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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.

VOLUME III.

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By ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern
District of New York.

The Rev. E. L. Parker writes thus concerning Mr. David McGregor:—

‘He was greatly respected, and his death sincerely lamented by the people of his charge. He stood deservedly high in public estimation, as a preacher and a divine. Few, if any, then upon the stage, were considered his superiors. His praise, as a bold, faithful, successful minister, was in all the surrounding churches, and his services eagerly sought. Though not favoured with a collegiate education, yet under the private instruction of Rev. Mr. Clark, and by his great assiduity and application in the acquisition of knowledge, he became a scribe well instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven; and was able at all times and on all occasions to bring forth out of his treasure things new and old. He was an animated and interesting preacher. His pulpit talents were considered superior to those of his father. His voice was full and commanding, his delivery solemn and impressive, and his sentiments clear and evangelical. His house of worship was usually thronged. Many from the neighbouring towns attended regularly upon his ministry. He excelled not only as a preacher but as a pastor. In the discharge of parochial duties, especially in catechising his flock, he was eminently distinguished. . . . He possessed in an eminent degree, a spirit of firmness and independence, which deterred him from shrinking from duty on account of apparent danger or difficulty.’

Mr. McGregor was married to Mary Boyd, a lady of fine personal appearance and accomplishments, who, having been early left an orphan, was brought up by his mother. She died September 28, 1793, aged seventy. They had nine children. One son, *Robert*, was aid-de-camp to General Stark, at the surrender of Burgoyne. Another son, *David*, was graduated at Dartmouth College in 1774, held the office of Captain in the Revolution, afterwards engaged in the business of teaching, and died in 1827. A third son, *James*, settled in Londonderry, was in the earlier part of his life much engaged in public business, sustaining not only the office of a magistrate, but various offices of the town, and was for some years a Representative in the General Court. He possessed a well endowed and well cultivated mind. He died much lamented on the 23d of June, 1818, aged seventy.

EBENEZER PRIME.

1719—1779.

FROM THE REV. SAMUEL I. PRIME, D. D.,

NEW YORK, April 26, 1852.

My dear Sir: I send you, agreeably to your request, the following notice, from such materials as I have been able to gather, of my venerable great-grandfather. As there is nobody now living who remembers him, I have to depend of course chiefly upon family records and traditions.

The Primes came from England,—three brothers of them, in the latter half of the seventeenth century. One settled in Rowley, Mass.; and from him descended the Primes who have been known in the mercantile circles

Upon his making what seemed penitent acknowledgments of the sin with which he was charged, the Presbytery continued his license, at the same time administering to him a sharp rebuke. After a while, he returned to Georgetown, and in June, 1750, the people renewed their call to him, and about the same time he was also invited to settle at Newcastle, Me. The Presbytery recommended both calls to his consideration; but he thought proper to decline them both. In 1751, the call from Georgetown was a second time renewed, and, in November of that year, he accepted it. Difficulties, however, arose, either on the part of the people or of the Presbytery, which prevented his becoming the pastor of that church. In 1754, he accepted a call from the church in Newcastle, and, as a matter of convenience, was ordained at Newburyport, on the 19th of September of that year. He remained at Newcastle, constantly involved in difficulties, and labouring to very little acceptance, until the latter part of the year 1758, when his dismission was finally effected. I find no trace of him afterwards.

