

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.

BY WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

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DAVID CALDWELL, D. D.*

1763—1824.

DAVID CALDWELL, the eldest son of Andrew and Martha Caldwell, was born in Lancaster County, Pa., March 22, 1725. His father was a farmer in comfortable circumstances, and was much esteemed in the neighbourhood in which he lived. The son, after receiving the rudiments of an English education, served an apprenticeship to a house carpenter; and he subsequently worked at the business four years, in the capacity of a journeyman. At the age of about twenty-five, he believed himself the subject of a true conversion, and made a public profession of his faith in Christ. Having resolved to devote himself to the ministry, he immediately commenced a course of study with a view to a collegiate education. Part of his preparatory course at least was under the instruction of the Rev. Robert Smith of Pequea, Pa. He was graduated at Princeton in 1761,—the year in which President Davies died; and he has been heard to say that he assisted in carrying him to his grave.

After leaving College, he was engaged, for a year, in teaching a school at Cape May; at the same time occupying his hours of leisure in the study of Theology. When the year had expired, he returned to Princeton, with a view to devote himself more exclusively to his preparation for the ministry; but, during a part of the time of his residence there, he acted as assistant teacher in College, in the department of languages. He was taken under the care of the New Brunswick Presbytery at its meeting in Princeton, September 28, 1762, and was licensed to preach the Gospel, by the same Presbytery, and at the same place, on the 8th of June, 1763.

Having supplied several vacancies within the bounds of the Presbytery that licensed him, he was commissioned by the Synod to spend at least one year as a missionary in North Carolina, and the Presbytery were ordered to ordain him with reference to this mission. He seems to have visited North Carolina first in the summer, or early in the autumn, of 1764; and then to have returned to the North for ordination. He was ordained at Trenton, N. J., on the 6th of July, 1765,—the sermon being preached by the Rev. William Kirkpatrick.† A call to him had been laid before the Presbytery at a previous meeting, from the Congregations in Buffalo and Alamance settlements in North Carolina; in consequence of which, he was dismissed to join the Presbytery of Hanover in Virginia. The Congregations to which he was called, included a considerable number of his friends, who

* Memoir by Rev. Dr. Caruthers.—Foote's Sketches of N. C.—MS. from Rev. Dr. Hall.

† WILLIAM KIRKPATRICK was graduated at the College of New Jersey in 1757; was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of New Brunswick at Princeton, August 15, 1758; and was ordained *sine titulo*, at Cranberry, July 4, 1759. In March, 1760, he was sent, in answer to a petition made to Presbytery, to preach at Trenton. In April, 1761, the people of Trenton gave him a call; and in April, 1762, by the advice of Presbytery, he accepted it; but, for some reason or other, his installation was postponed; and in December, 1764, the Presbytery refused to install him on the ground of inadequate support. He continued, however, to preach there, the greater part of the time, till June, 1766, when he accepted a call from Amwell, N. J., where he was installed in August following. In 1767, he was chosen a member of the Board of Trustees of Princeton College, and held the office until his death, which occurred on the 8th of September, 1769, in the forty-third year of his age. He was Moderator of the Synod in 1769. Tradition represents him as an eloquent man, and distinguished for his piety and usefulness.

had emigrated from Pennsylvania to North Carolina, and some of whom had been thoughtful enough to bespeak his services as a minister, while he was yet only in a course of training for the sacred office. One of his congregations belonged to the Old Side, and the other to the New Side, of that day; but, by his discreet and cautious management, he was enabled to keep them in friendly relations with each other.

He proceeded to Carolina immediately after his ordination; but, for some reason that is not now known, did not immediately join the Hanover Presbytery, or accept the call of the two Churches. It was not till the 11th of October, 1767, that he was received as a member of the Presbytery, and not till the 3d of March, 1768, that he was installed Pastor of the Churches. The installation sermon was preached by the Rev. Hugh McAden.*

As the salary which his congregations promised him, was only two hundred dollars, he found it necessary to make some other provision for his support; and, accordingly, he purchased a small farm, and, about the same time, commenced a classical school in his own house, which he continued, with little interruption, till the infirmities of age disqualified him for teaching. The number of scholars generally ranged from fifty to sixty; and among them were many who have since held some of the most important places in both Church and State.

Mr. Caldwell, at an early period in his ministry, directed his attention to both the science and the practice of medicine. He profited, in this way, by the residence in his family, for a year, of a practising physician, as well as by a constant correspondence with Dr. Rush, between whom and himself there grew up an intimacy while they were together in College.

Mr. Caldwell was identified with some of the most terrible events of the war of the Revolution. The territory that constituted the field of his labours, was repeatedly a scene of terror and bloodshed. His house was plundered, his library and furniture destroyed, and the most vigorous and insidious efforts were made to overtake and arrest him, when he had fled for his life. His people, like himself, were generally earnest patriots, and some of them lost their lives in battle, while all were subjected to the severest trials and privations.

