with the shock of the torpedo. The Baconian philosophy is the mother of that proud science which sheds such glory upon the age in which we live; and this philosophy, as already shown, has historical and logical connections with the Bible, the charter of our religious hopes. We may rest therefore in the conviction that as the Bible has conferred the largest benefits on philosophy, true science will repay it with the largest gratitude. Kindling her torch at every light between a glow worm and a star, she will read to us "the silent poem of creation." She will appear like an ancient priestess, in the sacred temple of religion; and burn the frankincense of all her discoveries upon the altar of inspired truth. She will assemble the elements and powers of nature in one mighty orchestra, and revelation shall give the keynote of praise, while heaven and earth join in the rehearsal of the grand oratorio.⁴³

Referring to the address on "Baconianism and the Bible," the Reverend Professor William T. Hall, of Columbia Seminary, testifies to Palmer's

⁴²Quoted in Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 134-135. Lanneau was Palmer's cousin.

⁴³Palmer, "Baconianism and the Bible," Southern Presbyterian Review, VI, 226-253, October, 1852.

transcendent power as a speaker.

The first time I ever saw him was on the rostrum at Davidson College. He delivered as a commencement oration a discourse on "Mormonism and the Bible." At first we were not prepossessed. He was rather small, his complexion was dark, his face was dished, his whole appearance was against him. But he had not spoken long until he had full attention. Interest deepened as he proceeded. The interest was genuine, but not painful. We found ourselves carried along by the tide of the discourse, our vision gradually enlarging, and every faculty enlisted and charmed. The spell of the orator was upon us. Weeks passed before the echoes of that oration ceased to be heard on the College campus.⁴⁴

On November 10, 1852, Palmer delivered an address, "The Claims of the English Language," before the Phi-Delta and Thalian Societies of Oglethorpe University, Willedgeville, Georgia. Upon this occasion the University conferred on Palmer the degree of Doctor of Divinity.⁴⁵ The theme of the lecture stressed the necessity of mastering the English language, and appealed for an elevation of our native tongue to a place among languages compatible with the position enjoyed by the English nations among the other nations of the world. The substance of this discourse appeared as the leading article in the Review for January, 1853.

"Mormonism" was the title of an address delivered before the Mercantile Library Association of Charleston, June 28, 1853.⁴⁶ The discourse in condensed form appeared in the Review for April, 1853. The lecture denotes a wide range of study by the speaker on the Mormon religion as well as Mohammedanism, for the central idea, the standpoint from which the speaker regarded Mormonism, was its parallelism to Mohammedanism. The main body of the address was devoted to a discussion of the similarities and differences between the two religions.

⁴⁴Quoted in Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 135.

⁴⁵Ibid., 149.

⁴⁶A pamphlet edition of this address is available in the Charleston Library Society, Charleston, South Carolina.

A broad philosophical spirit characterized the entire analysis. In the conclusion this fact is illustrated when the speaker alluded to the poignant problems now operating on the Pacific side of our continent--the springing up of empires and states, "Minerva-like" and full grown, and the influx of Asiatic immigration, which would inevitably present the critical problem--the conflict resulting from the mixing of races and types of civilisation. The Charleston Daily Courier devoted considerable space to a summary of the address mentioning the size of the audience that assembled in Market Hall. "The Hall was not only crowded, but numbers near the door could not obtain seats at all, and many returned not being able to find even good standing room."⁶⁷

On August 9, 1884, Palmer delivered an address, "The Love of Truth the Inspiration of the Scholar,"⁶⁸ before the Philomathean and Euphemian Literary Societies of Erskine College at the annual commencement. The lecture material is drawn from a surprising variety of sources: Lord Bacon, Milton, Locke, Kant, Sir William Hamilton, Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Pythagoras, Newton, Des Cartes, Galileo, Solomon, Aesop, Terence, Epictetus, Thomas Simpson, John Hunter, Euclid, Edmund Stone, Benjamin Franklin, Byron, Macaulay, Blaise Pascal, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, religion, drama, ethics, history (ancient, medieval and modern), etc. However, it is the facility with which these raw materials were converted into apt and striking illustrations that makes

⁶⁷Charleston Daily Courier, January 27, 1883.

⁶⁸A pamphlet edition of this address is available in the Smyth Library of Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia.

the speaker's style sparkle with reality and beauty.

Palmer delivered a discourse on "Christianity, the Only Religion for Men," before the graduating class of the University of North Carolina, June 4, 1855.⁴⁹ His approach to the subject was admirably simple. The argument centered around two main contentions: first, "that man's religious nature constrains him to find repose in some form of faith and worship"; second, "that the wants of his nature, well understood, are met only in Christianity, as taught in the Gospel."

Palmer appears not to have kept a record of his occasional speaking. Therefore, it is impossible to estimate accurately the full extent of this type of service. However, it is likely that many addresses, perhaps less elaborate in preparation than those recorded, were delivered by Palmer during this period.

When Palmer became pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Columbia, the congregation was worshipping in a rather dilapidated structure of small dimensions. The church building soon became too small to accommodate his audience.⁵⁰ Under Palmer's leadership a plan was devised for the building of a new church. After experiencing the proverbial hardships of erecting a church structure, the pastor dedicated the new edifice on Sabbath morning, October 9, 1855. The subject of Palmer's address was the "Warrant and Nature of Public Service."⁵¹

⁴⁹A pamphlet edition of this address is available in the Presbyterian Historical Foundation, Montreal, North Carolina.

⁵⁰The church membership increased from 128 in 1843 to 320 in 1855. Minutes of General Assembly of Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., 1843-1855.

⁵¹A pamphlet edition of this sermon is available in the library of the University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

After declaring that no act of spiritual magic short of a congregation and pastor dedicated to the observance of God's laws could transform the new building into a real tabernacle of worship, Palmer discussed the three great principles from which the institution of stated public worship seemed to flow: first, "that man, endowed with a social nature, cannot attain the perfection which is possible to him, in the privacy and insulation of his own being"; second, "that it is necessary to the church as the visible kingdom of Christ"; and third, "Since, by means of the worship and ordinances of the sanctuary, this kingdom of Christ makes its aggressions upon the surroundings and opposing powers of darkness." Following this discussion of the "Warrant" for public service, Palmer considered the "nature" of Christian worship, stating that the "formal exposition of truth" is a necessary service in the Christian church and that Christian worship should be "pre-eminentlly simple." Having declared in closing that the new church, beautiful as it was to the eye, should be considered a simple Presbyterian Meeting-house, Palmer emphasized the paramount elements of glory that should be recognized in God's new temple.

The glory we see in it, let it not be the glory of its arches and its timbers,--not the glory of its lofty and graceful spire, pointing ever upwards to that home the pious shall find in the bosom of God; not the glory of this chaste pulpit, with its delicate tracery, and marble whiteness, not the glory found in the eloquence or learning of those who, through generations, shall here proclaim the gospel,--nor yet the glory traced in the wealth and fashion, refinement and social position of those who throng its courts. But let its glory be "the glory of the Lord risen upon it!" Let its glory be the promises of the covenant engraved upon its walls, which are yet and mean in Christ Jesus. Let its glory be found in the parity, soundness and uncton, of its pastors,--in the fidelity and watchfulness of its elders,--in the piety and godliness of its members. Let its glory be as a birth place of souls, where shall always be heard the sobe of awakened penitence, and the songs of new-born

love. Let its glory be the spirituality of its worship, its fervent prayers, its adoring praise, and the simplicity and truth of its ordinances and sacraments. Let its glory be the communion of saints, who here have fellowship one with another, and also with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. Let its glory be as the resting-place of weary pilgrims, toiling on toward the heavenly city--the emblem of that Church above--

"Where congregations ne'er break up,
And Sabbaths never end."⁵²

While pastor at Columbia, Palmer was offered the pulpit in various churches in different sections of the country. As early as 1848 he received a call from the Second Presbyterian Church of Baltimore.⁵³ The Globe Street Church of Charleston made application to the Presbytery for Palmer's services in 1852.⁵⁴ About two months later he received a call from the Central Church of Cincinnati.⁵⁵ The following year, 1853, overtures were received from Philadelphia. "He had been a member of the General Assembly sitting in that city in the spring of 1853, was honored by the Assembly and brethren of his faith generally in the city. Hence, perhaps, in part his inclination to go."⁵⁶ "In the same year he was elected to the chair of Hebrew in Danville (Ky.) Theological Seminary. This he refused without much difficulty."⁵⁷ In January, 1854, Palmer was again called by the Central Church of Cincinnati. Although the

⁵²This address in full is recorded in Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 107-124.

⁵³Session Records of the Columbia Presbyterian Church, 1819-1847, July 18, 1848.

⁵⁴Ibid., January 31, 1852.

⁵⁵Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 147.

⁵⁶Ibid. According to Mr. Alfred Lanneau, Charleston, South Carolina, the calls for Mr. Palmer's services in the Northern Churches led the Southern commissioners to the Assembly in 1853, in a meeting called for the purpose, to express their unanimous opinion that he should not leave the South. Quoted as a footnote in ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid.

call was presented with much emotion by the commissioners from Cincinnati, the Presbytery declined to let Palmer go.⁵⁸ Later in the year 1854, he allowed himself to be made Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Polity in Columbia Seminary.⁵⁹ The foregoing calls do not comprise a complete list, but represent the most important invitations received by Palmer during his Columbia ministry.

The facts indicate that Palmer's ministry at the First Presbyterian Church of Columbia was successful in every important respect. Palmer fully realized that his decision to accept the Columbia charge placed his career in the balance. There could be no compromise with excellence. The task was of such proportions as to insure success or incur failure. He accepted the challenge. Success attended his efforts. He entered the Columbia pulpit in 1845, young in years and young in experience. He left his charge in 1864 still young in years but a master pulpiteer. Through his faithfulness to pastoral duties he had shown himself to be a "good shepherd" to his congregation. Through his strict administration of discipline to those who violated the rules and ordinances of this church, he announced to the community that a high standard of conduct should attend acceptance of the laws of God's church.

In the pulpit Palmer was ever faithful to the high level of performance for which his capacities and training had equipped him. With indefatigable faithfulness he sought to enhance his ability to serve, not only his own congregation, but all those in need. He left his

⁵⁸Ibid., 148.

⁵⁹P. D. Jones and W. H. Mills, History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina since 1850 (R. L. Bryan Co., Columbia, S. C., 1926), 45.

congregation ninety per cent stronger numerically than he found it and far greater advanced as an efficiently organized unit working for the realization of "Christ's teachings." That Palmer was recognized as a minister of the first rank was indicated by the calls he received from many of the important churches in influential cities throughout the country. "Could he make a contribution to his age?" was no longer a pertinent question. What field would he choose to grace with his splendid capacities? -

CHAPTER VI

PROFESSORSHIP IN COLUMBIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

When Palmer became a member of the faculty in the Columbia Seminary in 1854, Howe and Leland comprised the faculty.¹ Although the Seminary had been doing a useful work, it was not meeting the demands of the age. There had been much general advancement in theological education. Other seminaries, such as Princeton, the Union Seminary in Virginia, and Alleghany Seminary had been materially strengthened by the addition of men of power to their faculties. The Danville Seminary in Kentucky had opened in 1853 with all the intellectual force on its faculty that the West could command.² The time had come for Columbia Seminary to equip herself with a complete corps of professors if she intended to withstand the competition of her rivals. As Dr. J. E. Thornwell declared:

Things had reached a crisis, and something vigorous was to be done, or the Seminary virtually abandoned. It was ascertained that, if things remained another year as they were, the next session would, in all likelihood, open with the merest handful of students, not more than six or eight. The Board determined to propose a measure which, it was thought, would remove these grounds of complaint. They nominated me for the chair of Theology and Palmer for that of History.³

During his pastorate at Columbia, Palmer had served the Seminary by lecturing on "Church History and Church Polity." These lectures were given through the school years of 1851-1852 and 1853-1854. From the fall of 1854 until October, 1855, Palmer served both as pastor of his church and professor at the Seminary.⁴ He continued to serve his congregation

¹semi-Centennial of the Columbia Theological Seminary, 221.

²Palmer, Life and Letters of James Henley Thornwell, 382.

³Ibid., 384.

⁴Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 138.

at their request as supply pastor until the close of 1855. During 1856 he filled the pulpit from Sunday to Sunday at Orangeburg, South Carolina.⁵

It is certain that Palmer allowed himself to be elected to the professorship in Columbia Seminary against his better judgment. This fact, together with the real reason why he allowed the appointment, Palmer expressed in a letter dated September 4, 1854, to the Reverend J. B. Adger of the Charleston Presbytery.

As to myself, I shall feel thankful to God if He shall turn the mind of the brethren at Synod to the choice of another, as was the case last year. My own judgment and inclination are decidedly against it--much more so than last year. And I do not hesitate to say, if the question was the same as last year, to elect me alone, I should instantly refuse to serve. Constituted as the Seminary now is, without an able man in the Theological Chair, I could not entertain the thought for a moment; and if a really able man, say Dr. Thornwell himself, was now the professor of Theology, I should not feel that the Seminary was in such extreme distress as to require on my part the sacrifice of interest of taste, and of feeling. But it is to secure Brother Thornwell to the Seminary as the teacher of Theology, and for this alone, that I have gained my own consent to be wholly passive and allow the Synod to dispose of me as they see fit. If the vote divides upon Brother Thornwell, or he fails to serve, leaving the Seminary as it now stands, I shall not go into the chair of history--for as long as the students are dissatisfied with the instructions received in theology, nothing can raise the institution.⁶

Some five weeks later, after he had arrived at the Seminary, Palmer wrote again to Adger, disclosing the magnitude of the task before him and his supreme effort to maintain the same lofty ideals in the professorship that he had sustained in the pulpit.

You do not know how hard I work, ten hours a day, and that scarcely keeps me up with a daily exercise with my classes. I have undertaken the Herculean task of lecturing systematically

⁵Ibid., 156.

⁶Quoted in ibid., 151-152.

- upon the whole course of Church History in connection with the text-book, in order to give the philosophical and real connections. To one ignorant as myself it is a task scarcely inferior to taking the Alps on my⁷ shoulder--Church History in its totality is bigger than the Alps.

A diligence that consumed from ten to fourteen hours daily in the preparation of his materials found its compensation in Palmer's growing success as a teacher in the Seminary. As a student of history, he sought philosophical scholarship and endeavored to awaken it in his students. As a teacher he possessed the necessary analytical faculty, a sensitivity to logical reasoning, and a superb command of the tools of expression. But Palmer's mastery of narration and description, his power of imagery, his magic use of the pathetic--these were tools of the pastor rather than of the professor. The minister who could control the heart of the popular assembly was never truly at home in the classroom; for the chief concern of the Seminary professor was not in the winning of disciples to Christianity but rather the imparting of knowledge to those already devoutly Christian.⁸ However, it is not to be implied that Palmer would not have made an enviable reputation as a teacher. His ability as an instructor is affirmed by his colleagues and students. Professor W. T. Hall of Columbia Seminary, who was a student of Palmer's, states:

One session hardly affords opportunity for estimating the capacity of a teacher; and a class of juniors may not be the best of judges. Dr. Palmer's own opinion was that his proper sphere was the pulpit and none of us was disposed to call his opinion in question. Not that he was by any means a failure in the classroom; but for the reason that he was a prince in the pulpit. In fact he was easily the best teacher we had until Dr. Thornwell came in, about the middle of the session. We understood that he was offered a chair in Princeton Seminary about the

⁷Quoted in ibid., 154.

⁸ibid., 155.

time he left Columbia. There can be no doubt that he would have made a great reputation, and have been a pillar in the Seminary, if he had chosen to devote his life to teaching. In one respect he certainly had no superior. I refer to his personal influence on the students. His Christian character was one of his strong points. I never knew a Christian whose "walk" was more worthy of the "vocation." Students were impressed by the strong, healthy type of his piety; and consulted him in their spiritual conflicts. He was also a model of industry. Reports credited him with fifteen hours given to study out of the twenty-four. He was then laying the foundation for his long and successful ministry.⁹

Palmer's thoroughness of preparation for the classroom is demonstrated by one of his lectures which appeared in the Southern Presbyterian Review, April, 1856.¹⁰ The subject was "The Importance of Hebrew History." An examination of the discourse reveals the ease and complacency with which its author follows the great trends and explains the contributions of Hebrew History. Generalizations and the provocative forms of supports are dignified by a subtle philosophical undercurrent. The writer's style maintains an elevation compatible with the magnitude of his subject.

However, Palmer's services as a teacher were not the only contribution that he found time to make to the welfare of the Seminary. The institution had from its beginning been insufficiently endowed. It looked primarily to friends in the field for support. Palmer was quick to answer this call in 1855, aiding in raising the endowment necessary to insure the services of Thorndwell. The extent of his work in behalf of this aspect of the Seminary, Palmer described in a letter written from Columbia to the Reverend B. E. Lanneau, March 24, 1855.

You are probably aware that about the tenth of January I started out with Dr. Adger upon an agency in behalf of the Seminary to secure the endowment of the fourth chair; or rather

⁹Quoted in ibid., 155.

¹⁰Benjamin Morgan Palmer, "The Importance of Hebrew History," Southern Presbyterian Review, I, 330-351, April, 1856.

to provide certainly for Dr. Thornwell's support. The history of the effort in Charleston (in which, however, I had no concern, it being conducted entirely by Drs. Adger and Smith) you have doubtless learned through the public prints. About \$16,000 was taken up in money and bankable notes chiefly in the Second Church and in Globe Street (Church). This, however, includes the \$7,500 raised in guarantee of Dr. Thornwell's salary for three years; some portion of which was obtained in Columbia and elsewhere. I then went to Savannah and made a partially successful application there....Dr. Adger joined me in a united effort upon Augusta; from which place we moved forward to Montgomery. At this point we separated, I remaining at Montgomery, while he went to Selma. After this we joined forces and made a descent upon Mobile, and then upon New Orleans.

...I cannot even begin to give you the particulars of my Western trip. It was in many respects very pleasant. I made many new and valued friends, and I hope made some capital for the Seminary....¹¹

When Palmer and Adger, in search of funds for the Seminary, visited New Orleans early in 1855, the pulpit of the First Presbyterian Church in that city was vacant.

On the morning of their first Sunday in the city, Dr. Adger preached to the people of the First Church, and Dr. Palmer, the younger man, at the Prytania Street Church. They exchanged pulpits in the evening. In the interim between morning and evening service, the people who had been in Prytania Street Church were talking enthusiastically about the little gentleman the wonderful preacher who had spoken to them. That evening the people of the First Church flocked to hear Dr. Palmer preach; and were "struck with his graceful action and his beautiful soul-stirring diction." "The speaker seemed lifted so high by his illustrations, by his grand images" that at times they "feared he would never be able to get down from the heights without a tumble, or at least a stumble," but he did "come swooping down with all the grace with which he went up" and stand there on the platform a simple, humble man. The matter of his discourse seemed no less excellent, didactically rich and emotionally and spiritually quickening. On the next Sabbath he seems to have preached again to these people, and to have so preached that his message burned itself indelibly into the memories of his hearers.¹²

No later than the following September a unanimous call for Palmer was placed in the hands of the Charleston Presbytery by the New Orleans

¹¹Quoted in ibid., 137-138.

¹²ibid., 156.

Session.¹³ Palmer was inclined to accept it but the Presbytery refused to release him, stating that his services as professor in Columbia Seminary were indispensable to the welfare of the institution and that they did not propose to jeopardize the action of the Synod that had secured his acceptance of the position.¹⁴

Immediately the committee from New Orleans registered protest against the action of the Charleston Presbytery to the Synod of South Carolina in the form of a letter containing twelve major contentions.¹⁵ The Synod refused to sustain the protest.¹⁶ It is difficult to ascertain Palmer's personal reaction to the decision of the Synod. However, it is certain that he continued to be possessed of a growing conviction that his greatest contribution could be made in the pulpit and not the classroom. This contention was evinced by Palmer in a letter to Adger, June 1, 1856:

The rumors that have reached you are correct. I have made up my mind to resign at the approaching meeting of the Board, with a view to accept the New Orleans call, if it shall be placed in my hands by the Presbytery. With the renewal of this call I have had no concern, and was taken as much by surprise as anyone else. Now that it has come, I must meet it....The considerations which have controlled my decision are briefly these:

1. It is clear the Church at large does not acquiesce in my withdrawal from the pulpit. Since November I have been engaged in a laborious and annoying correspondence to frustrate and prevent calls from five churches in as many definite cities, and without success in two of the five.
2. Add to this my own growing conviction that the pastoral work is the work for which alone, I am in a degree, fit....
3. The actual and admitted importance of the New Orleans field, in itself considered, and in relation to the outlying territory--and the difficulty in securing a supply of it, arising from the perils and risks incurred through a removal to that city.
4. The fact that I feel committed in honor, by all that has passed, to go to New Orleans if I leave the Seminary....

¹³Minutes of the Charleston Presbytery, September, 1855.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵*Ibid.*, October, 1855.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, November, 1855.

5. It is certain or nearly so that the Presbytery will put the call into my hand when it shall be prosecuted....

6. The Constitution of the Seminary requiring a six months notice of resignation, I must take the initiative at the meeting of the Board.

7. It is but right the Electors should have time to think and confer, before they are precipitated upon a ballot for my successor.

8. I would have preferred to be entirely passive until the Presbytery should have taken action, and with great reluctance do I take a step in advance of their action....¹⁷

Meanwhile a second call had been received from the First Presbyterian Church in New Orleans.¹⁸ Palmer, convinced that he should accept the call, let his desire be known to the Presbytery. It became necessary for him to justify his decision to leave the Seminary. This he did in a letter to Adger, June 10, 1856:

As to the protest you have included on record against my decision in relation to New Orleans, you need be under no apprehension that I will consider it either "brusque," "degeatic," or "abrupt." The die is however now cast, and has therefore got beyond the reach of discussion.

...Let me say distinctly that I neither deny, nor override the rights of the Presbytery. They have full jurisdiction over the case and if they feel disposed to exercise their power to arrest the call, I shall not murmur, but submit. I shall then have reached the end of my rope in my efforts to follow out what I conceive to be the leadings of Providence, and to act upon the convictions of my own mind.

A word upon the implied breach of faith to Brother Thornwell. My consent to go into the Seminary with him was given by me without due consideration, and when my own mind had not worked itself out to any clear conviction on the subject. If God, in the unfoldings of his providence, has connected together a chain of events which seems to reprove that decision, and lead me to fear that I have been brought into a false and wrong position, I think the course of true Christian honor is for me to say frankly to him and to you and to all, that I erred, through ignorance and a fallible judgment, in giving that consent, and must retrace my steps. It is not a question simply of personal sacrifice, but of high Christian duty; a question simply of interpretation as to what is the will of Thornwell's Master and my Master.¹⁹

¹⁷Quoted in Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 161-162.

¹⁸Minutes of the Charleston Presbytery, March, 1856.

¹⁹Quoted in Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 162-163.

When the directors of Columbia Seminary met June 24, 1856, they were in possession of Palmer's resignation. However, they did not concede his request, but instead adopted the following minutes:

The Board can not consistently, with a sense of duty, present to the Synod the resignation of Rev. Dr. Palmer, without expressing its regret that he should feel it a duty to resign his chair in this institution. The interests of the Seminary seem to demand his continuance in his office, and the reasons which he assigns for resigning have all been deliberately considered, both by the Presbytery to which he belongs and by this Synod; and so far from producing in his brethren the conviction entertained by himself, they have precisely the opposite effect. We believe that he is eminently qualified for the chair....The question before the Synod is simply the question concerning the importance of the Seminary. The necessity of its prosperity and success is the necessity of refusing this resignation.²⁰

When the Charleston Presbytery met, instead of disposing of the New Orleans call themselves, they referred the question as to whether it should be made by the Synod of South Carolina to that body. At the meeting of the Synod, which spent two sessions on the New Orleans call, it was decided that the Presbytery of Charleston should place the call in Palmer's hand. When the Synod met in November, 1856, the following minutes were unanimously adopted and placed on the records:

Whereas, our beloved brother, the Rev. Dr. Palmer, has felt constrained, by a severe conviction of duty to resign his professorship in our Seminary, and to transfer his relation to a different Synod, we desire to place upon our Minutes an enduring testimony of our high appreciation of his character and usefulness, and our deep regret at the disruption of the endearing ties which have so long united us, and our ardent wishes and fervent prayers that he may prove a rich and lasting blessing to his future field of labor.

Deploring, as we must continue to do, the lamented removal of this bright and shining light in which we have so greatly rejoiced, our grief is assuaged by the anticipation of the radiance it will diffuse in that wide and interesting region to which his labors are to be transferred.

²⁰Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina, June, 1856, Appendix, 43-44.

As we are well assured that our brother has been governed by a sense of imperative duty in adopting a course which involves so great sacrifices, and causes so much pain to many dear friends, it is incumbent on us to cheer and comfort him in his noble act of self-consecration.²¹

Thus with the noble benediction of Synod of South Carolina, Palmer was seen to move to a new field of service in the southwest. He retained his position in the Seminary and in the pulpit at Orangeburg until December, 1856. At the request of the people of the First Presbyterian Church of Columbia, he preached a farewell sermon to his old congregation there November 4, 1856.²²

The facts indicate that Palmer endeavored to equip himself for success in the professorship at Columbia Theological Seminary with the same thoroughness and industry that had characterized his previous efforts in the pulpit. He had been a good teacher. But in a short time he had come to realize that the pulpit and not the classroom was the sphere in which he could make his greatest contribution. Although his two years in the Seminary had been strenuous and harrowing ones, they were of marked significance. His exhaustive research into the field of ecclesiastical history and polity enhanced the wealth of information which so readily lent itself to his fashioning in the pulpit. Thus, when Palmer bade farewell to the region of his birth, he was abundantly equipped to become, as newspapers and colleagues so frequently called him, the "first citizen" of his adopted city, New Orleans.

²¹Ibid., November, 1856.

²²Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 166.

CHAPTER VII

NEW ORLEANS MINISTRY, 1886-1888

Presbyterianism was first planted in New Orleans by the Congregationalists of New England.¹ In 1817 the Reverend Elias Cornelius was engaged by the Connecticut Missionary Society to tour the southwestern states and especially to visit New Orleans, then a city of some 30,000 inhabitants. The primary object of Cornelius' visit to New Orleans was to induce those of the Presbyterian or Congregational communion to establish a church and secure a pastor. At that time there was only one Protestant minister in the city, the Reverend Dr. James F. Hull.

When passing through New Jersey on his trip to the southwest, Cornelius made the acquaintance of one Sylvester Larned, a senior in the divinity school of Princeton University. It was agreed between the two that Larned should proceed to New Orleans as soon as he was admitted to the ministry. He was licensed and ordained by the Presbytery of New York in July, 1817.

After many delays, Larned reached New Orleans January 22, 1818. Cornelius had arrived three weeks earlier and prepared for Larned's arrival. The latter was at once requested to remain permanently. Plans were soon under way for the construction of a church. As soon as subscriptions to the enterprise were completed, a loan was negotiated for \$40,000 to finance the rection of the tabernacle. On January 8,

¹The writer has drawn upon the account of the history of the Presbyterian Church in New Orleans as prepared and delivered by Palmer at the Semi-Centenary Anniversary of Presbyterianism in New Orleans, November 23, 1873. Cited in Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 174-181.

