

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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born in the city of New York, in the year 1688, died the same year with her husband.

Mr. Cross maintained a correspondence with the ministers of the South Carolina Presbytery.

The following testimony to his character appears on his grave-stone:—

“He excelled in prudence, and gravity, and a general deportment, was esteemed for his learned acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures, and long accounted one of the most respectable ministers in the Province.”

In 1735, Mr. Cross published a Sermon, preached before the Commission of Synod at Philadelphia, which he dedicated to his people at Jamaica, in terms expressive of strong regard and attachment.

WILLIAM TENNENT.*

1718—1746.

WILLIAM TENNENT was born in Ireland, in the year 1673. He received a liberal education in his native country, and was probably a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin. He entered the ministry originally in the Episcopal Church: he was ordained Deacon by the Bishop of Down, July 1, 1704, and Priest, September 22, 1706. After receiving orders, he acted as Chaplain, for some time, to an Irish nobleman; but it does not appear that he ever had charge of a parish, previous to his coming to this country; and the reason that has been assigned for it is, that he could not conscientiously conform to all the terms imposed on the clergy of the Established Church.

On the 15th of May, 1702, he was married to a daughter of the Rev. Gilbert Kennedy, who, having been ejected from his charge in Ayrshire, Scotland, went to Holland, where he exercised his ministry for some time, and thence went to Ireland, where he spent his latter years, and died February 6, 1687-88.

As Mr. Tennent's family was increasing, and his prospects of usefulness in his own country were somewhat dubious, he resolved, after a few years, to migrate to America, where he was encouraged to hope for more liberty of conscience, and greater facilities for doing good. He landed at Philadelphia on the 6th of September, 1718, with his family,—consisting of his wife, four sons, and one daughter; and was most hospitably received and entertained by James Logan, who was his cousin on the mother's side, and who, at different times, held several of the most important offices in the State.

Mr. Tennent seems to have come to this country with an intention immediately to change his ecclesiastical relations; and, accordingly, he soon applied to the Synod of Philadelphia, to be received as a minister into their connection. The Synod, after due deliberation, agreed to receive him;—not, however, till he had laid before them in writing the reasons which had induced him to withdraw from the Episcopal Church. The minute of the

* The General Assembly's Missionary Magazine or Evangelical Intelligencer, II.—Dr. Alexander's Hist. of Log College.—Tennent's Family Record, in his own hand-writing.—Webster's MSS.—MS. from the Rev. I. W. K. Handy.

Synod is as follows :—" Mr. William Tennent's affair, being transmitted by the committee [of overtures] to the Synod, was by them fully considered, being well satisfied with his credentials, and the testimony of some brethren here present ; as also they were satisfied with the material reasons which he offered concerning his dissenting from the Established Church of Ireland ; being put to a vote of the Synod, it was carried in the affirmative to admit him a member of the Synod. Ordered that his reasons be inserted on the Synod book *ad futuram rei memoriam*. The Synod also ordered that the Moderator should give him a serious exhortation to continue steadfast in his now holy profession—which was done." This transaction took place on the 17th of September, 1718,—within less than a fortnight after he arrived in the country.

Mr. Tennent, thus being introduced into the Presbyterian Church, went, in November following, to East Chester, N. Y., where he continued, probably as a stated supply, for about eighteen months. In May, 1720, he removed thence to Bedford, in the same neighbourhood, where he laboured for a short time ; but soon after, probably in the year 1721, he left Bedford, and went to preach at Bensalem and Smithfield, in Bucks County, Pa. Here he continued until the year 1726, when he accepted a call from the church at Neshaminy, in the same county, where he remained till the close of his life. The Presbytery did not send a minister to install him ; but the people, in answer to an inquiry made of them in the meeting-house, signified their acceptance of him as their pastor. He had two congregations, distinguished as the Upper and Lower.

Some time after his removal to Neshaminy, Mr. Tennent, being deeply impressed with the importance of a well educated as well as pious ministry, resolved on establishing a school at which young men might acquire the requisite qualifications for the sacred office. He was admirably fitted to conduct such a school, being a fine general scholar, as well as a thoroughly read theologian ; and with the Latin language he was so familiar, that he could write and speak it, not only with perfect ease but with remarkable elegance. He is said to have delivered a Latin oration before the Synod, not long after he was admitted a member, which was greatly praised for its correct and splendid diction, and which showed the more finished education which, at that time, was obtained, in the mother country.

