

A
HISTORY
OF THE
Presbyterian Church in America,

FROM ITS ORIGIN UNTIL THE YEAR 1760.

WITH
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF ITS EARLY MINISTERS.

BY THE
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WITH
A Memoir of the Author,
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AND
An Historical Introduction,
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JOSEPH M. WILSON,
No. 27 SOUTH TENTH STREET, BELOW CHESTNUT ST.
1857.

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Whitefield preached several times, both at Crosswicks and Allentown, on weekdays.

McKnight was dismissed from Cranberry in October, 1756, and Burden's Town obtained one-fourth of his time in 1758. He was called, May 28, 1766, to Middletown Point and Shrewsbury; and, in the fall, Trenton asked for him. He was dismissed from Allentown in October, and accepted the call to Middletown Point, Shark River, and Shrewsbury, April 21, 1767.

He was seized by the British, and his church was burned. He died, soon after his release, in 1778.

In 1789, Morgan Edwards said of the Presbyterian church at the Point, "The place which knew it knows it no more." It was rebuilt by a lottery, and was only rarely used by the Presbyterians till 1820. Shrewsbury remained vacant till 1812; and Shark River has long been surrendered to other denominations.

JOHN BLAIR,

A BROTHER of Samuel Blair, was born in Ireland, in 1720, and was educated at the Log College, and licensed by the New-Side Presbytery of Newcastle at its earliest sessions. He was ordained, December 27, 1742, pastor of Middle Spring, Rocky Spring, and Big Spring, in Cumberland county, Pennsylvania. These places had been served by Thomas Craighead; the first two being then called Upper and the third Lower Hopewell. They divided on the rupture, Hopewell having supplicated the conjunct presbyteries in 1741, and Campbell and Rowland having been sent to them. Blair gave two-thirds of his time to Big Spring, and divided the remainder between the others.

He visited Virginia soon after Robinson. "Truly* he came to us in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. Former impressions were ripened, and new ones made on many hearts. One night, a whole houseful of people was quite overcome by the power of the word, particularly of one pungent sentence; they would hardly sit or stand, or keep their feelings under any proper restraint. So general was the concern during his stay, and so ignorant were we of the dangers of apostasy, that we pleased our-

* Samuel Morris.

selves with the thought of more having been brought to Christ than now appear to have been. There is the greatest reason to believe that several bound themselves in an everlasting covenant to the Lord." He visited* the New-Side congregations east and west of the Blue Ridge, and also on his second visit in 1746. In that year he organized the congregations of North Mountain, including Bethel and Hebron, of New Providence, Timber Ridge, and the Forks of James River, now New Monmouth and Lexington.

The incursions of the Indians led him to resign his pastoral charge, December 28, 1748. He seems to have remained without settlement till 1757, when he succeeded his brother at Fagg's Manor. He continued his school with reputation. In 1767, he was chosen Professor of Divinity and Moral Philosophy in the College of New Jersey, and officiated as President. On the accession of Dr. Witherspoon, in 1769, he resigned, and accepted the call to Walkill, in the Highlands of New York, May 19, 1769. He died, December 8, 1771.

During the excitement growing out of the question concerning the examination of candidates on their experience of saving grace, one of the Old Side published "Thoughts on the Examination and Trials of Candidates." On this pamphlet Blair published "Animadversions," dated "Fagg's Manor, August 27, 1766." He also published a reply to Harker's "Appeal to the Christian World," entitled "The Synod of New York and Philadelphia vindicated." He left behind him a treatise on Regeneration, orthodox, and ably written: it was published shortly before his death, with the title, "A Treatise on the Nature, Use, and Subjects of the Sacraments; on Regeneration; and on the Nature and Use of the Means of Grace." The preface is dated "Goodwill, alias Walkill, December 21, 1770." In it he states that his opinions have undergone a change; and he begs that those who attempt to answer his reasons for the change will not throw dust. He had formerly believed that, though the unregenerate ought to have their children baptized, they ought not to adventure to the Lord's table. On this point he had changed his views and his practice. He endeavours to prove that there is no more propriety in excluding those who wish to partake of the sacraments than there would be in excluding them from other parts of public worship. It was reprinted by Dr. James P. Wilson, in his collection of Sacramental Treatises.

He married the daughter of John Durborrow, of Philadelphia. The Rev. John D. Blair, of Richmond, was his son. His daughter Rebecca was the wife of Dr. William Linn, of the Reformed Dutch Church in New York City. The Rev. Dr. John Blair Linn, of the First Church in Philadelphia, was her son.

* Dr. Foote.

Davies said of him, in his elegy on Samuel Blair:—

“When, all-attentive, eager to admit
The flowing knowledge, at his reverend feet
Raptured we sat, O thou above the rest,
Brother and image of the dear deceased,
Surviving Blair! oh, let spontaneous flow
The floods of tributary grief you owe.”

SAMUEL FINLEY

Was born in the county Armagh, Ireland, in 1715. His parents early sought the Lord's blessing on each of their children, and he was seriously impressed by divine truth in his sixth year. The family arrived at Philadelphia, September 28, 1734, and made their home in West Jersey. He was in his eighteenth year, and had already made some progress in preparing for the ministry: he completed his studies at the Log College. New Brunswick Presbytery took him on trials, August 4, 1740, and licensed him the next day. He went into the bounds of Donegal Presbytery, and was present at the trial of Craighead, in December, and abetted him in his contumelious treatment of that judicatory. He preached, January 20, 1741, at Nottingham, from Matthew xii. 27, 28:—“If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom then do your sons cast them out?” This sermon was published with the title, “Christ victorious, and Satan raging,” and was soon reprinted at Boston and London. Soon after appeared in print his letter in commendation of Whitefield.

The conjunct presbyteries, in August, 1741, sent him to Dover and Baltimore, and directed him to supply the new erection at Nottingham. He then went into West Jersey, and his labours were remarkably blessed at Greenwich, in Cohanzy, and Deerfield, in Gloucester county. Whitefield had passed through the region, and Gilbert Tennent had laboured there. “There was a remarkable stir of a religious kind in Cape May.” In the spring of 1740, Abel Morgan, the Baptist minister in Middletown, New Jersey, “was so affected by Whitefield's spirit that he went forth preaching the gospel on the sea-coast” and other places in that province. He came to Cohanzy, and Finley soon appeared: on Tuesday he went to Cape May, and on Thursday Finley came. The mode and the subjects of baptism became the topic of general discourse; “many of the disciples went among the Baptists, which caused