After the return of Peace, Mr. Caldwell, besides attending faithfully to his duties as teacher and preacher, had much to do, in a more private way, with the political concerns of the country. He had been a member of the Convention that formed the Constitution of the State of North Carolina, in 1776, and had voted for a provision which forbade his being a member of the Legislature, while he was a minister of the Gospel; but still he was at liberty to express his opinion in regard to the measures which the public welfare demanded; and his opinion always carried with it great weight. As a testimony of grateful respect for the various public services he had ren-

* HUGH McADEN was born in Pennsylvania, though his parents were from the North of Ireland. He was graduated at the College of New Jersey in 1753; studied Theology under the Rev. John Blair; was licensed to preach by the Newcastle Presbytery in 1755; was ordained by the same Presbytery in 1757; was dismissed to join the Hanover Presbytery in 1759, and the same year became the minister of the Congregations of Duplin and New Hanover in North Carolina; and, having remained there about ten years, removed to Caswell County, chiefly for the sake of a better climate, where he died January 20, 1781, leaving a wife and seven children. He suffered, not a little, during the Revolution.—his house being ransacked, and many of the most valuable things it contained, particularly his papers, being destroyed by the enemy; and, within two weeks after his death, they were encamped in one of the churches in which he had been accustomed to preach. He is represented as having been remarkably exact in his habits, and an eminently faithful and laborious pastor and missionary.

dered, when the present system of District Courts went into operation,—notwithstanding there were many applicants for the office of Clerk of Guilford County, Mr. Caldwell's son, in whose behalf no application had been made, received the appointment under circumstances the most gratifying to both the son and the father.

When the University of North Carolina was established, in 1791, Mr. Caldwell, it is understood, had the offer of the Presidency; but, owing to his advanced age, and to the peculiar state of his family, he saw fit to decline it. In 1810, the Trustees of that institution testified their respect for his character by conferring upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity.

When the great religious excitement took place throughout the Southern country, about the commencement of the present century, Dr. Caldwell, though he believed that it was, on the whole, a genuine work of Divine grace, yet was convinced also that there was much about it which could not approve itself to an enlightened Christian judgment. He ventured cautiously, and yet firmly, to express this opinion; and, as might be expected, he was, for a time, set down by many as among the doubtful friends of the revival.

Dr. Caldwell continued to preach in his two churches, unless prevented by inclement weather, till the year 1820, though his infirmities had become so great that it was often with difficulty that he could reach his house, after a public service. For two or three years previous to his death, he never left the plantation on which he resided; but, during the whole progress of his decline, he uniformly evinced the utmost patience, equanimity, and gratitude for the Divine goodness. His death, which took place on the 25th of August, 1824, was attended with so little suffering, that his friends scarcely realized that he had entered the dark valley, when they saw that life was extinct. Had he lived seven months longer, he would have completed a century. A Sermon, with reference to his death, was preached, by appointment of the Orange Presbytery, in the Buffalo Church, by the Rev. E. Currie, one of his former pupils, from Eccl. vii. 1.

In the latter part of the year 1766, he was married to Rachel, the third daughter of the Rev. Alexander Craighead, minister at Sugar Creek, N. C. They had a large family of children: three of the sons entered the ministry, and one, the medical profession. Dr. C. suffered severe domestic afflictions,—three of his children, and one of them a clergyman of great promise, becoming irrecoverably insane. Mrs. Caldwell survived her husband less than a year, and died in the triumph of Christian faith. A marble slab near the Buffalo Church designates the spot where their mortal remains repose.

A somewhat extended biography of Dr. Caldwell, by the Rev. E. W. Caruthers, D. D.,—was published in 1842, at the close of which are two of Dr. Caldwell's Sermons,—one entitled "The character and doom of the Slug-gard;" the other, "The doctrine of Universal Salvation unscriptural."

FROM THE HON. J. M. MOREHEAD,
GOVERNOR OF NORTH CAROLINA.

GREENSBORO', N. C., 4th August, 1852.

Dear Sir: The Rev. Dr. Caldwell, concerning whom you ask for my reminiscences, can hardly be said to have lived in my generation, but he seems rather to have belonged to a generation or two preceding

In November, 1811, my father took me, then in my sixteenth year, with a good common English education, from his residence in the County of Rockingham, to Dr. Caldwell's,—a distance of some thirty miles, for the purpose of putting me under his care and instruction. I had heard so much of him as an instructor and disciplinarian, that I had conceived of him as a man of great personal dignity, with a face the scowl of which would annihilate the unlucky urchin who had not gotten his lesson well. So I approached his residence with fear and trembling. We found, a few hundred yards from his house, and near a little mill on a small branch,—built rather to serve as a hobby for amusement than for any more practical purpose, an exceedingly old gentleman, bowed down by some eighty-six or seven winters, enveloped in a large cape made of bear skin, with a net worsted cap on his head, (for the evening was cool,) and supporting himself with a cane not much shorter than his own body—this was Dr. Caldwell. My fears of him and his authority were at once dissipated. The moment he was informed of our business, he remarked that he had long ago abandoned his school, and had taught but little since, and then only to oblige a neighbour or two; that he had no pupil at that time, and did not wish to engage in teaching again. My father reminded him of his promise made, many years before, and while he was not teaching, that he would educate his oldest son for him. The Doctor replied jocularly that he did not consider that that promise bound him to live always, that he might comply with it; and that my father ought to have presented his son long since. My father made some answer at which the Doctor laughed heartily, and said in a broad Scotch accent, which he often assumed, when he desired to be humorous, or to worry a laggard pupil with a bad lesson—"Weel mon, we must thry and see what we can do with the lad;" and turning to myself, said—"But mon, have ye an appetite for reading?" To which I replied, "I am not very hungry for it." The answer seemed to please him, and we then proceeded to his house.

