

A
HISTORY
OF THE
CHURCHES AND MINISTERS,
AND OF
FRANKLIN ASSOCIATION,
IN
FRANKLIN COUNTY, MASS.
AND
AN APPENDIX RESPECTING THE COUNTY.

BY REV. THEOPHILUS PACKARD, JR.,
Late Pastor of the Congregational Church in Shelburne, Mass.

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CONGREGATIONAL PREACHERS ORIGINATING FROM SHELBURNE.

1. *Rev. Amariah Chandler, D. D.*, was born in Deerfield, Oct. 27, 1782, and at about five years of age removed to Shelburne. For a further notice of him, see the account of the pastors of the first Congregational church in Greenfield.

2. *Rev. Rufus Childs*, the son of Dea. Israel Childs, was born in Shelburne, April 28, 1819; at about eight years of age removed to Waitsfield, Vt.; never graduated at any college, but pursued classical and preparatory studies at the academies in Jericho, Vt., Montpelier, Vt., Randolph, Vt., and Deerfield, Mass.; finished the regular course of theological study at the seminary in Gilmanton, N. H., in 1844; likewise spent half a year with Rev. Joel Fisk, then of Essex, N. Y., in theological studies; was licensed at Montpelier, Vt., in January, 1844; and was ordained as pastor of the church at Gilmanton Iron Works, N. H., Nov. 6, 1844, and the sermon was preached by Rev. Dr. William Cogswell. Mr. Childs was married to Miss Pamela Hobart, daughter of Rev. James Hobart of Berlin, Vt., in October, 1844. He still continues pastor at Gilmanton, N. H.

3. *Rev. Daniel T. Fisk* was born in Shelburne, March 29, 1819; is the son of Dea. Ebenezer Fisk, and nephew of Rev. Pliny Fisk, missionary to Palestine; graduated at Amherst in 1842; finished the regular course of theological study at Andover in 1846; was licensed by the Andover Association, April 7, 1846; was a resident licentiate at Andover about one year; supplied in Exeter, N. H., St. Johnsbury, Vt., and Williamsburg; was ordained as pastor at (Bellville,) Newburyport, Aug. 18, 1847, and the late Professor Bela B. Edwards, D. D., preached the sermon. Mr. Fisk still remains a pastor in that place.

4.* *Rev. Ezra Fisk, D. D.*, was born in Shelburne, Jan. 10, 1785, and was the son of Simeon Fisk, and a cousin of Rev. Pliny Fisk. He died in Philadelphia, Penn., Dec. 5,

1833, aged nearly 49. Rev. Dr. Ashbel Green read a biographical account of him at his funeral, in the lecture room of the second Presbyterian church in that city, from which the following extracts are taken :—

“ The Rev. Dr. Ezra Fisk, whose mortal remains are now before us, was born in the town of Shelburne, State of Massachusetts, in January, 1785; and in Williams College, in the same State, he received his academic education. He was graduated in 1809; having been, during his college course, one of the little band of pious youths, that met frequently for prayer, with a special reference to evangelical missions; and of which the well known and much lamented Mills and Richards were leading members. His classical studies previously to his entering college, and his theological studies afterwards, were prosecuted under the Rev. Dr. Packard, the pastor of a Congregational church in the town of his nativity, and for whom he ever retained the greatest love and veneration, as the man whose early instructions had imbued his mind with those principles, and given him those views, which had effectually preserved him from the pernicious errors in philosophy and theology, which have recently obtained a lamentable currency. Having preached as a licentiate for about a year, he was ordained as an Evangelist in 1810. His labors in this character were principally performed among the numerous destitute congregations then in the State of Georgia; and here, in March, 1812, he entered into the marriage relation with a daughter of the venerable Dr. Francis Cummins. In the autumn of the same year, though debilitated by his residence and labors in the south, he preached as a missionary for some months in this city. In August, 1813, he was permanently settled in the ministry, at Goshen, in the State of New York; so that he appears to have sustained the pastoral relation to his beloved people a little more than twenty years. An affection of the lungs compelled him to intermit the greater part of his ministerial duties in the autumn of 1832, and to seek relief by a

winter's residence in the more genial climate of Georgia. During his absence, he unexpectedly received the appointment of Corresponding Secretary and General Agent of the Board of Missions of the General Assembly; which on his return he declined to accept, under a conviction that his health was not such as would enable him to endure the labors, hardships, and exposures of the appointment. He was recommended in May last, by the Directors of the Western Theological Seminary, to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church for the appointment of Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government in that seminary. After his election to the designated professorship by vote of the General Assembly, he visited the seminary at Alleghanytown, and having inspected its state and prospects, he accepted the professorship assigned him. His separation from the beloved people of his pastoral charge was, both to them and to himself, a most trying occasion. His farewell sermon to his brethren of the Presbytery, of which he was a member, is published, and remains to them and the attached people of the congregation that he left, a memorial of his affection, and the depository of his wise counsels. On his way to Pittsburg, he arrived with his wife in this city on Saturday, the 2nd of November last. The evening of the next day, the Sabbath, he preached his last sermon in the lecture room where we are now assembled. His text was Col. i. 12, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." From these words, while addressing his christian brethren, he undesignedly drew his own character, and described the blood-bought inheritance of his Redeemer, of which in a few days he was to be a glorified partaker. * * * A heavenly composure or serenity of soul was vouchsafed him during the whole of his illness. Nor did it in any degree abate, when he knew that he was dying; and it left imprinted on his features, after his spirit had fled from its earthly abode, such a sweetness of expression, as I have

never seen in any other countenance after death. For him the king of terrors had no terror. * * *