of New York for the last fifty years. Another went to North Carolina, and the name is there perpetuated to this day. A third brother was one of the first settlers of the old town of Milford, Conn. Of this last mentioned brother, whose name was *James*, my great-grandfather was the second son, and was born July 21, O. S., 1700. The stormy period of the Revolutionary war destroyed the records of those early years, of which I should be glad to say more than is now possible; for I can learn nothing of his youthful training till he graduated at Yale College in 1718. He was probably licensed to preach by an Association in Connecticut, very shortly after his graduation; for, at the early age of nineteen, he was preaching at Huntington, L. I., as an assistant to the Rev. Eliphalet Jones,* pastor of the church of that town. After a service in this capacity of four years, he was ordained as colleague of Mr. Jones, by a council of ministers, half of them from Connecticut, and half from the Eastern part of Long Island. Happily settled over his first, and as it pleased God, his only, charge, he took to himself a wife—Margaret Sylvester, of Shelter Island, October 2, 1723. She died September 26, 1726; leaving two children. He was subsequently married to Experience, daughter of Benjamin Young of Southold. She died January 1, 1734,—the mother of three children. The eldest child, bearing his father's name, was a lovely youth, remarkable for his piety. While a member of Yale College, but at home during vacation, he fell sick and died, having completed his eighteenth year. After seventeen solitary years, Mr. Prime was married, a third time, to Mrs. Hannah Carle, a widow, who died February 9, 1776.

Only one of the children by either marriage, and he a child of the second wife, left motherless at the age of three weeks, survived the father. His name was *Benjamin Young Prime*. He was born December 20, 1733; entered the College of New Jersey, then in its cradle at Newark, in July, 1748, and graduated at Princeton in 1751. After pursuing the study and practice of medicine several years, he became a Tutor in the College at which he graduated in 1756, and continued in the office about a year. In 1762, he went to Europe for the purpose of enjoying higher advantages than our country then afforded, for the study of medical science. After a residence abroad of between two and three years, he took his degree in medicine at the University of Leyden, on which occasion he delivered a Latin Dissertation which was published there in a handsome quarto pamphlet. He became a highly accomplished scholar,—eminent for his mathematical, philosophical and classical attainments. He was in the habit of writing with great facility both prose and poetry, in the Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French, and Spanish languages; and in the opening of the Revolutionary struggle, his patriotic and popular songs spread like wildfire over the land, and helped to kindle the sparks of liberty into a flame. In the *Curiosities of American Literature*, appended by Dr. Griswold to D'Israeli's Collec-

* ELIPHALET JONES is supposed to have been a son of the Rev. Mr. Jones, who was episcopally ordained in England, came to this country at an early period, and became the first minister of Fairfield, Conn.; but, in consequence of the burning of the first Records of Fairfield, neither the time of his installation, nor of his death, can now be ascertained. He, *Eliphalet*, was born at Concord, Mass., in the year 1640. He was invited to Huntington in January, 1676, having previously declined an invitation to the congregation of Jamaica. He was, at that time, residing at Greenwich, Conn. After some hesitation, he consented to spend a year with the people, and at the end of that time was settled with great unanimity. He continued in that relation more than half a century, and died June 5, 1731, in the ninety-first year of his age. He is said to have been "a man of great purity and simplicity of manners, and a faithful and successful preacher."

tion, among the Revolutionary odes and songs, some of Dr. Prime's are gathered,—more remarkable, however, for patriotic feeling than poetical merit.

After his return from Europe in 1764, he became a practitioner of medicine and surgery in the city of New York; but, after a few years, being the only surviving son of his father, who was then becoming infirm, he returned to Huntington, and resumed his residence with his father; where both employed the little leisure which their respective professions afforded, in the pursuits of elegant letters, for which their tastes and education admirably fitted them. Dr. Prime lived through the Revolutionary war, and died suddenly, October 31, 1791, leaving two sons and three daughters. The youngest son is the Rev. Nathaniel Scudder Prime, D. D., who still survives in a green old age.*

* This venerable man, since this letter from his son was written, has been gathered to his fathers. He was born in Huntington, L. I., on the 21st of April, 1785. He inherited from his father and grandfather a taste for letters, which he cultivated through life, and transmitted to his posterity. In 1800, he first embraced Christianity, as he believed, in its life and power. He graduated at the College of New Jersey in 1804; and on the 10th of October, 1805, was licensed, by the Presbytery of Long Island, to preach the Gospel. For a few years, he laboured on the East end of the Island, especially at Sag Harbour, where his ministry was attended by a powerful revival of religion. He subsequently preached, for some time, at Freshpond and Smithtown; and, in 1812, became the pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Cambridge, N. Y. Here he spent nearly twenty years of eminent usefulness, exerting a powerful influence through the whole region in the several departments of learning, benevolence, and religion. After a pastorate of seventeen years in Cambridge, he was induced to take charge of a literary institution in that place, where he became greatly distinguished as a teacher, while, at the same time, his services as a preacher were almost constantly put in requisition.

