

ANNALS

OF THE

AMERICAN PULPIT;

OR

COMMEMORATIVE NOTICES

OF

DISTINGUISHED AMERICAN CLERGYMEN

OF

VARIOUS DENOMINATIONS,

FROM THE EARLY SETTLEMENT OF THE COUNTRY TO THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR
EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FIVE.

WITH HISTORICAL INTRODUCTIONS.

BY WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

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It was very common, about the middle of the last century, in printed volumes, to print emphatic words, especially in title pages and conspicuous positions, in red ink, to render them more attractive and conspicuous. Dr. Wilson was fond of introducing this practice into his letters. I have seen and now have in my possession a number of his letters, and in almost all cases, black and red ink are alternately employed, in order to give conspicuity and emphatic meaning to important words, names, or statements. I have no recollection of having observed this habit in any other man. He was said to have had two inkstands, one of black and the other of red ink, in every room in his house. Whether this were a fact, I know not; but for one thing I can vouch,—that I scarcely ever saw a letter from his hand, which did not, in some measure, corroborate the statement.

As a preacher, Dr. Wilson was not animated, or strikingly powerful. He was mild, instructive and persuasive. His voice was rather feeble and plaintive. His health was always delicate, and, toward the latter part of his life, he was habitually a valetudinarian. This his appearance in the pulpit generally indicated. Yet his ardent piety, his solemnity, and his manifest learning and intelligence, always made him an acceptable preacher to an enlightened audience.

Dr. Wilson was married to Hester Gray in 1756. She died in 1762, having become the mother of two children, only one of whom survived her. In 1764, he was married to Elizabeth Creghead, a lady of uncommon energy of character, and eminent piety, who survived him many years, and died about 1813, in her eighty-fourth year. By this marriage he had five children, one of whom was the Rev. James P. Wilson, D. D., late pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in the city of Philadelphia, who, in piety, in learning, in talents, and in power as a preacher, had few equals.

It would give me pleasure to enlarge, without limit, on the reminiscences of a family so dear and so interesting to me and mine. But the infirmities of a man who has entered on his eightieth year, must be my apology for bringing this communication to a close.

Yours with great regard,

SAMUEL MILLER.

HUGH KNOX, D. D.*

1755—1790.

HUGH KNOX was born in Ireland, but came to this country in 1751, when he was approaching manhood. It seems that he had some thoughts of entering the ministry, shortly after his arrival; for there is a record that the Synod of Philadelphia, having heard that he was desirous of being taken on trials, directed him to meet the Newcastle Presbytery; but as his views and feelings were at that time little congenial with the sacred office, so he quickly dismissed all ideas of seeking it, and resolved on a different course of life.

* Miller's Memoir of Rodgers.—Webster's MSS.—Original Letters of Knox.—Works of Alexander Hamilton, I.

Having letters to the Rev. Dr. Francis Alison, then Principal of the Academy at New London, Pa., he called upon him to see whether he could not employ him as an assistant teacher; but as Dr. Alison had no occasion for his services in that capacity, he gave him a note of introduction to the Rev. (afterwards Dr.) John Rodgers, who was then settled as pastor of the Churches of St. George's and Middletown, De., with a request that he would, if practicable, gather a school for Mr. Knox within the limits of one or the other of his congregations. Mr. Rodgers, being favourably impressed with the young man's appearance, immediately made an effort in his behalf, which resulted in the establishment of a school of which Mr. Knox became the head. Being a young man of fine personal appearance, and more than ordinary accomplishments, he became a very popular teacher, and was much esteemed throughout the neighbourhood.

