

350 REID, JAMES – [ELDER JAMES REID]

Publisher

Winchester

Publisher of a sermon collection (1819) from Winchester press of Jonathan Foster (168).

Reid was a Baptist minister who published a collection of sermons in 1819 written by a non-conformist English minister. A native son of Fairfax County, he ran away from home in his adolescence, purportedly to obtain an education that his father was unwilling to provide. While he found a "common English education" in the neighborhood of Winchester, he also found his faith there, being baptized into "some church in the Valley," before being granted a license to preach on his own. Reid returned to Fairfax as a ministerial candidate and was ordained in 1816. He eventually served four pulpits in that area: Black Lick Church and Enon Church in Fairfax, Mount Pleasant Church in Alexandria (which he organized in 1819), and Occoquan Church in Prince William. His ministry continued until his death in 1830, a mission to which he was so devoted that he never married.

In 1819, Read contracted the Winchester press of Jonathan Foster to issue a new American edition of *The Almost Christian Discovered or The False Professor Tried and Cast* by Matthew Mead (1630-99); Mead was a non-conforming minister preaching in England during the Civil War and Restoration periods, described today as an independent divine; as a result, he was occasionally persecuted and once exiled to the Netherlands; Mead's fame as a theologian was largely posthumous and embraced by Baptists on both sides of the Atlantic. Yet Read's publication of Mead's sermons was not purely his idea; he was likely encouraged by Foster, who was moving his press away from newspaper publishing – the decade-old *Republican Constellation* – to focus on musical and religious imprints at that time; so Read's contract fit nicely into Foster's plan to make Winchester a publishing center.

As for Read, this one publication was seen by contemporaries as an example of his ministry. In his biographical sketch of Read, James Barnett Taylor quoted an unnamed colleague, who reported that Read "literally gave all his goods to feed poor sinners. Matthew Meade's *Almost Christian Discovered* was published and circulated at his own expense." This was usually the case with titles published by contract by Virginia ministers in the early Republic era, as few printers would chance the failure of such titles to sell. Read's memorialists all cited this charitable act. But unnoticed in those obsequies was the hymn collection Reid had published in Washington in 1828, the only other imprint he published in his lifetime.

Personal Data

Born: Apr. 30 1788 Fairfax County, Virginia.

Died: Aug. 3 1830 Fairfax County, Virginia.

Died unmarried and without offspring.

Sources: Imprints; Taylor, *Virginia Baptist Ministers*.