I took boarding in the neighbourhood, and remained under his tuition until the fall of 1815, (losing a good deal of time, however, from the school,) when I went to the University of North Carolina, and was admitted a member of the Junior class. As I had nearly completed the prescribed course in the languages under Dr. Caldwell, I studied no Latin or Greek at the University, with the exception of Cicero, and that I studied privately.

I was not long in Dr. Caldwell's hands, before I became satisfied of his remarkable excellence as a teacher. He had but little to amuse him, except hearing my lessons. I applied myself to my studies with great zeal, with which he was much pleased; and often has he made me recite, from four to six hours a day, parsing every difficult word, and scanning nearly every line, when the recitation happened to be in any of the Latin poets. Indeed you could not get along with him, with any comfort, without knowing accurately and thoroughly every thing that you passed over.

The Rules of Prosody and Syntax in the Latin, and of Syntax in the Greek, with all the exceptions and notes, seemed to be as familiar to him as the alphabet. His memory had evidently failed to some extent; and I have sometimes found him, on my arrival in the morning, when I was studying the higher Latin and Greek classics, looking over my lesson for the day. He would apologize for doing so, by saying that his memory failed, and he was afraid I might *cork* him; meaning that I might ask him questions that he would not be able to answer. Hard words or difficult sentences in the various authors that he taught, seemed, for the most part, entirely familiar to him; and often, when he would ask me for a rule which I could not give, he would attempt to give it; and the phraseology having escaped his memory, he would bother at it, like a man with a tangled skein, searching for the end by which it can be unravelled, until some word or expression of his own would bring back to his memory some part of the rule,

and then he would repeat the whole of it with great accuracy. Sometimes, when he could not repeat the rule in English, he would say—"Weel mon, let us thry the Latin;" and the Latin generally proved to be quite at his command.

Dr. Caldwell's course of studies in the languages,—Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, as well as in the sciences, was extensive for his day; and the facility and success with which he imparted his knowledge to others, in such extreme old age, was truly wonderful. Towards the latter part of the time that I was under his instruction, he had several more pupils, and among them was a student of medicine; and I noticed that he seemed just as familiar with that subject as any other.

During a part of the time that I was with him, he found great difficulty in reading, with the help of two pair of spectacles; but his sight returned subsequently, so that he could read the finest Greek print, without any glasses at all. I did not, however, observe much change in his intellect.

In stature, I suppose he must have measured about five feet, eight or ten inches; and in his younger days, he probably weighed from one hundred and seventy-five to two hundred pounds. He had a well formed head and strong features. He was an exceedingly studious man, as his great acquisitions in various departments of learning proved. The prominent characteristics of his mind were the power to acquire knowledge and retain it, and the power to apply it to useful and practical purposes. By some he was thought to be lacking in originality; but I think this questionable. He certainly possessed a strong mind; but the late day at which his education was commenced, the great extent and variety of his knowledge, and the active pursuits of his life, gave him but little time for that kind of reflection, without which originality of thought is not apt to be developed.

Dr. Caldwell was a man of admirable temper, fond of indulging in playful remarks, which he often pointed with a moral; kind to a fault to every human being, and I might say to every living creature, entitled to his kindness. He seemed to live to do good.

It would be difficult to duly appreciate his usefulness through his long life. His learning, his piety, and his patriotism, were infused into the generations of his day. An ardent Whig of the Revolution, he taught his people the duty they owed to their country as well as their God. Well do I remember, when, in 1814, the militia of Guilford were called together in this town to raise volunteers, or draft men to go to Norfolk, to have seen the old gentleman literally crawl up on the bench of the Court House to address the multitude, and in fervid and patriotic strains exhort them to be faithful to their country. The sermon had a powerful effect upon the soldiers. As an illustration, I may mention that a Quaker lad, who had been strictly educated in the faith of his denomination, after hearing the sermon, entered the ranks of the volunteers, served his tour, returned to the bosom of his own Church, which gladly received him, and lived and died an honoured and esteemed citizen.

From Dr. Caldwell's great age at the time I knew him, and the consequent failure of his voice, (never I think a very good one,) I could not form a very satisfactory opinion of his merits in the pulpit. All the sermons I ever heard him deliver were extemporaneous. But, if I were to hazard an opinion in respect to him as a preacher, in the vigour of his manhood, I should say he was a calm, strong, didactic reasoner, whose sermons were delivered with an earnestness that left no doubt with his hearers that he was uttering his own deep convictions, and with an unction that bore testimony to the Christian purity of his own heart.

Happy in the opportunity of thus bearing an humble testimony to the memory of my venerated friend I remain, your obedient servant,

J. M. MOREHEAD.