1819, the cornerstone was laid with impressive ceremonies. The site chosen was on St. Charles Street between Gravier and Union. On the following July 4, the new edifice was dedicated. Larned was primarily an evangelist, and his brief labors in New Orleans consisted mainly in gathering a congregation and building a place of worship. There is no record of his having organized the church according to ecclesiastical customs, and he was never installed as pastor by ecclesiastical authority. He was not privileged to enjoy the fruits of his early labor, for during August, 1830, yellow fever broke out in the city. On Sunday, August 27, he chose as his text Phil. 1:21: "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." On the following Thursday, August 31, his twenty-fourth birthday, he was stricken by the scourge.

The Reverend Theodore Clapp, a New Englander and Graduate of Yale College and Andover Theological Seminary, was Larned's successor. Finding the church struture under a \$45,000 debt, he refused to accept the invitation until liquidation was assured. In an effort to raise \$25,000 of the needed \$45,000, the trustees of the church made application to the Louisiana legislature for a lottery. The request was granted. The additional \$20,000 was raised through the sale of some church property, and Clapp occupied the pulpit.

The first evidence of the organization of the church as a spiritual body was recorded November 25, 1823, when twenty-four persons were formed into a church organization by the adoption of the Presbyterian Standards and by petition to the Presbytery of Mississippi for enrollment under its jurisdiction. "The First Presbyterian Church in the City and Parish of New Orleans" was the title chosen for the organization.

Despite a very successful beginning, Clapp's ministry was destined to prove an unhappy one. As early as 1824, he became critical of the doctrine of the "Eternity of Future Punishment." After further investigation, with the advent of time, he became openly hostile to the whole Calvinistic Theology. The harmony of the church was soon disrupted, for the membership was divided in loyalty, some following Clapp and others adhering to the Calvinistic standards. In March, 1830, Clapp communicated with the Presbytery in Mississippi, stating that he found no evidence in the Bible in support of Calvinistic Theology, and therefore desired dismissal from the Presbytery to the Hampshire County Association of Congregational Ministers of Massachusetts. The Presbytery refused to grant the dismissal on the premise that "it was inconsistent to dismiss in good standing to another body one whom they could no longer recognise in their own." The Presbytery referred the case to the General Assembly, which tried Clapp upon the charge of "error in doctrine." He was dismissed from the ministry of the Presbyterian Church January 10, 1833.

The breach in the church was soon healed through the influence of the Reverend Dr. Joel Parker, who was solicited from the American Home Mission Society, and installed as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in April, 1834. Under his direction, a new church was erected, the old one having become too small to accommodate the congregation, which had grown by 1836 to embody a membership of 142. The Reverend Dr. John Breckenridge succeeded Parker as minister in 1839. Although his ministry gave promise of being extremely efficient and beneficial, he succumbed in August, 1841.

The Reverend Dr. William A. Scott was installed as pastor March 19, 1843. His ministry was unusually successful. By the close of his pastorate in 1854, the church membership had reached 600. On October 27, 1854, the church building, which had been constructed under the supervision of Dr. Parker, burned. Immediately the congregation resolved to rebuild the church larger in proportions and more unusual in style. The edifice was completed in 1857 at a total expenditure of \$87,000. Such had been the history of the first Presbyterian Church of New Orleans when Palmer arrived to begin his long and memorable pastorate.

Two days after Palmer arrived in New Orleans, December 5, 1856, he preached his "first sermon as Pastor-elect in Odd-Fellow's Hall to an overwhelming audience, not less than 1500 souls."² On December 19, Palmer was received into the Presbytery of New Orleans, and on December 28 was installed as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of New Orleans. Referring to the installation service Palmer said:

Sermon preached by Rev. Dr. Hutchinson from Rom. 11:13.

"I magnify mine office--his subject being the responsibility of the ministerial office & the honor put upon it by God. The charge to the pastor was delivered by Rev. Dr. Woodbridge, being a good summary of Itology--& the charge to the people by Rev. Mr. Chamberlain. After services, received a cordial greeting from the officers & members of the church."³

Palmer had been noted for his loyalty to pastoral duties while

²Benjamin Morgan Palmer, Diary, December 5, 1856, Historical Foundation, Montreat, North Carolina. Cited hereafter as Diary. This diary is for the year 1857. On the fly-leaf is the name "Benjamin Morgan Palmer, New Orleans, 1856." The following statement ensues: "Resolved upon coming to New Orleans, & entering upon the duties of another and important pastoral charge, to keep a running journal of each day; with a view to preserve myself from flagging & to show each day the diligence or negligence which may have distinguished it. At the end of this book will be found a running commentary upon the first three weeks of my residence here, the last three of the year 1856."

³Ibid., December 28, 1856. In his Diary Palmer consistently used the symbol "It" to represent "Christ."

minister at Columbia. He was equally faithful in this field of service on his arrival in New Orleans. In his Diary this phase of his work is clearly indicated. His graciousness in reference to pastoral calls is illustrated by tracing his visits to the bed-side of a Mrs. Wheeler of his congregation. His first call was made the day following his arrival in New Orleans.

(Dec. 6, 1856) Made my first pastoral visit to a sick lady, Mrs. Wheeler, dying of consumption, found her full of peace, resting quietly upon the merits & work of J. Xt.

(Dec. 11, 1856) Called again on Mrs. Wheeler and found her more able to converse and full of Xtian comfort.

(Dec. 15, 1856) Called again upon Mrs. Wheeler, quite feeble and distressed with her disease--still in a calm and tranquil frame of Soul.

(Dec. 26, 1856) Called to see Mrs. Wheeler who is growing feebler but very hopeful and calm.

(Dec. 27, 1856) Called twice after tea upon Mrs. Wheeler, supposed to be dying, found her looking at death with perfect calmness and hope.

(Dec. 29, 1856) Called upon Mrs. Wheeler who is still alive, prayed and read the SS.--still in a calm & trustful frame, quietly waiting her charge but with no rapture of Soul, & no physical ability to express it, if she would.

(Dec. 30, 1856) Failed to call on Mrs. Wheeler, due to wetness of the day, & heard that she was better, to the surprise of all.

(Dec. 31, 1856) Called on Mrs. Wheeler, read & prayed with her--she was too weak to converse, but expressed her trust in Xt. her Saviour--.

(Jan. 2, 1857) Called also on Mrs. Wheeler who was too feeble to see me.

(Jan. 3, 1857) Called again on Mrs. Wheeler--very low & feeble, but calm and waiting for the hour of her translation.

On January 5, Palmer left New Orleans for a meeting of the Synod of Mississippi. When he returned he went to the home of Mrs. Wheeler, but found that she had died during his absence. Palmer's frequent visits to Mrs. Wheeler were not exceptional. His Diary indicates that he was relatively consistent in devoting his time to those to whom he felt he could be of service. Although the Diary is limited to a period of some five or six months, apparently, it is the only continuous record

of his pastoral services. At this time Palmer had been preaching for some fourteen years. It is reasonable to assume that his habits regarding pastoral duties were relatively fixed.

Seemingly, Palmer's Diary is the only record available of the size of his Sunday-to-Sunday audiences and their reactions to his sermons as reflected by him. As has been previously stated, Palmer's first sermon as pastor-elect was delivered before "an overwhelming audience, not less than 1500 souls." The following Sunday, December 14, Palmer again preached "to an immense audience." Palmer's reactions to his own efforts in the pulpit are interesting and noteworthy. On the second Sunday, he states that he "had unexpected & unusual freedom and power in delivery & came home with a grateful heart for the manifest assistance & favor of God." The record in his Diary for several succeeding Sundays is as follows:

(Dec. 21, 1856) Day very cold and House full. Preached morning & night...with power & freedom....

(Dec. 28, 1856) Preached in the morning to a large & attentive house...had much freedom and earnestness in speaking.

(Jan. 4, 1857) Preached to a very crowded House....Had great enlargement of spirit in speaking. At night preached to a full House....Although greatly fatigued, at commencement, warmed up in preaching, & was greatly aided by the spirit.

(Jan. 11, 1857) At night, preached in Methodist Church.... Congregation large and attentive....

(Jan. 18, 1857) A severely cold day; but had a large audience, the Hall being very nearly filled.

(Jan. 25, 1857) House fuller than ever before. Every inch covered by the audience. Earnest attention given throughout & much feeling exhibited by some.

(Feb. 1, 1857) A pleasant day, which drew out an immense audience. The Hall was filled to completion--Every inch of space on the floor filled with supernumerary chairs & the gallery crowded, and all the platform filled with ladies, & gentlemen giving me only room to stand....Preached in the morning with unusual power...a terse argument listened to with beautiful attention, & considerable evidence of feeling on the part of many in the Congregation. Felt all day the awful responsibility of my position in this city, & my need of almighty grace, in ascending such a dizzy height of prosperity.

(Feb. 2, 1857) Day cold and inclement--House full....Preached in the morning...a very close & pungent sermon, which was deeply felt by the congregation. At night preached a plain but faithful Discourse, listened to with attention & feeling by the audience.... Hall filled at both services, & very serious & earnest.

(Feb. 18, 1857) Day pleasant & congregation larger than ever before.

Thus the evidence tends to indicate that Palmer believed he had deeply impressed his congregation even with his first appearance. This magnetism was not only intensified but broadened during the following months and years. New Orleans was not only the business center of the Lower Mississippi valley, but one of the important export cities of the world. Large in numbers were the people from the "outside" who found their way to his church on the Sabbath, and many a visitor was inclined to remain "another Sunday" in order to hear this "wonderful preacher."⁴

His voice, therefore, reached the ears of a vast multitude that was constantly moving through this place of traffic. His own flock grew in numbers and in activity, and thus his influence was spread abroad throughout the city. By reason, therefore, of his position in a great business center, his matchless powers as a preacher were used of God, in moulding the character of a large part of the people of the Southwestern part of the country. Throughout a long period his church was crowded every Sunday with as many as two thousand listeners. These always sat with their attention fixed upon the speaker, drinking in every word that fell from his lips....⁵

On November 1, 1857, a few months after his arrival in New Orleans, Palmer delivered the sermon dedicating the church which had been started in 1856 immediately following the destruction by fire of the edifice built in 1844. The new tabernacle was an imposing structure of Gothic architecture with a seating capacity of 2,000. Palmer made use of the sermon he had delivered previously at the dedication of the Columbia

⁴Dr. J. W. Caldwell in interview with the writer, January 20, 1942.

⁵Henry Alexander White, Southern Presbyterian Leaders (The Neale Publishing Co., New York, 1911), 364-365.

Presbyterian Church, in which he set for himself and his congregation a high standard of worship.

During his ministry at Savannah and Columbia, Palmer had accumulated a considerable number of sermon briefs. Many of these he used from time to time in his appearances before new audiences.⁶ However, Palmer was not inclined to relax in his efforts to fathom new topics. The old briefs were revised, and month by month new ones were added to his collection. His diligence in the preparation of new sermons is well illustrated in his Diary.

(Jan. 17) Spent this day in preparation for Sabbath--trying at a new sermon, the subject of which has greatly interested my own mind, hope to have it ready for tomorrow. (The following day the sermon was delivered with satisfactory results).

(Jan. 18) Preached in the morning from Rom. 8:10 on the temporal death of believers no argument against their complete justification. This subject suggested by the recent death of Mrs. Wheeler; found the subject fresh; & the Hearers evidently interested in the train of thought suggested.

(Feb. 7) This day spent in preparation for the services of tomorrow--Hard at work in preparation of a sermon in which I was greatly interested.

Within a short time Palmer's sphere of influence widened beyond the bounds of his own congregation. Protestants scattered throughout the city, regardless of denomination, came to hear his teachings. That his growing influence was noticed by the press is clearly indicated by its readiness to allow his sermons to be published. Between 1857 and the opening of the Civil War, many of Palmer's sermons in full, and others in compendious form, were reported in New Orleans newspapers.

However, Palmer's speaking was not limited to his Sunday sermons.

⁶Sixty of these sermon briefs (MSB) are available in the Historic Foundation, Montreat, North Carolina.

He usually spoke at prayer meetings on Wednesday evenings, and "on two other week-day evenings he lectured to special classes organized for the study of the Bible."⁷ That Palmer considered his speaking outside his regular pulpit of notable importance is illustrated by the magnitude of the subject of a discourse which he delivered before the Young Men's Christian Association, March 7, 1857, entitled "The Historic Position of the United States."⁸

Before Palmer had been in New Orleans long, he performed certain humanitarian services that were to endear him forever to the populace of that city. Yellow fever had raged in New Orleans during the years of 1853, 1854, and 1855. In 1853 the disease had killed more than 7,000 persons. The scourge slackened in 1857, but in 1858 almost 5,000 deaths occurred.⁹ During this dark year Palmer displayed remarkable courage, and an unselfishness in administering to those in need wherever he found them. "Dr. Palmer," says White, "went in and out among those that were afflicted. Wherever he saw a sign displayed, showing that the fever was within the house, he entered, offered prayer, spoke a word of good cheer to the sick, and then continued on his way. 'It was thus,' said a Jewish rabbi, 'that Palmer got the heart as well as the ear of New Orleans. Men could not resist one who gave himself to such ministry as this.'"¹⁰

Thus it is evident that Palmer attempted to identify himself with

⁷Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 183.

⁸Palmer, Diary, March 7, 1857.

⁹Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 187-188.

¹⁰White, Southern Presbyterian Leaders, 368.

all those in need, regardless of their station in life, religious belief or race. Even the "spiritual care" of the Negroes did not escape Palmer's attention and effort. "In the spring of 1859 the Session passed a resolution to secure the permission of the mayor for the regular meeting of a colored congregation in the lecture room of the First Presbyterian Church. Soon after, Reverend B. Wayne was engaged to preach to the blacks."¹¹ Palmer's Diary indicates that he preached regularly to the Negroes immediately after his arrival in New Orleans.

(Feb. 1) In the afternoon, preached to the Colored People from John 3:1(?) upon the brazen serpent.

(Feb. 8) In the afternoon preached to the negroes from the Parable of the Prodigal, 15 ch

(Feb. 15) In the afternoon, lectured the Colored People from the Parable of the Pearls.

Moreover, Palmer's labor in behalf of Presbyterianism was not limited to New Orleans. He was made examiner of the Presbytery in Ecclesiastical History and Polity and the Sacraments, March, 1857.¹² Later in the year Palmer was invited to preach the opening sermon to his old Synod of South Carolina.¹³

In 1858 the Synod of Mississippi appointed Palmer to a committee whose function was the establishment of the Southern Advisory Committee of New Orleans as a branch of the Board of Domestic Missions of the General Assembly.¹⁴ As spokesman for the committee, Palmer presented

¹¹Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 188-189.

¹²Minutes of New Orleans Presbytery, March, 1857.

¹³P. D. Jones & W. H. Mills, History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina since 1850 (The R. L. Bryan Company, Columbia, South Carolina, 1928), 47.

¹⁴Minutes of Synod of Mississippi, 1858.

the request before the General Assembly in 1858, and again in 1859, stating in answer to the accusation that the movement originated in sectional antagonism, that the real intention

was merely to lengthen the arm of the Board, so that it might reach over the distant Southwest. The moneys raised would all be acknowledged in the receipts of the Board, and be under their control; though necessarily, for a considerable time, they must be disbursed upon that field. Special reasons might be urged for this arrangement at the Southwest, as the difficulties in the way of evangelizing that region were somewhat peculiar. The country itself was very remote from the center of the Church's operations, and could be reached only after a week's travel. The facilities for communicating with the interior were few, so that its exploration would be a work of toil and time. More than all, it was the door opening into a vast outlying territory, extending to the Isthmus in one direction, and to the Pacific Ocean in the other; a territory which, whether it shall be hereafter incorporated into this Union or not, must be overtaken by the Gospel, and that, too, through our instrumentality, in connection with other branches of the Christian Church. It was of little use for the General Secretary to run down and touch here and there a few points upon the border of this great and destitute missionary region. A district Secretary was needed.... But such considerations, showing that the only purpose had in view was to aid the Board of Domestic Missions in that distant and difficult region, and not to impair the unity of the Church,¹⁵ the measure was carried in the Assembly by an overwhelming vote.

Upon returning to New Orleans, Palmer prepared a ninety-two page digest entitled "The General Assembly of 1858," a very elaborate discourse on the happenings of that body. The paper appeared as a leading article in the Southern Presbyterian Review in 1860.

In the midst of such pressing religious duties, Palmer found time to prepare and deliver two excellent addresses: "Our Historic Mission," given before the Russian and Phil-Hu Societies of LaGrange Synodical College of Tennessee, July 7, 1859;¹⁶ and "Feminine Excellence," delivered

¹⁵Quoted in Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 182-183.

¹⁶A pamphlet edition of the address is available in the Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia.

before the Fayette Female Academy July 23, 1859.¹⁷

By 1860 antislavery forebodings of the coming of the national conflict were gathering fast. The Presbyterian Church was not and had not been quiescent in her attitude toward the issues of slavery and secession. As early as 1818 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church had declared slavery to be a "gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature, and utterly inconsistent with the laws of God, and utterly irreconcilable with the spirit and principle of Gospel of Christ."¹⁸

In contrast to this declaration, in 1854 the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia "resolved unanimously, That in the opinion of this Synod, Abolition Societies and the principle upon which they are formed in the United States are inconsistent with the best interests of the slaves, the right of slave-holders, and the great principles of our political institutions."¹⁹ "In the 1856 minutes, the question of a Southern Disfranchisement separation is twice and perhaps thrice, alluded to, in each case in the review of the acts of the General Assembly."²⁰

The following year the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia declared the action of the General Assembly of 1818 regarding slavery void and without authority.²¹ In 1858 a very drastic resolution was

¹⁷Johnson, Panama Horton Palmer, 195.

¹⁸Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (N.S.), 1818, II, 6.

¹⁹Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia (N.S.), I, 364-365.

²⁰Johnson, Columbia Theological Seminary and the Southern Presbyterian Church, 30.

²¹Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, II, 19.

introduced into the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia by Mr. I. S. K.
 Lagere. The proposal read:

Whereas the spirit of Religion and the cause of our Redeemer require that his church should be pure, peaceable, and united, and whereas that branch of it with which we are connected has become contentious and divided, and whereas each division claims to be the true Presbyterian Church; and whereas the Gen'l Assembly of neither sympathizes with this Synod in its peculiar interests on the subject of slavery, and whereas the majority of both refuse to repeal the Act of 1818, which declares every slaveholder to live in open violation of the most sacred laws of Heaven, and requires him to promote the abolition of every slave in his own possession and through the world--therefore, Resolved that the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia will no longer consent to take any part in this foreign and unhappy contention of the Presbyterian Church, which has already introduced somewhat of discord and division into the bosom of our once peaceful and happy Southern Church.

"Resolved 2, That this Synod will and hereby do declare itself to be an independent Synod.

"Resolved 3, That in doing this they act from a conscientious sense of duty to themselves, to the inhabitants of the states within their bounds, and to the great Head of the Church, the Lord, our Redeemer."²²

Although the motion did not carry, "It was clear to the members of the Synod and to their delegates in the General Assembly that only by regarding slavery as a domestic and civil matter, not a subject for ecclesiastical legislation, could the organic union of the Southern and Northern parts of the Presbyterian Church be preserved."²³

During this period, and until the Southern split of 1861, the most dynamic force opposing a Southern separation was Dr. Thornwell.²⁴

Dr. Thornwell, the leader of the Seminary's thinking, was a Union man. His friend, faithful follower and professional colleague, Dr. S. H. Palmer, Jr., declares that Thornwell loved the Union with a passion almost rising to idolatry. He finds the key to Thornwell's attitude, both before and amid the sectional war, in an early letter in which Thornwell contrasts "an American spirit" with "a Yankee spirit." As long as the government was administered in the American or national spirit, he clung to the Union with almost religious devotion.²⁵

²²Ibid., 41-42.

²³Robinson, Columbia Theological Seminary and the Southern Presbyterian Church, 35.

²⁴Ibid., 38.

²⁵Ibid., 38.

Until the breach had widened beyond repair, Thornwell served as mediator between the Northern and Southern factions in a role comparable in Presbyterian history to that of Henry Clay in national history. In a letter to his wife, May 19, 1845, Thornwell stated:

The question of slavery has been before the house and referred to a special committee of seven. Though not a member of the committee, I have been consulted on the subject, and have drawn up a paper, which I think the committee and the Assembly will substantially adopt; and, if they do, abolitionism will be killed in the Presbyterian Church, at least for the present.²⁶

Palmer, although not a Unionist like Thornwell, yearned for harmony between the factions of the Presbyterian Church. Speaking before the General Assembly in Philadelphia in 1858, he stated:

I believe the Church is panting for union, in spite of all the forebodings and the warnings which our fathers have given in this Assembly. I am glad that I am young....I hope to live to see the day when prejudice will be thrown aside...when all the branches of the Presbyterian Church finally will come together...and form one united society.²⁷

The first actual step that foreshadowed the inevitable separation between the Northern and Southern forces was made by the Synod of South Carolina meeting in Charleston, November, 1860. The following resolutions were submitted by the Reverend W. B. Yates:

1. Resolved, That the period has arrived when it becomes the duty of every Minister and Elder, South, to let his position be known.
2. Resolved, That fidelity to the South requires us to sever all connection with the Northern portion of the General Assembly.
3. Resolved, That we recommend to all Presbyteries connected with this Synod to take steps to dissolve their connection with the General Assembly.
4. Resolved, That a Committee be appointed to correspond with Synods and Presbyteries, South, with the view of forming a Southern Assembly.
5. Resolved, That we still cherish fraternal feelings towards all those brethren who have ever stood up firmly for the rights of the South.²⁸

²⁶Palmer, *Life and Letters of Thornwell*, 226.

²⁷Reported by Howe, *Southern Presbyterian Review*, XI, 278.

²⁸Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina, November, 1860, 8.

Although the resolution was tabled by a vote of 27-21, the die was cast, for at the meeting of the General Assembly held in Philadelphia, May, 1861, the famous "Spring resolutions" were passed. The second of the resolutions read:

That this General Assembly, in the spirit of that Christian patriotism which the Scriptures enjoin and which has always characterized this church do hereby acknowledge and declare our obligation to promote and perpetuate, so far as in us lies, the integrity of these United States and to strengthen, uphold and encourage the Federal Government in the exercise of all its functions under our noble Constitution; and to this Constitution, in all its provisions, requirements and principles, we profess our unabated loyalty.²⁹

These resolutions are usually alluded to as the chief reason for the final schism which resulted in the establishment of the Southern Presbyterian Church.

The occasion of the Presbyterian Church in the United States coming into existence was the successful effort, on the part of the majority of the Old School Assembly of 1861, to usurp the crown rights of the Redeemer in making new terms of church membership; and in the same act to prostitute the Church to the States so far as to hold the Southern Presbyterians to the support of the Federal Government, as over against the Governments of their several sovereign States, on pain of ejection from the Church in case of failure to comply with the terms of church-membership thus made.³⁰

The attitude of Palmer's Presbytery toward the "Spring Resolutions" was typical of that adopted by most of the Southern Presbyteries. The resolutions of the New Orleans Presbytery stated:

Resolved, That in view of the unconstitutional, Erastian, tyrannical, and virtually excising act, of the late General Assembly... we do hereby...declare...our connection with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States to be dissolved.³¹

As soon as the General Assembly passed the "Spring Resolutions," the Southern commissioners withdrew from the body and returned home.

²⁹Jones & Mills, History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina since 1850, 66.

³⁰Ibid., footnote.

³¹Palmer, Life and Letters of Thorarell, 502-503.

On August 15 members from the Southern Presbyterians met in Atlanta, Georgia, to execute plans for the establishment of a Southern General Assembly. This convention did not exercise any ecclesiastical authority and its actions assumed only the form of recommendations.³² Following the appointment of necessary committees, the following resolution was adopted:

That these Presbyteries send Commissioners, according to the former rule of representation, to a General Assembly, to be held in the city of Augusta, in the First Presbyterian Church, on the 4th day of December next, and that the Reverend B. H. Palmer, D. D., be Prizipal, and the Rev. Dr. Wilson, pastor of said Church, as Alternate, be requested to preach the opening sermon and to preside until the Assembly be organized, and a moderator and clerk be chosen.³³

On December 4, 1861, in the First Presbyterian Church, Atlanta, Georgia, the commissioners to the first General Assembly of the Southern Presbyterian Church "presented their credentials and were enrolled." The Assembly was not a large body in size, less than 100 members being present, but unusual in character and intellectual power. The manner in which these men went quietly about their task bespoke their earnestness and sincerity. Outside the church the city was "alive with excitement over the war."

The commissioners themselves were intensely patriotic, holding strongly to their convictions as to the righteousness of the Southern cause, as their writings attest. Out of every congregation represented here, sons, brothers, and friends were in the field with rifles in their hands for the defense of the principles they held so dear. Yet there was heard within the church during that Assembly not even an echo from the field of war nor from the

³² Annals of the Diamond Jubilee General Assembly, 9.
³³ Proceedings of a Convention of Delegates from Various Presbyterian Churches in the Southern States of America (Franklin Printing House, Atlanta, Georgia, 1861), 11. The only known copy of the minutes of the convention now available is in the Historic Foundation, Montreal, N. C.

forum of political debate. "The court of the Church did not unfurl a flag nor make an announcement of political principles. The Assembly began its work with quiet dignity by declaring that the work of preaching the gospel in all the world is the chief work of the Southern Presbyterian Church and the great end of her organization."³⁴

Palmer's opening address before the Assembly will stand as "one of his greatest contributions to the Church he loved. So impressed was the Assembly with this sermon that it was ordered printed in full in the minutes,"³⁵ and immediately Palmer was unanimously elected moderator of the Assembly. "Dr. Palmer," said Johnson, referring to the address, "felt the responsibility of the occasion. What was of greater moment, he was prepared to meet it. Endowed with a force and splendor and enthusiasm like Sumner's, a fiery and convincing logic, like Paul's, the speaker commanded an eloquence like Edmund Burke's. Habitually an honest and comprehensive student and hence on all occasions a well-furnished preacher, on great occasions he was in possession of the resources and the mettle to respond to the unusual pressure. The present was a great occasion."³⁶ In the address, entitled "The Headship of Christ," Palmer stressed the contention that Christ, not Caesar, was head of the Church and that the mission of the Church was strictly spiritual and in no way political. Thus his major premise differed little from the central idea set forth by the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia in 1838 and 1867; namely: "The Church of Christ is a spiritual body, whose jurisdiction extends only to the religious faith and moral conduct of her members. She cannot legislate where Christ has not legislated, nor make terms of membership which he has not made."³⁷

³⁴ Memorial of Diamond Jubilee Assembly, 12.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 246-247.

³⁷ Quoted in Robinson, Columbia Theological Seminary and the Southern Presbyterian Church, 42.

