

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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not think that he was accustomed fully to write out his sermons. Still, he always preached to the intelligence of his hearers, and his thoughts were well matured and luminously presented. His manner, as a public speaker, was animated and earnest, and well fitted to secure attention. I think he had no great taste or tact for public business, and my impression is that he had little to do with ecclesiastical bodies.

Yours truly,

JOHN McDOWELL.

JOSEPH CLARK, D. D.*

1783—1813.

JOSEPH CLARK was born near Elizabethtown, N. J., October 21, 1751. His parents were both persons of great worth, and his mother especially was distinguished for her piety. It was chiefly through the influence of his mother's instructions and example, that his mind early took a decidedly religious direction. While he was yet a youth, he was admitted a member of the Presbyterian Church in Elizabethtown, under the ministry of the Rev. James Caldwell.

Mr. Clark was trained to the carpenter's trade, but, after he had passed his twentieth year, he resolved to become a minister of the Gospel. He had many difficulties to contend with, but, by great patience and perseverance, he overcame them all. His progress was not a little retarded by the confusion occasioned by the American Revolution. When the British entered New Jersey, he was a member of Princeton College; but he nevertheless joined the American army, and continued, for a considerable time, in the service of his country. He then returned and completed his collegiate course, and was admitted to the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1781, just at the close of his twenty-ninth year. He immediately entered upon his course of theological study, under the direction of the Rev. Dr. Woodhull of Monmouth, at the same time assisting the Doctor in conducting a highly respectable grammar school, which had been established through his instrumentality.

Having gone through the usual course of study prescribed to candidates for the sacred office, he was licensed to preach the Gospel on the 23d of April, 1783, by the Presbytery of New Brunswick. On the 21st of October following, he was appointed as a stated supply, for six months, to the vacant Congregation of Allentown, N. J. On the 15th of June, 1784, he was ordained, *sine titulo*, to the work of the ministry, by the Presbytery of New Brunswick. Shortly after this, the people of Allentown extended a call to him to become their pastor; but, though he laboured steadily among them from that time, he did not regularly accept their call until June, 1788, when his installation took place.

Here Mr. Clark continued, growing in the affections of his people, and the good-will and confidence of his brethren in the ministry, till January, 1796, when he was regularly translated from the pastoral charge of the Congregation in Allentown, to that of the Congregation in New Brunswick, where he continued till the close of life.

* App. to Life of Rev. Robert Finley, D. D.—MS. from Rev. I. V. Brown

In the years 1798 and 1799, the state of our Western frontier, and the destitute condition of many congregations in different parts of the country, became an object of attention and interest with the General Assembly, and with many prominent individuals in the Presbyterian Church. In the year 1800, the General Assembly fully matured their views on the subject, and appointed several agents, of whom Mr. Clark was one, to solicit donations, in various parts of the country, with a view to carry their benevolent purposes into effect. Mr. Clark addressed himself to the duties of his agency with great vigour, and collected upwards of seven thousand dollars,—a sum exceeding, by nearly two thirds, the greatest amount collected by either of his associates in the agency. He was, at the same time, performing very important service in reference to the same object, in connection with his own Presbytery.

In the year 1799, Mr. Clark was appointed by the General Assembly, in connection with several other gentlemen, to meet the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Church, in reference to their receiving and ratifying the system of correspondence and intercourse between the Associate Reformed, Reformed Dutch, and Presbyterian, Churches in the United States, which had been prepared and reported by a joint committee from these several sections of the Church, and unanimously agreed to by the preceding General Assembly. The effort, however, proved unsuccessful.

In March, 1802, the edifice, library, and philosophical apparatus, of the College of New Jersey were destroyed by fire. Here again, Mr. Clark's labours were put in requisition for collecting funds to repair the very extensive loss. He travelled into the interior of Virginia, and made liberal collections for his object, but his labours were prematurely interrupted by a serious illness, which obliged him to suspend all active exertion for a considerable time.

In 1802, he was elected a member of the Corporation of the College of New Jersey, and continued to discharge the duties of the office with great zeal and fidelity to the close of life. He was also, for many successive years, a member of the Committee of Missions, which acted by the appointment, and under the direction, of the General Assembly.

In 1809, he was honoured with the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Jefferson College.

Dr. Clark had at best a feeble constitution and imperfect health; but he was nevertheless among the most active ministers of his day. For a short time previous to his death, he had suffered from some increase of indisposition; but the evening before, he seemed much better, and had retired to rest with the expectation of setting off early the next morning to meet the Synod of New York and New Jersey. His wife, having her attention drawn to him by something unusual, hastened to his bedside, and found him in the agonies of death. Medical aid was instantly called, but it was unavailing—it was found that violent spasms had stopped the motion of his vital powers. He died on the 19th of October, 1813.

Dr. Clark's only publications were a Sermon occasioned by the death of the Hon. William Patterson, 1806, and two Discourses in the New Jersey Preacher, 1813.

