

François Turretin

TURRETIN

ON THE

ATONEMENT OF CHRIST.

TRANSLATED BY

THE REV. JAMES R. WILLSON, D.D.

A NEW EDITION,

CAREFULLY REVISED BY COLLATION WITH THE LAST EDITION OF THE
LATIN ORIGINAL.

DANIEL IX. 26. יְבִרַח מִשִּׁיחַ וְאֵין לוֹ

Ὅς παρεδοθη διὰ τα παραπτώματα ἡμῶν, καὶ ἡγέρθη
διὰ τῇν δικαιοσυν ἡμῶν.—ROMANS IV. 25.

NEW YORK:

BOARD OF PUBLICATION
OF THE REFORMED PROTESTANT DUTCH CHURCH,
61 FRANKLIN STREET.

1859.

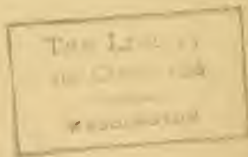
*Deposited in: Clerk's Office Southern
Dist. New York June 18. 1859*

BT264
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United States for the Southern District of New York.



HOSFORD & Co., STATIONERS AND PRINTERS,
57 and 59 William Street, N. Y.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF THE TRANSLATOR,

JAMES R. WILLSON, D.D.

JAMES R. WILLSON was born April 9th, 1780, in the Forks of Yough—the neck of land lying between the rivers Youghiogeny and Monongahela—about sixteen miles nearly south of Pittsburgh, Pa. His father, Zaccheus Willson, was a ruling elder in the Reformed Presbyterian Church. His mother, Mary McConnell, was connected, before her marriage, with the Associate Church. Their forefathers had emigrated from Rosstrevor, County Down, Ireland, in 1721, making their first settlement in the neighbourhood of Back River, Delaware. Subsequently, they removed to Central Pennsylvania, locating at an early period in the Cove, a fine valley, about a mile and a half wide, lying west of Chambersburg, between the North Mountain and Bear Ridge. In 1769 they crossed the intervening mountains—at that time a very arduous undertaking—and fixed their abode in what was then an unbroken forest, now constituting the townships of Rosstrevor and Elizabeth.

While in the Cove—where they have left their memorial in the name of the leading town, McConnellsburg—some incidents occurred, not void of interest, which have been handed down in the traditions of the family. One of them it may be worth while to record. Situated so near the very outskirts of civilization, the valley was, of course, exposed to the incursions of the Indian tribes, and somewhere about the middle of the last century they actually entered without any warning and ravaged it—burning the dwellings, carrying off the property, and taking the lives also of some of the settlers. At this

time, the doctor's grandfather—so the writer thinks—was very aged, almost helpless, decrepit in mind as well as in body, but of ripened and devoted piety. It was in the early part of summer. He dreamed that the Indians had come into the valley. He awoke; slept, and dreamed again as before. He woke; slept, and dreamed the same dream. It was then about daylight. He roused the family and told them what had occurred, and advised them to make the best of their way over the mountain. They demurred, and especially insisted upon the fact that their horses had been turned out, and time—perhaps a day or two—would be required to find them. Just then, the horses came up to the very door. As this seemed to be a providential interposition, the family yielded, and as soon as possible set out. When they had reached the summit of the mountain, they saw, on looking back, their houses in flames. The Indians were in fact wasting the upper part of the valley at the very hour when their aged parent had dreamed the dream that was instrumental—however we may account for it—in saving them.

James was the eldest of a large family. Of course, at that early day, his opportunities for acquiring an education in a rural district were not very favourable. In measure, however, this was made up by the advantages of intercourse with his father, a man of no ordinary intelligence and reading, and with his mother, a woman of robust and masculine mind: both of them being sincerely devout, and living in the fear of God and in the faith of the Gospel. Their house, moreover, was the resort of ministers of various denominations—particularly of those of the same religious connection. Books were not wanting; and what there were, were read and studied with great care. Hence, the mind of the young farmer was stored, long before he began his classical course, with an amount of useful knowledge rarely attained under similar circumstances. He was especially eager for religious information. In his fourteenth year he led in family worship during the absence of his father. And when, as was the case very frequently, groups were gathered on the Sabbath and other days of public worship, or at the meetings of church courts, discussing doctrinal points, James was sure, boy as he was, to make one of the number.