Hear the close of the discourse Palmer gives a splendid recapitulation of his arguments:

Do we understand, Fathers and Brethren, the mission of the church given us here to execute? It is to lift up throughout the world our testimony for this headship of Christ. The convocation of this Assembly is in part that testimony. But a little while since, it was attempted in the most august court of our Church to place the crown of our Lord upon the head of Caesar—to bind that body, which is Christ's fulness to the chariot in which Caesar rides. The intervening months have sufficiently discovered the character of that State, under whose yoke this Church was summoned to bow her neck in meek obedience. But in advance of these disclosures, the voice went up throughout our land, of indignant remonstrance against the usurpation, of solemn protest against sacrilege. And now this Parliament of the Lord's freemen solemnly declares that, by the terms of her great charter, none but Jesus may be the King in Zion. Come now in this distant age and in these ends of the earth, the Church must declare for the supremacy of her Head and fling out the consecrated ensign with the old inscription, "For Christ and His crown."³⁸

Braving gathered up all the indignations of his theme with a superb intellectual comprehensiveness, Palmer approached his peroration, in which the appeal, fired by the ardor of his emotion, became a perfect pyrrhoid to the sublime.

Let us take this young nation, now struggling into birth to the altar of God, and seal its loyalty to Christ, in the faith of that benediction which says, "Blessed is that nation whose God is the Lord."

Above all, it is ours to bear aloft the Redeemer's cross, and with the finger ever pointing to say, with the Baptist on the banks of Jordan, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!" May He who wears the crown make us to feel the power of that cross! Brethren, we have today been gazing into heaven after our ascending Lord, ascending to his headship and his crown. From his glorious throne he unfolds the sacred parchment on which our charter and commission are engrossed: "Go ye into all the world and disciple all nations." With pathetic gesture, he also points over mountains, continents, and seas to the "other sheep which are not of this fold." wandering upon the bleak heather under the dark star of some idle god. Hail the rushing mighty wind of the Pentecostal day fill this house where we are sitting! and may the tongues

³⁸Johnson, Benjamin Meriam Palmer, 261. A complete copy of the address is available in ibid., 247-262.

of fire rest upon each of this Assembly! Emblem of the power with which the story of suffering love shall subdue an apostate world! Sinking personal ambition, and forgetful of sectional aggrandisement, let us strive to equip the Church with the necessary agencies for the prosecution of her solemn work. Let us build her towers and establish her bulwarks just where the most effective assaults may be made upon the kingdoms of Satan; that "her righteousness may go forth as brightness and her salvation as a lamp that burneth;" and Zion become "a crown of glory," a "royal diadem in the hand of our God."³⁹

Palmer's views on secession were again expressed clearly and powerfully in an article, "A Vindication of Secession and the South from the Strictures of Reverend R. J. Breckenridge," appearing in the Southern Presbyterian Review of April, 1861. As indicated by the title, the discourse was prompted by an essay, "Our Country; Its Perils and Its Deliverances," written by Breckenridge of Danville Seminary, which appeared in the Danville Quarterly Review for March, 1861. Prior to its publication, Breckenridge has delivered the essay as a speech on the day of National Emancipation, January 4, 1861, at Lexington, Kentucky. After reviewing the arguments advanced by Breckenridge, Palmer centered his attention upon what he declared was the major premise.

The discussion narrows itself down to a single point. There is no dispute upon the fact that sovereignty, the jus summi imperii, resides in the people. But the dispute is, whether this sovereignty resides in the people as they are, merged into a mass, one undivided whole; or in the people as they were originally formed into colonies, and as afterwards into States, combining together for purposes distinctly set forth in their instruments of Union. Dr. Breckenridge maintains the former thesis; we defend the latter; and in the whole controversy upon the legal right of secession this is the cando causa.⁴⁰

³⁹ Ibid., 261-262.

⁴⁰ Benjamin Morgan Palmer, Vindication of Secession and the South (Southern Guardian Steam Book Press, Columbia, South Carolina, 1861), 31.

From this clear statement of the issue, Palmer proceeded to a thorough examination of the history of the United States, citing ample evidence to substantiate his contention that the Union was a "compact." In contending that the doctrine of "withdrawal from the Union" was not novel, but supported by sound fact, Palmer offered the following concrete illustrations:

When Mr. Jefferson was made Secretary of State, after his return from France, he was warmly importuned by Mr. Hamilton to throw his influence in favor of the assumption of the State debts, in order to save the Union from threatened dissolution. "No," says Mr. Jefferson, "painted pathetically the temper into which the legislature had been wrought; the disgust of those who were called the creditor States; the danger of the secession of their members, and the separation of the States"; which was only averted by bringing over two of the Virginia delegation (White and Lee) to support the measure. At a later period, the passage of the Embargo Act, it is well known, inflamed the New England States to the highest degree; so that on the floor of Congress it was declared, "they were repining for a secession from the Union." In the Hartford Convention, at which five of the Eastern States were represented, the report which was adopted uses the following language: "Whenever it shall appear that these causes are radical and permanent, a separation by equitable arrangement will be preferable to an alliance by constraint among nominal friends, but real enemies, inflamed by mutual hatred and jealousy," etc. Again: "In cases of deliberate, dangerous and palpable infractions of the Constitution, affecting the sovereignty of a State and the liberties of the people, it is not only the right, but the duty, of such a State to interpose its authority for their protection, in the manner best calculated to secure that end. When emergencies occur which are beyond the reach of the judicial tribunals, or too pressing to admit of the delay incident to their forms, States, which have no common umpire, must be their own judges, and execute their own decisions."⁴¹

Palmer further pointed out what appeared to him the inconsistency in the attitude assumed by some of the Eastern states, declaring:

It is little curious that these avowals of the right of secession should come from the very section which is most chargeable with beggoting the present schism; and that the very people now most ready to arm themselves for the coercion of the South could plead for an equitable and peaceful separation, so long as it was mediated by themselves.⁴²

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 43.

In closing his main argument, Palmer very ably summarized the legal aspects of the situation by contrasting the two points of view upon which he and Breckenridge were at antipodes with one another.

He affirms the people to be one, divided into many; we, that they are many, united into one. He ascribes sovereignty to the Union: we, to the States. He regards the Constitution as creating a government which is over the States: we regard it as a common law established between the States. In his view, "any attempt to throw off this national allegiance, in any legal, in any constitutional, in any historical light, is pure madness:" in our view, in every legal, constitutional, or historical light, there is no allegiance to be thrown off, and consequently there is no madness in the case. He affirms secession to be rebellion, which must be suppressed at every hazard: we, that it is an inherent right of sovereignty, which can not be disallowed without an international war. Let the speaker put the two into his own scales, and decide for himself.

The conclusion of the discourse afforded very little hope for a peaceful reckoning between the two factions which were clinging so tenaciously to antithetical interpretations of the Constitution.

Palmer declared:

No rise from this discussion under the profound conviction that the separation of this country into two governments was inevitable: simply because, from the beginning, two nations have with us been in the womb--and the birth, however long delayed, must come at length. From its very formation, two antagonistic interpretations of the Constitution have prevailed, which have just been presented in contrast. The final issue would naturally be deferred, as this and the other struggled for the ascendancy. But whenever, through the expansion of territory, and the consequent increase of patronage, the political prizes should become too great for the virtue of our people; and whenever sectional jealousies should arise, springing from different forms of society, and opposite systems of labor, the time has arrived for deciding whether the Federal Executive is a servant or a sovereign.

The discourse is a masterpiece of analysis and refutation. The power of Palmer's cumulative utterances is striking.

Although Palmer's opening sermon before the Southern Assembly

⁴⁵Ibid., 64.

⁴⁶Ibid., 44-45.

was a great effort, in some respects its influence was not comparable to his Thanksgiving sermon, "Slavery a Divine Trust," delivered to his congregation in New Orleans, November 29, 1860. He had watched with intense anger the actions of his Mother State, South Carolina, as step by step she had advanced toward secession and war. By Thanksgiving, 1860, his agitation became unbearable. He felt that he must speak in behalf of South Carolina and the South; that his duty as a minister of the "Gospel" compelled him to speak from his pulpit. In response to this trenchant conviction, he delivered the Thanksgiving Address. In the latter portion of his introduction, Palmer pronounced the tenor of the occasion and of the times.

Hitherto, on similar occasions, our language has been the language of gratitude and song. "The voice of rejoicing and salvation was in the tabernacles of the righteous." Together we praised the Lord "that our garners were full, affording all manner of store; that our sheep brought forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets; that our oxen were strong to labor, and there was no breaking in nor going out, and no complaining was in our streets." As we together surveyed the blessings of Providence, the joyful chorus swelled from millions of people, "Peace be within thy walls and prosperity within thy palaces." But, today, burdened hearts all over this land are brought to the sanctuary of God. We "see the tents of Cushan in affliction, and the curtains of the land of Midian do trouble." We have fallen upon times when there are "signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexities; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming" in the near yet gloomy future. Since the words of this proclamation were penned by which we are convened, that which all men dreaded, but against which all men hoped, has been realized; and in the triumph of a sectional majority we are compelled to read the probable doom of our once happy and united Confederacy.⁴⁵

The argument in the main body of the speech centered around four major contentions which placed a sacred trust in the hands of the

⁴⁵New Orleans Daily Delta, December 2, 1860.

South. Palmer very simply and ably presented these main divisions in an informal summary.

This argument, then, which sweeps over the entire circle of our relations, touches the four cardinal points of duty to ourselves, to our slaves, to the world, and to Almighty God. It establishes the nature and solemnity of our present trust, to preserve and transmit our existing system of domestic servitude, with the right, unchallenged by man, to go and root itself wherever Providence and nature may carry it. This trust we will discharge in the face of the worst possible peril. Though war be the aggregation of all evils, yet should the madness of the hour appeal to the arbitration of the sword, we will not shrink even from the baptism of fire. If modern crusaders stand in armed ranks upon some plain of Edomelon, there shall we be in defense of our trust. Not till the last man has fallen behind the last rampart, shall it drop from our hands: and then only in surrender to the God who gave it.⁴⁶

Inference to the course that should be undertaken by the Southern states in the crisis. Palmer spoke as a true South Carolinian when he said:

As it appears to me, the course to be pursued in this emergency is that which has already been inaugurated. Let the people in all the Southern States in solemn council assembled, reclaim the powers they have delegated. Let these conventions be composed of men whose fidelity has been approved--men who bring the wisdom, experience and firmness of age to support and announce principles which have long been matured. Let these conventions decide firmly and solemnly what they will do with this great trust committed to their hands. Let them pledge each other in sacred covenant, to uphold and perpetuate what they cannot resign without dishonor and palpable ruin. Let them further, take all the necessary steps looking to separate and independent existence; and initiate measures for framing a new and homogeneous confederacy. Thus, prepared for every contingency, let the crisis come.⁴⁷

In the conclusion, Palmer referred to the intense religious conviction under which he was speaking, and pledged himself to a full share in the fortunes or fate of the South.

I have done my duty under a deep sense of responsibility to God and man as I have ever felt. Under a full conviction that the salvation of the whole country is depending upon the action

of the South, I am impelled to deepen the sentiment of resistance in the Southern mind and to strengthen the current now flowing toward a union of the South in defence of her chartered rights.

...It only remains to say, that whatever be the fortunes of the South, I accept them for my own. Born upon her soil, of a father there born before--from an ancestry that occupied it while yet it was a part of England's possessions--she is in every sense my mother. I shall die upon her bosom--she shall know no peril, but it is my peril--no conflict, but it is my conflict--and no abyss of ruin, into which I shall not share her fall. May the Lord God cover her head in this her day of battle!⁴⁸

Many have been the great speakers whose reason has been partially blinded by patriotism and passion during momentous crises. That Palmer was deeply moved by what he conceived was the inevitable conflict, there is no doubt. The primary weakness of the sermon is the error of a great psychic emotion, finding its release through the most natural channel, the pathetic, rather than the logical. The penetrating analysis and the abundance of evidence, so often characteristic of his style, are too frequently retired in favor of generalizations and pathetic imagery. However, in the light of the occasion, perhaps the speaker was justified in his method of speech development. For particularly in times of crises, the populace is emphatically more interested in, and more easily directed by, persuasion (in the classical sense) rather than by logic. Moreover, if audience response is a safe criterion on which to base judgment regarding the effectiveness of the speech, Palmer's address was remarkably successful. An editorial in the Daily Delta, November 30, 1860, stated:

We will publish in Saturday's Delta the Thanksgiving sermon delivered at the First Presbyterian Church yesterday by Dr. Palmer. All who heard that great discourse declare it to be the ablest ever delivered by its accomplished author. The manly and patriotic position taken by Dr. Palmer was such as was expected by those familiar with the frank and decided character of the great divine.⁴⁹

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid., November 30, 1860.

The following day, Saturday, the sermon was published in full in the Daily Delta. On Sunday, the address was republished. An article commenting upon the sermon was carried on the front page of the Sunday edition. After commending Palmer's delivery of the sermon as the act of a "clergyman and scholar, of a Southern patriot, of a frank, earnest, brave, and a high-souled man," the article referred to the speech itself:

The discourse we refer to was perhaps about two hours long; and a more cogent, exhaustive, logical and impressive production of not greater length we never met with coming either from pulpit or rostrum. It rose far above the conventional forms and phrases of an ordinary sermon. It rose infinitely above the usual thought and rhetoric of a political speech. It was more than eloquent; it was sacramental in its fervor. But the language of praise is out of place in speaking of it. It is above compliment. It was an event of the time passing, and a sign of the time at hand. It will be sure to fire the hearts and stir the souls of Southern men wherever read, while through the glowing words God seems to whisper to them of noble deeds.⁵⁰

There was no Delta published on Monday, but in Tuesday's edition, December 4, the sermon was printed again. An editorial explained the third printing of the address:

Dr. Palmer's Sermon.—Scarcely any apology is necessary to be made to our readers on account of the republication of Dr. Palmer's Sermon, which appears, for the third time, in the Delta, this morning. When we state that we reproduce it in accordance with the urgent request of a large number of our friends, and to supply a demand which seems yet far from exhausted, although the supply from this office alone has exceeded thirty thousand copies, we trust that no further explanation will be required.⁵¹

The afternoon following the delivery of the sermon, Palmer received two letters requesting a copy of the address for publication; one from members of his congregation, and the other from a group of citizens at large. A pamphlet edition was published immediately. Mr. William C.

⁵⁰ Ibid., December 3, 1860.

⁵¹ Ibid., December 4, 1860.

Bogers, a member of Palmer's church and session, as well as a close personal friend, was present at the Thanksgiving Sermon, and has recorded the following impressions of the occasion:

It has been my good fortune to hear some of the great pulpit and political orators of my generation, but I cannot recall an occasion when the effect upon the audience was so profound. After the benediction, in solemn silence, no man speaking to his neighbor, the great congregation of serious and thoughtful men and women dispersed; but afterwards the drums beat and the bugles sounded; for New Orleans was shouting for secession.⁵²

In his Thanksgiving sermon, Palmer had expressed the views held in general by the Southern States. Some doubt was registered by a few as to the propriety of a minister's expressing political views in the pulpit. "The time came," says Johnson, "when the wisdom of his course in preaching that sermon seemed less apparent; indeed, he is said to have regretted preaching the discourse, though the day never came when he took an essentially different view of the great subject discussed."⁵³

Approximately six months after the delivery of the Thanksgiving address, Palmer preached a sermon from his pulpit to the Crescent Rifles, a group of New Orleans soldiers leaving for the battle front. In military costume, with banners of the Confederates and Louisiana, the soldiers crowded the First Presbyterian Church. The text of the speaker was taken from Psalms 144:1: "Blessed be the Lord, my strength, which teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight."⁵⁴

Through Biblical allusion and appeal to reason, Palmer attempted to vindicate the Southern participation in the conflict, declaring that

⁵²Quoted in Johnson, Benjamin HOKKAN Palmer, 220.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 228. The writer is unable to find evidence to substantiate Johnson's contention that Palmer regretted having preached the sermon.

⁵⁴A complete copy of the sermon is available in the Daily Delta, June 2, 1861. A synopsis of the address appeared in the New Orleans Daily Arrangement, May 27, 1861.

her position was one of "self-defense." The point in question, he declared, was "an issue between religion and atheism," and that the Union was demanding "a new Constitution, a new Bible, and a new God." Viewed in the light of logic and conservative statement, qualities that so frequently characterized Palmer's thinking, these hasty generalizations are scarcely worthy of his utterance.

On May 28, 1861, Palmer delivered a patriotic address to the Washington Artillery gathered on the steps of the City Hall. Immediately following the address, the troops boarded a train for service in Virginia. According to the Daily Delta, there were not less than 5,000 citizens present, in addition to the Military. The eloquent address abounds in pathetic proof. Palmer closed the oration with the following vehement statement:

It only remains, soldiers, to invoke the blessing of Almighty God upon your honored flag. It waves in brave hands over the gallant defenders of a holy cause. It will be found in the thickest of the fight, and the principles which it represents you will defend to "the last of your breath and of your blood." May victory perch upon its staff in the hour of battle,--and peace--an honorable peace--be wrapped within its folds when you shall return. It is little to say to you that you will be remembered. And should the frequent fate of the soldier befall you in a soldier's death, you shall find your graves in thousands of hearts and the pen of history shall write the story of your martyrdom. Soldiers, farewell! and may the Lord of Hosts be around you as a wall of fire, and shield your head in the day of battle!⁵⁵

It is remarkable that during the storm and stress of the early months of the war Palmer found time to produce an elaborate essay on "The Art of Conversation" which was published in the Southwestern Presbyterian Review.⁵⁶ The discourse reveals a thorough knowledge of

⁵⁵New Orleans Daily Delta, May 29, 1861.

⁵⁶Palmer, "The Art of Conversation," Southwestern Presbyterian Review, XIV, 580-589, January, 1862.

the subject on the part of the writer; a knowledge that had been crystallized into a philosophy. Out of such a philosophy came an appeal in the conclusion of the essay for a disciplined tillage of the art as a medium for dignifying the tenor of ordinary conversation. Palmer had no patience with idle conversation, "shop talk." He believed that conversation should serve certain legitimate ends; for example: speculation, wholesome enjoyment, and enlightenment. Consequently, he had cultivated the art of directing and dignifying ordinary social intercourse. As a member of a casual group, he at once became the central attraction.⁵⁷

Unfortunately, a detailed account of Palmer's career during the war is difficult to construct, for his movements are somewhat shrouded in mystery. However, "early in April, 1862, Dr. Palmer left New Orleans, intending to visit the army of General Albert Sidney Johnston, and later to attend the meeting of the General Assembly of his church, appointed to convene in Memphis, Tennessee."⁵⁸

Palmer was unable to attend the General Assembly, which, because of the nearness of a Union force, had in the meantime been moved to Montgomery, Alabama. Instead, "he found himself pressed by the Government of Mississippi into the patriotic function of stumping the state with a view to the reconciliation of those disaffected with the government of the Confederacy at Richmond."⁵⁹ During this campaign, Palmer delivered a memorable address at Jackson. Regarding the content of the speech, The Jackson Mississippian stated:

⁵⁷Dr. J. W. Caldwell, in an interview with the writer, January 22, 1912.

⁵⁸Johnson, Benjamin Marcus Palmer, 262.

⁵⁹Ibid., 263.

This distinguished orator, philosopher and divine, whose services in the cause of civil and religious liberty have excited the admiration and gratitude of the whole Southern Confederacy, addressed on yesterday one of the largest and most intelligent audiences ever assembled in the Representatives' Hall. It was a most profound, philosophical and exhaustive exposition of the grounds of our defense in the great struggle in progress before the bar of God and in the forum of nations. It covered the whole ground upon which we rest our cause, and challenged the verdict of the world.⁶⁰

Commenting upon Palmer's style of delivery and audience-contact,

The Mississippiian further declared:

As his vast audience hung entranced, they knew not which most to admire, the charm of classic imagery, the rich and glowing eloquence which flowed from his lips in words almost divine, the grand and massive proportions of the argument, which challenged conviction and defied criticism, or the catholic spirit of the Christian patriot who confides in the justice of his God.

Dr. Palmer's style of speaking is wholly unlike that of the sensational preachers and orators. There is no straining after effect or display. He has no time to think of the meretricious ornaments of the mere rhetorician. His soul is too deeply imbued with the mighty theme and the mighty thoughts which sway it, to give heed to these things. The weightier matters of the law claim his attention. The graces of oratory and poetry fall in, only because they were born in him. What is said of Lord Brougham may with equal truth be said of Dr. Palmer--"he wields the club of Hercules entwined with roses."⁶¹

Just prior to the Battle of Shiloh, Palmer seems "to have been with General Johnson's Army....According to tradition, astride a horse, he delivered a thrilling address to a portion of Johnson's Army just before it went into battle."⁶²

Near the close of April, 1862, prior to Palmer's return, Commodore Farragut's fleet successfully stormed the defenses of New Orleans, and on May 1, Butler's Army entered the city. Considering Palmer a traitor and "arch rebel," General Butler fixed a price on his head.⁶³

⁶⁰Quoted in *ibid.*

⁶¹*ibid.*

⁶²*ibid.*, 202.

⁶³J. W. Caldwell in interview with writer, January 22, 1942. According to Dr. Caldwell, the setting of a "price" on Palmer's head was probably incited by the sentiments he had expressed in his "Thanksgiving Sermon," and in his "Crescent Rifles," and "Washington Artillery" speeches.

Fortunately, his family, consisting of Mrs. Palmer and five daughters, were moved from New Orleans, first to Hazelhurst, Mississippi, and in August, 1862, to the home of Mrs. Palmer's mother, Mrs. Howe, who lived in Columbia, South Carolina. While his family was in Hazelhurst, Palmer seems to have been with Bragg's Army in Tennessee. In the latter part of August, 1862, while in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Palmer was requested to conduct a service on a day set aside by the Confederacy for prayer and fasting.

The house was crowded with citizens and soldiers. Dr. Palmer arose to pray, the audience rising with him and standing; scarcely had he begun to pray when the scream of a shell flying over the church was heard, and the distant boom of a cannon from the opposite side of the Tennessee River. In a moment came another shell screaming and another cannon booming. The soldiers began quietly to withdraw, then the citizens, until presently the church was almost empty, and still the good doctor prayed calmly on. When he had closed his eyes the church was full of people, when he opened them it was an empty house.⁶⁴

Having settled with his family in Columbia, South Carolina, Palmer occupied the chair of theology in Columbia Seminary during the 1862-63 session. The chair had been made vacant by the death of Thornwell, August, 1862. In the First Presbyterian Church at Columbia, September 17, 1862, Palmer delivered a masterful eulogy on Dr. Thornwell. "Happy the eulogist," says Johnson, "with such a subject, and happy the subject with such a eulogist."⁶⁵

Palmer's deep respect and admiration for his great friend Thornwell drew from him the full power and beauty of his oratory. The eulogy stands as a testimonial to Palmer's mastery over imagery and pathos. The tenor of the address is sounded in a portion dedicated

⁶⁴Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 264-265.

⁶⁵Ibid., 265.

to Thoreau's genius.

A man gifted with the highest genius...a mind which ranged through the broad field of human knowledge, gathered up the fruits of almost universal learning, and wore garlands of beauty around discussions the most thorny and abstruse; an intellect steeped in philosophy, which soared upon its eagle wings into the highest regions of speculative thought, then stooped with meek docility and worshipped in childlike faith at the cross of Christ; a man who held communion with all of every age that had eternal thoughts, and then brought the treasures hoarded in the literature of the past, and sanctified them to the uses of practical religion. Yet, a man not coldly great, but who could stoop from lofty contemplation to sport and toy with loving ones around his hearthstone; with a heart warm with the instincts of friendship, so brave, so generous and true that admiration of his genius was lost in affection for the man, and the breath of every nerve withered a single leaf of all the honors which a single generation crowned him.

On December 30, 1862, Palmer delivered the funeral oration of

General Henry Gregg. The opening paragraph was done with a masterful touch. Similes and metaphors were effortlessly fashioned into edictic imagery. Cadence, rhythm, and beauty--no reminder of Ingersoll--grace Palmer's introduction.

No more this day in the house of God to mourn--to mourn for ourselves, and for the State, the mother that has borne us all! When death comes in at the window and steals away its victims from some private circle, a whole community will yield obedience to the law of Christian sympathy and weep. But to-day the State, like the Spartan mother of old, receives through us one of her noblest sons upon his shield, and pours out her grief upon his venerated form.... Her martyred sons sleep everywhere upon her soil; upon the mountain's grassy slope, beneath the peaceful watching of the silent stars, to where the ocean flingers the earth with its foam, and chants with its deep bass the low, funeral dirge! But here, to-day, in the center of them all, with his sword beneath his hand, we bury the gallant abolitionist who led the strife in which they bravely fell. What language can rise to the solemn majesty of this assembly, or speak with the pathos which belongs to unuttered sorrow! Were I to follow the impulse of my own heart, I would cover my head, and sit a silent mourner beside that bier, rather than be the woe to utter the wail which now rends every breast throughout this commonwealth.

Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy, appointed March 27,

69 Fold., 286-288.
67 Fold., 286-287.

1863, as a day of "fasting, humiliation, and prayer." Palmer delivered a discourse, "The Rainbow Round the Throne; or Judgment Tempered with Mercy," before the Legislature of Georgia. "The sermon makes pathetic reading now; but under the magic of his voice and port it could hardly have failed to make heroes of all who heard it."⁶⁸

In 1863, the General Assembly of the Southern Presbyterian Church selected Palmer to fill the chair of theology in Columbia Seminary for another year.⁶⁹ Likewise the Assembly appointed him to travel with the Army of Tennessee as a sort of roving chaplain prior to the opening of the Seminary in the fall.⁷⁰

Early in July, 1863, he was called to Columbia to the bedside of his eldest daughter, Sarah Frances, who died shortly after his arrival.⁷¹ From the death of his daughter to the opening of the Seminary in the fall, Palmer was supply pastor at his old church in Columbia. When possible he continued to render this service until his return to New Orleans in 1865. The following spring, April, 1864, Palmer delivered an occasional address to the "Soldiers of the Legion and Gentlemen of the Army who had been absent from South Carolina for three years."⁷²

In 1864, the General Assembly reappointed Palmer "Provisional Professor of Theology" in the Seminary for the year 1864-65. On February 15, 1865, Union troops captured Columbia. Palmer, at the earnest request of friends, escaped in advance of the enemy. After the Northern Army had plundered the city and passed on, Palmer returned to Columbia,

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 263. The writer is unable to locate a pamphlet edition of this address.

⁶⁹*Minutes of Southern General Assembly*, 1863.

⁷⁰J. W. Caldwell in interview with the writer, January 22, 1942.

⁷¹Palmer writes at length of this experience in his book Broken Home, or Lessons in Sorrow.

⁷²Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 273. (A copy of the address is available in The Columbia Daily Southern Guardian, June 10, 1864.

where he performed what service he could until the close of the war.⁷³

During the first two years of Palmer's absence from New Orleans he refrained from communicating with his congregation for fear that his letters might be intercepted and his church suffer thereby. However, in May, 1864, he addressed a long letter to his congregation.⁷⁴ The communication is replete with phrases expressing his poignant longing to be again among his brethren and friends in New Orleans. Thus, it was with eagerness that Palmer awaited the termination of the war; the time when he could return to his "chosen city" to aid in the "rebuilding of the broken walls."

With reference to Palmer's early ministry in New Orleans the evidence indicates that he was eminently successful. Fifteen hundred persons heard his first sermon. An audience of this size was the average, not the unusual, during Palmer's pre-war ministry. During this period the membership of the First Presbyterian Church increased approximately thirty-five percent. By his unselfish and faithful pastoral services, rendered to all those in need during the yellow fever epidemic of the late fifties, Palmer endeared himself to the entire citizenry of New Orleans. In the pulpit, he was majestic. His increasing renown as an occasional speaker brought demands for his appearance in many sections of the South and Southwest.