Mr. Tennent, with a view to carry his benevolent purpose into effect, erected a humble building, within a few steps of his own dwelling, for the accommodation of those who might offer themselves as students. His kinsman, James Logan, had presented him, in 1728, with fifty acres of land ; and on this lot stood the building referred to. His expectations in this enterprise were more than realized ; for here, before many years had passed, had been educated a considerable number of the most distinguished Presbyterian ministers of their time. Among them were Tennent's own sons, *Samuel* and *John Blair, Wm. Robinson, &c.* It may safely be said that the establishment of this institution, known as the "Log College," marked an epoch in the history of clerical education, at least in the Presbyterian Church, in this country.

In the year 1737 a portion of Mr. Tennent's congregation had become dissatisfied that he had so long acted as pastor of the church at Neshaminy, without having been formally installed. This part of the congregation made a complaint against Mr. Tennent before the Synod ; but it was

answered by another part of the congregation, who fully justified the course of their pastor. After both papers had been read, and both parties heard, the Synod adopted a minute expressive of their strong disapprobation of the conduct and probable motives of the complainants, and exhorting them to "lay aside their groundless dissatisfactions, and return to their duty."

Mr. Tennent seems to have been a man of great zeal, and a warm friend to revivals of religion. When Whitefield first visited Philadelphia, Mr. T., though living at a distance of thirty miles, hastened to the city, that he might enjoy the privilege of communion with one whom he considered so truly a kindred spirit. What impression he made upon Whitefield, may be inferred from the following entry in his journal:—

"At my return home [from visiting a family] was much comforted by the coming of one Mr. Tennent, an old gray-headed disciple and servant of Jesus Christ. He keeps an Academy about twenty miles from Philadelphia, and has been blessed with four gracious sons, three of which have been, and still continue to be, eminently useful in the Church of Christ. He brought three pious souls along with him, and rejoiced me by letting me know how they had been spoken evil of for their Master's sake. He is a great friend of Mr. Erskine of Scotland; and, as far as I can learn, both he and his sons are secretly despised by the generality of the Synod, as Mr. Erskine and his friends are hated by the judicatories of Edinburgh; and as the Methodist preachers (as they are called) are by their brethren in England."

Whitefield, on his return from New-York, visited Mr. Tennent at his own house, and spent some days with him. His account of this visit is as follows:—

"November 22. [1739.] Set out for Neshaminy, (twenty miles distant from Trent Town,) where old Mr. Tennent lives and keeps an Academy, and where I was to preach to-day, according to appointment. About twelve [o'clock] we came thither, and found about three thousand people gathered together in the meeting house yard. Mr. William Tennent (Jr.), an eminent servant of Jesus Christ, because we staid beyond the time appointed, was preaching to them. When I came up, he soon stopped; sung a hymn, and then I began to speak, as the Lord gave me utterance. At first, the people seemed unaffected; but, in the midst of my discourse, the power of the Lord Jesus came upon me, and I felt such a struggling within myself for the people as I scarce ever felt before. The hearers began to be melted down immediately, and to cry much; and we had good reason to hope the Lord intended good for many. After I had finished, Mr. Gilbert Tennent gave a word of exhortation to confirm what had been delivered. At the end of his discourse, we sung a psalm, and dismissed the people with a blessing—*O that the people may say amen to it!* After our exercises were over, we went to old Mr. Tennent's, who entertained us like one of the ancient patriarchs. His wife, to me, seemed like Elizabeth; and he like Zachary; both, so far as I can learn, walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. Though God was pleased to humble my soul, so that I was obliged to retire for a while, yet we had sweet communion with each other, and spent the evening in concerting what measures had best be taken for promoting our dear Lord's Kingdom. It happened very providentially that Mr. Tennent and his brethren are appointed to be a Presbytery by the Synod, so that they intend bringing up gracious youths, and sending them out from time to time into the Lord's vineyard. The place wherein the young men study now, is, in contempt, called *THE COLLEGE*, &c. Friday, November 23d, parted with dear Mr. Tennent and his other worthy fellow labourers; but promised to remember each other publicly in our prayers."

Mr. Tennent, previous to the division of the Synod, had been a member of the Presbytery of Philadelphia; but, at that time, he joined the Presbytery of New Brunswick, to which also his sons, Gilbert and William, were attached.

His health, for some time before his death, was so infirm, that he was obliged to withdraw from his pastoral duties, and his pulpit was supplied by the Presbytery. His connection with his congregation is supposed to have been dissolved in 1742; but his name is enrolled among the members of the New Brunswick Presbytery in the following year, (1743,) and he is

mentioned also as being present, the same year, at the ordination of his successor. He died at his own house, in Neshaminy, May 6, 1746, aged seventy-three; and was buried in the Presbyterian burying-ground, where his grave is still to be seen. Mrs. Catharine Tennent, his widow, died in Philadelphia, May 7, 1753, aged seventy.

Mr. Tennent had five children,—four sons and one daughter. Three of his sons, *Gilbert*, *William* and *John*, form the subjects of distinct sketches in this work.

