



HISTORY

OF THE

Reformed Presbyterian Church

IN

AMERICA:

WITH SKETCHES OF ALL HER MINISTRY, CONGREGATIONS,
MISSIONS, INSTITUTIONS, PUBLICATIONS, Etc.,
AND EMBELLISHED WITH OVER
FIFTY PORTRAITS AND
ENGRAVINGS.

BY

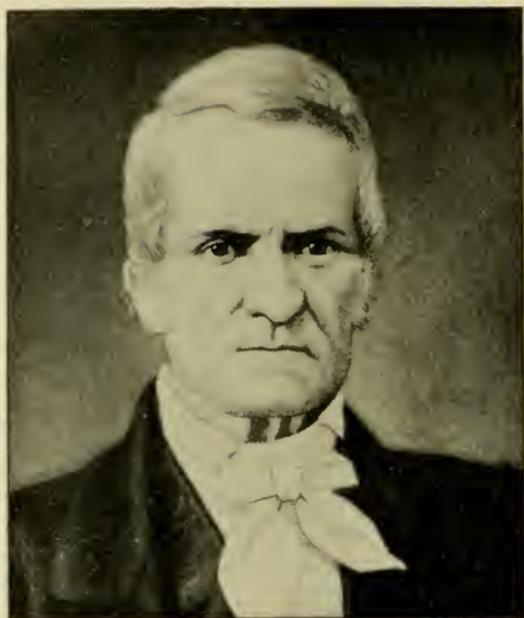
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JAMES R. WILLSON, D. D.

42. "Civil Government," 1853, pp. 162. "Social Religious Covenanting," 1856, pp. 36. "Witnessing," 1861, pp. 31, and other pamphlets of minor import. Being a public spirited man he was connected with all the Mission Boards, and literary and benevolent institutions. He was honored with the degree of Doctor of Divinity by Westminster College in 1865. He was Moderator of the Synod of 1859.

JAMES RENWICK WILLSON, D. D.:

Son of Zaccheus and Mary (McConnell) Willson, was born at "the forks of the Yough," near Elizabeth, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, April 9, 1780. His ancestors were sturdy Covenanters who came to America in 1713, and settled in the Cumberland Valley in Eastern Pennsylvania. In 1769, the family removed to "the forks of the Yough." His father was a farmer, in which occupation he also engaged until his twenty-first year. In 1795, he connected with the Associate Reformed Church, but transferred his membership to the Covenanter Church in 1798. In 1801, he entered Jefferson Academy, and graduated with first honors from Jefferson College in 1805. His theological studies were pursued during his last collegiate year at Canonsburgh, Pennsylvania, under the direction of the Rev. Dr. John McMillan, also two years under the care of the Rev. Dr. Alexander McLeod, of New York, and he was licensed by the Middle Committee of the Reformed Presbytery, June 9, 1807. In 1809, he became Principal of the Academy of Bedford, Pennsylvania. In 1815, he took charge of a classical school in Philadelphia, and also established a Mission in "the Neck," where his

labors were very successful. He was ordained by the Northern Presbytery, and installed pastor of the united congregations of Coldenham and Newburgh, Orange County, New York, August 10, 1817. In 1823, the Newburgh branch was dropped, and he remained at Coldenham until his resignation in 1830. He was installed pastor of the congregation of Albany, New York, September 17, 1830, and remained in charge three years. He returned to Coldenham, where he was re-installed November 21, 1833, and resuscitated the Coldenham Academy. He was chosen Professor of Theology in 1836, and the Eastern Seminary, located at Coldenham, New York, was established, October 12, 1838, where he was the preceptor for two years. At the union of the Eastern and Western Seminaries, creating the Allegheny Seminary, he resigned his charge at Coldenham, June 26, 1840, and accepted a professorate in the new institution. The Seminary was removed from Allegheny, Pennsylvania, to Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1845, where he was the sole Professor, and stated supply to the congregation of that city for four years. In 1849, the Seminary was removed to Northwood, Ohio, where he was exonerated from duty in 1851, and retired at Emeritus Professor. During the remaining two years of his life he resided with his son, the Rev. Dr. James M. Willson, in Philadelphia, and spent the summers in Coldenham, New York, where he died at the house of Mr. John Beattie, of old age, and under the affliction of a fractured limb, September 29, 1853. He lies buried in the graveyard of Coldenham, in the very spot above which stood the pulpit of the old church