On the issue of slavery and secession, Palmer had displayed his South Carolina heritage in upholding the contentions of his mother state

⁷³Ibid., 288-290.

⁷⁴A copy of this letter and two written later are available in ibid., 277-286.

and the South even in his own pulpit. When the breach came between the Northern and Southern Presbyterians which led to the establishment of the Southern General Assembly, it was Palmer who was chosen by his colleagues to "test the tenor" of that great occasion and to be the Assembly's first moderator. During the war he had endured innumerable hardships in order to render every possible service to those carrying the battle to the enemy and those suffering the calamities of war at home. When the conflict was over and the cause lost, Palmer endeavored to bury the memories of the struggle. Like so many of his comrades in arms who turned southward from Appomattox and began their "slow and painful journey homeward," Palmer returned to the once "fabulous New Orleans" to offer the summation of his powers in reconstructing that which had been destroyed.

CHAPTER VIII

NEW ORLEANS MINISTRY AND OCCASIONAL SPEAKING, 1865-1902

Before the Civil War, New Orleans was a prosperous commercial city. In 1865, she was only an echo from her once glorious past. Practically all commerce and industry had been suspended after the capture of the city in 1862. Many Negroes crowded the town, seeking shelter with the Union Army. Nor did the government of New Orleans escape the flagranties connected with "Carpet Bag Rule," following the Civil War. In fact, because of the chaos instituted by the conflict, it was necessary for the city to start rebuilding almost from the very foundations.

The state of Palmer's church was somewhat comparable to the general condition of the city. Its wealth had declined considerably. Likewise, the membership had dropped twenty-five percent.¹ Prior to his arrival in New Orleans after the war, Palmer had very astutely surmised the condition of his congregation. He realized that the task of relieving their anxiety and rebuilding their faith and hope would devolve upon him. It was largely through his untiring efforts as a loyal pastor that the church was soon to become stronger in all departments than it had ever been before. Thus, grave responsibilities fell upon Palmer in the discharging of his duties in his pulpit, in his pastoral work, and in exemplifying his precepts as he moved among his fellow men. His first sermon to his old congregation was delivered July 16, 1865. The following Monday, an editorial in the New Orleans Times described Palmer on that occasion:

¹Minutes of the General Assembly, 1860-65.

The churches, we noticed, were very largely attended, particularly the First Presbyterian Church, where Dr. B. M. Palmer, so famous for his eloquence in other days, held forth as one who had returned from his wanderings to become again a teacher and a guide. It was soon apparent that during his absence the Doctor had lost none of those powers which gave such a charm to his pulpit oratory. He seemed, however, to be more chastened and subdued than he ever was before. With an humbler hope he looked up to the bow of promise which spanned the sky, and with gentler persuasion he called for a renewal of the covenant of grace. He feelingly alluded to the long years of suffering, now so happily closed, and expressed a hope that his own trials and sad experiences would be so far sanctified as to fit him better than ever before for the responsible duties of a Gospel minister. He then told, how in the general affliction, the angel of death had visited his household, and, as he alluded to the sad theme, all hearts were melted and the waters gushed forth from the smitten rock. As for the dead past, he, for one, was anxious to hide it away in the solemn tomb. Henceforth, no word should escape his lips but such as was meet for an humble servant in the temple of his God and King. Wherever called to minister in the land of his birth and of his love, he would emulate the example of Paul the Apostle, by preaching Christ and Him crucified; and his song should be the song of the angels--"Peace on earth, and good will toward men."²

Palmer's delivery of this sermon marked the beginning of his second ministry, a thirty-seven year period of sustained service to the First Presbyterian Church of New Orleans. Although already recognized as one of the foremost ministers in the Southern Presbyterian Church, during the ensuing years, Palmer as a church orator, a pulpit leader, and an occasional speaker was to receive new impetus. Having taught the principles of the Reformed and Calvinistic theology to his Columbia audience for thirteen years and to the New Orleans congregation prior to the Civil War for five years, when Palmer returned to the First Presbyterian Church following the conflict, he continued to adhere rigidly to doctrinal preaching. As a theologian Palmer accepted the "Word of God" as the original and ultimate authority, and the standards of his church in

²New Orleans Times, July 17, 1865.

their "historical import."

He was a real preacher of the Gospel. He had studied the evidences of its being the word of God; had deliberately made up his mind that they were valid, and that the Bible is the word of God; had set that down as a fixed fact in his creed. He gave himself to preaching that word. Whatever others might preach, science, sociology, politics, literature, he would preach the Gospel, and the Gospel only, from his pulpit. It was a thing the world needed worst of all, and that need he would fill. He preached the Westminster interpretation of the Bible, preached it all; the doctrines of the Trinity and the incarnation; the doctrines of sin and grace, the doctrine of the atonement, the doctrines of regeneration and conversion, justification and sanctification. He even preached boldly and frequently on those points of Calvinism which have been so bitterly attacked in every generation, viz.: Total depravity, unconditional election, particular redemption, efficacious grace and perseverance therein unto the end. He was a theological preacher from the very order of his mind....Knowing the truth of the Bible experimentally, and preaching what by experience he knew to be true, he communicated, as by a contagion, the affection of his own mind to the truth. To the minds thus opened he poured in the great central doctrines of Christianity. He was particularly happy in preaching the great doctrine of the atonement by the cross, but the gift of popularisation of all the doctrines was his.

Regardless of the impress of the tendencies of the times on the pulpit, Palmer never veered from his course. When "clerical hunters" found delight in dealing superficially with the peripheries of what Palmer regarded as truth, Palmer continued to proclaim the central principles of the cardinal doctrines from his pulpit.

He held to these doctrines, not only as distinct propositions, but as a whole, a complete system, derived from and built upon the clear and undoubted teachings of scripture, as the mind of God. To the last he clung to that system in its integrity, as one not to be tampered with; he could not bear the thought of change in the long-established and accepted creed of the church. Possibly, it is but justice to him to state that he was not ignorant of or indifferent to the various and varying proposals to revise, amend, etc., the Confession. Among his last utterances to his brethren here was his emphatic and solemn dissent from and protest against any attempt of the sort....⁴

³Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 334.

⁴J. H. Hall, "Benjamin Morgan Palmer," Presbyterian Quarterly, XVI, 86, July, 1902.

Palmer's fidelity to doctrinal preaching was violated only twice during a ministry of more than sixty years; the "Thanksgiving Sermon" in 1860 and the "Greatest Rifles" sermon in 1861. An examination of available sermons⁵ delivered from Sunday to Sunday in his church substantiates the contention that Palmer kept his pulpit "a sanctuary for God's Word."⁶ The following twelve titles, selected at random from fifty sermons delivered between October 1, 1876, and July 16, 1877, suggests the topical and doctrinal nature of his routine sermons: "The Church, the Kingdom of the Truth"; "Eternal Life, the Gift of God"; "The Law, the Rule of Christ's Kingdom"; "Evidences of Conversion"; "Fruits of Redemption certain"; "Freedom by Christ"; "Freedom through the Truth"; "Truth, the law of the intellect"; "Love, the law of the heart"; "Obedience, the law of the will"; "The Gospel, the power of God"; and "The new birth."⁷

In the fall of 1886, Palmer was visiting in New York. At the request of Dr. H. J. Van Dyke, he preached in Van Dyke's church. Miss Mary Caldwell of Charleston, South Carolina, gives the following description of Palmer's power over the New York audience:

Dr. Palmer began without an introduction. He preached on the Comforter, "I will send you another Comforter," etc. He began in his apparently simple way with sentences, short, clear and crisp. The people were electrified and held as under a spell. That evening the house was crowded. People had gone home from the morning service talking of the modest-looking little gentleman with such command of the teachings of Scripture and such wonderful eloquence in setting the truth forth, whose name nevertheless they could not tell. The sermon in the evening was of equal eloquence. An old veteran of the Northern army inquired

⁵Three bound volumes of sermons are available in the library of Tulane University.

⁶Theodore W. Parker in interview with the writer January 16, 1942.

⁷Palmer, Sermons, II, 479.

who the wonderful preacher was. He finally learned that he was the Rev. B. M. Palmer, of New Orleans, La. "The arch rebel of that name!" he exclaimed. "He preaches like an archangel!"⁸

During Palmer's visit in New York, he was urged to remain in the city, and to establish a "Church of the Strangers." He gave the thought little consideration. Two years later, in 1858, Palmer visited Charleston, the city of his birth. While there, he preached twice: on Sunday morning in the Central Presbyterian Church, and in the evening, in the Globe Street Church. The power of his eloquence is described in The Charleston News and Courier:

All classes of the community, natives, and foreigners, Northerners and Southerners, Jews and Gentiles, whites and blacks crowded to hear his far-famed eloquence. In the morning he preached from the text: "Father, I will," being the first three words of the twenty-fourth verse of the seventeenth chapter of Saint John. Words fail to describe his eloquence, but its effect upon the audience may be judged from the fact that he compelled their undivided and eager attention for one hour and twenty minutes.

In the evening he preached from Matthew 27:22: "What shall I do then with Jesus, who is called Christ?"....The same close attention was paid to the discourse as in the morning. Dr. Palmer is, probably, the ablest pulpit orator in the Southern States, and can have but few if any superiors in the North.⁹

In 1870, while attending the Synod of Mississippi, which met in Jackson, Palmer preached to the convicts in the state prison. Upon seeing Palmer, the prison physician, Dr. T. J. Mitchell, asked Judge Thomas S. Wharton, who had accompanied the speaker, "why they sent such a piny weak specimen of a preacher to preach to the convicts?" The erroneousness of Dr. Mitchell's statement is indicated by the following account of the incident:

The hymn was sung, and the preacher opened the Sacred Word and read--as he only can read--a chapter appropriate to the occasion. The Doctor--remained through the sermon. Then approaching Judge

⁸Quoted in Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 296.

⁹Ibid., 296.

Wharton, he said, "Judge, there is only one minister that can read and preach after that fashion. I am prepared to be introduced to Dr. Palmer."¹⁰

Palmer's masterful performance in the pulpit was not only adding to his reputation as an eloquent speaker, but was also increasing the membership of his church. This fact is illustrated by the reports of his session for the following years: 1866, 436; 1870, 600; 1871, 620; 1874, 680; 1876, 700; 1881, 720 members.¹¹ That Palmer's influence in the pulpit was maintained until the very end of his career is exemplified by the fact that in 1901, shortly before his death, the membership of his church was 675.¹² The annual report made by the First Presbyterian Church Session to the New Orleans Presbytery affords an excellent view of the splendid organization and aggressiveness of the people under the influence of Palmer's leadership. The report of 1870 is typical of the status and activities of his church during this period:

During the past year, the officers of this Church, pastor, elders, and deacons, have been at their several posts, and engaged in the duties assigned to each. The Word has been preached with solemnity and constancy, without a single intermission of the services of the sanctuary....Since the autumn the congregation has been more than usually large; swelled by the presence of strangers in the city during the winter. Throughout the entire season the building has been filled, floor and galleries, with serious and attentive hearers; who have given every outward mark of, at least, a general interest in the truths to which they have listened.

¹⁰Ibid., 297.

¹¹Session Records of the First Presbyterian Church of New Orleans, 1866, 1870, 1871, 1874, 1876, and 1881. A membership of 700 may appear relatively small in comparison to that of some of the larger churches in the North. However, it was never the custom among the protestant churches of New Orleans to form large congregations. The members of each denomination were separated into several memberships, each maintaining its respective church establishment.

¹²Ibid., 1901.

The program meting on Wednesday night has been regularly sustained, and the attendance upon it has been uniform and large. The lectures-union, seating two hundred more persons, is generally full and sometimes crowded. It has taken the form of a prayer-meeting and lecture combined; an informal address being always made by the pastor, while the prayers offered by the private members promissuously called to lead in these devotions....

There are five Sabbath-schools in connection with this Church, all of which are under the acknowledged control of the session.... Probably the most noticeable feature of our religious history, during the year, has been the systematic effort to draw out the dormant energies of our church members in evangelical labors. A little more than a year ago, the male and female members of the Church and congregation were organized into two distinct associations; which have cooperated under the direction of the pastor and session. As the result, two flourishing Sabbath-schools have been gathered, and are now sustained by the active labors chiefly of our young people. A building has been erected, free of debt and costing about \$2,000,¹³ and incipient steps have been taken for the erection of another.¹³

Under "Carpet Bag Rule" in New Orleans, a reconstruction measure was passed in 1870, admitting Negroes to public schools. The agitation against the measure became so great that it was abolished in 1872.¹⁴ In the meantime, however, a system of parochial schools for whites had been established by Mr. William O. Rogers, a member of Palmer's congregation. Eight schools were established under the auspices of the Presbyterian church. In order to aid the project, Palmer prepared a series of lectures, twelve in number, on the "Philosophy of History," which he delivered before the students in the particular school under the direction of the First Presbyterian Church. These lectures are not preserved in complete form, but a study of the reports concerning them found in the New Orleans Ploeyune reveals that Palmer applied himself in their preparation and delivery with the usual diligence and thoroughness. Commenting on the fourth lecture of the series, the Ploeyune states,

¹³Ibid., 1870.

¹⁴Henry Richter, ed., Standard History of New Orleans (The Lewis Publishing Co., Chicago, 1900), 260.

The lecture was simply a grouping together of the leading historical events, during a period of 500 years, as these bear upon the general history of the world.

When we take into consideration the fact that the Reverend gentleman appears before his audience without a single memorandum, or note, and discourses for an hour and a half without intermission, we are surprised at his clear, powerful and retentive memory, which, grasping the history of a world in the embrace of his great mind, gradually unfolds it, and by graphic descriptions (interspersing names and dates with wonderful correctness and celerity) lays before his auditors the knowledge contained therein.¹⁵

The General Assembly of the Southern Presbyterian Church met in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1870. A committee had been sent by the General Assembly of the Northern Presbyterian Church to broach the question of union between the two Assemblies. The Northern Committee's proposal was submitted to the Southern Committee on Foreign Correspondence. Palmer, as chairman of the Committee, made the reply. He stressed four difficulties in the way of union between the two bodies.

1. The political utterances of the Northern Assemblies. "We believe it to be solemnly incumbent upon the Northern Presbyterian Church...to purge itself of this error, and, by public proclamation of the truth, to place the crown once more upon the head of Jesus Christ as the alone King of Zion." The Southern Church will continue to maintain the independence and spirituality of the Redeemer's kingdom upon earth.
2. Doctrinal inclusiveness. The union of the Old and New School Assemblies North "involved a total surrender of all the great testimonies of the Church for the fundamental doctrines of grace." "The united Assembly stands of necessity upon an allowed latitude of interpretation of the standards, and must come at length to embrace nearly all shades of doctrinal belief. Of these falling testimonies we are now the sole surviving heirs."
3. The exclusion of Presbyterians of Kentucky and Missouri under "the Curley ipse facto resolutions."
4. Injurious aspersions preferred against the Southern Presbyterian Church by Northern Assemblies.¹⁶

The report as first drawn up by Palmer refused even to consider

¹⁵New Orleans Picayune, December 11, 1870.

¹⁶Minutes Southern General Assembly, 1870.

correspondence with the Northern Assembly for the reasons mentioned. When submitted to the Committee, it was thought unnecessarily harsh. Against Palmer's judgment, the Committee decided that courtesy at least demanded the appointment of a committee to confer.¹⁷ The General Assembly adopted the report of the Committee, and the Union issue was dropped for the time being. That Palmer's conduct during the Union controversy met with the approval of most of the members of the General Assembly is indicated in a letter to Adger written by Palmer, July 21, 1870.

In regard to the action of our Assembly at Louisville, I am in the receipt of letters from all parts of the Church expressing the warmest approval. After a good deal of reflection, I am satisfied this action is not only right as to substance, but wise as to its form. Notwithstanding the dissent of a few, I am clear that the appointment of a committee, dry as [sic], as Dr. Brown contends for, would have yielded the whole case upon its principles. It would have sent distrust and anxiety through our whole Church; and would have resulted within a year in the organization of distinct party for reunion at all hazards.¹⁸

In 1873, the Northern Assembly again attempted to induce the Southern Assembly to join them. Palmer immediately published four articles in the Southwestern Presbyterian in reply to the new proposal for union. That these articles embodied a restatement of the four difficulties in the way of union adopted by the Southern General Assembly of 1870 is indicated by Palmer's statement in the first article, "our objection to this basis of union is today exactly what it was three years ago...."¹⁹

These discourses are examples of Palmer's power of analysis and completeness of statement. Again he was successful in disposing of the

¹⁷Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 320.

¹⁸Quoted in ibid., 334.

¹⁹Palmer, "The Olive Branch Again," Southwestern Presbyterian (New Orleans, 1869-1908), V, 3, June, 1873.

arguments of his opponents, and the plan of union was again frustrated.

During the seventies many demands were being made on Palmer for occasional addresses. On January 19, 1870, Alfred Hennen, a most highly revered member of the New Orleans Bar and a charter member of Palmer's church, died. A short time thereafter, Palmer was requested by members of the Bar to deliver a memorial address for Hennen. The address, "Christianity and Law; or the Claims of Religion on the Legal Profession,"²⁰ suggested six ways in which Christianity commended itself to the legal profession, namely,

By the fact that she herself founds upon the idea of law; by its wonderful method of tempering justice with mercy; the cardinal principles upon which the whole method of grace proceeds, light among the elemental trust, and our illustration in the daily practice of this profession; you are compelled in the trial of every cause to recognize the religious nature of man; as a stupendous system of truth whose evidence you are professionally fitted to estimate; (and finally as) the surest protection against the professional dangers to which the lawyer is exposed.²¹

In emphasizing the necessity for members of the legal profession to draw inspiration from religion in the discharging of their solemn trust to society, Palmer opens his peroration with a vehemence which would have done credit to the illustrious Webster.

I proffer these practical aids of Christianity to you, Gentlemen of the Law, because I think society has the right to exact that you should build up your character on every side, and by just such influences as Religion alone can bring to bear. You are her constituted guardians; and as the sworn minister of justice, all classes of men come alike under the mantle of your protection. Life, liberty, honour and estate,--all in their turn are committed to your trust. You are under the vow of the truest knight-errantry,

²⁰A copy is available in the Library of Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia.

²¹Palmer, Christianity and the Law; or the Claims of Religion upon the Legal Profession (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1871), 4-53.

going forth armed with knowledge and virtue to redress all human wrongs. The prisoner waits for you to unlock the door of his dungeon and restore him once more to the joys of freedom. The criminal in the dock hangs in the dreadful suspense between life and death upon your eloquence; to relieve him from the gibbet. The fatherless and the widow appeal to you for protection against the perjury and fraud which would violate the most sacred of trusts, and turn them out to beggary and want. You pluck the fangs from beneath the tongue of slander, when it would stain the honour of the good and poison the very life of life itself. You unravel the plots of avarice and cunning, of malice, treachery and revenge, when these dire passions form their foul conspiracies against the peace and happiness of our homes. The whisper of long-hidden guilt, and the sadder story of wrong which cannot be avenged, pour their confidence into your ear; and the secret anguish of dark and bitter years is laid bare to your inspection. When all these passages of human life have been trodden, you stand at the very portals of Eternity itself and share the funeral expirations of a dying hour. Your hands trace the last will and testament, in which love looks back, as from beyond the tomb, to shield the objects of its fond solicitude.²²

On October 18, 1870, the citizens of New Orleans gathered in the St. Charles Theater to pay tribute to their fallen hero, General Robert E. Lee, who, at the time of his death, had been president of Washington and Lee University, at Lexington, Virginia. Eulogies were delivered by the Honorable Wm. Burwell, the Honorable Thomas J. Semmes, and Palmer. The two eulogists who preceded Palmer had carried the assembly to a high level of sentiment. Palmer sensed his responsibility. His eloquence moved the audience nearer the sublime. The simplicity of his style, elevated through an appropriate use of the pathetic, is illustrated in his description of Lee's character.

That gentle, that perfect moderation, that self-command which enabled him to be so self-possessed amidst the most trying difficulties of his public career, a refinement almost such as that which marks the character of the purest woman, were blended in him with that massive strength, that mighty endurance, that consistency and power which gave him and the people whom he led such momentum under the disadvantages of the struggle through which he passed....

²²Ibid., 38-39.

Mr. It is a cause far mourning before high heaven to-night, that he was not spared thirty years to educate a generation for the time that is to come for as in the days when the red banner streamed over the land, the South sent their sons to fight under his flag and beneath the wave of his sword, these sons have been sent again to sit at his feet when he was the disciple of the Nurses and the teacher of philosophy. (Applause.) Oh, that he might have brought his more than regal character, his majestic frame, all his intellectual and moral endowments, to the task of fitting those that should come to the orials of the future, to take the mantle that has fallen from his shoulders and bear it to the generations that are unborn.²³

Commenting on Palmer's speech, the Playmate and Times carried

identical statements:

After an aria from "Lamia" by the band, the Reverend Doctor Palmer was introduced, and delivered a long and eloquent eulogy, replete with all that elegance of diction, brilliant rhetoric, and wonderful comparison, for which the Great Divine is famous.²⁴

Two years later, June 15, 1872, Palmer delivered an address, "The Present Orials and its Issues," before the graduating class of Washington and Lee University. In the address he attempted to set forth the major problems facing the nation during the period of reconstruction. Palmer offered two premises afforded by the history of nations: "That no people has long kept its place in history after traversing the fundamental principles upon which the national character has been formed," and "that in passing successfully through any orials, a people must possess elasticity enough to adapt themselves to any conditions, and thus to meet the issues of another cycle." After thoroughly amplifying those principles in the light of the current orials, Palmer presented the following problems that demanded satisfactory solution:

25Full text of the speech appeared in the New Orleans Playmate, and the New Orleans Times, October 19, 1870.

26New Orleans Times and New Orleans Playmate, October 19, 1870.

1. Before all others, is the problem of race;
2. This changed relation of the two races draws after it the whole labor question;
3. A caveat must be entered against that coarse and selfish utilitarianism which measures all things only by material standard;
4. We must retain from the past that individuality of character which makes a man a solid unit in society;
5. Finally, we must carry over into the future a patriotism that is born of adversity and trial, more intense and purer than in the joyful and prosperous past.²⁵

In concluding, Palmer paid tribute to Washington and Lee, and then charged the graduating class with the task of preserving the principles of the Fathers.

And you, gentlemen, representing the young thought and hope which must shortly deal with these mighty issues, I swear each one of you by an oath more solemn than that of Hannibal, not that you will destroy Rome, but that you will save Carthage. I charge you, if this great Republic like a gallant ship must drive upon the breakers, that you be upon the deck, and with suspended breath await the shock--perchance she will survive it--but if she sink beneath the destiny which has devoured other great kingdoms of the past, that you save from the melancholy wreck our ancestral faith, and work out yet upon this continent the problem of a free, constitutional and popular government. And may the God of destinies give you a good issue!²⁶

In addition to the Washington and Lee address, Palmer delivered during 1872 four other speeches worthy of mention. On February 16, he gave the initial lecture of a series under the auspices of the Southern Historical Society at Lyceum Hall, New Orleans. His address, "The Tribunal of History," was an eloquent attempt to show that history proves the contention that ultimately "truth is triumphant."

²⁵Palmer, The Present Crisis and Its Issues (Baltimore: John Murphy and Co., 1872), 15-25. A copy of the address is available in Tulane University Library.

²⁶Ibid., 28.

The audience was select and unusually intelligent, and filled the entire hall.

The address occupied more than an hour in delivery. In illustrating his great theme the speaker drew copiously from the records of ancient and modern history. His exordium was a brilliant and elaborate parallel between the internal wars of the Greeks and that but lately enacted on this continent. Predicting a spirit of justice as an inherent quality of human character, he proceeded to show how just verdicts were pronounced upon the deeds of men in spite of all contemporary clouds of falsity and detraction, and how the vices of governments have always wrought their overthrow. By what learning, by what skill of reasoning, or by what beauty of appropriate argument he worked out his theory could only be indicated by the address itself. It was one of the orator's greatest efforts, and was received with profound and thoughtful attention.

Several passages were applauded, but the general impress of the discourse was one of earnest thought and deep solemnity.

Palmer delivered an address dedicating the new church building of the First Presbyterian Church of Savannah, Georgia, June 9, 1872. His theme was "Christ the Builder of the Church." Commenting on the service,

The Savannah Morning News stated:

The handsome new church of the First Presbyterian congregation was yesterday morning densely thronged on the occasion of its formal dedication to the worship of the Omnipotent God. The pews will comfortably seat five hundred and fifty people, but sometime before the hour announced for the opening of the services they were taxed to their utmost capacity, and chairs were placed in the aisles as close together as circumstances would admit, and these were too occupied in a short time.

On June 15, 1872, Palmer delivered an address at the 100th Anniversary of the Organization of the Nazareth Church and Congregation in Spartanburg, South Carolina, entitled²⁷ "The Glory Which the Infinite and Blessed God Secures to Himself through His Immortal Church." Palmer developed his theme by regarding the church in its two aspects:

²⁷New Orleans Picayune, February 17, 1862. A copy of the address is available in Tulane University Library.

²⁸The Savannah Morning News, June 10, 1872. A copy of the address is available in the Columbia Theological Seminary Library.

²⁹A pamphlet edition of the speech is available in the Library of the Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia.

tri-une God, we recognize in the most impressive of all actions the declaration of our Lord that His 'law is the Truth,' and is upheld in the world by simple witness-bearing."³² This principle was developed in accordance with Palmer's usual method of division and amplification.

Meanwhile, sorrow had weighed heavily upon Palmer's household. In addition to his eldest daughter, Sarah Francis, in 1865, two of his four remaining daughters were stricken. On October 25, 1871, his fourth daughter, Kate Gordon, who had grown to be a young woman of unusual beauty, died of consumption. About eighteen months later, his youngest daughter, Marion Louisa, contracted pneumonia, which developed into tuberculosis of the lungs. She expired on February 1, 1873. Approximately two years later, February 12, 1875, Palmer's third daughter, Augusta Bernard, also died of consumption. Palmer's deep sorrow, yet child-like submission, is trenchantly expressed in his letters of that period.³³ On February 24, 1875, in a letter to his friend Adger, he said:

I will not say a word as to our own sorrow, except that the weight of four graves lie upon us at once, and this last bereavement leaves us almost stripped and bare. Nothing but a conviction of God's gracious sovereignty, and the immense love He has shown to us in them all, keep us from sinking beneath the pressure.³⁴

As early as 1869, writing in the Southwestern Presbyterian, Palmer had advocated the establishment of a Presbyterian university to serve

³²Palmer, Discourses at the Dedication of the New Church Edifice of the Central Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, Missouri (New Orleans: Clark & Hodeline, 1870), 4.

³³See Johnson, Marion's Mother Palmer, 390-400.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 513.

the needs of the Southwest. As a result of continued agitation, the Southwestern Presbyterian University was organized at Memphis, Tennessee, under a board chosen by the Synods of Arkansas, Alabama, Memphis, Mississippi, Nashville, and Texas.

