

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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MOSES HOGE, D. D.*

1781—1820.

The grandparents of MOSES HOGE came originally from Scotland, during the persecution of Charles the Second, and settled first at Amboy in New Jersey. Thence they removed to Delaware; thence to Pennsylvania, and thence to what is now Frederick County, Va., and settled on Cedar Creek, about the year 1735. Here also lived and died James and Mary (Griffith) Hoge, the parents of the subject of this sketch. And here too he himself was born on the 15th of February, 1752.

Young Hoge evinced an uncommon precocity of mind, and such was his thirst for knowledge that every leisure moment was devoted to his books. His father was a farmer in only moderate circumstances; but he was an intelligent as well as eminently pious man, and was disposed to gratify and cultivate the intellectual tastes of his son to the extent of his ability.

From his earliest childhood, under the influence of a Christian education, his mind had a serious direction, and he has been heard to say that he could not remember the time when the subject of religion was not grateful to his feelings. He did not, however, make a public profession of his faith till he was about twenty years of age. His father, though he had been a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church near his own residence, for some reason transferred his relation to an Associate Church in Pennsylvania, distant more than a hundred miles; and though he and his family attended the usual Sabbath services in the church where they had been accustomed to worship, *he* went regularly once a year into Pennsylvania to attend the Communion. On one of these occasions, his son Moses accompanied him, and became a member of the same church with which his father was connected.

With his first desire to obtain a liberal education, and perhaps with his first distinct religious impressions, was connected the purpose, if Providence should open the way, to become a minister of the Gospel. He served, for a short time, as a soldier in the army of the Revolution; but under what circumstances cannot now be ascertained. Up to that time, nothing seems to have occurred that gave promise of his being able to carry out his favourite purpose of acquiring an education; but, shortly after, as is supposed, two clergymen called and passed a night at his father's, and were so much struck with the evidence of his intellectual superiority, that they encouraged him to commence at once a course of study, and persuaded his father to render him whatever pecuniary aid might be in his power. Accordingly, without much delay, he made his way across the Blue Ridge into Culpepper County, to a classical school, taught by a minister of the Associate Church. This school, however, owing to the troubles of the Revolution, was soon broken up; and, for a short time after this, he seems again to have been engaged upon the farm. In 1778, he repaired to Liberty Hall Academy, which Hanover Presbytery had then lately established at Timber Ridge, and of which William Graham was at that time the head. He completed his studies here in 1780; and meanwhile his mind

*MSS. from Rev. Dr. Hill and Rev. Dr. Alexander.—Foote's Sketches of Va., 1st Series.

had undergone a change in regard to his church connection. On the 25th of October of that year, he was received as a candidate by the Hanover Presbytery.

During the pendency of his trials for licensure before the Presbytery, he went to reside with the celebrated Dr. James Waddel, and prosecuted his theological studies still further under his direction. He was licensed to preach in the latter part of November, 1781; about one year after he left Liberty Hall Academy. It had been his purpose to settle in Kentucky; but this was deferred for a while, that he might visit the people on the South branch of the Potomac, within the present bounds of Hardy County; and finally, from his attachment to that people, his purpose was relinquished altogether. The Congregation in Hardy, which took the name of *Concrete*, called him to be their Pastor; and he was ordained at Brown's meeting house, Augusta, December 13, 1782,—the Sermon on the occasion being preached by the Rev. Archibald Scott. During his residence at this place, he devoted himself with great assiduity to study, especially the study of Hebrew; and at the same time taught a school, which not only helped to furnish him the adequate means of support, but secured to the youth in the neighbourhood important advantages which they could not otherwise have enjoyed.

On the 23d of August, 1783, he was married to Elizabeth, daughter of John Poage, of Augusta County,—a lady of the finest intellectual and moral qualities.

After having spent about five years on the South branch of the Potomac, he found the climate so injurious to his health, that it became necessary for him to seek another residence; and, notwithstanding the devoted attachment of his people, and their earnest wish that his labours among them might be continued, they could not conscientiously interpose any obstacle to his leaving them. Accordingly, in the autumn of 1787, he removed to Shepherdstown; and, though there was much in the religious state of things there that seemed unpromising, he very soon gathered a large congregation, and acquired great popularity throughout the whole region.

In 1793, he appeared for the first time as an author. A very popular Baptist minister, by the name of Jeremiah Walker, had suddenly passed, under somewhat peculiar circumstances, from ultra Calvinism to the entire rejection of the Calvinistic doctrines, and had written a pamphlet in defence of his new views. To this pamphlet Mr. Hoge wrote an able and somewhat extended Reply, in vindication of the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church.

In the year 1799, Mr. Hoge published another work which attracted very considerable attention, entitled, "The Christian Panoply." It was designed as an antidote to Paine's Age of Reason. It consisted of two parts—the first containing the substance of Bishop Watson's masterly Reply to the first part of Paine's work, and the second Mr. Hoge's Answer to the second part of it. It had a wide circulation, and exerted a very important influence.

In the autumn of 1801, Mrs. Hoge's health had become so delicate that her physicians advised that she should pass the winter in a more Southern climate. He accordingly set out to travel with her; and, after spending some time in North Carolina, they proceeded farther South, but without any perceptible improvement of her health. On their way home, they determined to visit the Sweet Springs in Bottetourt County; but, before

they arrived there, she became so feeble as to be unable to proceed on her journey, and on the 18th of June, 1802, the fifth day from the time that they stopped, she died. She was full of peace and hope in her last hours; and her husband, though he was obliged to bury her in a desolate place, and in the midst of strangers, stood at the head of her grave, and preached Christ and Him crucified as the Resurrection and the Life. They had lived together in the conjugal relation upwards of nineteen years.