After having been thus engaged for several months, a circumstance occurred which greatly changed Mr. Knox's condition and prospects;—a circumstance which, though involving criminality on his part, and bringing in its train immediate disaster, was nevertheless overruled to the most desirable and important results. When he went to reside at the Head of Bohemia, (for that was the place where he had his school,) he was exemplary in his morality, though he did not profess to know any thing of Christian experience. Unhappily, the strictness of his morals began to relax, and he became associated with a number of young men, who used to meet every Saturday afternoon for a frolic; and though these meetings were at first of a comparatively unexceptionable character, yet they gradually changed into a scene of boisterous and indecent revelry. On one of these occasions, some one of the company cried out to Knox—"Come, parson," (a title which they gave him on account of his being the gravest of their number, and withal a great admirer of the preaching of Mr. Rodgers,) "Come, parson, give us a sermon." At first, he declined; but, upon being urged, he actually met the demand in a very remarkable manner. Having an uncommon memory, great flexibility of voice, and withal a wonderful gift at mimicry, he began to preach the sermon which Mr. Rodgers had preached the Sabbath before, and went through it, so exactly imitating his tones and manner, that one of his elders who overheard it from another apartment in the house, declared that he could not distinguish between the original and the copy. But the most remarkable thing remains to be told. As he proceeded in the sermon, such was the interest which he contrived to counterfeit, that his auditors, who began to listen in merriment, gradually became serious, and, when he had finished, they left the spot disposed to any thing else than diversion or ridicule. And what was more, the mock preacher was overwhelmed with a sense of the criminality of what he had been doing, and deeply felt the power of those truths with which he had thus profanely trifled. Such was his mortification and his remorse in reflecting on his conduct, that he fled from the place the next morning, without stopping long enough to collect his dues, or arrange his affairs.

He went now to Newark, and applied to President Burr for admission to College; but, as he brought no testimonials, and stated that he had been living in the neighbourhood of Mr. Rodgers, the President told him that he might remain with him until the next Commencement, which Mr. R. would undoubtedly attend, and if his testimony concerning him were what could be desired, he should immediately be admitted. In due time Mr. Rodgers

came; and much was he surprised at meeting the fugitive school-master, and much was the school-master embarrassed at meeting the minister, whose generous patronage he had so ungraciously and ungratefully requited. Mr. Knox watched his opportunity to get Mr. Rodgers to step aside with him, when he made a frank and penitent acknowledgment of his wicked conduct, and stated to him his circumstances in regard to becoming a member of College. He informed him, moreover, that reflection upon the ungrateful and wicked act which he had committed towards him, had led him, as he hoped, to deep reflection upon his character as a sinner, and to unfeigned repentance of all his sins; and that he wished to obtain a collegiate education with a view to devote himself to the Christian ministry. He begged Mr. R., provided he could consistently do so, to withhold from President Burr a statement of the sad affair which occasioned his leaving his school, lest, if it were communicated to him, it should prevent his being received as a member of College; and Mr. R. promised to comply with his request, unless the President should ask him questions that would render it impossible. Happily, no such questions were asked; and the President, having received such a testimony concerning his character as satisfied him, admitted him to College.

Mr. Knox graduated in the year 1754, and probably studied Divinity with President Burr. The Reformed Dutch Church in the Island of Saba having requested the New York Presbytery to send them a minister,—they selected Mr. Knox as a suitable person for the place, and he consented to their proposal. They accordingly proceeded to ordain him in the year 1755,—on which occasion he preached a Sermon on “the dignity and importance of the Gospel ministry,” which was published by the unanimous request of the Presbytery. It is prefaced with a brief Address from the Presbytery to the Church of which he was to become the pastor, which commences as follows:—

“To the Dutch Protestant Reformed Church on the Island of Saba:—

“The Presbytery of New York send Greeting:

“When your request for an English Protestant minister was made known to us, we gladly embraced the opportunity of assisting so distant a part of the Lord’s vineyard. And Divine Providence seasonably pointed out the ingenious author of the following Discourse, whom we can cheerfully recommend as a person we judge well qualified to supply your destitute church, and to promote the interest of the Redeemer’s Kingdom among you.”

It concludes thus:—

“We trust you will have reason with us to bless God, that has inclined his heart to accept your call; to forsake the society of his dear friends, and risk the danger of the sea, that he might carry the glad tidings of salvation to the distant Isles. That he may come to you in the fulness of the blessings of the Gospel of peace, and become the happy instrument in the hands of the great Head of the Church, of building you up in faith, peace and holiness, is and will be the prayer of

“Your brethren and servants in the Gospel of Christ.

“Signed by order,

TIMOTHY ALLEN,* Presby. Cl.”