Reverend Dr. B. M. Palmer...one of the earliest and strongest advocates and friends of the enterprise...and supporter as well as Director, was elected Chancellor. Thoroughly convinced of the importance of the work and of its promise of great usefulness to the church at large, he accepted the call, but his congregation so strenuously resisted his removal from them that he felt impelled to remain among his beloved people.³⁵

In 1884, the School of Theology was organized at Southwestern University. "The chair is fully endowed and self-supporting. In recognition of friendship and distinguished services in the University, the Board has named this chair the Palmer Professorship of Theology."³⁶

The Palmer Homiletic Society of Southwestern, "founded in 1892, is designed to afford practice to the students in all kinds of homilies, essays, theses on theological points, and the free discussion of practical subjects are the features of each meeting."³⁷

Palmer Hall, a wing of the main building of Southwestern University, "was erected largely by contributions from the people of New Orleans in memory of Dr. Benjamin Morgan Palmer...who is regarded as the father of this institution. In the cloister of Palmer Hall, a bronze table bears the following inscription: 'To the glory of God and in grateful recognition of the generosity of the people of New Orleans by whom this building was erected in memory of Benjamin Morgan Palmer.'³⁸

³⁵Catalog of Southwestern Presbyterian University 1892-1900 (Southwestern University Press, Clarksville, Tennessee, 1900), 10. (For a rather complete record of Palmer's efforts in behalf of the University and the struggle with his New Orleans congregation over the acceptance of the chancellorship, see Minutes of New Orleans Session, 1872.)

³⁶Catalog of Southwestern Presbyterian University 1892-1893 (W. P. Titus, Clarksville, Tennessee, 1891), 32.

³⁷Catalog of Southwestern Presbyterian University 1892-1893 (Whittet and Shepperson, Richmond, Virginia, 1893), 59.

³⁸Catalog of Southwestern Presbyterian University 1925 (Southwestern University Press, Clarksville, Tennessee, 1925), 109.

In 1866, at the age of 68, Palmer was a master of assemblies. As he passed his sixtieth year, there was no indication of a lessening of his skill or industry. He was still growing. While visiting in New Orleans in 1865, the Reverend William Frost Bishop attended Palmer's church. He recorded his experience in a letter to the St. Louis Presby-terian, dated February 11, 1866.

The greatest preacher began his sermon in the simplest manner possible, describing the closing conflict of our Lord's life, with occasional flashes of interpretation which showed that he had studied the context carefully and also that a storm of eloquence was gathering. His enunciation was distinct and his delivery deliberate.

This calmness of manner continued till the chariot wheels took fire toward the close of the sermon, which lasted an hour and ten minutes.

The great preacher had not proceeded far with this theme when I perceived that he was moving upon what a certain post has termed "the unknown seas of feeling" in my heart. I tried to show myself a man and keep my handkerchief in my pocket—but it was no use. The man ~~who sat~~ next to me was rough and unlettered—a man of the world. In ~~the~~ ^{an} ~~unhappy~~ ^{unhappy} convenient, just at this time, to brush his rough hand over his eyes, in order to see better. I looked down upon the one thousand people beneath me, and they reminded me of "the tops of mulberry trees" when the wind is shaking them....The men were shielding their faces with their palm leaf fans, while their wives made public use of the handkerchief. It was the most effective eloquence I had ever known....

I have no words to tell you of the soaring thoughts which marked the close of Dr. Palmer's sermon, in which a comparison was instituted between philosophy and religion. ^{There} ~~There~~ was the motion of Spurgeon with the eloquence of Beecher.

An equally enthusiastic acknowledgment of Palmer's transcendent power in the pulpit was made by a correspondent in the Louisville

Courier Journal, January 22, 1866.

At New Orleans lives and ministers one of the greatest divines of his time....

He is a very ripe scholar, and keeps conversant with the rich old tongues of Greek [sic] and Rome. And he not only has the key to, but has explored and possessed the treasures of these languages....

³⁰Quoted in Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 424-425.

I think, too, he is a Hebrew scholar, but of this I cannot judge....

With the classics of English literature it is impossible to doubt his conversancy....

He seems in the very zenith of his intellectual powers, with ripe judgment, a warning, but not dominating imagination; an exquisite taste and vast stores of erudition....

Then he is utterly free from bigotry--unsectarian, catholic in spirit, and a man of most fervent piety, blameless life, an endeared pastor.⁴⁰

The New Orleans Exposition was held in 1885. People from all sections of the country visited the City--and Palmer's church. In the Session Records of the First Presbyterian Church, April 1, 1885, the following description is given of the huge audiences attending the church during the Exposition year.

Since the opening of the Exposition in our city, the church building has been thronged, much beyond its seating capacity, by an audience of strangers exceedingly respectful and reverential. It has been the rare opportunity for sowing the seeds of the Word produced over the whole country, which will doubtless yield its harvest in Eternity.⁴¹

Not only was Palmer experiencing some of his most efficient years in the pulpit during the eighties, but his duties were discharged with the same zeal and methodicalness that had characterized his earlier years. Nor were his standards of church membership lowered, for his session exercised unusual care in receiving members into communion. As in the Columbia Session Records during Palmer's ministry, so in the New Orleans records there are many discipline cases. Palmer was eager to widen the influence of his church, in general, and therefore took advantage of every opportunity to advance the cause of religion, unless

⁴⁰Ibid., 428-430.

⁴¹Session Records of the First Presbyterian Church of New Orleans, April 1, 1885.

the action necessitated a compromise with principle. This desire to enhance the scope of the church was illustrated by Palmer's plan for "cooperative alliance" with the Dutch Reformed Church, and his leadership of the Sabbath Observance League of New Orleans. This league was composed of representatives from the different religious organizations in the city. Palmer worked with all denominations and creeds. "There were representatives of the Roman Church, appointed by the Archbishop; and a prominent Jewish Rabbi also took part in the proceedings."⁴²

In contrast to Palmer's almost universal co-operation with movements designed to expand the reach and influence of the church, by bringing all religious organizations into closer harmony, his sustained opposition toward all attempts to unite the Southern and Northern Assemblies remained a paradox. To the casual observer, his action might have appeared rooted in prejudice, but to Palmer the issue involved the upholding or yielding of a deep-seated religious conviction. In 1882, when the two Assemblies passed reciprocal resolutions withdrawing all offensive statements of past Assemblies, which had opened the way for "official correspondence," Palmer opposed the action, declaring that the two bodies were not in harmony on two points; namely, "relations subsisting between the Church and the State," and "doctrinal inconsistencies."⁴³

Palmer never approved the action of the Assembly establishing official correspondence with the Northern Church. When new agitation

⁴²Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 438.

⁴³Minutes of Southern General Assembly, 1882, and Palmer, "Personal Relations," Southern Presbyterian Review, XXIV, 308-330, April, 1883.

arose in the Southern Assembly of 1866 for closer relation between the two churches, he delivered a great speech, "The Church a Spiritual Kingdom," in opposition to the movement. Likewise, in the Southern Assembly of 1867, Palmer made a "telling speech in opposition to every device to loosen the church from her moorings."⁴⁴

In addition to being a platform and pulpit speaker, Palmer was a member of the Publishing Board and a constant contributor to the Southwestern Presbyterian, an organ of the Presbyterian Church, established at New Orleans in 1869 with Dr. Henry M. Smith as editor. An article by Palmer, "Panaticism of the World," appeared in the first issue of the publication. This discourse was followed by four articles on foreign missions appearing in the next four issues of the journal. Palmer's next contribution, which followed immediately, consisted of a series of sketches of pastoral experiences entitled "From a Pastor's Portfolio." Late in the same year, 1869, he began a series of essays on "The Beatitudes," which continued into 1870. This series was followed by a number of articles on "Prayer" and "Christian Paradoxes." Following the death of his daughter, Kate Gordon, in 1871, Palmer was moved to write an article "Temptation and Sorrow," which appeared in the Southwestern Presbyterian.⁴⁵

Meanwhile the eulogy on Thornwell that Palmer had delivered at Columbia in 1862 had grown into what many of his colleagues termed

⁴⁴Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 458.

⁴⁵Although it is true that Palmer's contributions to the publication were the meagrest during its early years, he remained a regular contributor. For example, he was constantly paying tribute to deceased persons through the columns of the publication.

"a masterful biography." Palmer endeavored to find a publisher in the North, but was unsuccessful. Commenting upon his experience, he wrote to Adger, February 24, 1875, "The difficulties attending southern authorship have impressed me with a new sense of the importance of our board or committee of publication."⁴⁶ The following month he wrote Adger again, "We are nothing to the North; and it is very clear to me that we must develop our own publishing interests."⁴⁷

In a short time Palmer and his friends secured a large list of subscribers and the book was published at Richmond, Virginia, in 1875. The following year another volume, The Family in Its Civil and Churchly Aspects, was published. In the main the content of the book had originally appeared as a series of articles in the Southwestern Presbyterian. The Formation of Character appeared in 1889. This book consisted of a series of twelve lectures delivered before a group of young men in his church on Sunday evenings. At the close of the series of addresses it was requested that they be published. The book embraces Palmer's conception of the essentials in character formation. The following year The Broken Home or Lessons in Sorrow appeared. This stirring volume was composed of a series of incidents and reflections connected with the life and death of each of the members of his family. These reminiscences were written for his own consolation and to preserve the memory of each deceased for those of the remaining family. "The literary style of the sketches," says Johnson, "is marvelously beautiful. They are each a poem in limpid and nervous prose. They linger on the ear like music, sad music."⁴⁸ In the introduction Palmer observes that

⁴⁶Quoted in Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 482.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., 572.

"the Free-Masonry of those in sorrow would pour the balm into other hearts which the Spirit of Consolation may have given to each. From the simple desire of comforting those who mourn, this story of repeated bereavements is here told....Long-treasured memories are now scattered upon the winds, with the prayer that they may help to 'bind up the broken-hearted.'"⁴⁹

The fifth volume of Palmer's works appeared in 1894, entitled Theology of Prayer. This notable ecclesiastical discussion aimed at verifying polemic teachings with reference to prayer. The Threefold Fellowship and the Threefold Assurance, Palmer's final publication, was begun in 1892 and completed in 1902. After 1897, Palmer's eyesight was extremely poor; therefore his granddaughter, Miss Gussie Calceck, prepared the copy for the printer.⁵⁰ The first section of the book is devoted to an explanation of the threefold fellowship (fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) and the latter part to an explanation of the result of the threefold assurance (the assurance of Understanding, Faith, and Hope).

Little mention has been made of Palmer's conduct among the members of his own household. "It was his custom," says Johnson, "to declare that he had left the business of disciplining his children to his wife; that he had made only two attempts at disciplining them and had been forced to conclude that Mrs. Palmer was better adapted to that form of ministry than he was....Mrs. Palmer seems to have been wise and skillful in the management of her children. Her husband felt that he might safely leave the matter in her hands. The relegation of

⁴⁹Palmer, The Broken Home; or Lessons in Sorrow (E. S. Upton, New Orleans, Louisiana, 1891), 5.

⁵⁰Dr. J. B. Caldwell in interview with the writer January 22, 1942.

other forms of attention to his children, even to his best beloved, he would never make. He was a most affectionate father, and as instructed as affectionate. He counted not his time too valuable to be given in due measure to his children's development.⁵¹

Palmer's letters,⁵² written quite regularly when absent from his children, are poignant with affection. He was none the less faithful in his correspondence with and admiration for his father. The comradeship between father and son, which lasted more than sixty-four years, was finally broken by the death of Edward Palmer in 1882. Having recovered from the loss of his father, Palmer was destined to receive a greater burden of sorrow. On November 13, 1888, Mrs. Palmer died. The loss of her upon whom he had depended for encouragement and companionship for so long was almost overwhelming. In a letter to Mrs. Mary Jane Moffat McMaster November 17, 1888, he alluded to his suffering: "My friend, I cannot tell you what a wrench this is. She was everything to me and to this house; with her quiet force she ruled this home, its center and its stem."⁵³ However, in the face of his great sorrow Palmer filled his pulpit the following Sunday. He preached a powerful sermon to a crowded house, making no reference to his own suffering.⁵⁴

Palmer's speech activities from 1882 until the end of his career in 1902 can best be viewed and estimated in the light of several great occasions upon which he appeared. On March 17, 1881, Palmer delivered the annual commencement address of the Medical Department of the University of Louisiana.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Johnson, Benjamin Marion Palmer, 225.

⁵² Ibid., 225-226; 371-389.

⁵³ Ibid., 322-323.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ A pamphlet edition of the address is available in the Library of Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia.

However, the first address during this period was incited by the Jewish persecutions in Russia. As early as 1881, a movement against the Jews had been instigated among the Russians. The persecutions soon became so outrageous that the plight of the Jews was extremely serious. Indignation against the acts of the Russians was expressed by Christians universally. Because of a considerable number of Hebrew inhabitants, resentment ran high in New Orleans. Ultimately the city founded a home for the survivors of the persecution. A public gathering was called to crystallize public opinion on the project. Palmer delivered an eloquent address to the assembly; a gesture that was to convert an already wholesome admiration on the part of Hebrews toward him into a permanent love and reverence. During the course of the address, Palmer revealed one of the keynotes of his life, his belief in the ultimate triumph of ideas over sheer force.

And since the authors of these wrongs wear the Christian name and profess the Christian faith, we cannot purge ourselves of seeming complicity in these horrible transactions except by rendering a protest in the most nervous language which a righteous indignation can employ.

But these words of remonstrance will not be without their effect. Ideas at last rule the world. The true monarchs of earth are not the sceptered kings upon thrones, but the men of patient thought, who embalm great principles in immortal words and send them ringing around the globe; and if our voice to-night should be but the echo of an echo, let it swell the reverberation until it fills the dome of Heaven.⁸⁸

Near the close of the discourse, Palmer forcibly expressed his reverence and compassion for the Hebrew race:

Their sacred books are in part my sacred books, and through their hands I derive that religion which is the ground of my hope beyond the grave. For more than two thousand years their history has been one of unspeakable pathos. Whenever persecution bursts upon the Jew there would I be at his side--an Hebrew of the Hebrews--

⁸⁸Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 468-469.

to suffer and to do. If we cannot stay the hand of persecution abroad, let us welcome them to our homes and our bosoms here, and roll up such a sentiment in favor of civil and religious freedom on this new continent that it shall never be darkened with the stain which rests upon the old.⁸⁷

Four years later, in a somewhat unusual manner, the Jews of New Orleans revealed their respect and admiration for Dr. Palmer. On June 8, 1898, Senior Rabbi James L. Gutheim was buried. Gutheim had not only been the leader of the Hebrew community in New Orleans, but was also a most prominent figure among Jews throughout the South. When Rabbi I. L. Loubt of New Orleans and other notable rabbis from various sections of the South had paid their tributes, it was Dr. Palmer who was asked as a "Christian gentleman" to close the services at the synagogue. Some two weeks later Palmer received a leather-bound volume of The Lord's Prayer in One Hundred Languages from Rabbi Gutheim's family. The book was accompanied by a letter from the Rabbi's son, Meyer Gutheim.

Rev. and Dear Sir: Mother bids that you will accept this volume as a memento of my lamented father, and her devoted husband. During his life, it was the centerpiece of our parlor table, and voicing forth in a hundred different tongues the simplest, grandest, prayer of the later testament....Among the many testimonials of esteem and respect to the memory of my dear father that we have received since his death, none have so much touched the depths of our sorrow as the eloquent tribute paid by you in public, and your tender, soulful letter of condolence to my bereaved mother. Knowing the high esteem, respect and appreciation he bore you during his life, and conscious of that invisible bond of sympathy that always unites the truly good and great, we assure you, dear sir, that we prize above all else, as a memento of the late sad occasion, the letter to which you so expressly subscribe yourself my "father's friend."⁸⁸

A further tribute was rendered Palmer by the Hebrews of New Orleans on his eight¹⁸⁹⁸ birthday when the Young Congregation presented him a

⁸⁷Ibid., 490.

⁸⁸A copy of the original letter appears in the front of the volume, both now in the possession of Dr. J. W. Caldwell, Montreat, N. C.

silver loving cup with scriptural engraving. Rabbi Lousht delivered the speech of presentation. During the course of the address he stated:

Often have I had the pleasure of addressing men, and have conveyed to them my heart's sentiments, but I do not remember a single case when I had better cause to thank God than for the privilege granted me to-night to bring home to you in my name and in the name of Four Synagogues the reverence and affection we cherish for you.

Do you remember when, in 1882, the persecution of the Jews commenced in the dominion of the Czar and my brethren were driven from hearth and home, a cry of despair was heralded across the ocean and you, sir, were one of the first to raise your voice in solemn protest? Never shall I forget how your manly form rose before me and, with a voice trembling with emotion, you cried: "When a Hebrew suffers, I suffer with him." We have not forgotten all this; we cherish a feeling of gratitude; and we have come on your eightieth birthday to pray God to spare you many a day for the blessing of mankind.⁵⁹

On June 15, 1891, Palmer was called to Savannah, Georgia, to dedicate the fourth church edifice of the Independent Presbyterian Church. The Savannah Morning News carried a long account of the service:

The Church was filled before the commencement of the dedicatory exercises at 11 o'clock....Dr. Palmer occupied the pulpit from 12 until 1 o'clock, taking for his text "And everything shall live whither the river cometh," an extract from Ezekiel's vision of the holy waters, upon which he delivered a most excellent sermon of profound reasoning, and with a clear logical interpretation of the meaning of Ezekiel's vision.⁶⁰

The evening service consisted of a memorial sermon to the Reverend Dr. I. S. K. Axson also delivered by Palmer. According to The Morning News,

The night service was more largely attended than the morning service, all the Protestant congregations of the city having omitted the night service to attend. Every seat was taken, and a great many people stood during the service. Many were unable to gain admittance at all. There were nearly 1500 people in the church.⁶¹

⁵⁹New Orleans Times-Democrat, January 26, 1898.

⁶⁰The Savannah Morning News, June 15, 1891.

⁶¹Ibid.

Two speeches delivered by Palmer prior to his famous address against the Louisiana Lottery Company deserve cataloging: An address before Sophie Newcomb College of Tulane University at its first commencement, June 17, 1890, and a memorial address delivered in honor of General Joseph E. Johnston, April 26, 1891.

The greatest single issue championed by Palmer during his later years was the opposition to the Louisiana lottery. The company was chartered in 1803 with a capital stock of one million dollars and given a monopoly on drawing lotteries in the state for twenty-five years.⁶² Although the charter was received by questionable means, the lottery was able to maintain itself against all assaults until 1879, when the legislature repealed its charter. However, an injunction was secured by the company and the lottery continued to operate. The functioning of a constitutional convention, called in 1879, was greatly hampered by the activities of the lottery lobbyists. Finally, as a compromise measure, provision was made in the constitution for the legislature to charter other lotteries until January 1, 1895, when all charters would be cancelled and lotteries ended. Rather than defeat the entire constitution, the voters passed the compromise lottery measure with the belief that soon the curse would be ended. However, between 1880 and 1890 the lottery became so powerful through wealth and influence that its leaders sought to pass a bill submitting an amendment to the people for renewing the charter with certain minor changes for another twenty-five year period. The governor, Francis T. Nicholls, vetoed the bill, and although it received the necessary two-thirds majority in the House, it lost in the Senate by one vote. But the lottery league was not through. Their lawyers contended that constitutional

⁶²For a detailed history of the Louisiana Lottery Company see Berthold C. Alves, "The History of the Louisiana Lottery Company," unpublished M. A. thesis, Louisiana State University, 1929.

amendments were not subject to gubernatorial vetoes and carried their protest to the courts. This brazen attempt on the part of the lottery company to perpetuate its activities aroused the people of the state. In the summer of 1891 the Louisiana Anti-Lottery League was organized. The organization began its campaign against the lottery by announcing a public assembly in the Grand Opera House, New Orleans, June 25, 1891. The opening address was delivered by Colonel William Preston Johnston, chancellor of Tulane University. He in turn introduced Palmer with the following sentence: "It is now my privilege to introduce to you a man who by his talents, his eloquence, and his virtues, well deserves the title of the first citizen of New Orleans."⁶³

Amid tremendous applause Palmer arose and stood before his audience. For more than a half century this servant of the people had championed the principles of decency and justice in the affairs of men. Yet he seemed to realize that the moment had come when he could render his greatest service to the future welfare of his adopted state. With marked simplicity Palmer pronounced his indictment of the lottery in the opening paragraph of the address:

I lay the indictment against the Lottery Company of Louisiana that it is essentially an immoral institution whose business and avowed aim is to propagate gambling throughout the State and throughout the country. Being not simply a nuisance, but even a crime, no Legislature as the creature of the people, nor even the people themselves in convention assembled has the power to legitimate it, either by legislative enactment on the one hand, or by fundamental charter upon the other. In other words, I lay the indictment against the Louisiana Lottery Company that its continued existence is incompatible, not only with the safety, but with the being of the State.⁶⁴

⁶³New Orleans Picayune, June 25, 1891.

⁶⁴Ibid.

After amplifying the proposition, Palmer directed his attention to proof primarily in the form of illustration and analogy to support his indictment. The following example is typical:

Suppose that a universality should be endowed with many millions in this State or elsewhere, in order to persuade the people throughout the land of the great advantages of lying and of stealing (applause), sending out their agents in all the avenues of life in order to indoctrinate the people both as to the methods and the advantages of these practices. Is there a Legislature in the land, or the people themselves in convention assembled, who would not immediately recognize that in chartering such an institution they simply dissolve the State? For how can society hold together if confidence be destroyed in the veracity of man to man, or if there be no security whatever in our earthly possessions?⁶⁶

In attempting to prove the inherent viciousness of the lottery system, Palmer declared "that the first physical matter which forms a basis upon which society rests is the law of labor," the creative versus the possessive instinct. Following an enumeration of those in the various industries and vocations who contributed by their labor to the totality of goods, Palmer asked the poignant questions: "What value does the gambler create?...What does the lottery do in all its manipulations but shift the products of a preceding industry from one hand to another (applause) without the imparting in the process of a particle of value to that which is thus transferred?" In presenting proof that the lottery neither created nor protected any value Palmer declared that during the normal transactions of the lottery about fifty percent of the proceeds collected was kept by those who ran the fraud. In view of this procedure he asked the question: "Mr. Chairman, I do not wish to appear harsh but will you draw for me the line between this and absolute stealing? (Applause.)"

In his final indictment of the lottery, Palmer pronounced that "It becomes the propagandist of gambling, it goes forth under the charter of the State to persuade man, woman and child wherever they meet them to gamble. (Applause.) It carries the solicitation into our very homes. It meets our cooks when they are going with the basket to get the master's breakfast. (laughter) and induces them to gamble....What I charge, therefore, upon the lottery is not simply that it is a gambling concern, but that it is a university for the instruction in gambling and a high endowment in order to stimulate the process of gambling by and through the country at large."⁶⁶

Palmer began his conclusion by declaring that the future of Louisiana was doomed unless the lottery was defeated.

Whilst you are holding out our invitations to invite capital and invite population, who shall drain your morasses and stimulate industry and create the wealth of the State, you are holding up this forbidding thing to drive every desirable citizen away from Louisiana. Worse than that, sir,--when you have an institution that goes openly before the Legislature and seeks to bribe it, that in less than ten years after its recharter will carry in its pocket every governor in the State (applause), remove every honest judge from the bench, and put their men in the places to do their bidding, what then will Louisiana be worth? (Applause.)⁶⁷

Palmer's peroration abounds in pathetic and ethical proof:

I, sir, was not born upon the soil of Louisiana, but I am her son by adoption. (Applause.) I have spent thirty-five years, almost the half of a long life, in what I believe is honest and virtuous labor for the good of this people (Applause.)....My dead are here and the narrow house is already built in which after a year or two of active service I expect to be laid aside to enjoy the quiet repose which heaven has afforded to them, but before that event takes place, I desire to see this land of my adoption redeemed. (Applause.) I want her redemption to be accomplished by her own act. These beautiful plains, this delicious climate, taking the year round superior to any other upon this continent, these beautiful streams which like silver threads almost convert a portion of our State into a modern

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Yankee-are we, sir, to abandon such a land as this, created by beneficent heaven and secured by the patriotism of the fathers that went before us? Are we to deliver her, bound hand and foot, to such an enemy as this? (Cries of "No, no.") Unless she be redeemed by her own act then the appeal must be made to the virtue and the intelligence of the entire country. Mr. Chairman, I need not say to one like you, so versed in moral truths, that the world is ruled by ideas, and it is not competent to any isolated community to live against the moral convictions of the world. (Applause).

Johnson states that at the close of the speech Palmer "might have turned his vast audience of intelligent and characterful people into a mob and led them, with such arms as mobs seize, against the domiciles of the lottery institution throughout the city."⁶⁸ Johnson's statement is substantiated in an editorial which appeared in the Picayune, "A Plea for Peace," the day following the delivery of the speech. The article expressed the hope that open violence would be avoided during the lottery conflict. The Picayune went further in stating that Palmer certainly had no intention of inciting violence, but that he probably underestimated his power over the audience.⁶⁹ The comments in the Picayune which preceded the text of the speech, although somewhat lacking in the usual zest over Palmer's speeches, were not uncomplimentary. However, the remarks were confined primarily to a review of the arguments presented by the speaker:

Dr. Palmer opened his address by laying the indictment against the Lottery Company of Louisiana that it is essentially an immoral institution, whose business and avowed aim is to propagate gambling in the state and country. It is not simply a nuisance, but a crime, and no legislature representing the people, or the people themselves in convention assembled, can have the power to legitimate it, either by legislative act on one side, or by fundamental charter on the other. Its existence, he declared is not incompatible with the being but with the safety of the state.

He did not propose simply to utter the language of denunciation. He had framed an indictment and proposed to support each declaration by adequate proof.⁷¹

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Johnson, Benjamin Moriam Palmer, 562.

⁷⁰New Orleans Picayune, June 26, 1891.

⁷¹Ibid.

In contrast to the relatively neutral position taken by the Program, the Times-Democrat was most unfavorable toward Palmer's speech, declaring that it was "sophistical and incendiary."

Now the two epithets which we think are applicable above all others to the speech, in its intellectual and its moral aspects, are that it was at once sophistical and incendiary.

Dr. Palmer's oration is full of false assumptions, misleading analogies, unsound deductions, and vehement denunciations, which with thinking people, will rob it at once of any value it may have otherwise possessed as an exposition of the case against lottery, and stamp it a more one-sided and badly impassioned piece of special pleading.

Dr. Palmer, for example, adopts the trick that is so well known among rhetoricians, of giving the opponent's case a bad look and a bad odor by inventing what he would no doubt be pleased to call an analogous case, and placing it alongside the one he attacks.

But Dr. Palmer is strong in argument by the method of analogy....

The consideration of the incendiary features of Dr. Palmer's oration we shall have to postpone, but we must express our regret that a citizen of Dr. Palmer's standing and enlightenment should have felt justified in suggesting revolution to bar the revenue amendment should legal measures fail.⁷²

Commenting upon Palmer's power over the audience during the lottery speech, Rabbi Leucht stated:

I have heard the foremost American public speakers, in the pulpit, or on the rostrum. Beecher commanded a more lurid rhetoric than Palmer. For a combination of logical argument and noble and brilliant rhetoric, neither he nor any other has equalled Palmer when he was at his best. I heard him that night in the Grand Opera House. Always except on this occasion, when listening to an address, even a great one, I have been able to say to myself, _____, how far do you agree with the speaker? What do you reject? How far will you go with him? Where will you stop? But I give you my word, sir, that night Dr. Palmer did not permit me to think for myself, not to feel for myself, not to will for myself, but picked me up and carried me whithersoever he would. It did not seem to me that it was Palmer that was speaking. He spoke as one inspired. It seemed to me that God Almighty was speaking through Palmer. He had filled him with His Spirit and Message as He filled the Hebrew prophets of old."⁷³

⁷² New Orleans Times-Democrat, June 27, 1891. It had been the policy of the Times-Democrat to praise Palmer's previous speeches. The paper's extremely critical attitude toward Palmer's lottery address suggests that it might have been under the influence of the lottery company.