He remained on the farm—labouring, and taking his part in the long journeys over the mountains with horses and pack-saddles, to Chambersburg for family supplies, until he attained his majority. He then entered the grammar-school, established a short time previously in Cannonsburg by Dr. McMillan, out of which soon grew

Jefferson College. Here he remained between four and five years, and was graduated in 1806 with the first honours of his class. He pursued the study of theology, somewhat irregularly—a short time with the late Dr. McLeod, of New York, but mostly at home. In the mean time he married, and took charge, in the year 1809, of the Academy at Bedford, Pa., whence, in 1815, he removed, to continue the same occupation in the city of Philadelphia, where, besides his labours as Principal of a large classical school, and occasionally in preaching, he prepared and published a “History of the Doctrine of the Atonement, with Translations of Turretin” on the same subject.

In 1817, having received a call to the pastoral charge of the Reformed Presbyterian congregation of Coldenham, Orange County, N. Y., he accepted it, and was ordained in the fall of that year. A portion of his charge which was in Newburg received a considerable share of his attention, and in the course of a few years became a distinct congregation. His pastoral labours were thenceforth restricted to Coldenham. During the years 1822–26 he edited “The Evangelical Witness,” a monthly periodical; and also, as before and afterwards, superintended the theological studies of young men. With the exception of three years, during which he was pastor of a congregation of the same denomination in the city of Albany, Dr. Willson remained in Coldenham until 1840, when he was called to be Senior Professor in the Theological Seminary of the church with which he was connected, in Allegheny, Pa.* Here he remained until 1845, when, the location of the Seminary being changed, he removed to Cincinnati, Ohio. He continued to perform the duties of his chair until 1851, when, through debility which had been induced by a “sun-stroke” in the summer of 1846, he became unable longer to attend to them. He survived, preaching occasionally, although with difficulty, until September 29th, 1853, when, his death being hastened by a severe fall, he departed this life, in the sure hope of everlasting rest and peace.

This rapid sketch presents but a faint outline of a life of active and unwearied industry in the discharge of most important duties. His publications—chiefly sermons and essays, besides those already mentioned—were very numerous. He delivered very many public addresses, scientific, literary, and religious. His eloquence was at the

* He had previously been Professor in an Eastern Seminary: in that year the Eastern and Western were united.

service of every call of philanthropy. While he set before him one grand object—the proclamation of Christ's salvation and glory—he ever took a deep interest in every matter of social and public concern. He had an especial delight in the training of candidates for the ministry of reconciliation; and at his decease, a large majority of the ministry of the Reformed Presbyterian Church had received at least a part of their training under his inspection. In the division which took place in 1833, he held the most prominent position in maintaining the earlier views of the Church. His integrity was never questioned. Into every subject to which he directed his attention, he entered with all the ardour of a great mind, impelled by deep and strong feeling. He had every qualification of the orator: capacious intellect; vast attainments in almost every department of human knowledge; a ready and retentive memory; lofty imagination, combined with unsurpassed powers of argument, and copiousness of language and illustration. He was eminently a man of prayer, and in whatever society he was thrown he never shunned to declare the counsel of God. Among Christians he ever urged the duty, and excellence, and efficacy of prayer. His theology was of the old stamp. He gave no countenance to supposed modern improvements. He dwelt much in his ministrations upon the glory of Christ and His claims to supremacy. He was the friend of man, and never faltered in the advocacy of the interests of human liberty.

His physical appearance corresponded with his mental character. His stature, over six feet; his frame well developed, muscular and active; his expanded and lofty forehead; deep-set, dark, and piercing eye; his nose slightly arched; his mouth compressed to a line; his entire aspect marked with the deep lines of thought;—gave indications that could not be mistaken of extraordinary mental power. His voice, not deep, but sonorous and strong, completed the list of his oratorical accomplishments. At his decease he left two sons—both in the ministry—James M. Willson, of Philadelphia, and R. Z. Willson, late of Craftsbury, Vt.; and three daughters, married to ministers of the same ecclesiastical connection. A monument has been erected to his memory, by his friends throughout the Church, and others, in the vicinity of the church in Coldenham where he so long ministered, and where repose his mortal remains.