In 1830, he removed to Sing Sing, N. Y., to take charge of the Mount Pleasant Academy, and supplied the Presbyterian Church there for two years. He established at the same place a large and flourishing Female Seminary. In November, 1835, he removed this Seminary to Newburgh, where he resided chiefly for nearly eight years. In April, 1843, he removed to Williamsburg; in April, 1846, to Newark, N. J.; in May, 1847, to Ballston Spa, where he preached as a stated supply for about two years; in December, 1849, to Scotchtown; and in April, 1851, again to Williamsburg. From June, 1851, to October, 1852, he supplied the first Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn, and the rest of that year supplied at Yorkville. During a part of 1854, he supplied at Wyoming, Pa.; and in 1855, for several months, at Huntington, L. I. In April of this year, he removed to Mamaroneck, to the house of his son-in-law, Mr. A. P. Cummings, where he died in great peace on the 27th of March, 1856.

He was a Trustee of Middlebury College from 1822 to 1826; and of Williams College, from 1826 to 1831. The degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him by the College of New Jersey in 1848.

The following is a list of Dr. Prime's publications:—The pernicious effects of Intemperance in the use of ardent spirits: A Sermon delivered at the opening of the Presbytery of Long Island, at Aquebogue, 1811. An Address before the Cambridge Branch of the Moral Society of the County of Washington, 1815. Divine Truth the established means of Sanctification: A Sermon delivered at the Annual meeting of the Washington County Bible Society, 1817. A familiar illustration of Christian Baptism, in which the proper subjects of that ordinance and the mode of administration are ascertained from the Word of God and the History of the Church, and defended from the objections usually urged by the opponents of Infant Baptism and the advocates of Immersion, 1818. The year of Jubilee, but not to Africans: A Sermon delivered on the forty-ninth Anniversary of American Independence, 1825. Charge to the Rev. Samuel Irenæus Prime, delivered at his Installation as Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Mattewan, 1837. A History of Long Island from its first settlement by Europeans to the year 1845, with special reference to its ecclesiastical concerns, 1845.

On the 5th of July, 1808, he was married to Julia Ann, daughter of Major John Jermain of Sag Harbour, L. I. They had seven children,—five sons and two daughters. Two of his sons became clergymen, one of whom is the Rev. Dr. Prime, Editor of the New York Observer.

I knew the venerable Dr. Prime quite well during the latter years of his life, and always regarded him as a noble specimen of a man and a minister. He was compactly built, rather inclined to be stout, had a fine intelligent face, was quick and easy in his movements, and most agreeable in conversation. He had a mind of uncommon force and discrimination; a noble and generous spirit; simple and engaging manners; an invincible firmness in adhering to his own convictions; an earnest devotion to the best interests of his fellow men; an excellent talent for the pulpit; great tact at public business; and a remarkably graceful facility at mingling in a deliberative body. In private he had the gentleness of a lamb; but sometimes, in public debate, the lamb disappeared, and the lion came in its place.

To return to the main subject of my narrative. With the weight of increasing years and increasing labours, Mr. Prime began to feel the need of assistance. As he had been settled originally as a colleague with his predecessor, so now an associate was sought for him; and the Rev. John Close* was set apart to that work, October 30, 1766. He continued to labour with Mr. Prime nearly seven years; but in 1773 was dismissed. From this time onward, the aged pastor had no regular aid in the ministry. Though he was very infirm, the state of the congregation, distracted by the war of the Revolution, rendered it impracticable to provide him any relief.