“The intellectual powers of Dr. Fisk were of the solid more than of the brilliant kind. His imagination was not the distinguishing faculty of his mind. His imagination was by no means barren—it was fertile; but its fertility was that of thought, and not that of poetic images and rhetorical figures. His mind was vigorous, penetrating, discriminating and judicious. This was its character. He saw truth with a quickness, perspicacity and depth, that was uncommon; and hence he could separate and disentangle it from error, with a readiness and accuracy that few possess. His affections were tender and strong, but not violent. * * * Modesty and humility were ever distinguishing features of his character. His integrity was of the most unsullied and unbending kind. He had doubtless adopted the resolution of Job, ‘My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.’ Hence it was, that he acquired the high estimation which he held in the minds of all honorable men who knew him, and enjoyed the peculiar confidence of his brethren in the ministry. He was a man, whom all who were acquainted with him intimately, knew where they would find him on every question, in which truth and consistency of character and profession were concerned. It was his integrity, prudence, discretion and firmness, mingled with a mildness of manner, and so far as duty would permit, a spirit of accommodation and conciliation, which gave him the extensive influence that he confessedly possessed. His literary attainments were highly respectable. Of the original languages of the Sacred Scriptures, he had acquired a better knowledge and a greater familiarity, than is possessed by most of the clergy of our country. He loved science in almost all its departments; and in some not often cultivated, he made a desirable progress. In mental philosophy I do not know his superior in the church to which he belonged. He loved this study. It accorded with that close and discriminating investigation to

which his faculties were adapted, and in which he delighted. His was the true Baconian system of philosophy, applied to the mind—a system in which facts and fair inductions from facts stand for everything, and hypotheses and fanciful speculations stand for nothing. Such alone was the philosophy which had charms for our departed friend. He considered a plain declaration of the word of God as establishing a fact, to which all speculation was implicitly to bow and submit, and not to busy itself in perverting, disguising, or endeavoring to explain away the announced fact—a fact resting on the declaration of Him who cannot err. His theology was that of the Protestant Reformation, as embodied in the doctrinal standards of the Presbyterian church. In every department of his theology he was an adept. He had carefully examined its foundations and all its bearings. And he was prepared to defend and maintain the system on the ground both of reason and scripture. The piety of Dr. Fisk was truly eminent. It was not a flighty and fluctuating principle in his mind or in his life. It was a deep, solid, consistent, tender and well considered principle, influencing his judgment and his affections, more than his imagination, and it was carried out into all his connexions and intercourse with the world, directing and animating him in every duty.

* * * As a preacher, our deceased brother was in a high degree impressive. He sometimes held his audience in almost breathless silence, and very often melted them into tears; yet his, in general, was not that showy eloquence in which many delight, and consider as the charm of pulpit addresses. His manner indeed was always free and dignified, and solemn and affectionate. But his preaching was peculiarly doctrinal and instructive; followed in almost every sermon with close application, and sometimes with strong appeals to the conscience and the heart. He was abundant in pulpit labors. * * * His preaching was eminently blessed. Few ministers of the gospel have had more seals to their ministry than he. At one period he had a revival of relig-

ion, which continued with very little fluctuation for more than four years. A most remarkable revival, of which he gave me personally an account, took place among the people of his pastoral charge, not long before he was attacked by the pulmonary complaint, which entirely silenced him for a time, and from which he sought and found relief in the journey to the South, from which he returned but a few months since. The preaching and pastoral services of Dr. Fisk falsify completely the wild notion of those, who think that there must be a resort to new measures and a new mode of preaching, if a minister is to expect a revival of religion among his people. He adopted no new measures; he disapproved of them entirely. He used no new modes of preaching. He preached, as I have stated, in the old fashioned way, and in maintenance of old fashioned doctrines—the doctrines taught in the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of our church. To these he steadfastly adhered; these he lucidly explained and powerfully enforced; and these the Lord blessed to bring into his church, not hastily, but after time to examine and prove them, such a number of hopeful converts as are seldom seen to crown the most faithful labors in the service of Him whose blessing alone gives the success. I have been credibly informed, that when Dr. Fisk settled in the congregation of Goshen, the communicating members of his church were in numbers between ninety and a hundred, and that when he left them, they exceeded five hundred; besides more than two hundred who had been dismissed to join other churches, or had been removed by death.”

