

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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Newtown and Plumstead, in Bucks county, obtained leave of Philadelphia Presbytery to employ him; and he joined that body in June, 1736. Hugh Hunter and Anthony Thompson requested the presbytery that a call might be moderated for him. Treat was directed to preside. The call was presented in May, 1737; but, in August, he declined it, on account of the distance of Plumstead from Newtown. He continued to service them, and was sent, in November, to supply Amwell and Bethlehem, in Hunterdon county, New Jersey, with other vacancies. Martin met with Philadelphia Presbytery, March 14, 1738, to request that Carlisle might go into the bounds of Lewes Presbytery. He removed at once, and is mentioned as a member of that presbytery in 1742: subsequently his name is not seen.

ALEXANDER CRAIGHEAD

WAS probably the son of the Rev. Thomas Craighead, and may have been born in this country. He appeared before Donegal Presbytery, January 5, 1734; and was licensed October 8, having preached from Prov. x. 9. He was sent to Middle Octorara and "over the river," being the first to whom that duty was assigned. He was called (April 9, 1735) to Middle Octorara, the people promising sixty pounds, and declaring their ability to raise seventy-one pounds. He accepted in June, and was appointed to prepare a sermon on Col. ii. 7, a lecture on the first Psalm, and to discuss the question, Where revelation is necessary to salvation? He was ordained November 18, Boyd having preached from 2 Tim. ii. 15.

A zealous promoter of the "Revival," he accompanied Whitefield while in Chester county; and they made the woods ring, as they rode, with songs of praise.*

He carried the gospel to the people of New London, in opposition to the wish of the minister, session, and most of the congregation. A part of his flock complained of his introducing new terms of communion, requiring them, when having their children baptized, to adopt the Solemn League and Covenant. He also was charged with denying that ministers should be confined within

* Whitefield, after preaching at Willingston, (Wilmington,) rode towards Nottingham with Tennent, Craighead, and Blair, accompanied by many from Philadelphia, most sweetly singing and praising God, May 13, 1740.—*Gillies*.

the bounds of one congregation, but should roam as evangelists; and with excluding from communion one who seemed opposed to the new methods.

The presbytery came to his meeting-house in December, 1740, to adjudicate the case. He was preaching from—"They be blind leaders of the blind." It was a continued invective against Pharisee preachers, and the presbytery, as given over to judicial blindness and hardness. "He railed on Mr. Boyd." The people were invited at the close to repair to "the tent" and hear his defence, which was read by David Alexander and Samuel Finley.

The presbytery, though summoned to hear it, remained in the church, and were proceeding to business, when the people rose in a tumult, and, with railing, compelled them to withdraw. When they met next day, he, with his coadjutors, appeared; and, having read the defence from the pulpit, he declined their jurisdiction, because they all were his accusers. They suspended him; but resolved that, if he should signify his repentance to any member, a meeting should be called at once, to consider his acknowledgment and take off the suspension. He sat in the next synod; and, they having spent the first week in considering his case without coming to any decision, the Protest was introduced on Monday, and separated the conflicting parties.

Some of his people respected the sentence of the presbytery, and forsook him. He asked the presbytery, just before the rupture, to see to it that those persons fulfilled their engagements to him.

He separated from the Brunswick party at the first meeting of the conjunct presbyteries, because they refused to revive the Solemn League and Covenant. Soon after, he published his reasons for leaving their connection, putting forward, as his prominent inducement, that neither synod nor presbytery had adopted the Westminster Standards by a public act. Blair replied to him; Gilbert Tennent lamented his party-spirit and censoriousness. Craighead addressed the Reformed Presbytery in Scotland, declaring his adherence to their views and methods, and soliciting helpers. He issued a manifesto, setting forth his opinions, to draw together all who held the like sentiments.