⁷³ Quoted in Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 562.

The Hobb expressed the opinion that without Palmer's great effort, the lottery would have won the struggle for a new chapter. Although it is impossible to estimate accurately the effect of Palmer's speech on public opinion, many were the leading citizens who held convictions identical with those of Hobb's lecture. For example, the Reverend Dr. E. L. Hill, now (1962) pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Athens, Georgia, declared that "The lottery speech delivered from the platform of the Open House sealed the death knell to the lottery racket. Palmer accomplished in one speech what the religious forces and other civic organizations had been trying to do for years."⁷⁶

On October 19, 1901, Palmer delivered a second anti-lottery speech before the Woman's Anti-Lottery Assembly in Tulane Hall.⁷⁵ This address was followed by a notable oration on "The Representative Life and Character of Dr. T. G. Richardson,"⁷⁶ delivered at the annual commencement of the medical department of Tulane University, April 5, 1902. The address abounds in historical allusions, poetry and noble sentiment.

During the last five or six years of his life Palmer received many requests to appear on important occasions. When a prominent assembly was in the offing, those in authority seemed to prefer to hear the "old man eloquent."

Mr. Alexander Hill, a New Orleans business man and a loyal deacon in the First Presbyterian Church for some twenty years, died January 12, 1904. Palmer found time to pay homage to his faithful friend in a short eulogy.⁷⁷

⁷⁵Dr. E. L. Hill in interview with the writer January 18, 1962.
⁷⁶Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 664. The writer was unable to find a copy of this address.

^{76a}A pamphlet edition of this address is available in the Louisiana State University Library.

⁷⁷A pamphlet edition of this address is available in the Louisiana State University Library.

The Reverend Dr. J. W. Walden, one of Palmer's very close friends, was installed as pastor of the Presbyterian church in Athens, Georgia,

December 1, 1896. Palmer was asked to deliver the installation sermon. J. W. Reed,⁷⁶ who was present at the service, testified to the unusual power of Palmer's address on that occasion in the following account:

I had heard much about Palmer and since he was to preach the installation service of Dr. Walden I decided to go hear him and take notes for the Banner. I went uptown and sat down right in front of the pulpit against the wall and took out my pad and pencil. I had seen him on the street and someone had told me who he was and I had said, "Well, if you are a preacher, you certainly believe your locker." Palmer stepped forward to read a sentence or two of scripture. My disappointment was reinforced but then Palmer threw his head back and began talking. In ten minutes I had forgotten his ugliness, his shortness, he began to stretch up until he seemed full six feet. His eyes were like balls of fire. I never looked at a more handsome man. As I gazed at him it seemed as if I saw an angel. Some spirit had transformed him. Then the sermon ended I suddenly realized that I had taken about two sentences before becoming so enthralled that I forgot to write.⁷⁹

Reed's report of the service in the Banner was entitled, "Dr. Palmer's Sermon--Has a Masterpiece of Logic and Theology--." Commenting upon the size of the audience he stated: "The church building was crowded to its utmost seating capacity by citizens of all denominations in spite of the inclemency of the weather."⁸⁰

On December 20, 1899, a memorial service was held in honor of William Preston Johnson, first president of Tulane University. Palmer delivered the memorial oration.⁸¹ As Johnson, Palmer's biographer, has very ably stated, the address was "a production valuable not only for its brilliant account of the life and work of a great scholar, and of the origin and establishment of Tulane University, but for philosophical

thought present(1943). Reed is registrar of the University of Georgia but was editor of The Athens Southern Banner in 1896.

⁷⁸J. W. Reed in interview with the writer January 17, 1942.

⁷⁹The Athens Southern Banner, December 1, 1896.

⁸¹A copy of the address is available in the library of Louisiana State University. A resume of the address is available in the Times-Democrat and Picayune, December 21, 1899.

views of the progress of education itself....."⁵²

A notable example of Palmer's later years, "The Obedience of God," was held west at the Breckinridge service of Southwestern Presbyterian University, Nashville, Tennessee, June 11, 1898. The Reverend M. L. Hall, who was a student at Southwestern at that time, gave the following account of Palmer's address:

I recall having heard him as a student. He was the speaker of the day and I got a seat right in front of the pulpit. When I saw him come in and take his seat I said, "Well, I'm in for it now." However, in a few minutes he had the assembly completely under his thumb and after he spoke for an hour and a quarter, we longed to hear him cease. It was a tremendous experience and I was deeply moved.⁵³

On April 6, 1900, Palmer delivered the principal address at the Confederate Decoration Day Memorial Service. During the course of the address Palmer very clearly pronounced his allegiance and the allegiance of his comrades to the progress of the national destiny:

It is true that mighty changes have passed over the country and over the people. We are now one nation, and it is for us to shape our destiny. The same spirit that was true in its loyalty to the Confederacy is as true in its loyalty to the national standard today. We were patriotic heart beats today than the heart that beats under the words hidden by the Gray.⁵⁴

Commenting upon Palmer's delivery, the Pleynure stated:

Dr. Palmer's words, full of such deep meaning and pathos, were uttered so plainly and distinctly that they reached clear out to the confines of the vast assembly. It was a grand speech, worthy of the veterans and anti-Confederate, and worthy of the occasion.⁵⁵

A grand reunion of Confederate veterans was held in Louisville, Kentucky, May 20, 1900. Palmer was requested to deliver the main

⁵²Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 564.

⁵³M. L. Hall in Interview with the writer January 18, 1942.

⁵⁴New Orleans Times, April 7, 1900.

⁵⁵Ibid.

address. In view of the grandeur of the occasion, he made laborious preparations. Contrary to his usual custom, he wrote the speech in full and memorized it.⁸⁶ Although still faithful in pronouncing the Southern attitude of 1860 admirable and justifiable, the keynote of the speech was conciliation. Praising both the "blue and the gray" in their fidelity to principle, Palmer declared that now all colors blended as one as the nation marched forward under the burden of destiny. Through the medium of ethical and pathetic proof, Palmer set the mood for the occasion in the opening paragraph of his introduction.

Accustomed through sixty years to address public assemblies, I am nevertheless subdued with awe in your presence to-day; for we stand together under the shadow of the past. It is the solemn reverence one might feel in the gloom of Westminster Abbey, surrounded by England's illustrious dead. Indeed, we are here the living representatives of countless comrades who sleep in lonely cemeteries throughout the land, where perchance a single monumental shaft is the ghostly sentinel keeping watch over the bivouac of the dead.⁸⁷

The account of the Bannion appeared in the Picayune under the headline, "THE ORATION OF DR. PALMER WAS THE FEATURE OF THE SESSION OF THE GREAT REUNION ... OF THE VETERANS OF THE CONFEDERACY AT LOUISVILLE KY. ...IT WAS A GREAT DAY FOR LOUISIANA, AND EVERY LOUISIANIAN FEELS PROUD OF THE SPEECH OF THE FAMEOUS DIVINE."⁸⁸ Referring to the immense size of the audience and Palmer's power of holding the attention of the listeners, the Picayune stated:

The hall holds about 10,000 people, and there were crowds standing in the rear and all along the sides, and many of these, after the elaborate speeches of welcome, which left little to be said on that line, moved out of the hall, while their places

⁸⁶Dr. J. W. Caldwell states that Palmer said the attempt at memorization greatly hampered his delivery.

⁸⁷Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 565.

⁸⁸New Orleans Picayune, May 31, 1860.

were taken by others. Dr. Palmer's address was the last on the programme. It was a splendid sight, that man of 80, standing before the vast audience and holding their spell-bound attention for a period equal, or nearly so, to that occupied by all the preceding addresses.⁸⁹

Perhaps the greatest address of Palmer's last years was the

Century Lecture delivered at the request of the populace of New Orleans January 1, 1901. In the discourse, Palmer endeavored to "trace divine purpose through different civilizations and epochs." As in the previous address, Palmer's opening paragraph sounds in ethical and pathetic tones:

Then the request for this service was first submitted to me I was appalled at the magnitude of the trust involved, and was deeply humbled under the consciousness of my own insufficiency to meet the claim. But there is a sense in which the voice of the people is the voice of God; and when the cry comes up from a number of hearts that we should recognize God in his awful supremacy, it is a challenge from the throne itself, that we should all come and bow before the presence of His majesty.⁹⁰

After tracing the history of nations and peoples from the beginning of time until the present, Palmer described American civilization as being "aggressive." [sic]

And now, what is the truth to-day? That a haughty and aggressive civilization, such as ours, a civilization that has been growing up under the education of the nineteenth century--a civilization that has learned through science nature's most secret powers, brings forth hitherto unknown agencies, no more to be the toy of the scholar in the laboratory or the philosopher in his study and in his library, but to be harnessed to all the practical duties of common life--the very wonders of God's power harnessed to man's ear, and made each day to minister to and serve us in our wants, and make our lives happier and brighter--such might civilization has grown strong in its new discoveries, has mastered the great secrets of nature, has plowed beneath the surface and brought to the light those mines of ore, iron and lead and silver and gold, which disturb the repose of oceans, and is now shaking the earth to its center. ...More,

⁸⁹ Id.
⁹⁰ Palmer, Century Lecture [n.d., 1900], 1.

then is an aggressive [sic] civilization....⁹¹

In a most vehement exhortatory peroration, Palmer ascribed to history the task of revealing the splendor of God's love to man.

This earth, and we--we--we, in this sanctuary to-day, a part of this inhabited globe, shall, I hope, stand on this redeemed earth, this glorious and purified earth, this testimonial earth, this earth that, as it sweeps in its orbit around its appointed sun, shall testify to the glory of God in the redemption of man and the building up on earth of the kingdom which is righteousness and peace and joy forever. The vast significance of all this history of our ransomed earth is to reflect itself upon the destinies of mortal beings occupying, it may be, myriads of worlds, and touching them the glory of God in the last perfect revelation of Himself through the splendor and majesty of His love.⁹²

The account of the occasion as reported in the Pionyr was headed:

"THE CENTURY SERMON PREACHED BY PALMER, AT THE REQUEST OF PROMINENT CITIZENS, IRRESPECTIVE OF CREED--A MAGNIFICENT AUDIENCE GATHERING AT THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH TO HEAR THE PATRIARCHAL MAN OF GOD TRACE DIVINE PURPOSE THROUGH DIFFERENT CIVILIZATIONS AND EPOCHS UNTIL THE NEW ERA'S DAWN BRINGS HARMONY TO PEACE AND GOOD WILL ON EARTH."⁹³

Referring to the kaleidoscopic representation attending the address, the Pionyr declared:

The audience which Rev. Dr. B. H. Palmer addressed in delivering his century sermon at the First Presbyterian Church at 11 o'clock yesterday was one of the most representative that could be imagined...every denomination, race and calling was represented in the 2200 people who were packed into the great church. There were Methodists, Baptists, Episcopalians, Jews, German Protestants, Lutherans, merchants, scholars, professional men, representatives of the great business and railroad interests, shipping people, strangers in the city, young men and women, old men and women...and little children...who will see many of the wonderful things which will come to pass in the further march of civilization outlined in the eloquent words of the man who has

⁹¹Ibid., 4-15.

⁹²Ibid., 18.

⁹³New Orleans Pionyr, January 2, 1901. A large picture of Palmer appeared in the center of the page. Full text of the sermon was also recorded.

for forty-four years stood in the pulpit of the First church and uttered words of wisdom to three generations.⁹⁴

Palmer's majestic presence, his complacency, his dignified command of the occasion was attested to by the Playmate.

Dr. Palmer appeared just as for so many years he has, calm, self-possessed and dignified, and the sight of the pastor, standing with his back to the audience and his head bowed reverently during the prayer, and during the address standing or moving with ease and power, the master of himself and the English language, was one which will live long in the minds of those who saw and heard it.⁹⁵

The Times-Democrat was equally generous in its praise of Palmer's performance on that memorial occasion.

In reading it one will recognize its noble elevation of thought, its purity of expression, its profound sympathy, its rich rhetorical allusions, its nice historical perspective, its comprehensive grasp of the forces that have fought for empire throughout the history of the earth for four thousand years, and its wise emphasis of those eternal verities which have made and kept civilization what it is to-day. All this may be recognized in the printed words. But the potent personality of the speaker is absent. The simple majesty of his presence, the strange music of his voice, the unearthly gleam of his eye, the gesture dignified and impressive, the countenance luminous with intense conviction of God's eternal law--these no artist with pen or brush can adequately describe or portray. Looking upon him one felt in all solemnity and with profound pride that a city and country that could produce such a man surely had much energy for good.⁹⁶

After commenting upon the rapt attention accorded Palmer during the delivery of the sermon, the Times-Democrat related the reaction of one of his parishioners.

For more than an hour, in the densely-crowded church, the thronging auditors sat in reverent silence, listening to the words

⁹⁴Ibid.
⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶The New Orleans Times-Democrat, January 2, 1901. In addition to a large picture of Palmer on the front page, a large sized artist's conception of him delivering the address appeared on page 6. The full text of the sermon was also recorded.

spoken by one who was at once poet, priest, patriot, prophet, and patriarch. During the solemn address the clock in the rear of the church ticked audibly throughout the great congregation. No one moved. No one spoke. No one whispered. There was not even the slightest coughing so common in densely crowded halls and on damp days, cheerless and depressing. When the great spectacle of God's law had finished, a gray-haired parishioner in the gallery, who had listened attentively to every word of the discourse, turned to the man at his elbow and said soberly: "Three generations of Palmers. And the old doctor--eighty-two years old--tells younger than any of 'em." Then he added with strange earnestness and sincerity, measuring each word, he uttered: "Greatest man alive!"⁹⁷

On July 16, 1901, Palmer delivered the Baccalaureate sermon at the University of Georgia. J. W. Reed, registrar of the University in commenting upon the power of the sermon, stated: "I recall his description of Hell--it was not the usual fire and brimstone--it was shame from God and good for eternity. I can still hear that word ringing in my ears, eternity. It was the longest and most awful word imaginable."⁹⁸

Palmer's last address of note was delivered at Tulane University in February, 1902, shortly before his death. His subject, "Love of Truth the Inspiration of the Scholar," was a re-worked speech first delivered before the Philomathean and Euphonian Literary Societies of Bryn Mawr College some forty-eight years earlier.

⁹⁷ Ibid.,
⁹⁸ J. W. Reed in interview with the writer January 22, 1942.

CHAPTER IX

LAST DAYS

It has been mentioned previously that Palmer was still growing in power as a speaker when he passed his eightieth year. There is little evidence to support the surmise that he had lost to any appreciable extent his power over an audience and his command of a subject when he passed his eightieth birthday. Two of his greatest speeches, "Century Burns" and "Quadrant of Russian Question," were prepared and delivered at the age of eighty-two.

On his eightieth birthday, a reception was planned by the ladies association of his church. The meeting was held at Palmer's home. From seven in the afternoon until ten o'clock in the evening, some ten thousand people paid their respect to the venerable minister. From all parts of 1880, all creeds, all denominations, friends came to express their love and admiration. Three Jewish synagogues were represented and each presented Palmer with a handsome gift. The following tribute was paid him by representatives from "Temple B'nai":

For almost the lives of two generations has the Rev. Benjamin H. Palmer pursued his labor as a divine, performed his duties as a citizen and as a man in this the beloved city and our home. In other words of those several decades many trials have visited our sunny metropolis. The ravages of war, the chaos of political corruption, the raging of pestilence, threatening disaster without and unto dissensions within, have tested severely the manhood and the enlightened patriotism of the people of New Orleans.

From an early time our citizens of every field have learned to look for guidance and inspiration under public exigencies to one spiritual leader above others, to the man whose earnest eloquence was always bold in check by a courtly dignity, whose religious fervor was balanced by sincere love for the fellow man. They instinctively admire in Dr. Palmer the noble consistency of distinctly

entireties believe with truly human sympathies, the temperamental supremacy of human order and of lofty moral aspirations.¹

The following letter was received from friends in the Louisiana Soldiers' Home who remembered the services he had rendered them during the Civil War.

No still retain lively remembrances of your stirring battle addresses, which were delivered to inspire and comfort our young heartbeating them) at the outset of the great conflict when first marshaled together destined for terrible scenes of conflict. The memory of your cheering exhortations, your sentiments of patriotism for the cause of the South, and all the admonition of our duty toward the land we love, and, above all, the blessing of heaven so continually by you lavished upon our hosts, often in the dark hours of hardship and defeat, have poured a consolation, and in the "quadruple shock of battle, the triumph and the rapture of the fray" have been to us a soul-strengthening stimulus; for on those critical occasions our minds ever reverted to your words of hope and consolation.²

By order of the "faculty, students and committee," the Chancellor of Southern Presbyterian University sent Palmer the following communication:

The University whose foundation you helped to lay, and all whose interests have been dear to your heart, most heartily unites with your people in congratulations upon your eightieth birthday and prays that you may have many years to bless it with wise counsel and continued love.³

In addition to carrying accounts of the reception, the New Orleans press was most generous in its tribute to the character and contributions of the old and revered pastor. The following headlines appeared in the Times-Democrat and Pioneer: "THOUSANDS VISIT HIM IN HIS PRETTY SURROUNDINGS" "JOHN AND GENTILE JOIN IN RESPECTFUL HOMAGE TO THE GREAT PREACHER."⁴

New Orleans Pioneer, January 26, 1898.
New Orleans Times-Democrat, January 26, 1898.

Ibid.
Ibid.

"THE GOOD OLD MAN ELOQUENT BEACHE FORESCORE YEARS, AND ALL NEW ORLEANS,
IMPERVIOUS OF CHURCH ACKNOWLEDGING HIM MINISTER OF ALL THE PEOPLES"⁵

In lavish praise of Palmer's spectacular eloquence, particularly during the Civil War, the Times-Democrat made the following statement comparing him with Beecher and Spurgeon:

To say that R. N. Palmer is the Henry Ward Beecher of the South is to say less than the truth, for while he is gifted with a matchless eloquence of oratory its sources are so pure, so legitimate and so unconventional that his name as an orator and as a preacher must remain inseparable.

In this respect of oratory alone Dr. Palmer has won an international fame that dims the lustre of such names as Spurgeon and Beecher, which was evidenced at the beginning of the civil war, when his call to arms had the music and the thrilling splendor of the Marseillaise. It has been truly said that it was his burning words that set the South on fire. It was the here in him rousing up the here in his brother men. It was the emperors coming together in conclave.⁶

In 1890 Palmer made his last visit to Columbia and McPhersonville. In the Stoney Creek church in McPhersonville, where sixty-three years earlier he had made his profession of faith, he preached a farewell sermon. Commenting upon the address, Mr. Robert Ludie Fraser, Sr., of Walterboro, declared that "when Ben preached in McPhersonville all the churches in Walterboro turned out to go hear him." Referring to the sermon, he exclaimed, "My soul, gracious me, something fine."⁷ According to the Martin sisters, Palmer read the Thirty-sixth Psalm and chose as his text "All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me." "When he spoke his face was transfigured and his voice was wonderful, filling the room like an organ."⁸

By the summer of 1896, Palmer's eyes had begun to fail. The best

⁵New Orleans Pionier, January 28, 1890.

⁶New Orleans Times-Democrat, January 28, 1890.

⁷Robert Ludie Fraser in interview with the writer, January 29, 1942.

⁸Martin sisters in interview with the writer, January 30, 1942.

gradual onset effected no consolation, for his trouble was permanent. Eventually his vision became more imperfect, until in August, 1888, he wrote "For two years I have not read so much as five pages of ordinary print. With the aid of a strong glass, good light and large print I can read a little in the Bible."⁹ By 1900 he could neither read nor write. From then until the end of his life Palmer dictated his materials to Miss Gusie Colecock, his granddaughter, who in turn read them back to him.¹⁰

On the afternoon of May 5, 1902, Palmer was walking from his house on Palmer Avenue¹¹ to the First Presbyterian Church to attend the ladies' meeting. At the intersection of Palmer Avenue and St. Charles Avenue he was struck by a street car. Apparently he had neither seen nor heard the approach. Fortunately he was thrown clear of the car, but he received several injuries. Upon examining him, the physicians and surgeons in attendance issued the following bulletin:

Rev. Dr. B. H. Palmer's condition is as follows: After a careful examination made by myself and colleagues we find a comminuted fracture of both bones of the right leg about two and a half inches above the ankle joint; also compound fractures and lacerations of the three inner toes of the left foot, and, in addition, numerous superficial abrasions and contusions of the scalp, face, arm and legs. His condition we regard as extremely dangerous, but not hopeless.¹²

In spite of his crippled condition Palmer gave evidence of recovering during the first two weeks of his illness. However, infirmities that had troubled him in his late years, prostatic irritation and a kidney disorder, were so intensified by his weakened condition that by

⁹Quoted in Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer.

¹⁰J. H. Gellensall in interview with the writer, January 22, 1942.

¹¹A section of Henry Clay Avenue was renamed Palmer Avenue in honor of Palmer.

¹²New Orleans Times-Democrat, May 6, 1902.

May 26 his recovery was considered impossible. Commenting upon the consensus with which the daily press bulletins concerning Palmer's improvement during the first two weeks were received, the Times-Democrat declared:

Day after day, as the days went on the bulletins from the chamber of the distinguished patient grew more and more encouraging, and it is probably that no paragraphs published in the daily newspapers were read with more eager anticipation than these daily bulletins.¹³

In the midst of his suffering, Palmer was still thoughtful of his congregation. He dictated his last message to them Sunday, May 18. The letter, which was read from his pulpit by the compactor, Dr. W. T. Palmer, was characteristic of his concern for his congregation and his complete submission and humility to the "Divine Will."

It does not seem proper that a second Sabbath should intervene without a word of communication from me to the dear people of my charge--the members of the First Church and congregation.

I desire, first of all, to express my grateful sense of the warm sympathy and affection tendered me in this hour of trial. I can do nothing more than reciprocate most tenderly all the expressions that have been conveyed to me and to pray that they may be returned in measure of blessing upon those who have been thus lavish in their kindness to myself.

It is even more important, however, to urge that in this period of severe discipline we should both be prepared to meet whatever may be before us. As yet we cannot anticipate the changes which loom. My only desire is to suggest on the part of us both a hearty submission to the Divine will, which will order all things for the praise and the glory of His Church upon earth.¹⁴

On Tuesday, May 27, Dr. Joseph Holt issued the following bulletin: "Dr. Palmer is in complete coma and is gently clinking. The end is not immediately at hand."¹⁵ The following afternoon Palmer expired.

Immediately tremendous numbers of letters and telegrams of consolation began coming in from various sections of the country. For the next three days, May 28, 29, 30, 31, the press of the city was flooded with pictures,

¹³Ibid., May 29, 1902.

¹⁴Ibid., May 29, 1902.

¹⁵Ibid., May 27, 1902.

descriptions, biography, and tributes to Palmer. The headline and opening paragraph in the Times-Democrat read:

WHOLE SOUTH MOURNS DEATH OF DR. PALMER

To-day not only New Orleans but Louisiana and the whole South unite in mourning the departure to "that undiscovered country" of one of the brightest and noblest of the great men who have left an ineffaceable imprint upon the history of the community in which they have lived and labored. ... A noble career is ended, a mighty voice is stilled. Death has at last crowned one of the princes of the race. To the people of New Orleans it will seem quite impossible that Dr. Palmer's beloved lips should be forever silent—that the "old man eloquent" should no longer stand in the forefront of the daily battle against the cohorts of darkness.¹⁶

The lavish praise expressed generally by the press of the city is illustrated by editorials appearing in the Picayune and Times-Democrat.

Dr. Palmer was perhaps the most eminent orator upon the continent. His fame has gone abroad over the world. His eloquence was not a mere outpouring of well-chosen words arranged in pleasing phrases. It was in the flood of ideas, always expressed in the most fitting words, moving the heart of one moment or convincing the understanding at another, that his wonderful oratory excelled, and although it was in the pulpit that his magnificent public addresses were oftentimes heard, he was no less gifted on some festive occasion when he arose in response to a call to speak to some sentiment that was worthy of his greatness and dignity of character.¹⁷

In speaking of Richard Cobden, Mr. Disraeli most truly declared that certain illustrious men would always be members of the House of Commons, even though they were no longer in the land of the living. It may likewise be affirmed that the name of the great teacher will be forever borne on the golden roll of our citizenship. The splendid and strenuous life of this modern prophet was indeed inseparably intertwined with the ideas and aspirations of us all. In sunlight and shadow, in peace and war, his tongue was possessed of a redemptive magic. No barriers of creed could stand against a philanthropy which was rooted in the profoundest perception of the eternal verities. To such a mind and heart, every problem presents itself in its largest aspects alone. To such an intelligence the accidents of time and place are but the light which lends to the landscape of life its unfailing perspective.

The ordinary forms of praise are the merest impertinence in the case of him whose whole nature bore the ineffaceable impress of the Most High.

This old city has a stormy past, and we dare not hope that the future will bring calm in its train. Standing about the bier of the foremost moulder of our public opinion, we should resolve that

¹⁶Ibid., May 28, 1902.

¹⁷New Orleans Picayune, May 29, 1902.

and justice. If we be tempted to substitute the suggestions of greed for the standards of conscience, let us recall the accents of a voice which was never allowed to plead the merits of a creed so base."

The circle then in the Times-Democrat for May 30 read: "WITH HEARTY
DOUBTS THOSE WHO PASSED BEFORE THE BIER OF DR. PALMER. --ALL CLASSES

IN THE LITURGICAL Community upon the representative character of the

body that thronged the First Presbyterian Church the Times-Democrat

observed:

No official of New Orleans need be told of the highly representative character of the congregation that for more than forty years have been gathering in the First Presbyterian Church; but if one wishes to picture the throng that was slowly straining through its aisles last night he must sprinkle the average congregation with hundreds of poor and lonely whose presence would scarcely have been noted by the average Sunday congregation. ...There were old and decrepit negroes, men and women, who would not under ordinary circumstances struggle voluntarily with "their betters"; but who for one last look at Dr. Palmer, would have braved scorn and danger in their latest forms.²⁰

During the funeral ceremony the entire life and commerce of the city paused in reverent tribute. The Civil District Court, which was in session, adjourned at the request of members of the bar on Thursday evening, May 29, until the following Monday. The Board of Trade, the New Orleans Cotton Exchange, the New Orleans Stock Exchange, and other commerce suspended activities.

