

A
HISTORY
OF THE
Presbyterian Church in America,

FROM ITS ORIGIN UNTIL THE YEAR 1760.

WITH
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF ITS EARLY MINISTERS.

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WITH
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PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

PHILADELPHIA:
JOSEPH M. WILSON,
No. 27 SOUTH TENTH STREET, BELOW CHESTNUT ST.
1857.

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rational piety; with a proneness to anger, which was forgotten in his placableness and affability. Davies speaks of him to Cowell as "our learned friend."

DAVID COWELL

WAS born in Dorchester, Massachusetts, in 1704, graduated at Harvard in 1732, and came as a licentiate to Trenton, N.J., in 1736. Trenton, which had formed a part of Hopewell, asked Philadelphia Presbytery, in September, 1734, to provide them a minister. In the next fall, Cowell began his labours there. On his receiving a call,* the presbytery examined him on his religious principles and sentiments, heard him preach from Rom. iii. 25, and, after a sermon by Andrews, ordained him, November 3, 1736.

A debate was maintained between him and Gilbert Tennent on a most important matter: namely, Whether a motive, to which the natural man is susceptible, a regard to what he sees to be on the whole most for his interest, is acceptable with God when it leads one to embrace Christ's salvation and God's service? Cowell disclaimed the affirmative, which Tennent charged him with holding, and probably was equally unwilling to admit that our obedience to God is worthless if we be influenced by a desire for our own salvation as well as the glory of God.

He took no part at the division in 1741; but he was fully opposed to the extreme measures of the Brunswick party. He remained with the Old Side; but his intercourse with the New York brethren, and his intimate friendship with Burr, was not interrupted.

In 1749, the commissions of both synods met at Trenton, to treat about a union. Cowell was chosen moderator; but, a heated discussion arising about the Protest, they broke up, unanimously agreeing that each synod more fully prepare proposals of reconciliation, and that there be in the mean time a mutual endeavour to cultivate candour and friendship.

He was an early, an ardent, and an indefatigable friend of New Jersey College, and unwearied in his efforts to place Davies in the presidency. He wrote to him,† "The college ought to be

* It is dated April 7, 1736, and is in the hands of Mr. J. V. Cowell.

† MSS. in the possession of Mr. Joseph V. Cowell, of Philadelphia. Davies

esteemed of as much importance to the interests of religion and liberty as any other institution of the kind in America. God at first, in a most remarkable manner, owned and blessed it. It was the Lord's doing. He erected it; for our beginning was nothing. He carried it on, till it was marvellous in our eyes. But it hath been under terrible frowns of Divine Providence: first, in the loss of Mr. Burr, the life and soul of it; and then of Mr. Edwards, from whom we had such raised expectations. May the Father of mercies look with pity and compassion on the work of his own hands! I am sensible that your leaving Virginia is attended with great difficulties; but I cannot think your affairs are of equal importance with the college."

Upon the union, he joined New Brunswick Presbytery, June 3, 1758; and, the next year, Trenton asked for supplies. He died, December 1, 1760, having never married. Davies preached at his funeral—himself so soon to follow—from Heb. iv. 11, having been "nominated by him to that service."

"During* the short time I have been a resident of this province, he has been my very intimate friend; and I have conversed with him in his most unreserved hours, when conversation was the image of his soul. I had only a general acquaintance with him for ten years before.

"The characteristics of his youth were a serious, virtuous, religious turn of mind, free from the vices and vanities of that thoughtless age; and a remarkable thirst for knowledge: and I am witness how lively a taste for books and knowledge he cherished to the last. He appeared to me to have a mind steadily and habitually bent towards God and holiness. If his religion was not so warm and passionate as that of some, it was perhaps proportionally more even, uniform, and rational. His religion was not a transient passion, but appeared to be a settled temper. Humility and modesty, those gentle virtues, seemed to shine in him with a very amiable lustre. He often imposed a voluntary silence upon himself, when he would have made an agreeable figure in conversation. He was fond of giving way to his brethren with whom he might justly have claimed an equality, or to encourage modest worth in his inferiors. He was not impudently liberal of unasked advice, though very judicious, impartial, and communicative when consulted. He had an easy, graceful negligence in his carriage,—a noble indifference about setting himself off; he seemed not to know his own accomplishments, though they were so conspicuous that many a man has made a

relied upon his skill as a physician, and requested his presence when the students had been inoculated for the smallpox.