Thomas Cookson, Esq., one of his Majesty's justices for Lancaster county, appeared before the Synod of Philadelphia, May 26, 1743, and, in the name of the governor, laid before them a paper to be considered. All other business was at once deferred, and the paper, with an accompanying affidavit, was read. The synod unanimously agreed, "That it is full of treason, sedition, and distraction, and grievous perverting of the sacred oracles, to the ruin of all societies and civil government, and directly and diametrically opposite to our religious principles, as we have on all occasions

openly and publicly declared. We hereby declare, with the greatest sincerity, that we detest this paper, and, with it, all principles and practices that tend to destroy the civil and religious rights of mankind, or to foment or encourage sedition or dissatisfaction with the civil government that we are now under, or rebellion, treason, or any thing that is disloyal. If Mr. Alexander Craighead be the author, we know nothing of the matter. He has been no member of our society for some time past, nor do we acknowledge him as such, and heartily lament that any man that was ever called a Presbyterian should be guilty of what is in this paper."

Dickinson, Pemberton, Alison, and the moderator, Cowell, prepared an address to the governor. It was presented to him, with a copy of the minute, by Andrews, Cross, and Cathcart.

Tennent said, about the same time, "His late and present divisive conduct we utterly detest and disclaim. I hope he is a pious man; but, having more zeal and positiveness than knowledge and judgment, he has schismatically broken communion with us, and adopted the rigid Cameronian scheme. He is indeed tinged with an uncharitable and party spirit, to the great prejudice of real religion in some places this way. May the Almighty forgive him and rectify his judgment!"

His success in forming praying societies is not known; no minister came from Britain to his assistance.

"With apparent sincerity, he objected to the deficiency of the system on which the Philadelphia Synod was constituted, and, with seeming sincerity, joined himself to the support of the languishing cause of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. He did not, however, possess stability. Overstrained zeal is seldom permanent. This man, having co-operated with the Covenanters with an ardour which appeared to some of them enthusiastical, left his profession and vows, and turned to the flocks of his former companions. The societies which he had forsaken continued eight years in this distressed condition, until, moved by their entreaties, the Rev. John Cuthbertson* came to them from Scotland, in 1752."†

In 1751, he wrote to the Anti-Burgher Associate Presbytery in Scotland; but, though ministers were directed by the presbytery to go in answer to his appeal, they failed to comply.

He is said to have removed to Windy Cove, on Cowpasture River, in Augusta county, Virginia, in 1749;‡ but it was probably not till after the ill success of his second application to Scotland. A

* Through the kindness of the Rev. T. W. J. Wylie, of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, I learn that Cuthbertson laboured forty years at Middle Octorara, Lancaster county, and joined in forming the Associate Reformed body. He died there, March 10, 1791, aged seventy-three.

† Reformed Principles exhibited by the Reformed Presbyterian Church.

‡ Dr. Foote's Sketches of Virginia.

large* buttonwood-tree, close to the river-bank, marks the site where stood his humble cabin. About a half mile above, stood his little log church; nothing now remains of it but a few stones of the back-wall of the fireplace, amidst a thick grove of pines. He and his people went to the house of God fully equipped to meet any sudden attack of savages. He joined Newcastle Presbytery before the fall of 1754. On Braddock's defeat, his congregation fled from the frontier, and a portion settled in North Carolina.

He met with Hanover Presbytery, September 2, 1757, and, in January, was sent to Rocky River, in North Carolina, and to other vacancies. He was called, in April, to Rocky River; and Richardson, on his way to labour among the Cherokees, was directed to install him.

He died in March, 1766, leaving behind him the affectionate remembrance of his faithful, abundant, and useful labours. He is said to have been a prey to dejection of spirits, as was also his relative, John Craighead, the pastor of Rocky Spring, Pennsylvania.

The first numerous settlement† between the Yadkin and Catawba was three miles north of Charlotte. In 1750, there were no white inhabitants; but they poured in so rapidly that, in 1756, the church on Sugar Creek was formed. Here was Craighead's home, and his burial-place: no stone marks his grave; but it is known by two large sassafras-trees, which grew, it is said, from the sticks being thrust into the ground, on which his coffin was borne to the grave.

His son Thomas became a minister of our church in Tennessee, and rose to high standing. His third daughter married the Rev. David Caldwell, of Buffalo and Allemande. Her son, Samuel Craighead Caldwell, was licensed at nineteen years of age, and ordained pastor of Hopewell and Sugar Creek in 1792. His harmonious continuance in that relation for thirty-five years is his best eulogium. At one time, seventy were added to the church. He died in 1826. Two of his sons are in the ministry.

* Rev. Samuel Brown, of Windy Cove.

† Dr. Foote's Sketches of North Carolina.