CHARLES, the youngest son, was born at Colrain, in the County of Down, Ireland, on the 3d of May, 1711; and was, therefore, at the time of his father's emigration, seven years of age. He, like his elder brothers, received his education at the Log College. He was taken on trial by the Philadelphia Presbytery, in May, 1736, and was licensed to preach on the 20th of September following. After preaching for twenty-six years to the people of White Clay Creek in Delaware, by whom he was highly esteemed as a faithful minister, he resigned his charge, owing to their inability to fulfil their engagements in respect to his support; and, shortly after, in 1763, was installed pastor of the united congregations of Buckingham and Blackwater. Here he remained four years, during which time he had the supervision of a boarding school for boys, in which employment he seems to have been assisted by his son, Mr. William Mackay Tennent. Having lost his wife, Mr. Tennent, shortly after his settlement at Buckingham, was married a second time to a widow lady in Philadelphia,—a member of his brother Gilbert's church; and this marriage was fruitful of evils that seem to have continued till the day of his death. After being dismissed from Buckingham, he accepted an invitation to supply the congregations of Broad Creek and Little Creek, in Sussex County, De.; and here he continued his labours till November, 1769. It is due to historic truth to state that his manifold trials, in connection no doubt with the prevailing fashion of moderate and even immoderate drinking, led Mr. Tennent to excessive indulgence in this way, until the case attracted public attention, and finally brought him into painful relations with his Presbytery. The facts, as they are presented in a document before me, while they are highly monitory, are fitted to awaken the deepest sympathy. His health gradually declined during several of his last years, and he died on the 25th of February, 1771, aged fifty-nine years.

Charles Tennent had a son, WILLIAM MACKAY, who became a distinguished minister. He was graduated at the College of New Jersey in 1763, and began to preach when he was in his twenty-third year. He was ordained on the 17th of June, 1772, as pastor of the Congregational church in Greenfield, Conn. In December, 1781, he resigned his charge, and accepted an invitation from the Presbyterian church in Abington, near Philadelphia, where he continued till his death, which took place about the beginning of December, 1810. He was one of the Trustees of the College of New Jersey from 1785 till 1808, when he resigned his office. He received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Yale College in 1794. He was Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in 1797. His wife was a daughter of the Rev. Dr. Rodgers of New York. Dr. Alexander, who knew him personally, represents him as "a man of great sweetness of temper and politeness of manner," and as "distinguished for his hospitality." He states also that, during his last illness, which was protracted, though

not attended with much pain, he was "blessed with an uninterrupted assurance of the favour of God." An Address was delivered at his funeral by the Rev. Dr. Green of Philadelphia, which was published.

THE MCGREGORES.*

JAMES, 1718—1729.

DAVID, 1737—1777.

JAMES MCGREGORE received a thorough classical and theological education, and had the care of a Scot's Presbyterian Church in the North of Ireland. The sufferings to which Protestants were there subjected, in connection with his inextinguishable love of religious liberty, led him, with three other ministers, and a part of their respective congregations, to migrate to this country. As they were on the eve of embarking, he addressed a discourse to them, on the text—"If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence."

Mr. McGregore, with about one hundred families, arrived at Boston, on the 14th of October, 1718. The next winter he spent at Dracut; and, in the spring following, sixteen of the families who had accompanied him from Ireland, commenced a settlement on a tract of land near Haverhill, which was then called Nutfield, but which they named Londonderry. Mr. McGregore now joined the party from whom he had been temporarily separated, and on the 12th of April preached to them, under a large oak tree, the first sermon ever delivered in that place, from Isaiah xxxii. 2. The spot is known, and regarded with veneration, to this day.

As soon as the settlers had become organized as a religious Society, they proceeded according to the order of the Presbyterian Church, to invite Mr. McGregore to become their pastor. He accepted their call; but, as no Presbytery then existed in New England, the formality of an installation was dispensed with. On a day appointed for the purpose, the people met, and he solemnly assumed the pastoral charge of the church and congregation,—they in turn recognising him as their pastor and spiritual guide. He preached to them on the occasion from this very appropriate text—"Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them; and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will place them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them forevermore."

There is a tradition that it was through the influence of Mr. McGregore with the Marquis de Vaudreil, then Governor of Canada, that the Colony, at an early period, was signally preserved from savage depredation. The two are said to have been intimate friends and correspondents; and the Governor, from respect to the wishes of his friend, directed the Catholic priests to charge the Indians not to molest or injure any of these people, as they were different from the English; and to assure them that not only would no bounty be paid for their scalps, but that the sin of murdering

* Parker's Hist. Londonderry.—Tracy's Great Awakening.—MS. from Rev. Dr. Whiton.