The invasion of the enemy compelled the pastor and his son, with their families, to fly from their home: throwing their plate into a well, from which it was recovered when the war was over, and taking with them only what they could most readily carry in their hands. The son, with his young family, fled from the Island, and his aged father found an asylum in a retired part of the town.

“Though the whole Island, especially the Western parts, suffered greatly from the insolence and oppression of the soldiery, and still more from the depredations of the Tories, under their authority and protection, no town was subjected to equal outrages on their feelings and property with Huntington. The seats in the house of God were torn up, and the building converted into a military depot. The bell was taken away, and, though afterwards restored, it was so injured as to be useless. Subsequently, (1782,) when the contest was virtually ended, the church was entirely pulled down, and the timber used to construct barracks and block houses for the troops, one of the former being erected on Mr. Prime’s home lot, directly overlooking his house. And to wound the feelings of the inhabitants most deeply, these structures were erected in the centre of the burying ground, the graves levelled, and the tomb-stones used for building their fire places and ovens. I have often heard old men testify, from the evidence of their own senses, that they had seen the loaves of bread drawn out of these ovens, with the reversed inscriptions of the tomb-stones of their friends on the lower crust.

“The redoubtable commander in these sacrilegious proceedings was Colonel Benjamin Thompson, a native of Massachusetts, and the same man who was afterwards created by the Duke of Bavaria, and known to the world as *Count Rumford*. But his acts in this place have given him an immortality, which all his military exploits, philosophical disquisitions, and scientific discoveries will never secure to him, among the descendants of this outraged community. It would seem that, during the whole war, no stone was left unturned to annoy the persons, and injure the property, of the inhabitants. Their orchards were cut down, (Mr. Prime’s among the first,) their fences burned, and the scanty crops which they were able to raise under these embarrassments, were often seized by lawless force for the use of the soldiers, or ruthlessly destroyed to gratify their malice. The aged pastor of the Congregation, while he lived, was peculiarly obnoxious to the enemy, on account of his known patriotic views and feelings. When the troops first entered the town, at an early period after the battle of Long Island, the officers housed their horses in his stable, and littered them

* JOHN CLOSE was graduated at the College of New Jersey in 1763. After resigning his charge at Huntington, he removed to New Windsor, N. Y., and, without being installed, preached there, and in the neighbouring places, from 1773 to 1796. He afterwards resided at Watford, where he died in 1813.

with sheaves of unthreshed wheat, which they did not need, tearing leaves out of his most valuable books, or casting one volume of a set into the fire, to render them valueless, without taking the trouble to destroy the whole. While recording these worse than Vandal transactions, I am sitting in the identical chair which my grandfather occupied before me, and which still bears the deep marks of British outrage. And I have books lying before me, with the impress of the same savage hands upon their mutilated covers and leaves.”*

The aged patriarch, when sinking under the numerous afflictions of a long and laborious life,—now approximating to fourscore years, having deserted his own dwelling, was compelled to live in retirement, and die an exile in a solitary neighbourhood of his congregation. But even here he was neither inactive nor unhappy. In his diary under date of August 2, 1779, (only two months before his death,) we find the following record:—“Through the good hand of God upon me, I have lived to the close of my seventy-ninth year, and am entered upon my eightieth year, this being my birth day, according to the new style. What a monument am I of sparing mercy!” On the 25th of September, (or, according to another account, on the 3d of October,) he entered into his rest. He was buried in the old grave yard, the outrages upon which, a few years afterwards, I have already detailed; and tradition has handed down to us the following incident, which testifies to my ancestor’s patriotism, and the distinction it earned for him in those days of trial. When Col. Thompson, (Count Rumford,) with a detachment of the enemy, took up their quarters in the Huntington grave yard, the Colonel pitched his *marque* at the head of my ancestor’s grave, in order, as he said, that he might have the pleasure of treading under foot the *old rebel*, every time he went out or in.