where he so long preached. He married Miss Jane Roberts, of Canonsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1807. Without exception he was the most powerful preacher the Covenanter Church in America has ever produced, and, in intellectual grasp, classical scholarship, and pulpit eloquence, ranked among the first preachers of the country. He possessed every physical attribute of the orator. His height was over six feet, his shoulders broad, his voice sonorous, his eye brilliant; and, his wide range of information in every department of literature, his ready command of language, and his intense earnestness, rendered him at once an attractive speaker upon any subject. His was the career of a great man. His style was generally distinguished for perspicuity of statement, simplicity of method, and beauty of illustration. His imagination was at once active and elevated, and when it took possession of him he was overwhelming in the majesty of his descriptions, and the awful character of his denunciations. At the time of his settlement in Newburgh, New York, there existed a hot-bed of infidelity. The followers of Tom Paine held sway, profaning sacred rites in the most public and shameless manner—even administering the symbols of the Saviour's death to dogs. He at once inaugurated the battle. His boldness in proclaiming the truth, the power of his arguments, the overwhelming force of his eloquence, the fearful warnings, and clear prophetic denunciations, attracted the whole community as they hung upon his burning words. Some shocking death-bed scenes, which seemed to be in fulfilment of his threatenings, alarmed many, and

gradually the whole place became reformed. During his residence in Albany, he was frequently called upon to open the Legislature with prayer. His fame soon became known as he denounced the ungodliness of that body, and the wickedness of the city. The Legislature feared his prayers. When he preached his famous sermon "Prince Messiah," the Legislature discussed it for a whole sitting, and denounced the author in the most violent terms. The prayers of such a man were, by a unanimous vote, banished from the legislative halls; the sermon was consumed in a public bonfire, and the author burned in effigy before the State House door. He was prominent in the controversy that resulted in the division of the Church in 1833, and a champion of the portion adhering to the principles of the Church. He was a well-read historian, and published many articles on the history of the Church. He had a large acquaintance with public and religious men. He was eminently a man of prayer, and was accustomed to carry all matters to the throne of grace. He had no disrelish for social pleasantries, but his mind was usually occupied with themes of momentous import. He was a very successful teacher, and had knowledge of twelve languages, of most of which he was master. He was an American patriot, at the same time a consistent and ardent covenanting protestant against the evils of the country, and the infidelity of the Constitution of the United States. He was a public man, and an address from him at an anniversary, college commencement, or scientific association, was the attractive feature of the occasion. An address delivered at Newburgh, New

York, upon the occasion of the burial of the bones of some revolutionary heroes, has been pronounced as one of the most eloquent and beautiful discourses in the English language. He left his impress as a great man upon every department of literary work. He was a profuse writer upon various subjects. The following are his most valued publications extant: "Historical Sketch of Opinions on the Atonement," 1817, pp. 350. "Subjection of Kings and Nations to Messiah," 1819. "Civil Government," 1821. "Dr. Watts an Anti-Trinitarian," 1821. "Honour to Whom Honour is Due," 1822. "The Book of Life of the Lamb," 1824. "The Glory and Security of the Church of God," 1824. "Political Danger," 1825. "The American Jubilee," 1825. "The Sabbath, and the Duty of the Nation to Keep it," 1829. "Prince Messiah's Claims to Dominion over all Governments," 1832. "Tokens of Divine Displeasure in the Conflagration of New York," 1835. "The Written Law," 1840. "Public Covenanting," 1848. He was editor of the *Evangelical Witness*, a monthly, 1822-26; also of the *Albany Quarterly*, 1832-34. He was honored with the degree of Doctor of Divinity by the Western University of Pennsylvania in 1828. He was Moderator of the Synod of 1823.

RENWICK ZACCHEUS WILLSON :

Son of Rev. Dr. James R. and Jane (Roberts) Willson, was born in Bedford, Bedford County, Pennsylvania, June 19, 1813. In 1815, his parents removed to Philadelphia, and, in 1817, to Coldenham, New York, where he received his early education in the Academy conducted by his distinguished father. Before he had