* TIMOTHY ALLEN was graduated at Yale College in 1736; was ordained as pastor of the Congregational Church in West Haven, Conn., in 1738; and remained there till 1742, though in 1741 he was deposed by the New Haven Association for his alleged extravagances in connection with the revival, and especially for saying that “the Bible could not of itself, or by any man’s efforts, do the unregenerate sinner any more good than the reading of an old Almanac.” After the arrest of Davenport, by the Connecticut magistrates in 1742, many of the ultra revivalists were impressed with the importance of establishing a school for educating young men, after their own notions, for the ministry. Such a school was actually established at New London—called “The Shepherd’s Tent;” and Mr. Allen was placed at the head of it; but, in consequence of an Act of the Legislature the same year, prohibiting the establishment of Seminaries “by private or unknown persons,” it was removed to Rhode Island. The school quickly

After Mr. Knox's settlement in the Island of Saba, he not only retained his connection with the Presbytery of New York, but kept up a regular correspondence with them as a Body, besides frequently exchanging letters with several of the prominent members. From a letter in my possession, addressed to one of these brethren,* dated March 2, 1759, I make the following extract, as containing the only account I can find of Mr. Knox's situation after his removal to Saba:—

“As to my outward estate, it is such as I bless God I am well contented with, although it can never be considerable upon this Island. You can easily be convinced of this, when you consider that my stated salary and perquisites yearly do not amount to more than a hundred and forty pounds, your currency, and that fresh meat of almost every kind is seldom sold for less than from twelve to eighteen pence per pound; a good turkey for a heavy pistole or thirty shillings; a dunghill fowl, six or eight shillings, and every thing else in proportion; so that, all things considered, I reckon fifty pounds per annum upon the Continent equivalent to a hundred and fifty here.

“You have, I hope, before this time, heard, by my last to the Presbytery, of my being married to Governor Simmons' youngest daughter. I married her at the age of fourteen years and six months. She is a young woman of a good as well as an honourable family, of a comely outward form and good natural endowments, of a spotless character and a virtuous deportment. God only knows whether she is yet possessed of the one thing needful. I entreat your joint prayers with mine that what may be yet lacking in her, Christ would graciously supply out of the abundance of his grace; that, as we are one flesh by marriage, so we may be of one spirit in Christ. Since our union, we have lived under the Governor's roof, and have sat at his table,—so that our expenses in living are by this means greatly lessened. Dutch fortunes are never known nor given till the death of parents—however, I conjecture, by a general estimate of my father-in-law's circumstances and family, that that part which will come to me or my widow and family, may amount to about eight or nine hundred pounds, your currency, if not more.”

In a letter addressed to the Rev. Caleb Smith of Newark Mountains, dated July 17, 1761, he writes thus:—

“In a letter enclosed with this, and which I beg you may forward to my pious and worthy friend, the Rev. Mr. Azariah Horton,† at South Hanover,

languished, and Mr. Allen removed to Long Island. He met with the Suffolk Presbytery, June 14, 1748, and laid before them the “absolution” by which the censure which he had incurred in New England was removed. He joined the New Brunswick Presbytery, October 12, 1748, and supplied the Churches of Hopewell and Maidenhead, three or four years. From 1753 to 1756, he laboured at Woodbridge, and was a member of the New York Presbytery till 1761, though he was installed at Ashford, Conn., October 12, 1757. He became the minister of Chesterfield, Mass., at the age of seventy, and preached, probably by the New York Presbytery, his own installation, June 15, 1785. He died January 12, 1806, in his ninety-first year. He was a man of vigorous powers, a fervent preacher, and the author of several occasional Sermons.

* It does not appear to which of the members this letter is addressed.

† AZARIAH HORTON was born at Southold, L. I., in the year 1715, and was graduated at Yale College in 1735. On being licensed to preach, probably by the New York Presbytery, he received a call to an eligible parish on Long Island, and was prepared to accept it. The Correspondents of the Scottish Society for propagating the Gospel urged upon his attention the case of the Indians on the Island, and finally prevailed on him to relinquish the call. He was ordained by the Presbytery of New York in 1741, and began his labours in the midst of the great revival. His charge extended along the whole Southern shore of the Island, for more than a hundred miles, upon which the remnants of once numerous tribes, at that time reduced to four hundred, of all ages, were scattered. Here he laboured with the utmost self-denial, and not without very considerable success, until 1750, when he accepted an invitation to supply

I have requested him to make a motion to the Presbytery that they should appoint a Committee of their members, or solicit the United Synod to appoint a Committee of their members, to draw up, print and publish a Plan of Church Government, and a Directory for Discipline, explaining the power of Church officers, the nature and reason of censures, suspension and excommunication, and giving plain and pertinent directions how to proceed with offending professors in a variety of cases. Such a public, authentic plan of procedure would, I am persuaded, be of great service to all our churches, more particularly to such of the members as are in my situation. If it should be objected that the Westminster Directory is adopted by the Synod, and is sufficient for this purpose,—I answer—the Westminster Directory, as it stands in our Confession of Faith, is too brief and general, and is no sufficient plan for procedure in particular cases. Besides, many of our people do not think themselves subject to the Church of Scotland, or belonging to it, and therefore are not willing to acknowledge its authority, or to be determined by its decisions. If you see any reason in this, Sir, I beg you would second the motion of the Rev. Mr. Horton. I am, for my part, fully persuaded that such a Directory, approved and published by the Synod, would add greatly to the authority of Church Councils, especially where there is not a concurrence of ministers to give force and weight to their decisions.”

