

A
HISTORY
OF THE
Presbyterian Church in America,

FROM ITS ORIGIN UNTIL THE YEAR 1760.

WITH
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF ITS EARLY MINISTERS.

BY THE
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WITH
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AND
An Historical Introduction,
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JOSEPH M. WILSON,
No. 27 SOUTH TENTH STREET, BELOW CHESTNUT ST.
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ANDREWS* TO PIERSON, OF WOODBRIDGE.

"PHILADELPHIA, June 25, 1741.

"REV. AND DEAR BROTHER:—

"Mr. Dickinson's letter of May 23, and yours since that date, came both to hand; and, though you both agree, it would be unreasonable to bring on the debate about the contested act at our last synod, when so many were absent; yet I am told there is reason to believe it was designed, and if they had carried their point in having that act rescinded, it would have brought in such a deluge of preachers that 'twould have been in vain for any that don't come into all their new notions, to have appeared at synod any more. And some judged they were strengthening their party with such a view, as we all know they stick at nothing to gather proselytes. What influence that had in bringing on the protestation against them now, as I was not consulted, or whether any, I can't tell. You may have your thoughts, as I have mine.

"But, brother, you that way don't see, hear, and feel what we do. The confusions they have made this way, in town and country, are perfectly astonishing, and indeed e'en make us weary of our lives. They have called themselves members with us, but have been continually acting against us, and endeavouring to make all that don't follow them to be looked on as carnal, graceless, unconverted hypocrites, to destroy our usefulness and bring as many as possible over to them, so that we can scarce tell where to go or who to speak to. But this is not all; both town and country are full of Antinomian notions, which if we say any thing against, in pulpit or out, 'tis almost as much as our lives are worth, and we feel ourselves bound in conscience to give people warning and endeavour to preserve them from destruction.

"The prevailing opinion among the party is, that the moral law is no rule to believers. They freely declare they don't do any good, or bring forth any fruit, or avoid any evil, on consideration of any law obliging or forbidding them, or from any fear of God at all. Nay, they tell me they have no regard to any thing they do or can do, to promote their own

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happiness or salvation at all. They utterly disclaim all self-love, and make it a wrong mercenary thing, contrary to the spirit of the gospel, to have any eye to their own benefit in any thing they do, but only the glory of God, exclusive of their own good.

“The common vogue is, that we must not press the unconverted to do duty, because all they do is sin; and that there is no need to urge the converted to it, because they will do it, not because they must. Accordingly they avoid preaching up moral duties; and, though they have ever so fair an opportunity for it, they avoid telling the people that the moral law is the eternal rule of reasonable creatures; they seem to be afraid to do it; for, if they did, they would be as bad as we, and their hearers would leave them. They converse with that party a hundred times more than I do, and, consequently, must know their errors better than I can; and yet they say nothing to bring them off, that I hear of, which they would do if they were not of the same mind themselves, or else can't be honest men. This enthusiastical frenzy is, I think, universal among them, (I mean their leaders and some others,) that they can tell who is converted or not, especially upon a little discourse, and so judge and condemn and damn with all the freedom imaginable.

“The Christ they invite persons to, seems to me not the true Christ. The true Christ has a yoke, which they that come to him must take upon them; but this yoke is not mentioned, but only ‘Come, come.’ All which, and much more to the same purpose, they say, they learned of Mr. Whitefield; and they do think they follow him punctually in them, which is their aim. I know in some of them they are not mistaken, and I feared things would come to this pass from the beginning, which made me dissatisfied. Some people blamed me then (thinking people would take the good and leave the bad) that now justify me and say that I saw further than they.

“A prevailing rule to try converts is, that, if you don't know when you were without Christ and unconverted, &c., you have no interest in Christ, let your love and your practice be what they may; which rule, as it is unscriptural, so I am of the mind will cut off nine in ten, if not ninety-nine in a hundred, of the good people in the world that have had a

pious education. And, hence, in a manner, all our pious forefathers are doomed to the pit, as most sober, pious people are now. The old rule that our Saviour gave of judging the tree by its fruits, is now generally thrown out of doors, and an intuitive way of judging, like God's, is now pretended to. All that don't come up to this way of thinking and judging are declared carnal; and so much as to call it in question, is almost fatal. Nay, all that don't think we are saved in the way of absolute sovereignty, (which some think renders all the promises of the gospel, and the gospel itself and the Mediator of it, all needless and useless,) and that don't believe we must feel the Spirit blow upon us as evidently as we can feel the northwest wind, they are looked upon as carnal persons.

“Now, my dear brother, I don't know what you may think of these things; but I think they strike at all solid religion, and tend to pervert the good principles derived to us from our forefathers; and I think—nay, I am almost sure—you like them no better than I, notwithstanding the angry letter you wrote me concerning the convulsive motions caused by Rd.'s* extravagant preaching. You quite mistook me, or you had spared the pains in that letter, as if I think convictions and awakenings, &c. were needless. Indeed, my brother, I never had such a thought. God forbid I should; but I am of the mind that those things of which we have heard so often, at least some of them, are not of that nature. But I'll forbear: only say that if you have heard nothing of them, or if you judge such outeries must be, or we are lost, I think you and I and our forefathers have been doing nothing but deceiving the people; but I hope in God it is not so, at least altogether. But enough of this at this time, and, for aught I know, more than expedient; for, if Whitefield or some other should come at the sight of this letter, it may occasion many a raving sermon, as the exposing my former letters did. But, though such an unbrotherly, not to say unchristian, thing were done once, I can't entertain a thought that it will be done again.

“I have here enclosed a protestation. What you may think

* Rowland.

of it I won't pretend to guess ; nor, as I was not concerned in it, will I tell you my thoughts of it. Only this I will venture to say : that, if it had not been done now, if things didn't soon make a great turn for the better, it must, in my mind, have been done in a little time, unless we would be contented to be a Babel both as to principles and practice.

“My dear brother, if you find your judgment don't jump with mine in every thing, I desire charity between us may be kept alive ; for I do assure you, if I know any thing of the doctrines of our predecessors and the reformed churches, (and I humbly conceive I am not altogether an ignoramus in them,) I have not varied from them. What I dislike is, for aught I know, new, not known, at least not professed, by those that went before us, and, which is abundantly more, not according to the word. Therefore, *non credo quia non lego*. I design this for Brother Dickinson as well as yourself ; and, with hearty affection from Mr. Cross and self for you and Mr. Dickinson and yours and his, in the entire bond of Christian brotherly friendship, I rest, your own

“JEDEDIAH ANDREWS.”