As the long procession left the First Presbyterian Church, "there marched behind the hearse a small detachment of men in gray. They were old and decrepit, and a few empty sleeves dangled in the breeze. Old and grizzled, they walked with halting steps as far as Camp Street and then turned down town. They wore a detachment from the Confederate Veterans' Band, and had gone to pay respect to the memory of the man who had encouraged them by his presence and by his words. It was like

²⁰New Orleans Times-Democrat, May 29, 1902.
¹⁹Id., May 30, 1902.
²⁰Id.

a chapter from the history of long ago."²¹

The road to the cemetery was lined with thousands of people. They stood with uncovered heads, bowed in reverent tribute; a silent testimony indicating that "a great man had passed their way." How fitting would have been the words of Ingersoll if gazing out over the multitude assembled at Washington Cemetery he should have uttered: "Could were everyone for whom he did some loving service to bring a blossom to his grave he would sleep tonight beneath a wilderness of flowers."

²¹ New Orleans Times-Democrat, May 31, 1908.

CHAPTER X

PALMER, THE PULPIT AND OCCASIONAL SPEAKER

It is the purpose of this section of the study to present, primarily in summary form, the more pronounced characteristics of Palmer as a speaker. As has been indicated previously Palmer's genealogical heritage, early training, and formal education were of such a nature as to equip him excellently for pulpit and occasional speaking.

Personality

With regard to stature Palmer was less than normal height, approximately five feet seven inches tall. In later life he was slightly stooped. His small head was covered with an unusually large amount of wavy hair. The eyes were dark brown, brilliant and piercing. His mouth was rather large and unattractive. From middle age until the end of his life his slightly receding chin was covered with a three or four inch beard. To the stranger there was little to note in Palmer's physical appearance other than those characteristics possessed by any ordinary person of average ability. However, to a more observant individual the entire countenance bespoke alertness, strength, a predominance of will, as well as kindness and sympathy. Although the face did not advertise those personality traits, the critical observer would have noted evidence indicative of unusual capacities. Palmer's more than sixty years of continued speaking in the pulpit and on the public platform is ample proof of his amazing physical vitality. During his professorship at Columbia Theological Seminary he frequently worked fourteen or fifteen hours daily. Prior to his accident at the age of eighty-four there was accessible evidence that several years of

services remained in the office. Longevity had been a Palmer characteristic. Benjamin's father had died at the age of ninety-four and his grandfather at the age of ninety-eight.

Palmer's intellectual equipment was of a high order. He was possessed of a passion for information. Not only did he read extensively, but he absorbed and retained the fundamentals of the materials read. While in the Seminary his fellow-students often remarked regarding his acuity of retention: "Palmer has only to put a book under his pillow and go to sleep; he will awake the next morning knowing all that is in the book."¹ Nor were his interests confined to his own particular field of endeavor. Many of his occasional addresses were upon subjects which required research far beyond the bounds of his chosen province.² Further evidence of his mental vitality is found in the fact that after graduation from the Seminary he resolved to master Hebrew, conceiving that the knowledge was necessary to a thorough understanding of the Old Testament.³ Greek, Latin and French yielded themselves to Palmer's questioning while he was still a student in the Seminary. Though perhaps not a profound scholar of history he knew well the great trends and movements throughout the ages.

Palmer's dialectic capacity and development was comparable to his faculties of retention. His wealth of information was stored away in logical order. The dominance of this faculty is indicated by the "series" of sermons he so often preached.⁴

¹Johnson, Benjamin Norman Palmer, 652.

²Illustrations of this type of addresses were: "Love of Truth the Inspiration of the Scholar," "Keromanism," and "The Tribunal of History."

³Dr. W. G. Odell in interview with writer, January 22, 1942.

⁴Illustrations of this type of series of sermons: "History of Christ," (Twenty-eight lectures delivered between 1886 and 1890); "Evidences of Christianity," (Eighteen lectures delivered about 1870).

The power of adequate and complete coverage of an idea or concept, even though it consumed twenty or thirty sermons, appealed to him particularly. This faculty of completeness of statement, this capacity for "piling up" salient points created the impression that his utterances were as "unanswerable as they were impressive." Palmer's endeavor at "total statement" was often directed by a lofty imagination which frequently lost itself in an appeal to idealism.

Among the "common traits" for which Palmer was noted may be emphasized courage, tact, self-assurance, humility and fidelity to conviction. As was illustrated by his stand taken during the anti-slavery campaign, the Jewish persecution, the Civil War, and the reunion between the Northern and Southern Assemblies, courage was a paramount trait of Palmer's personality. His career was an exemplification of the maxim "Only those are fit to live who do not fear to die; and only those are fit to die who have not shrunk from the joy and duty of life." Although Palmer was frequently accused by his opponents of being narrow and prejudiced on the issues of slavery, secession, and the issue of reunion between the Northern and Southern Assemblies, his courage, apparently founded upon deep conviction, seldom carried him to the point of rashness. Possessed of a certain even temper that left him relatively complacent following success and sorrow alike, Palmer was usually saved from pursuing foolhardy courses.

He was a power before the war in upholding with tongue and pen the constitutional position then assumed by the Southern people, and still held to be right by the South's greatest thinkers; and since the war he has been almost like a public conscience to a vast community, extending far beyond the reach of his voice, falling in cheerfully himself and exhorting them to fall in with the altered condition of things, and guiding them both by example and by precept to forgive as far as may be the bitter sectional animosities engendered by the war and by reconstruction.⁵

⁵New Orleans Times-Democrat, January 26, 1898.

Commenting upon Palmer's broadmindedness as well as aggressiveness and fidelity to conviction, Rabbi Leucht in a memorial addressed to Palmer stated:

Ben and women of our Commonwealth, I do not come here to-night to praise him or to add a new tribute to a sainted memory. I have come to weep a tear with you in common grief and to point out a ray of light in our bereavement. A tear has no fatherland and human of no theology--it is the tribute the human heart pays to its own sorrow--and it is also a symbol of joy when we have found consolation and peace, when at last a beam of hope pierces the clouds of pain and we. This grand privilege has been accorded to me, not because I deserve to stand here in the place hallowed by him, not because my weak words can ever pay him proper homage. For I have come because I loved him and he was my friend for so many years, and because we together were seeking light. Although seeking it upon different paths, we met and never quarreled as to the course. And here at once I touch the pivot upon which the character of Dr. Palmer revolved--broad-mindedness and large-heartedness. Only great men have the capacity of harboring strong convictions, and at the same time of allowing others to differ; only great men will take an opponent by the hand and say, "Be my friend."⁷

Another remarkable characteristic of Palmer's personality was that, the ability to move among his fellowmen, counsel them, at times reprimand them, and yet retain their respect. Referring to Palmer's employment of trust, Johnson said:

He seems to have an instinct for approaching problems social, political, ecclesiastical, precisely at the spot where his labors would be most easily effective. A shrewd fellow Presbyter, in illustrating this point, has said that often his brethren seemed to themselves to institute and carry on measures which they had never thought of, but for Dr. Palmer. He, the real instigator and director of the measures, seemed to be taking little part. But the thing which he desired was done. Others had come to desire it also and had, with a little public favoring help from his potent hand, done the thing. His kindness of heart, so great that he was always on guard against giving any one a needless wound, and so great that he was ever seeking to do some service to every man with whom he came in contact, was always coupled with his power to devise wise plans, and with his vigorous and indomitable resolution in pushing his plans, so that the righteous plan, and of the least friction, was always the one he sought and wished to push.⁷

⁶Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 646.

⁷Ibid., 656-659.

Illustrating Palmer's qualities of tact and humility, Arson related the following incident as told to him by his father:

Palmer was attending a Methodist revival meeting in a small town. He arrived late and sat down in a pew in the back of the church. Soon the minister was exhorting everyone to stand up and be prayed for. Everyone near Palmer arose but he remained seated. The minister, somewhat annoyed by the visitor's stubbornness, (he didn't know Palmer) singled the old gentleman out and pointing his finger at him, shouted, "You old gray-haired sinner, sitting in the back pew, stand up and be prayed for." Palmer calmly arose and was prayed for.⁸

The Reverend J. H. Wall, writing in the Presbyterian Quarterly, further emphasized the personality traits of tact and humility as exemplified by Palmer's conduct.

Greatest of living preachers, he was one of the meekest of men, lowly in spirit, absolutely wanting in self-assertion, never consciously or by intent over-shadowing others. ...More than one can tell how, after he had preached, perhaps with the depressing thought--"Dr. Palmer is sitting there listening, and the people would so much rather hear him, and he could deliver a message to them so much better than any I can speak"--that dear man would be the first to meet him at the close of the service, with a warm grasp of the hand, saying, "My brother, I wish to thank you for that sweet exposition; it went to my heart, and did my very soul good! Or, as on one occasion known to the writer, he said to the preacher, "It required great courage to stand before that congregation, constituted as it was, and speak such solemn truths as these which you have uttered; yet it gave no offence, because it was done in such manner and spirit, and I believe we ought to do more of that sort of preaching."⁹

Summarizing Palmer's personality traits in a memorial address, the Reverend M. B. Hillyard stated:

He had an intellect of great natural robustness; versatile and agile. His imagination was vigorous, easily kindled, of great power of flight, but trained to sanity and subordination. His fancy enlivened and adorned, but did not distract, dazzle or overdo.

He was a man of deep piety, most reverent reverence and exalted adoration. He had the enraptured gift of surrender to holy possession, and the will and capacity of self-command....

He was also a man of great level-headedness and supreme common sense. In fine, there reigned an exquisite harmony in make up of

⁸B. H. Arson in interview with the writer, January 30, 1942.

⁹Wall, "Benjamin Morgan Palmer," The Presbyterian Quarterly, XVI, 90-91, July, 1902.

the metaphysical, intellectual, moral, spiritual, and back of and above all, character transcendent, irreproachable, against which denigration or slander dare not stir their tongues: A "brow on which shame was ashamed to sit."

His gentility had a suave and mellow geniality; without a touch of levity or frivolity, without patronizing condescension or arrogant assumption of superiority, or any familiarity, save the sacred ease and lofty, yet holy, freedom that is the tender and precious privilege of conduct of a son of God with a brother in Christ: which opens the door of supremest intimacy, in a broad world of closest intercourse.¹⁰

Delivery

There is relative agreement among Palmer's contemporaries that his overt action was usually mild and at times almost totally lacking. After commenting upon Palmer's delivery from manuscript of the Thanksgiving sermon, William O. Rogers, who was present at the address, stated: "Palmer ... read ... slowly, carefully, with constrained voice—without a single gesture, without elevating his voice in any sentence during the hour of its delivery. The calmness of the speaker was the calmness of deep emotion held in check by the solemnity of the occasion."¹¹ Apparently Palmer utilized "intensity" rather than "volume" in attaining his end in this speech. "He never 'saw the air with his hand'," commented a correspondent in the Louisville Courier-Journal, "never 'bears a passion to tatters.' His action is never feeble, inept, commonplace, overdone, ungraceful. Except to a watchful artist, it would never distract or consciously delight, separately from the thought; for action is subordinated to utterance, intended to support and enforce it. The truly sympathetic auditor never sees any rhetoric in the man."¹²

¹⁰W. B. Hillyard, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, The Forensic and Pulpit Orator: The Citizen, Scholar, and Christian Pastor (n.p., probably delivered shortly after Palmer's death in 1902), 1-2.

¹¹Quoted in Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 219.

¹²Ibid., 427.

In reference to Palmer's use of gesture, Caldwell declared:

He spoke with mild gestures when he employed any. They always came after he had got into the swing of the speech, and were very free, natural and unpracticed. He frequently stood with one hand on the pulpit and the other behind him. Occasionally he folded both hands behind him.¹³

"His gestures were few," said Dr. Theodore N. Parker of Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, "except when dealing with the most emotional material-- even then sparingly. Yet his body seemed to become suffused with emotional fervor and he appeared much larger than he actually was."¹⁴

"I don't recall that he used any gestures," stated Dr. E. L. Hill of Athens, Georgia, "at least he had no characteristic gesture. He often held his head slightly back with one or both hands on the pulpit."¹⁵

Somewhat in contrast to Hill's statement, Hillyard gives the following detailed description of Palmer's characteristic procedure in the pulpit:

His almost invariable method was thus, until failing sight varied his announcement of texts: Read his text; closed his Bible; came to left of pulpit, and, assuming a pose most graceful and easy, placed right hand graspingly front of pulpit and near the left edge. Very soon his white handkerchief was taken gracefully out of his pocket, and opened and spread broadly with both hands and slowly held above waist-high. This done, he soon crumpled it into a loose, roundish mass in his right hand, with thumb and fingers pointing straight downward, and loosely encircling it. The handkerchief was then lightly placed on the left of the desk near the left and front of the pulpit. I do not think I ever saw him remove it afterwards. ...Then, were a series of gentle, changeful movements. Now a hand inside the top of the buttoned vest, with palm to breast, and hidden, and thumb exposed. Then three lower fingers inserted between his buttoned vest, high up, with thumb and first finger exposed. Sometimes this or the former movement would be conducted by his right hand, in conjunction with his spectacle-case held quite a distance in front or side, and well-high level with his head. Hardly any minute transpired that there was not some graceful and gentle change of pose in body. As exposition went on, movements of hands and arms warmed up; enforcing speech, emphasising meaning--all with striking grace and

13. H. Caldwell in interview with the writer, January 20, 1942.

14. T. N. Parker in interview with the writer, January 16, 1942.

15. E. L. Hill in interview with the writer, January 18, 1942.

appreciation.

An example of an unusual posture assumed by Palmer on a particular occasion was related by Doctor Bishop of St. Louis and is recorded as representing Palmer in an exceptional and not the normal speaking mode.

Dr. Palmer was delivering an apostrophe to heaven, praising God with every fibre of his being for the inestimable gift of an immortal Scripture, and not only praising God but triumphing in the fact of such a gift. I sat just behind him in the pulpit. When he began the apostrophe, his face was toward the South, the main audience to his left and the pulpit desk just at his back. His hands at the start were stretched to heaven, and his head thrown back. As the eloquent language of adoration and eulogy poured from his lips, his body leaned back more and more upon the marble pulpit behind him till at length first his shoulders and then the weight of his entire body rested upon the pulpit, and his arms fully extended toward heaven and his feet scarcely touching the floor. Was there ever such an attitude in the pulpit? The reading desk was low, reaching to the small of the back, the Bible itself yielding as a pillow support to his head. Yet, the pose was graceful, and the prostration backwards was begun, continued and ended without the slightest offense to good taste. But, surely, no one except Dr. Palmer could have done it.¹⁷

Palmer used covert action abundantly. His muscular tone was consistently in harmony with the emotion of the idea being expressed. Many are the references to his "majestic" presence and animated countenance, when under the spell of some powerful and moving sentiment.

He is then titanic and absolutely entralling. (wrote a correspondent of the Louisville Courier-Journal) and seems almost like a divine energy incarnate. A holy vehemence seizes his frame and convulses him with its transports. His voice peals and scars like some eternal sounds. His frame seems to dilate to superhuman proportions. He lifts his sympathetic auditor, in a spell of devout utterance, through flights of exultation to thrilled and almost breathless listfulness. At such times he seems most worthy of all men, in any earthly action, of that passage in "Hamlet" in Shakespeare's apostrophe to man:

"In action, how like a God."¹⁸

The Reverend Samuel Hall Chester in his Autobiography relates the

Mallory, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, The Forensic and Pulpit Orator: The Citizens' Bazaar, and Christian Pastor, 5-6.
Quoted in Jensen, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 426.
Middle, 426.

following story of Palmer's ability when on the platform to suffuse his body and countenance with a splendor and radiance. Ordinarily these qualities were inextinguishable. On this particular occasion Palmer delivered an address The Present Crisis and Its Issue at Washington and Lee University.

When Dr. Palmer began to speak Commodore (Matthew Fontaine) Maury turned to Mr. (John Randolph) Tucker and remarked, "He is the ugliest man I ever saw, sir." After Dr. Palmer had been speaking about ten minutes, Commodore Maury remarked to Mr. Tucker again, "He is getting better looking, sir." When the address was about two-thirds through, Commodore Maury, who had for some time been unable to sit quietly in his seat but had been unconsciously twisting and turning about as the result of his almost uncontrollable emotions, turned to Mr. Tucker and said, "He is the handsomest man I ever saw, sir."¹⁹

"In ten minutes," says Reed, commenting upon first hearing Palmer, "I had forgotten his ugliness, his shortness; he began to stretch up until he seemed full six feet tall. His eyes were like balls of fire. I never looked at a more handsome man."²⁰

Nature endowed Palmer with an excellent vocal mechanism. "His charm lay in his voice," exclaimed the Martin sisters. "It was wonderful--filled the room like an organ."²¹ "Palmer possessed an excellent voice," declared Parker, "resonant and without any trace of harshness, which carried to the corners of any chamber."²² Commenting upon Palmer's address at the Confederate Decoration Day Ceremony, New Orleans, April, 1900, the Picayune stated: "Dr. Palmer's words...were uttered so plainly and distinctly that they reached clear out to the confines of the vast assemblage."²³ "His voice is large," commented the Louisville

¹⁹Samuel H. Chester, Memories of Four-score Years, An Autobiography (Presbyterian Committee of Publication, Richmond, Virginia, 1934), 68, 217.

²⁰J. W. Reed in interview with the writer, January 17, 1942.

²¹Martin sisters in interview with the writer, January 30, 1942.

²²Theodore W. Parker in interview with the writer, January 16, 1942.

²³New Orleans Picayune, April 7, 1900.

Carrier-Journal, "just flexible; mellow, yet penetrating and sonorous, with a roundness and smoothness remarkable in one of such power. His whispers (when he whispers) can be heard anywhere in the large auditorium where he preaches."²⁴

The sheer carrying power of Palmer's voice was attested to by the Pioneer in commenting upon his address delivered before the Confederate Union at Louisville, May 31, 1900.

The hall holds about 10,000 people, and there were crowds standing in the rear and all along the sides... It was a splendid sight, that man of 30, standing before the vast audience and holding their spell-bound attention for a period equal, or nearly so, to that occupied by all the preceding addresses.²⁵

Commenting upon Palmer's speech, mechanism, Johnson stated:

His organs of speech were his greatest physical endowments for the function of preaching. His voice was "wonderful," indefinitely flexible and of great compass, adapting itself to the size of the audience room and the audience, always musical, even when thundering denunciations against sin and wrong, and often as sweet as a mother's lullaby. Apparently no description could do justice to this wonderful instrument. As he had the power by his choice of words, of calling up before the mind pictures, his own pictures of the things of which he spoke, so he had the power of expressing every emotion in his voice. His voice thrilled with joy, was smothered with weep, pulsed with hope, wailed with despair, responded to and interpreted to his congregation every phase of every emotion of his soul. So, at least, it seemed to his people.²⁶

It is probable that Johnson was too enamored with his subject when the above passage was written. However, in his Diary Palmer refers constantly to the rapt attention given him by his audiences. Press reports and contemporaries are consistent in their references to the strength, beauty, and power of Palmer's voice.

Based upon mathematical calculations and the expression of contemporaries, Palmer's usual rate of speaking varied between one hundred and five and one hundred and twenty-five words per minute.

²⁴Quoted in Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 429.
²⁵New Orleans Pioneer, May 31, 1900.
²⁶Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 663.

Seldom did his speed of utterance vary in either direction.

The elements of the conversational style, directness, intimacy, spontaneity, and a lively sense of communication, characterized Palmer's audience contact. Commenting upon the directness and intimacy of Palmer's delivery in his Century Sermon the Times-Democrat stated:

The occasion was characterized by a solemnity that was remarkable, owing not only to the significance of the celebration, but also to the personality of the speaker. ...Men and women... listened with well sustained interest to the noble thought nobly expressed by one who, in heart and mind, is concededly among the noblest men of his generation. Haraptured by the uplifting discourse of the speaker, the great throng of listeners sat for more than an hour under the spell of his majestically moving eloquence...²⁷

Speech Preparation

After the first few months in the ministry, Palmer discarded his trial method of memorizing his sermons. From 1842 until the end of his career, with two exceptions,²⁸ Palmer used the extemporaneous style. He followed the procedure of developing a skeleton outline and committing it to memory during the period of speech preparation. He, thus, appeared before his audience without notes. Commenting upon Palmer's success in employing the extemporaneous style, Johnson states:

His preaching after his new fashion was vastly more acceptable than his former preaching had been. His mental excitement in the pulpit was necessarily greater. Responding to the demand to clothe the skeleton sermon he held in memory in fitting the words as delivered, he inevitably underwent the exhilarating labor of recasting as well as reclothing the whole discourse. His exhilaration was imparted to his audience through noble speech, the commerce of his fine eyes, his graceful gestures, and his whole bearing.²⁹

In the preparation of his sermons, Palmer followed an unusual

²⁷New Orleans Times-Democrat, January 2, 1901.

²⁸These exceptions were the Thanksgiving Sermon, delivered in 1860 and the Confederate Reunion Address, delivered in 1900.

²⁹Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 81.

procedure. The study in his New Orleans home was large and spacious. A desk occupied one corner, leaving a diagonal of the room free from obstruction. Having completed an outline on paper, he left his desk and the sermon took form as he practiced it while walking the diagonal of the room. The Reverend Ogden Dunbar of the Napoleon Street Presbyterian Church of New Orleans declared that frequently in his visits to Palmer's study he found him "walking his sermon out."³⁰ He further stated that a well-worn path in the rug on the floor of his study indicated the diligence with which Palmer followed his self-styled procedure in speech preparation.

Speech Issues on Social Questions

Palmer was strictly a philosophical preacher. When he spoke, he endeavored to found his speech upon what he conceived to be some great principle of eternal truth. During his ministry he was brought face to face with certain issues that seemingly not only invited his condolence but demanded his attention. When the question of slavery first forced itself upon the ministerial world, Palmer remained silent. However, when the conflict at last seemed inevitable, he fearlessly pronounced his stand and proceeded to defend it from his own pulpit. He declared that it was not only duty but a divine trust bequeathed to the South to preserve and transmit our existing system of domestic servitude, with the right, unchallenged by man, to go and root itself wherever Providence and nature may carry it. When his opponents questioned the right of his mother state to secede from the Union, Palmer was quick to defend her action. He declared the Constitution to be a compact between the states, each retaining its sovereignty. Therefore, to Palmer

³⁰Ogden Dunbar in interview with the writer, February 24, 1942.

secession was not rebellion but an inherent right of sovereign states.

In 1881 when the lottery menace was threatening to perpetuate itself Palmer, in his famous address, indicted the company as being "essentially an immoral institution," whose express purpose was to "propagate gambling" within Louisiana and the surrounding territory.

The Russian persecution of the Jews in 1881 and 1882 was diametrically opposed to Palmer's catholic spirit. From the public platform he denounced the persecution as a barbaric practice. To Palmer the Russian display of mob violence and brute force against the Jews constituted an attack upon his belief in justice, mercy, and the ultimate triumph of ideas over physical prowess. In opposition to such atrocities he declared, "The true monarchs of earth are not the sceptered kings upon their thrones, but the men of patient thought, who enshrine great principles in immortal words and send them ringing around the globe."

When the split occurred between the Northern and the Southern Presbyterian bodies over the passage of the "Spring Resolutions," it was Palmer in his opening sermon before the assembly of Southern delegates who pronounced the paramount issues which necessitated the cleavage. In answer to the alleged practice in the Northern faction of allowing the church to become subservient to the State, Palmer, in his sermon, "The Headship of Christ," pronounced that "Christ and not Caesar" was the head of the church and that its mission was strictly spiritual and in no sense political. The second fundamental basis for differentiation was "doctrinal inclusiveness." Palmer's Calvinistic theology would not permit his acceptance of such a latitude of interpretation which allowed, as he declared, nearly all shades of doctrinal belief. Basing his arguments primarily upon these two fundamental differences, from 1869 until the close of his career, Palmer vigorously opposed all attempts to

remains the Northern and Southern Assemblies.

In reference to church standards Palmer stood for sound and certain Calvinism. The session records of his churches abound with evidence to substantiate this contention. He hated gabbling in all forms. Social dancing constituted a vice. The ordinariness of his church were maintained with predigious diligence. He was thoroughly a theological preacher. His ministry was a "living refutation of the widely current notion that the day of doctrinal preaching is over."⁵¹

Speech Organization

Palmer's method of speech organization seems to have followed a rather set pattern. His sermons were divided into three parts: introduction, body, and conclusion, or application, as he frequently termed it. His exordiums, preceded by scripture reading, were often eight or ten minutes in length. In this division of the speech Palmer endeavored, through narration and description, to explain the exact historical setting of the text. In the body of the sermon, the central idea underwent the necessary partitioning and each major issue was developed through the application of the various forms of support.

In the conclusion, which often assumed the vehemence of a peroration, specific application was made of the truth or principle established in the main body of the sermon. This same procedure was followed in the preparation of most of his occasional addresses. Palmer's omission of an introduction to his famous lottery speech was a rare exception. Commenting upon Palmer's method of speech preparation, Johnson states

St. Johnsen, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 661.

His plan, usually, then, upon announcing his text, was to show exactly what the text, in its historical setting connection, meant. This he did by a careful exegesis, giving often, in this preliminary step, as much matter, and in better form, as many ministers put into a whole sermon. Then having set forth in perspicuous terms the doctrinal teaching, which he had drawn from the text, he would proceed to enforce it by a series of arguments, generally powerful in themselves and so happily put as to carry general conviction to the hearts of his hearers. Following this would come an application which was often three-fold, or more, in the course of which the truth, previously developed by interpretation and argument, would be pressed with all his powers of appeal and persuasion.³²

"He usually read a passage of scripture," says Parker, speaking of Palmer's procedure in the pulpit, "selected a text and divided the sermon into three or four main heads and developed each by Biblical illustration. His introductions were rather long. He usually preached more than an hour always adequately summarizing."³³ Two specimen sermon briefs serve to illustrate Palmer's method of speech organization. The first brief is the oldest in the Palmer collection (available at the Historic Foundation, Montreat, North Carolina), dated Savannah, 1842, and the second, one of his last available briefs, dated New Orleans, 1900.

Deut 32:31 "For their Rock is not as our Rock even our Enemies themselves being judges"

This chapter records the song of Moses which he recited to the People, just before ascending Mt. Nebo to die there. It consists first in recounting God's providential dealings with his people; secondly, in showing the effect of poor parity [sic] in making them forgetful of God; & thirdly in threats pronounced against them if they continued apostate- Palestine is a rocky country, affording natural defenses from a sudden incursion of some Enemy: hence they would appreciate the metaphor which represented God as a rock- i.e. the strength, refuge & asylum of his Saints.

To gather the full meaning of this passage, we must regard the Jewish people in their peculiar character as the ancient visible children of God- & the proposition will then be, that God as the strength of his spiritual people, is a better defense than the world enjoys, the world itself being judge-

³²ibid.

³³Theodore W. Parker in interview with the writer, January 16, 1942.

I might show the reasons of this fact--why God should be the sufficient defense of his people--passing this by, I shall simply mention a few instances in which this confusion is wrong from the simplest--

1. At the hour of bereavement & affliction.
2. In the hour of death this usually an honest hour--we have such a shadowing dread of the unknown future, & such a consciousness of guilt, that confessions are usual on the bed of death--this not always true; for some are given over to delusion to believe a lie, as in the case of Hanne, the infidel--
3. In the hour of severe temptation.
All men must struggle with the Evil principles of their nature, if they would not be given over--there will be hours of temptation--at such times--the man have greater strength.
4. In the hour of calm & candid reflection.
God has written the brilliance of divine truth in our own consciences, so that at times men will confess to the same--only two exceptions to this: 1. those who are solemnly opposed to God, & will deny everything against their own consciousness-- 2. those who are so frivolous as never to spend one moment in serious reflection--
5. At the judgment Res--Here there is no exception found--all confess the value of the Believer's hope--

Application--

1. to professors--we should so live as to compel the confession that our hopes are above those of the world--
2. to sinners--if the hope be more valuable than yours, what hinders you from possessing it--

(Second brief, dated New Orleans, 1800).•

Rev. 13:6--I have written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Christ here presented as offered in sacrifice from eternity. This explained in that there can be no succession of thoughts and moments with God. Nothing relative with Him except as to their fulfillment in time. The relativity is to us not to Him.