In a letter to the Rev. Jacob Green of Hanover, N. J., dated January 22, 1772, he writes as follows:—

“Although all matters of difference are reconciled long ago on this island, and the people of it, almost to a man, are solicitous for me to stay among them in the ministry, yet, from a variety of considerations too tedious for me to particularize here, I am induced to remove from them to the Danish Island of St. Croix, where there is a church provided for me, and a yearly salary of about twelve hundred *prs.* subscribed. I have acquainted my people here of this determination, and think of moving, (God permitting,) about the 1st of May next. I spent the months of September and October in that fine island, and found a number of Scotch, English, Irish, and North American, Presbyterians there, who gave me a cordial and unanimous invitation to come among them. Their first plan was a coalition with the Dutch Church, and a colleagueship with the Dutch minister; on which plan the most of the Dutch had become my subscribers. But the English party thought best to have a place of worship of their own, in order to avoid some inconveniences arising from the other plan.”

In pursuance of the resolution intimated in the preceding extract, Mr. Knox, shortly after, resigned his charge at Saba, and settled at St. Croix, where he seems to have spent the rest of his days. The church in which he had preached at Saba was destroyed by a hurricane the same year that he left it; and the next year, (1773,) the Synod, by request of the New York Presbytery, appropriated fifty pounds out of “the collections for pious uses,” to aid in rebuilding the edifice.

a church on Long Island, and became a member of the Suffolk Presbytery. After remaining here about a year, he accepted a call from South Hanover, or Bottle Hill, N. J., in 1751, where he continued till November, 1776, when he was dismissed at his own request. On the 27th of March, 1777, he died of small pox, at the house of his son, in Chatham village,—aged sixty-two years. He was an earnest and faithful minister, an influential member, originally of the Synod of Philadelphia, and afterwards of that of New York, and had an important agency in establishing the College of New Jersey.

In the year 1767, the Rev. Jacob Green published a Sermon from Romans ix, 18, entitled "The Sinner's faultiness and spiritual inability,"—of which he sent Mr. Knox a copy. Mr. Knox dissented from some of Mr. Green's positions, which seem to have bordered on Hopkinsianism, and in 1769, he addressed a Letter to him through the press, in which he treats him with the utmost respect and kindness, states his objections to some of the views contained in his Sermon, and modestly advances what seems to him a more reasonable and scriptural theory. He maintains that God could not make a world of free agents without the possibility of their falling into sin. He also repudiates the Hopkinsian notion of benevolence, and of the necessity of sin to the highest display of God's glory. He writes as follows:—

"Make it appear clear, on your principles, [those of Edwards and Hopkins,] that God is exculpated from the charge of having any causality in producing sin, and I am satisfied. Consider me in the humble capacity of a learner. I have such a firm persuasion of your piety, and such a respect for your judgment and candour, as will keep me from uncharitableness in thought or language towards you. There breathes such a spirit of kindness and goodness through all your letters, as secures both my affection and my gratitude.

"The distinction between natural and moral inability I have ever thought an important and useful one, when well stated and explained. My worthy and excellent friend, President Burr, was the first who ever gave me an idea of this distinction. He did it in three sermons preached from Joshua xxiv, 19:—'Ye cannot serve the Lord, for He is an holy God.' He acknowledged they were the substance of Edwards' book relative to that subject, and expressed a pretty strong desire of having them printed, as some of the most useful and important he had ever preached. I would define *moral inability* thus:—a natural and contracted disinclination or aversion to the exercises of piety and moral virtue, which becomes faulty and criminal by our resisting the motives which would overcome it, and neglecting by prayer and other duties to apply to God through the Redeemer for those influences of the Holy Spirit by which it would have been wholly subdued, and our volitions and actions engaged on the side of piety and moral rectitude.