* MS. Sermon of Davies.

brilliant appearance with a small share of them. He had a remarkable command of his passions; he appeared calm and unruffled amid the storms of the world,—peaceful and serene amid the commotions and uproar of human passions. Remarkably cautious and deliberate, slow to determine, and especially to censure, he was well guarded against extremes. In matters of debate, and especially in religious controversy, he was rather a moderator and compromiser than a party. Though he could not be neuter, but judged for himself to direct his own conduct, he could exercise candour and forbearance without constraint or reluctance; when he happened to differ in opinion from any of his brethren, even themselves could not but acknowledge and admire his moderation.

“His accomplishments, as a man of sense and learning, were very considerable. His judgment was cool, deliberate, and penetrating; his sentiments were well digested, and his taste excellent. He had read not a few of the best modern authors, and was no stranger to ancient literature. He could think as well as read; and the knowledge he collected from books was well digested, and became his own. He had carefully studied the Sacred Scriptures, and had a rational theory of the Christian system.

“He had an easy, natural vein of wit, which rendered his conversation extremely agreeable: he sometimes used it with great dexterity to expose the rake, the fop, the infidel, and other fools of the human species; it was sacred to the service of virtue, or innocently volatile and lively, to heighten the pleasures of conversation.

“He was a lover of mankind, and delighted in every office of benevolence. Benevolence appeared to be his predominant virtue, and gave a most amiable cast to his whole temper and conduct.

“That he might be able to support himself without oppressing a small congregation, he gave some part of his time to the study and practice of physic; in which he made no inconsiderable figure. A friend of the poor, he spared neither time nor expense to relieve them.

“I never had the happiness to hear him in the sacred desk. In prayer, I am sure, he appeared humble, solemn, rational, and importunate, as a creature,—a sinner in the presence of God.

“In the charter of the College of New Jersey, he was nominated one of the trustees; and but few invested with the same trust discharged it with so much zeal, diligence, and alacrity. His heart was set upon his prosperity; he exerted himself in this service, nor did he forget it in his last moments.

“The church has lost a judicious minister, and, as we hope, a sincere Christian; the world has lost an inoffensive, useful mem-

ber of society, this town an agreeable, peaceable, benevolent inhabitant, the College of New Jersey a father; and I have lost a friend."

CHARLES TENNENT.

THE youngest child of Tennent, of Neshaminy, was born in the county Down, May 3, 1711, and was baptized by the Rev. Richard Donnell. He is said* to have learned the trade of a saddler. After studying with his father, he was taken on trials by Philadelphia Presbytery in May, 1736; in June, at Neshaminy, he was examined on the evidences of his piety, and was licensed Sept. 20. He was called, April 6, 1737, to Pilesgrove and vicinity; but the call was not put into his hands. He soon after was ordained, by Newcastle X Presbytery, the pastor of Whiteclay.

In November, 1739, † Whitefield assisted him at the sacrament; he preached from the tent to eight thousand persons. Among the hearers was Mrs. Douglass, the sister of Charles Thomson, Secretary to Congress, and the grandmother of the Rev. James W. Douglass, of Fayetteville. She describes Whitefield as bathed in tears during nearly all the service. It was a glorious day. The effect was happy and extensive. To his delight, he found there a family named Howell, who had heard him at Cardiff and Kingswood. In the following year he was there on a like occasion; some opposers being present, Whitefield felt peculiar pleasure in singing the 23d Psalm:—

" My table thou hast furnished,
In presence of my foes;
My head thou dost with oil anoint,
And my cup overflows."

A separation took place in the congregation: the Old Side joined with Elk River. On the union of the synods, some of the most zealous friends of the Revival forsook Tennent and went over to the Seceders, being unable to understand how it could be right to enter into fellowship with those they had been taught to regard as heart-enemies to the power of religion. "Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord." Tennent was dismissed from his charge in 1763, and settled at Buckingham, now Berlin, on the

* Letter of a Covenanting Presbyterian.

† Log College, Whitefield's Journal.