

111 CRAWFORD, JOHN R.

Publisher

Martinsburg, Winchester

Publisher of reprints of religious titles through press of John Alburtis (004) at Martinsburg and of Jonathan Foster (168) at Winchester.

Crawford was a Frederick County farmer who was evidently impressed by evangelical preaching with an apocalyptic overtone, as evinced by the two imprints he had published in the lower Shenandoah Valley. Both were intended as cautionary favors to his neighbors.

The first, issued in Martinsburg in 1811, was *A Solemn Warning to all the Dwellers upon Earth* by Nimrod Hughes. Hughes was a Virginian who had predicted that one-third of mankind would meet its end on June 4, 1812 based on his reading of the Book of Revelation; those that survived would have been spared on account of their piety; thus Hughes asked that all repent of their wickedness to save themselves. The work saw at least eight reprintings in the country, three of them in Virginia, and all of those privately published as Crawford's edition.

The second, issued in Winchester in 1813, was Lorenzo Dow's *Dialogue between Two Characters, Curious and Singular*. This evangelical evidently replaced Hughes in Crawford's eyes once the doomsday date had passed. Dow's theology was not extraordinary, being essentially Methodist, but his presentation was memorable; this work reproduced the style of Dow's regular engagements with skeptics, so providing any believer the tools to argue their views with similar authority. The dialogue was widely reprinted in America and England, and was regularly included in collections of his works.

There is no evidence that either printer – Alburtis or Foster – published these books out of any personal conviction, as both men were conventional Episcopalians. Rather, these were job-printing efforts for which they were undoubtedly well paid. Crawford's motives for publishing both are unknown, beyond the message carried in each work. His identity is even more opaque, given the dearth of a public record on him, and his not uncommon name.

Personal Data

Born: Between 1780 and 1795 in Virginia

Wife and three boys under ten recorded in 1820 federal census.

Sources: Imprints; 1820 Federal Decennial Census; *Life of Christopher McPherson*; Sellers, *Lorenzo Dow*.