The following extracts are from an obituary notice of him, published in a paper in Goshen, N. Y.: “Dr. Fisk possessed a clear, vigorous and comprehensive mind. Without culture it would have been remarkable for its acumen, strength and power. It was, however, when its capacities were expanded by the discipline and nurture of the schools, that it shone in its brightest splendor. There may have been, and

doubtless were, riper scholars—many who had drank deeper from the wells of science; instances are rare in which a human mind so judiciously and accurately appropriated to itself the measure of knowledge accumulated. * * * In his pulpit discourses Dr. Fisk followed no particular system closely. He would address indiscriminately the understanding and the feelings, the reason and the passions of men. His sermons, however, in most instances, were strictly practical, and nicely adapted to the varied capacities of his hearers. With the force and energy of a disciplined mind he would first assault the citadel of their understandings, and then, sensible that logical deduction and acute reasoning were singly inadequate to move the hearts and consciences of many, *conclude*, in imitation of the French School of Divinity, by affecting the passions, and melting into contrition and penitence the flinty heart. * * * For twenty years he resided in the midst of us without unnecessarily giving offence to any, and departed for a new sphere of usefulness, accompanied by the universal regret of the church and community. And how could it be otherwise? To a dignity and nobleness of manner and deportment, he added a mildness and sweetness of temper, and benignity of heart, irresistibly fascinating. In imitation of his heavenly Master, while on earth, “he went about doing good.” His sincerity no one ever had cause to doubt; and his deep, fervent piety was indelibly impressed on his life and conversation. In the prime of life; in the midst of honors and usefulness; in the full enjoyment of the confidence of the church, to which he was zealously attached, he has been called to wrestle with the last great enemy, death.”

From another obituary account of him, the following extracts are taken: “He expressed at all times an entire resignation to the will of God, whatever the event of his sickness might be; and felt no reluctance at dying, but what arose from the lonely situation in which his beloved wife

would be left. Frequently he said: "O, how sweet to be with Jesus!" and when questioned on the subject, said repeatedly, that he was perfectly happy in the state of his mind, and had not a doubt of his acceptance with God through Jesus Christ. * * * He died, as he had lived, a calm, firm, humble believer in the precious gospel."

Rev. Dr. W. D. Snodgrass, his successor at Goshen, N. Y., says of him, in a letter to the author: "He was regarded here as an eminently pious, discreet and faithful pastor. There were added to the church during his pastorate 539 members, including the fruits of two interesting revivals. And during the same period 829 adults and infants were baptized." Mr. John S. Crane, a trustee of his church, says of him: "He was a faithful, laborious and useful pastor. He was the instrument in saving a large number of souls; and was universally beloved."

Rev. Dr. Archibald Alexander, late Professor in the Theological Seminary at Princeton, N. J., once related the following anecdote in reference to Dr. Fisk: "In attending Commencement at Dartmouth College, in 1801, I became acquainted with Rev. Dr. Packard of Shelburne, Mass.; and in travelling with him on horseback down the Connecticut river, my horse becoming lame, he invited me to go and spend a few weeks with him in his parish, so that my horse might recruit. I did so. During my stay in Shelburne there was an interesting work of grace. Many of the children and youth were subjects of the work. As Dr. Packard and myself were one morning walking along by a house, he said to me: "There, I wish you would go and talk with that *chunk* of a boy, who stands by the fence yonder." I did so, as faithfully as I could. I of course did not suppose that I should see or hear of the boy again. Some years ago, a stranger passed through Princeton, and called at my study. He said: "You are Dr. Alexander—do you remember that you spent a few weeks in Shelburne, Mass., many years ago?" "I do," said I. "Do you remember that Dr. Packard

asked you one morning to talk with a *chunk* of a boy, that stood by the fence?" "Why," said I, "the circumstance had long been forgotten, but I now recall it to mind." He then said: "That chunk of a boy was myself. The words which you spake to me were blessed to my spiritual good. I date my conversion back to that time. My name is Ezra Fisk. I am pastor of a church in Goshen, N. Y."

Dr. Fisk was moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church in 1833, and was long a Director of the Princeton Theological Seminary, and from 1823 to 1833 was a Trustee of Williams College. He received his doctorate from Hamilton College in 1825. He was licensed by Franklin Association, April 19, 1810. He published several sermons, and a series of valuable articles on Mental Science in the Philadelphia "Christian Advocate" for 1832. He had no children. His widow resides in the city of New York. His remains were removed by a committee of his former charge in Goshen, N. Y., from Philadelphia to that place.

5.* *Rev. Pliny Fisk* was born in Shelburne, June 24, 1792; graduated at Middlebury in 1814; studied theology with Rev. Dr. Packard of Shelburne; was licensed by Franklin Association, Jan. 18, 1815; after preaching in Wilmington, Vt., about eight months, acceptably and usefully, he entered Andover Theological Seminary in November, 1815, and completed the theological course in 1818; was appointed a missionary to Palestine by the American Board, Sept. 23, 1818; and was ordained for that purpose in Salem, Nov. 5, 1818; then spent about a year in Georgia and South Carolina, and in October, 1819, preached an affecting farewell sermon in his native place, from Acts xx. 22: "And now, behold, I go up bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there." With Rev. Levi Parsons, his missionary colleague, he received his instructions, Oct. 31, 1819, at Boston, and embarked Nov. 3, and arrived at Smyrna, Jan. 15, 1820. He resided for a