It is well to inquire what this fact imports to us.

1. It shows that there can be but one atonement and one religion for the human race. How historically Abel's sacrifice as revealed immediately after the promise of the woman's seed. Also the slaying of Adam and Eve with skins of beasts. Then, down to Noah and the supernatural clean beasts in the Ark offered in sacrifice after the flood. Then, Abraham and his sacrifices--especially the story of Isaac and the ram, again connecting sacrifice with a human sacrifice. Then, all fulfilled in the death of Christ. Summable that even in idolatry bloody sacrifice and human sacrifices prevail, showing that even the heathen have had the Gospel and lost its connections.

2. That the names of all saved were always written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

See Rev. 20:12-15. 1 Pet. 1:19, 20. Eph. 1:14, 5. These the seed given to Christ as shown in Jno. 17. Since all men would reject the all-sufficient atonement of Christ, God secures a reward to His Son in the exercise of His own sovereignty snatching some brands from the burning.

3. The Church a unit in Christ, an organized body in Him, not sharply isolated individuals. See Eph. 1:22, 23. This

foundation of fellowship and of love to the brethren, etc.

4. The certainty of believer's salvation as flowing from all this. (a) Since the provision was made from eternity. (b) Their names written then in the book of life. (c) That this life centers in the risen Redeemer. (d) Implanted and preserved by the H. G. (e) Important to notice that the salvation of man is but a part of the method by which God glorified Himself in the overthrow of sin. Remarkable that the first promise of a Redeemer was addressed not to the first pair, but as a part of the curse to the serpent.

Import of this: Hence in the plan of salvation there must be exhibited justice and mercy side by side and standing over against each other.³⁴

Types of Proof

Except when dealing with highly emotional material Palmer

maintained a relatively desirable balance between ethical, pathetic and logical proof. When speaking on the subjects of slavery, secession and the lottery, Palmer was inclined to employ a disproportionate amount of ethical and pathetic proof. Palmer's sermon to the Crescent Rifles, delivered in 1861, illustrates his lack of logical support and development and his strong reliance upon pathetic proof. During the course of the address, Palmer declared that the conflict was "an issue between religion and atheism;" that the Union demanded "a new Constitution, a new Bible, and a new Code." Although these phrases, hasty generalizations, might have sounded persuasive to a Southern audience,

³⁴These briefs are available in the Historic Foundation, Montreal, North Carolina. At the end of each brief Palmer indicated the places and dates of the sermon's delivery. The first brief was delivered seven times: Savannah, July 17, 1842; Columbia, June 26, 1843; Savannah, September 23, 1849; New Orleans, August 22, 1850; Columbia, July 17, 1864; New Orleans, August 23, 1867; New Orleans, May (?), 1899.

Palmer not only failed to prove but avoided even an attempt at the logical development of his premises.

In contrast to his speaking mode, when writing upon the question of slavery and secession, Palmer employed adequate logical proof. His answer to Breckenridge's article "Our Country: Its Peril and Its Deliverance" was confined entirely to an examination of the "legal" aspects of the issue involved. Ethical and pathetic proof were almost totally lacking. With the deliberateness of a Calhoun, Palmer analyzed, synthesized, marshalled his facts and arrived at his conclusion.

The evidence tends to indicate that during his later years Palmer revealed the tendency toward greater reliance upon ethical and pathetic proof. A striking example of Palmer's employment of ethical proof is found in the introduction to his Thanksgiving Sermon. At least five techniques are utilized: personal vindication, reputation, position and status, popular trust, and the use of the pronoun I.

You, my hearers, who have waited upon my public ministry and have known me in the intimacies of pastoral intercourse, will do me the justice to testify that I have never intermeddled with political questions. Interested as I might be in the progress of events, I have never obtruded, either publicly or privately, my opinions upon any of you; nor can a single man arise and say that, by word or sign, have I ever sought to warp his sentiments or control his judgment upon any political subject whatsoever. The party questions which have hitherto divided the political world have seemed to me to involve no issue sufficiently momentous to warrant my turning aside, even for a moment, from my chosen calling. In this day of intelligence, I have felt there were thousands around me more competent to instruct in statesmanship; and thus, from considerations of modesty no less than prudence, I have preferred to move among you as a preacher of righteousness belonging to a kingdom not of this world.

During the heated canvass which has just been brought to so disastrous a close, the seal of a rigid and religious silence has not been broken. I deplored the divisions amongst us as being, to a large extent, impertinent in the solemn crisis which was too evidently impending. Most clearly did it appear to me that but one issue was before us; an issue soon to be presented in a form which would compel the attention. That crisis might make it imperative

upon me as a Christian and a divine to speak in language admitting no misconception. Until then, aside from the din and strife of parties, I could only mature, with solitary and prayerful thought, the destined utterance. That hour has come. At a juncture so solemn as the present, with the destiny of a great people waiting upon the decision of an hour, it is not lawful to be still. Whoever may have influence to shape public opinion, at such a time must lend it, or prove faithless to a trust as solemn as any to be accounted for at the bar of God.³⁵

Near the close of his Washington Artillery Address, delivered in 1861 to soldiers departing for the Virginia front, Palmer is seen at his best in the employment of pathetic proof. A gamut of pathetic techniques are utilized in a single paragraph: Appeal to justice, pride, patriotism, duty, deity, idealism, and sanctity of the home.

It is fitting that here, in the heart of this great city--here, beneath the shadow of this Hall, over which floats the flag of Louisiana's sovereignty and independence, you should receive a public and a tender farewell. It is fitting that religion herself should with gentle voice whisper her benediction upon your flag and your cause. Soldiers, history reads to us of wars which have been baptized as holy; but she enters upon her records none that is holier than this in which you have embarked. It is a war of defence against wicked and cruel aggression--a war of civilization against a ruthless barbarism which would dishonor the dark ages--a war of religion against a blind and bloody fanaticism. It is a war for your homes and your firesides--for your wives and children--for the land which the Lord has given us for a heritage. It is a war for the maintenance of the broadest principle for which a free people can contend--the right of self-government. Eighty-five years ago our fathers fought in defence of the chartered rights of Englishmen, that taxation and representation are correlative. We, their sons, contend to-day for the great American principle that all just government derives its powers from the will of the governed.

It only remains, soldiers, to invoke the blessing of Almighty God upon your honored flag. It waves in brave hands over the gallant defenders of a holy cause. ...Soldiers, farewell! and may the Lord of Hosts be around about you as a wall of fire, and shield your head in the day of battle!³⁶

Palmer's use of pathetic proof in his routine sermons is illustrated

³⁵ - Benjamin Morgan Palmer, Slavery A Divine Trust (George F. Nesbitt and Company, New York, 1861), 5-6.

³⁶ - New Orleans Daily Delta, December 1, 1860.

by Hillyard's description of his habit of depicting heaven in many of his sermons.

At the close of almost every sermon, he unfolded heaven. In many years of hearing his sermons in the morning (I hardly ever heard him at night) he depicted some aspect—one or more—of our final home. The muscularity such a practice gave to the imagination, and the capacity for continuity or sustainedness of contemplation, for long years, are innumerable. ...I doubt if ever, in any sermon I heard, there was not the melted heart, the tearful eye, the feature-play, the sympathetic voice, in this phase of his delivery. Everybody knows that almost any preacher (or layman, for that matter) who, deeply moved, speaks of heaven, will stir his auditors, be they pious or not. Again, think of the above, coupled with a grandeur and spell of delivery such as I never know, and see if he must have not been always eloquent.

It is strange how few ministers I have heard, and so few great writers have depicted Heaven. ...Dr. Palmer was not an occasional visitant to Heaven. Every Sunday morning he took us there; and it was the climax of every sermon.⁵⁷

However, in contrast to a tendency to rely rather heavily upon pathetic and ethical proof in many of his occasional addresses, Palmer's routine sermons are usually developed through the use of logical proof. It must be emphasized that Palmer's preaching found its basis in what he conceived were the "great eternal truths." Having deliberately made up his mind that the Bible was the word of God, and that the Calvinistic theology afforded the best set of standards, he devoted his entire energies to expounding the doctrines therein contained. Although capable of successful expository preaching, his logical turn of mind better fitted him for topical preaching, a method where the logical and systematic tendencies have better chance of utilization. Contrary to his use of inductive reasoning, specific instances, authority, causal relations, and analogy, in the main Palmer adhered to deductive forms.

⁵⁷Hillyard, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, The Forensic and Pulpit Orator: The Citizen, Scholar, and Christian Pastor, 8.

The Reverend Henry W. Field, visiting in the South during the eighties, heard Palmer and was struck by the power of his logic. He declared:

It was a great pleasure to listen to such a prince of preachers, whose ideas are not chaotic, like those of many of the brilliant "pulpit orators" of the day, but who has in his mind a clear, well-defined system of truth, which he firmly believes. His mind is logical; it moves, not in an eccentric orbit, but in a straight line, advancing from one position to another. It is an intellectual study to observe his way of opening a subject: how he accumulates proof upon proof, and argument upon argument, marshalling them one after the other with a military precision. ...Nor does he stop with intellectual conviction, but enforces the truth with the most direct personal application. Old Lyman Beecher used to define eloquence as "logic on fire"—a phrase which describes exactly that of Dr. Palmer. It is refreshing in these days of puny preachers, who hesitate and stammer even over the words of the Almighty, to listen to one who knows what he believes, and whose force of conviction speaks out in his clear, ringing voice.⁸⁸

Bright L. Moody was preaching in New Orleans during Field's visit there. After hearing Palmer on a Sunday morning, Field heard Moody in the evening. Commenting upon their antithesis in style he again mentioned Palmer's tendency toward logical development.

Very different was the scene at night, when three thousand people gathered in the largest hall of the city to hear Mr. Moody, whose style is the greatest possible contrast to that of Dr. Palmer, as he seems, in his free, off-hand way, to disdain logic, and yet he has a logic of his own; though he is so eager to get close to his hearers that he is impatient at being delayed by formal arguments.⁸⁹

With reference to Palmer's occasional addresses delivered before literary societies, the facts tend to indicate that he usually followed the method employed in his routine sermons, a rather extensive use of logical rather than an abundance of pathetic or ethical proof. This fact would tend to indicate that Palmer was aware of the type of audience

⁸⁸Henry W. Field, Blood is Thicker Than Water: A Few Days Among Our Southern Brethren (George Munro, New York, 1866), 77-78.
⁸⁹Ibid., 78.

addressed and that he used the method of development and substantiation best fitted to the particular group. Palmer's impassioned speeches delivered during the Civil War and even his memorial addresses abound in pathos and ethical proof. This tends to indicate that Palmer was conscious of the fact that, particularly during crises or at gatherings reminiscent of crises, the populace was more rapidly moved by persuasion than by classical logic.

Style

Perspicuity and unity were wedded characteristics of Palmer's style. Occasionally on the printed page his sentences appear long and overladen with clauses. However, there is no evidence to indicate that the audience found Palmer's style aught but lucid. The simple division of his sermons and addresses into a few main heads, which in their development kept the discussion moving forward, is illustrative of the clearness and unity exemplified in the development of Palmer's materials. "Amplitude of survey," says Johnson, "acumen, cogency of reasoning, force of phrase and statement, lucidity of enunciation, harmonious proportion of treatment, resistance of digression and circumlocution, the capability of throwing away unnecessary ideas—all mark his sermons."⁴⁰

Palmer was particularly successful in couching lofty principles and large concepts in language that at once became direct and simple. "He was as fine a master of the English language," says Parker, "as I have ever heard. He was never at a loss; each word fell into place

⁴⁰ Johnson, Benjamin Morgan Palmer, 428.

with marked precision.⁴¹

A combination of simile, epithet, sarcasm, epigram, vehement and mild invective were elements that added force to Palmer's style. Seldom were these elements arrayed against a background of righteous indignation, a technique frequently resorted to by those impoverished of information and devoid of essential analytical faculties. Beginning in college, Palmer had striven to avoid the mere use of normalities of language. He demonstrated unusual ability in coining striking phrases. In describing the eagerness with which the public awaited the appearance of Breckenridge's article on secession he stated: "Public expectation was raised on tiptoe." After having read the article, Palmer remarked: "We have laid this pamphlet down, after a third perusal, with a feeling of disappointment raised to the third degree." Expressing his opposition to the subordination of the church to the state in his sermon before the delegates to the Southern General Assembly in 1861, Palmer declared: "Chain not the church of Christ to the chariot wheels of Caesar." This variety of expression gave spontaneity and vigor to his style.

However, the dominant characteristic of Palmer's style was his abundance of figures of speech. Of the various figures employed metaphorical imagery and the simile were predominant. It would be difficult to read more than a few lines of any of his speeches without encountering one or the other of these figures. Palmer's description of Breckenridge's conception of the powers of the federal government is illustrative of his use of the metaphor and the simile.

⁴¹ Theodore H. Parker in interview with the writer, January 16, 1942.

No government will fill the eye of his ambition, which does not open the breadth of a hemisphere, and bathe its feet at once in the waters of the Gulf and of the Lakes. The silver trumpet is taken from the wall to break the slumber of an enchanted nation, which must rise and shake itself for an imperial career. The spectre of disunion must hie back to its grave among the buried seditions of the past. Whole states, stripped of their sovereignty, stand shivering before his buffeting and scorn, to be sent, like whipped children of the nursery, whispering and suppliant to bed.⁴²

In an omitted description of nature in his address "The Love of Truth, the Inspiration of the Scholar," Palmer's imagery and noble phrasing is reminiscent of Milton's loftiness of style.

This universe, both of mind and matter, presents itself in diversified panorama before him. No dull uniformity prevails, but myriads of objects make up the changeful scene. Here the Earth spreads out her broad bosom, on which, at intervals, the mountains lift up their peaks to kiss the heavens—now covered with eternal snow—now belching smoke and flame from subterranean fires—now the blue haze, like a veil of gauze, half conceals yet half reveals, their peaceful outline on the sky. Within their dark shadows sinks the lonely vale or the deep ravine, the fountains of Almighty power. Here, the toppling avalanche crashes on its path of ruin, and sends its hoarse thunder through the vault of heaven; while here, the flaming cataract leaps the shaggy precipice, and hisses in the boiling depths below. Anew, the canvass shifts; and,

"The full-faced moon sits silver on the sea,
The eager waves lift up their gleaming heads,
Each shouldering for her smile."

And now, a sleeping giant when the rough wind has wakened,—"The rumed sea, white with wrath, strikes at the stars." Then, in endless series of dissolving views, is unfolded the richer scenery of the sky. The fleecy clouds, grotesque and massy, form into Gothic piles of castellated ramparts, which seem to mock the proud architecture of the builder, man-or, rolling up in huge embankments, rugged and vast, present mountain ranges beneath which the wildest Alpine solitudes grow tame-or, gathering round the setting sun, tinged with mellow light, a dark drapery fringed with pearl and gold, they draw the curtains round the couch on which he sinks to rest.⁴³

⁴²Palmer, A Vindication of Secession in the South, 12.

⁴³Palmer, The Love of Truth, the Inspiration of the Scholar.

Although the rhetorical question was not a pronounced characteristic of Palmer's style, he frequently used it. In his lottery speech Palmer employed rhetorical questions as one of the chief techniques in punctuating his illustrations and arousing the spirit of the audience. In summing up the lottery as a gambling device he asked: "What value does the gambler ever create? What new value does he ever stamp upon the value which existed antecedently?" After illustrating the operation of the lottery company, Palmer inquired: "Mr. Chairman, I do not wish to appear harsh, but will you draw for me the line between this and absolute stealing?" In his peroration Palmer raised the question as to the future action of the citizens of Louisiana upon the lottery house. He exhorted: "...are we sir, to abandon such a land as this, created by beneficent heaven and secured by the patriotism of the fathers that went before us? Are we to deliver her, bound hand and foot, to such an enemy as this?" Palmer's contemporaries seemed to be in unanimous agreement in declaring that he did not use humor in his sermons. An quotation of more than one hundred sermons has failed to reveal any traces of humor. Finally, some eight or ten persons offering reminiscences on Palmer were in unanimous agreement that he employed no humor in his sermons. For example, Hill stated: "Palmer did not use any anecdotes or wittoles in the pulpit. Preaching was a serious business with him. However, in a group of friends he was most congenial, laughed heartily and got others to laugh."44 "Palmer used no

44E. L. Hill in interview with the writer, January 16, 1942.

humor or witticism in the pulpit," says Caldwell, "but was very jovial and humorous when among groups."

Rarely did Palmer employ humor or witticism as factors of attention or as forms of illustrative support in his occasional addresses. The notable examples illustrate his use of humor, or more rightly stated, witticism or whimsicality. In the introduction of his address to the graduating class of the Medical Department of the University of Louisiana, March 17, 1881, he said:

~~and~~ I do not know the principle upon which I have been selected as your orator to-day, unless it be that of Sidney Smith's famous witticism—that the best qualification of a critic is to know nothing about the book he undertakes to review. My acquaintance with the subject of medicine is measured exactly by ten grains of blue mass, administered on two separate occasions, and by which I was salivated both times. With such an experience at the threshold of medical investigation, you can well understand that your noble science has remained to me the forbidden tree of knowledge. The only claim which I can honestly assert is that of being a doctor's model patient, with absolute faith in his professional [sic] skill and in the awful potency of his drugs.

But, gentlemen, whilst entrenched behind a paradox which reaches for my competency to address you, I think it safe not to press its authority too far. The ass in the lion's skin makes an imposing appearance until he attempts to rear; when, alas, the raiment is betrayed by the voice.⁴⁵

The Pietyune records the following account of a witticism employed by Palmer in his fifth lecture of the series on "The Philosophy of History," delivered before the Sylvester Larned Institute.

On the Friday evening following, the speaker announced, that as it would be an evening between Christmas and New Year's, he would allow the young ladies sufficient time to recover from the effects of egg-nog, before calling them together again, as such proxy matter as was contained in his lectures on philosophy of history would not be so palatable to them as the good things of these times.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Palmer, An Address at the Commencement Exercises of the Medical Department of the University of Louisiana, New Orleans, March 17, 1881 (n.p.), 1.

⁴⁶New Orleans Pietyune, December 18, 1870.

Rhythm was a characteristic of Palmer's speaking mode that gave a ease to his style. This quality was not necessarily a technique that he developed after many long years of practice in the pulpit. As a student at the University of Georgia Palmer amply demonstrated his capacity for rhythm, cadence, and ease in his speaking. His address, "That is the True God of Rational Existence," delivered before the Phi Kappa Society of Franklin College only a few weeks after his twentieth birthday contains many rhythmical passages. In commenting upon the fundamental law of change, Palmer drew the following analogy:

Adventures have arisen in politics, in morals, in religion; and, like "bill o' the waps" gleaming athwart the darkness and confusion have decayed men from well trodden highways only to be loath and the mazes of experiment or plunged into the mire of fanaticism. Oftentimes too, conflicting opinions, pushed to extremes by opposing advocates, produce the most destructive as well as wonderful phenomena in the mental world. As upon the wide ocean, conflicting winds sometimes seize the light waters and, sending them up in swift gyration, create the dreaded waterspout which speeds along the plain, leaping from ridge upon the surge, till crossing the track of some unconscious bark, the consciousness of contact is broken and the watery column buries beneath its falling weight the victim of its violence--and no trace is left of the fatal deed other than the churning of the waters as they whirl, in malicious sport, around the spot of burial; so in life conflicting opinions create the moral and mental waterspout more destructive as it crushes in its fall not a passing few, but communities of countries and lands.⁴⁷

In his presentation Palmer directed the attention of his society brethren to the true meaning of the Kappa badge. Although the phraseology tends to "swell of the lamp" it has a vehemence, an elevation, a rhythm indicative of a more subtle style in the offing. Some of the phrases may appear hackneyed and banal today. They were more novel, newer when they were delivered one hundred and four years ago.

⁴⁷Quoted from The Athens Southern Banner, March 17, 1836.

No sooner hath yonder sun set in his glory, than this badge must be plucked from our breasts, and ourselves acknowledged but as citizens in a great world. Be it ours then, now and in after life, to be recognized by the noble, more enduring-though, I trust, the not distinctive badge; the badge of usefulness. And when we shall have passed from the stage of existence, let those who would trace our progress through life's barren waste, trace it not by the vestiges of the ruthless destroyer-but by the reeds strewn by the hands of our beneficence to smooth the ruggedness of the way. Our dirge will not then be the moan of the heart-riven sufferer, but the song of the happy shall chant requiem. Thousands "shall arise and call us blessed"-their hearts shall be our graves, and garlands of affection will forever deck the spot of our interment. Let the dignity and responsibility of your station nerve you to continuous action and stimulate you to a course of systematic usefulness; and throughout life's busy and tedious windings, remember that I said-"ye are God's-Immortals."⁴⁸

Interpretation and Evaluation

An appreciation of Palmer's Amherst experience is essential to a basic understanding of many of his attitudes and actions. His experiences over a period of some eighteen months prior to his dismissal were hectic ones. As he stated afterwards, "It was an uncanny time for Southern men to trim their sails for Northern seas." Upon arrival at Amherst, he was called upon immediately either to defend the position of South Carolina or remain silent while he listened to epithets cast at his home state. There being few to lend him aid in his defense of South Carolina, he was, in his vernacular, "baited until he was as cross as a brown bear." Psychological wounds when inflicted in youth not infrequently leave attitudes, legitimately or otherwise, that the span of a lifetime scarcely alters appreciably. Not only had Palmer built up strong resistance to the Northern attitude on secession, but his experience with the Amherst faculty probably weakened his respect for Northern integrity.

Between 1834 and 1860 Palmer's choice of the ministry and his

⁴⁸ Ibid.

successful promise of the profession was of extreme significance. Because of his unswerving belief in the "headship of Christ" it was logical for him to seek a divine justification for the institution of slavery. Far in so doing, by his logic, he was supported by the ultimate authority as well as by a potent institution, the Church. The strength of his conviction was attested to by the fact that when the crisis came a pulpit habit of two decades went overboard; he discussed a political issue from his pulpit. Even after the conflict, upon occasion, Palmer's intellect was often taxed in order to restrain emotions which arose from psychological wounds that seemingly refused to heal.

In later life when his humanitarian and catholic spirit was universally proclaimed, he continued to fight the reunion of the Northern and Southern Assemblies. Although seemingly his reasons were objective, it is probably that his actions were partially prompted by age-old emotional complexes. To his opponents, Palmer's stand appeared to be rooted in prejudices, but to Palmer, his actions sprang from sincere conviction.

Prior to the outbreak of the Civil War and during the struggle, the Union government considered Palmer both an influential and dangerous figure as a speaker; influential throughout the South and therefore, because of his beliefs, dangerous to the Union cause. The title of "arch rebel," an appellation by which he was frequently called, together with Butler's fixation of a price upon his head, supports this contention.

Palmer's Thanksgiving Sermon was an expression of the beliefs held in general by the South. Palmer was able to crystallize the thinking of

his fellow citizens into concise and bold utterances. The influence of the sermon is illustrated by the unusual demand made on the press for copies. The full text of the speech appeared three times in the Daily Letter.

With the possible exception of Thornwell, Palmer was the greatest single force in the Southern Presbyterian Church for almost half of a century. Prior to the Civil War, while yet a young man in his thirties, he received many calls from important churches in the mid-west and east: St. Louis, Baltimore, New York, Philadelphia. So numerous were the demands for his services and so strong was the desire of his friends in the South to keep him there, that as a body, in 1858, they petitioned him to remain among them. When the breach came between the Northern and Southern Presbyterians, which resulted in the organization of the Southern Assembly, it was to Palmer that his colleagues turned to deliver the opening sermon. This speech not only set the tenor for the immediate occasion, but pronounced principles which the organization was to follow for decades. So powerful was the address that Palmer was immediately elected moderator of the Assembly and the sermon was recorded in full in the minutes, the only sermon ever to receive such a distinction.

When the first attempt at reunion was made by the Northern Assembly in 1860, it was Palmer who was made chairman of the committee to investigate the proposal and to submit a report. Because of certain fundamental differences in the two bodies, he directed the committee in its rejection of the plan. For the next thirty years he was steadfast in directing his colleagues in maintaining the principles upon

which the Southern Assembly had been founded.

It is difficult to estimate accurately the influence of Palmer's speaking upon the Louisiana lottery issue. Many of his colleagues claimed that Palmer's lottery speech was the turning point in the struggle. This evaluation is open to question, yet press reports and the testimony of his contemporaries indicate that the address moved the audience deeply; that it not only crystallized the thinking of the thousands who heard it but that they were fired with a zealous fervor that was contagious. It is safe to assume that Palmer's lottery address was the greatest single speaking effort directed against the lottery company during the many years of the struggle.

History has thus far failed to accord Palmer rank alongside America's greatest ministers of the nineteenth century, Henry Ward Beecher, Theodore Parker and Phillips Brooks. This may be due in part to circumstance and not to his lack of ability. Near greatness is a penalty often exacted of those speakers whose influence is cast on the side of the losing cause. Nevertheless, Palmer certainly ranks high among the greatest pulpit speakers of the South. For six decades his voice sounded from the pulpit; at times a potent force in directing the trend of public opinion; at times a strong influence in substantiating and vindicating a course of action consummated.

More important than Palmer's capacity for finesse in logical development, his excellent vocal mechanism, his majestic presence, and other attributes of delivery, was the realization by friend and foe alike that behind the speech was a speaker; a man whose character was above reproach, whose convictions could neither be bullied nor bought.

The particular niche, along the hierarchy of illustrious Americans, in which historians ultimately locate Palmer, is relatively unimportant. It is sufficient to state that he belongs among that great body of American citizens, some great, some less great, who, primarily through the capacity of effective speaking, have "enslaved great principles in immortal words" and have thereby left an impress upon the culture of their particular age.

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BIOGRAPHY

Wayne Carter Eubank was born May 23, 1909, at Claude, Texas. He received his elementary education in the Lakeview Public School, and his secondary training at Claude High School, Claude, Texas, graduating in 1928. He received his B. S. degree from the West Texas State College, Canyon, Texas, in 1930.

From 1931 to 1934 he was principal in the Friona High School, Friona, Texas. He received his M. A. degree from Northwestern University in 1935. From 1935 to 1939 he was speech instructor in the Amarillo College, Amarillo, Texas. Since 1939 he has been a teaching fellow in Louisiana State University.

EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: Wayne Carter Eubank

Major Field: Speech

Title of Thesis: BENJAMIN MORGAN PALMER, A SOUTHERN DIVINE

Approved:

Dallas C. Dickey
Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

C. P. Shauer
Liese Dickerson

E. Hott

W. H. Stephenson

C. Claude E. Kantner

Edgar A. Schuler

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