He was married, not long after his first settlement in the ministry, to a Miss Imley, of Allentown, sister of the Hon. James H. Imley, who was for some time a Representative in Congress from New Jersey. They had four

children,—one daughter and three sons. The eldest son was a clergyman, the second a lawyer, and the third a physician. The eldest, *John Flavel*, was graduated at the College of New Jersey in 1807, holding rank among the first scholars in his class. After his graduation, he was engaged for some time in teaching in the State of Georgia. He commenced the study of Divinity in the Theological Seminary at Andover; but, before his course was completed, was chosen Tutor in his Alma Mater at Princeton, and held the office three years, still pursuing his theological course under Dr. Green, President of the College. He was licensed to preach the Gospel by the Presbytery of New Brunswick, and by the same Presbytery was subsequently ordained and installed Pastor of the united Congregations of Flemington and Amwell. This connection continued more than twenty years. He was afterwards settled at Patterson, N. J., and was called thence to take charge of the Presbyterian Congregation of Cold Spring, Putnam County, N. Y. Leaving Cold Spring, he was for about one year at Oyster Bay, L. I., and then accepted a call from the Presbyterian Congregation of Fishkill, Dutchess County, N. Y.—he was installed May 18, 1847, and continued there till his death, which took place in 1853. He had the reputation of being a benevolent and excellent man, and an able and faithful minister.

FROM THE REV. ISAAC V. BROWN.

TRENTON, December 9, 1854.

Dear Sir: The Rev. Dr. Joseph Clark of New Brunswick, concerning whom you ask for my recollections, was one of the three or four most intelligent, active and influential ministers of the Gospel in this State, and so continued till his death. I had the best opportunities for knowing him in public and in private. I sat under his ministry more than a year. Being the teacher of his three sons, in connection with Bishop Croes, I was often in his family; and while he was absent, collecting funds for Princeton College, then recently burnt to the ground, I uniformly at night occupied a room in his house. Mrs. Clark was very amiable, kind and excellent, but very timid; and having four children in early years, and only female help, she needed some protection.

Dr. Clark possessed a mind originally of a superior order, and enlarged and accomplished by much reading and study. Such was the peculiar character of his mind, that he was eminently qualified to be a successful agent in business implicating the characters, involving the interests, and touching the sensibilities and passions, of men. He was independent and firm in his exercise of thought, and accustomed to rely very much on his own judgment; and, without appearing to be ambitious, presuming, or self-confident, he was always ready and forward to aid, and if need be, to direct, in any great and good work. He had much to do in accomplishing several important public objects in his day.

In the pulpit he was always solemn, dignified and instructive. His discourses were solid and judicious, and well fitted to leave a lasting impression on the mind of the attentive hearer. His representations of Scripture doctrine were thoroughly Calvinistic; but they were also in a high degree practical. His elocution was deliberate, and, on ordinary occasions, on account of the weakness of his lungs, he spoke with no great animation; but there were times when he seemed to rise above his bodily debility, and to display not a little of the spirit and energy of the Christian orator.

In debate, he had a remarkable talent both to scrutinize and to defeat the arguments and aims of his adversary. He had promptness without arrogance in advancing, and firmness without obstinacy or ostentation in maintaining, his

opinions. If he had inadvertently deviated from order, or committed an error in his statements, it seemed to give him pleasure, when reminded of it, even by the most inconsiderable of his brethren, to make acknowledgment and reparation. The opinions and arguments of opponents in discussion he treated with the utmost respect. On the introduction of a new subject, he did not employ the artifice sometimes resorted to by those who aim only at triumph in debate, of waiting in silence to discover the popular impulse, that he might the more certainly espouse the successful side of the question—on the contrary, he was often, on such occasions, one of the first speakers; and, instead of betraying himself into the power of his antagonists for the want of previous thought, he generally showed himself prepared to speak at once appropriately and effectively.

In the details of business, few men probably have surpassed him. In giving thought an eligible form on paper for any specific purpose; in drawing an article of agreement between hostile parties; in sketching a resolution or report, or performing any kindred service, on a sudden emergency, he seemed to have an intuitive perception of what the occasion required. He was patient, indefatigable and accurate, far beyond what is usual even with men of his high character and standing.

Dr. Clark possessed extraordinary colloquial powers, and a strong relish for cultivated society; and his extensive and various information, his easy address and facility at communication, rendered him an uncommonly instructive and agreeable companion. In his person, he was of full the medium stature, but slender; his complexion was fair; his eyes sharp and blue; his hair light and not very abundant. In his manners, he exhibited a due proportion of dignity and familiarity, candour and affection. In all his walk through life, with the politeness and affability of the man of literature and the gentleman, he mingled that purity of conversation and that savour of devotion, which ought ever to characterize a minister of Jesus Christ. Hospitality always presided at his board. He welcomed the society of the excellent, the intelligent and honourable of every denomination, of all ranks, and from every quarter. He could accommodate himself with great ease to every kind of company, whether cultivated or uncultivated, and knew how to make persons of every description easy and happy in his presence and in his family. His memory well deserves to be honoured and embalmed.

I am, my dear Sir, truly yours,

ISAAC V. BROWN.