

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.

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VOLUME I.

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as a lay member of society. He was Colonel of the militia, Justice of the Peace, for many years a Representative of the town, and also a Judge of Plymouth county. He was struck with the palsy, while presiding on the bench in Plymouth Court, which was the commencement of a protracted decline that terminated in death. He died May 31, 1774, in the sixty-ninth year of his age.

JOSIAH SMITH.*

1726—1781.

JOSIAH SMITH was born in Charleston, South Carolina, in the year 1704. He was the son of George Smith, who died at the age of seventy-nine; and the grandson of Thomas Smith, who had been Landgrave and Governor of the Province. He was graduated at Harvard College in 1725; and was the first person from Carolina who ever received a degree from a College. Within about a year after his graduation, he began to preach; and, on the 11th of July, 1726, was ordained in Boston to the work of the ministry, the sermon on the occasion being preached by himself. He performed his ministerial function at different periods in Bermuda, in Cainhoy, and in Charleston.

In 1729, he maintained a learned disputation with the Rev. Hugh Fisher † on the right of private judgment.

In 1740, when Whitefield was forbidden to preach in the Episcopal churches in Charleston, Mr. Smith invited him to occupy his pulpit, and was willing to let the world know that he heartily espoused his cause. He even preached and published a sermon justifying his course,—on the text—"I also will show my opinion."

In 1749, after he had been actively engaged in the duties of the ministry about twenty-three years, he received a stroke of the palsy, from which he never recovered so far as to be able to articulate distinctly. He nevertheless continued to occupy himself in writing sermons, and many of them were published. So reluctant was he to give up preaching, that he requested as a favour that he might be allowed to deliver one sermon a month in the church in which he had been accustomed to officiate. His request was complied with; and his friends, from a regard to his feelings, listened patiently to him; though his tongue, from the effect of the palsy, performed its office so imperfectly that they could understand but little that he said.

Mr. Smith was an earnest friend to the cause of American independence. As he was seventy-two years old when independence was declared, and withal was labouring under great bodily infirmity, it was of course out of his power to render his country any active service; but his eyes were open to the signs of the times, and his heart was awake to every movement in favour of national freedom. On the surrender of Charleston, he became a prisoner of war,

* Ramsay's Hist. of South Carolina.—Hist. of the Circular Church, Charleston.

† HUGH FISHER was the second pastor of a Congregational church in Dorchester, South Carolina, and died Oct. 6, 1734.

and as such was paroled. He observed his parole conscientiously and faithfully, showing that his principles were too strong to yield to any considerations of prudence or expediency that could be urged upon him. In the year 1781, when he was in his seventy-seventh year, he, with the family of his son, Josiah Smith,—then a prisoner in St. Augustine, were all ordered away from Charleston, and were landed in Philadelphia. He died, however, in October of that year; and his body was interred within the walls of the Arch-street (Presbyterian) church, between the remains of his two friends,—the Rev. Gilbert Tennent and Dr. Finley, late President of the College of New Jersey. He had always expressed the utmost confidence in not only the righteousness, but the ultimate success, of the American cause, even when the prospect seemed darkest; and he had a strong desire to live to witness its complete triumph. Though this was not permitted to him, he did live till after the surrender of Lord Cornwallis.

Dr Ramsay writes thus concerning him:—

“Mr. Smith was a respectable preacher, a learned Divine, and a writer of considerable reputation. * * * His venerable age, distinguished eminence in the Church as a man of learning and piety, his steady patriotism, and personal sufferings in the cause of liberty, excited a general sympathy in his behalf. Though he died a stranger in a strange land, he was particularly honoured.”

The following is a list of his publications:—A Sermon preached at Boston, 1726. A Discourse delivered at his ordination, 1726. The Spirit of God a holy fire: A Sermon, 1727. The duty of parents to instruct their children: A Sermon, 1727. The young man warned: A Sermon, 1729. Solomon's caution against the cup: A Sermon, 1729. Human impositions proved unscriptural, 1730. Answer to a Sermon of Hugh Fisher, 1730. The Divine right of private judgment vindicated; in answer to the Rev. Hugh Fisher's Postscript, 1730. Character, preaching, &c., of the Rev. George Whitefield, impartially represented and supported: A Sermon, 1740. Jesus persecuted in his disciples: A Sermon, 1742. A Sermon on the death of Hannah Dart, 1742. Letters to W. Cooper, 1743. Zeal for God encouraged and guarded: A Sermon, 1745. A volume of Sermons, 8vo., 1752. The church of Ephesus arraigned: the substance of five short Sermons constructed into one, 1765.

Mr. Smith left two sons and two daughters. One of his sons, *Josiah*, upon whom, in his later years, he depended chiefly or entirely for support, was distinguished for an accurate knowledge of business, as well as for integrity, benevolence and patriotism. He died at Charleston in the year 1826, at the advanced age of ninety-five.