Mr. Prime, according to the testimony of his contemporaries, was “a man of sterling character, of powerful intellect, and possessed the reputation of an able and faithful divine.” He was a man of great system in all his habits, public and private. Having gathered around him a large and valuable library, he was constantly adding to the stores of his own learning, and enriching the minds of his people with the fruits of his patient, unremitting labour. It appears from a register which he kept till the close of his life, that he had written nearly four thousand sermons. He had some peculiar views on the subject of the Gospel commission. Believing, as he did, that the same qualifications and authority were required to preach the Gospel as to administer its ordinances, he would not consent to license men to preach, without, at the same time, ordaining them to the ministry. These views he defended in two sermons, and several members of the Presbytery of Suffolk adopted the same. His opinion on this subject was subsequently so far modified by the paucity of ministers, and the necessities of the times, that he did, before the close of his life, admit licentiates to preach in his pulpit; but he would never allow them to pronounce the benediction, which he considered an official act, in as high a sense as the administration of special ordinances.

Mr. Prime was eminently devotional in his spirit, and earnest and successful in his work. He sympathized deeply, and his people shared largely, in the great revivals which took place in his day, especially that in 1741.

* The above paragraphs are from the pen of my father, Rev. Dr. Prime.

In his diary he has detailed many interesting facts in connection with these periods, which show that a rich blessing attended his labours.

Mr. Prime published *A Discourse on the nature of Ordination*, delivered immediately previous to the ordination of Mr. Benjamin Tallmadge.*

It would be easy to extend this notice of my venerable ancestor, but as I suppose that I have written enough for your purpose, I will only add that

I am very sincerely yours,

S. I. PRIME.

GILBERT TENNENT.†

1725—1764.

GILBERT TENNENT, the eldest son of the Rev. William Tennent, Senior, was born in the County of Armagh, Ireland, February 5, 1703. He was about fourteen years old, when his father migrated to America. He received his education under the paternal roof, and afterwards assisted his father in conducting the education of others. The honorary degree of Master of Arts was conferred upon him by Yale College in 1725. His first permanent religious impressions were received in his fifteenth year, through the exertions of his father, on his passage across the Atlantic; but it was several years before he gained comfortable evidence of being spiritually renewed. In this interval, he pursued a course of theological reading, and subsequently devoted a year to the study of medicine, under an apprehension that his spiritual state would not justify his entering the ministry. But, about 1724 or 1725, his experience became more decided and satisfactory, so that he had no longer any doubt that he was called to preach the Gospel; and, in due time, he presented himself as a candidate to the Presbytery of Philadelphia, of which his father was a member. In his trials before the Presbytery, he appeared to uncommon advantage, and was licensed to preach in May, 1725. Shortly after his licensure, he preached for some time at Newcastle, De., and received a call to settle there; but he took his leave so abruptly as to excite no small displeasure among the people. The congregation and the Presbytery of Newcastle complained to the Synod on the subject, and a letter was produced declaring his acceptance of the call. The Synod decided that his conduct was too hasty, and the Moderator reproved him, and exhorted him to greater caution in future. He is said to have received the rebuke with great meekness. He was ordained at New Brunswick, by the Philadelphia Presbytery, in the autumn of 1726. He would have been called, shortly after, to Norwalk, Conn., had not the Fairfield Association interposed their judgment that he ought not to be taken from "so destitute a region as the Jerseys." From the

* BENJAMIN TALLMADGE was born in New Haven, Conn., January 1, 1725; was graduated at Yale College in 1747; was ordained and installed pastor of the church in Brookhaven, L. I., October 23, 1754; was dismissed June 15, 1785; and died February 5, 1786, aged sixty-one years. He was a fine scholar and an able divine. He was the father of the late Colonel Benjamin Tallmadge, of Revolutionary fame.

† Dr. Finley's Sermon on his death.—Gillies' Hist. Coll.—Assemb. Miss. Mag. I.—Hist. Log Coll.—Webster's MSS.