"The system of the ancient Calvinists is well jointed, and hangs together; but Calvinism, as held by President Edwards' admirers, seems to me as different from it as Arminianism—a middle thing patched up out of both, and ought to be called *Edwardism*.

"I greatly question what you say on p. 19:—'They have all the powers that can be conceived, in the nature of things, for a sinner to have; for they have light in the understanding, they see the reasonableness and fitness of things, and the obligations they are under.' I always thought the understanding was sadly darkened and blinded by the fall; that the natural man could not know nor discern the things of God, and that it required the power of renewing grace to cure this faculty of its blindness; but I find that Mr. Hopkins and you make out this faculty pretty sound and vigorous, as though it had suffered little, if any thing, by the original apostacy."

The celebrated Alexander Hamilton was placed in early boyhood under the instruction of Mr. Knox, and formed a strong attachment to him, while Mr. Knox, in return, watched and assisted, with the utmost fidelity, the development of the wonderful powers of his pupil. They kept up an active correspondence in after life; and two of Mr. K.'s letters are preserved in the first volume of Hamilton's works. Both were written during the Revolution, and breathe a spirit of earnest devotion to the American cause. From one of them, dated St. Croix, April 31, 1777, the following is an extract:—

"I have but a moment at command at present, and have not time to remark upon your letter. I can only inform you that it has given high satisfaction to all friends here. We rejoice in your *good character* and *advancement*, which is indeed only the just reward of merit. May you still live to deserve more and more from the friends of America, and to justify the choice, and merit the approbation of the GREAT AND GOOD GENERAL WASHINGTON—a name which will shine with distinguished lustre in the annals of history—a name dear to the friends of the liberties of mankind! *Mark this!* You must be the annalist and biographer, as well as the aid-de-camp, of

General Washington, and the historiographer of the AMERICAN WAR. I take the liberty to insist on this. I hope you take minutes and keep a journal. If you have not hitherto, I pray do it henceforth. I seriously, and with all my little influence, urge this upon you. This may be a new and strange thought to you; but if you survive the present troubles, *I aver*—few men will be so well qualified to write the history of the present glorious struggle. God only knows how it may terminate. But however that may be, it will be a most interesting story."

The degree of Master of Arts was conferred upon Mr. Knox by Yale College in 1768; and, at a subsequent period, he was honoured with the degree of Doctor of Divinity by the University of Glasgow.

Dr. Knox died in St. Croix in October, 1790. He had a son bearing his own name, who was graduated at Yale College in 1800.

Dr. Miller states that Dr. Knox "published five or six volumes, chiefly Sermons, which are highly esteemed." Two volumes of his Sermons, printed at Glasgow, in 1772, are in the Library of the College of New Jersey. In an autograph letter of his, written in 1761, I find him expressing his intention to publish a volume of Discourses, chiefly on Infidelity, but doubting whether the volume may be most advantageously brought out in this country or in Europe.



GEORGE DUFFIELD, D. D.

1756—1790.

FROM THE REV. GEORGE DUFFIELD, D. D.

DETROIT, February 29, 1848.

Rev. and dear Sir: In compliance with your request, I cheerfully give you what facts I have been able to collect, with regard to the history of my grandfather.

GEORGE DUFFIELD was the third son of George and Margaret Duffield, who had migrated to the Colony of Pennsylvania, somewhere from 1725 to 1730, from the North of Ireland. They were of English extraction immediately, but the family originally were French,—of the Huguenots, who were forced to fly from France, and take refuge in England and the North of Ireland, on account of their Protestant faith, and in consequence of the edict of Nantz, and the persecutions that ensued thereon. The name was originally *Du Fielde*, but was anglicised, after the settlement of the family in Great Britain. George Duffield (the father) first settled in Octorara township, Lancaster County, Pa., but shortly after sought a richer soil, and established himself in Pequea township, of the same county, where his son George was born; and on grounds which remain to this day in the possession of his descendants. He died at the advanced age of eighty-four years, and was noted for his stern integrity and devoted piety.

George Duffield, the subject of this sketch, was born October 7, 1732. He received his academical education at Newark, De., where he afterwards officiated as classical Tutor. He was graduated at Nassau Hall in 1752; and having, about that time, become hopefully pious, he joined the Church under the care of the Rev. Dr. Robert Smith, of Pequea, and soon after commenced the study of Theology under his supervision. From 1754 to 1756, he was Tutor at the College at which he