In October, 1803, Mr. Hoge attended the meeting of the Synod of Virginia, at Hampden Sidney College. During the sessions of the Synod, he renewed his acquaintance with an accomplished and pious lady, whom he had formerly known as the wife of William Pitt Hunt in Maryland, but who had been for several years a widow. He soon made proposals of marriage to her, which she accepted, and within less than a month she had become his wife. The union proved a source of much happiness to both parties, as well as to Mr. Hoge's family.

In 1805, he opened a classical school, partly as a necessary means of support, and partly with a view to the education of his own sons. In 1807, he was invited to take charge of the Academy in Charlestown, about ten miles from Shepherdstown; and to divide his ministerial labours between the two places; but, after due deliberation, he declined the offer. Shortly after this, he was appointed President of Hampden Sidney College, in place of Dr. Alexander, who had removed to Philadelphia; and at the same time was invited to be assistant preacher in Cumberland and Briery Congregations, each of them about ten miles distant from the College. After considerable hesitation, he consented to remove. He was inaugurated as President of the College during the sessions of Synod in the month of October, and was welcomed to his new field of labour with every expression of good-will and confidence.

In 1810, the degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him by the College of New Jersey.

The subject of education for the ministry having been discussed by the General Assembly in 1809, it was resolved to send down to the Presbyteries the inquiry whether there should be one or more Seminaries established. A divided answer was returned to the Assembly; but the Presbyteries in Virginia determined in favour of *Synodical* Seminaries; and the Assembly having consented to this, wherever it should be preferred, while yet they determined on establishing a central one,—the Synod of Virginia, in 1812, resolved to establish a Seminary within their bounds, and unanimously appointed Dr. Hoge their Professor.

From this time till his death, he held the two offices of President of the College, and Professor of Divinity under the appointment of the Synod. He had the pleasure of seeing about thirty of his pupils at Hampden Sidney, licensed and ordained ministers.

In 1819, Dr. Hoge's constitution, under his multiplied and onerous labours, was found to be giving way. For several months, he was confined to his chamber, and part of the time to his bed; but he still, even in his feeblest state, continued to hear the daily recitations of his class. In the course of the summer, his health was so far recruited that he paid a visit to his friends in the Valley about Shepherdstown and Winchester,—which proved to be his last. In the spring of 1820, he attended the meeting of his Presbytery in Mecklenburg County, and was appointed a dele-

gate to the General Assembly to meet in Philadelphia. He extended his journey as far as New York, with a special view to attend the anniversary of the American Bible Society. This desire being gratified, he spent a little time at Princeton, and then proceeded to Philadelphia. He was able to attend the sessions of the Assembly for about a week, when he became so ill as to be confined to his lodgings. As soon as his case became alarming, his family were sent for, and his wife arrived, only, however, in season to witness his serene and triumphant departure. He died on the 5th of July, 1820, in the sixty-ninth year of his age. A Sermon on the occasion of his death was preached by the Rev. Ezra Stiles Ely, D. D. His remains repose in the burying ground attached to the Third Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, by the side of those of his intimate friend, Dr. John Blair Smith, who had formerly been President of Hampden Sidney College.

Dr. Hoge had four children,—all by the first marriage, besides several that died in infancy. Three of his sons entered the ministry.

The year after his death, a volume of Sermons was published, from his original manuscripts; though, not having been prepared for the press by himself, they are thought, however excellent, scarcely to do justice to his character as a preacher. This at least was the opinion of Dr. John H. Rice.

FROM THE REV. W. S. REID, D. D.

LYNCHBURG, Va., April 14, 1853.

Rev. and dear Sir: Notwithstanding my health is feeble, and I find writing consequently somewhat laborious, I cannot decline your request for my recollections of my venerable friend, the Rev. Dr. Hoge.

My acquaintance with him did not commence until after I had graduated at Princeton in 1802. While struggling on my way to the ministry, by my personal exertions, aided by the beneficence of friends, I was providentially introduced to this excellent man. He was then a resident of Shepherdstown, in this State, and Pastor of the Church there. He kindly invited me to visit him. He opened to me, as he had done to many others in similar circumstances, the heart of affection and the hand of benevolence. He soon extended to me an invitation to come and make my home in his family; allowing me to prosecute my studies under his direction. I did so, and remained with him between one and two years; and of course had an opportunity of becoming thoroughly acquainted with his character. He was a member of the Winchester Presbytery, under the care of which I passed to my profession.

In person Dr. Hoge was of middle size, somewhat tending to a forward bodily inclination. His manners, though without much artificial polish, were familiar and agreeable: they expressed very strongly the kindness and benignity of his spirit. He possessed a mind of uncommon vigour, capable at once of accurate discrimination and profound research; and withal richly stored with the treasures of scientific knowledge. As a preacher, his manner was ungraceful, even uncouth; but there was so much depth and originality of thought, such richness and force of illustration, and such clear and cogent reasoning, that the awkwardness of his manner was very soon quite overlooked or forgotten. In his theological views, he was thoroughly Calvinistic, regarding the doctrine of salvation by free and sovereign grace, as the very substance of Christianity. He was profoundly read in Theology, and had accustomed himself to view the system which he held, in its various relations and bearings. As a teacher, he had not only great patience but great skill. He had an admirable facility at clearing up difficulties, and illustrating the harmony of the Christian system. At the same time, he was an eminent example to his pupils of the Christian spirit. He was

concerned, not more to impart to them a knowledge of the truths of the Gospel, than to lead them to cultivate an ardent piety, and duly to appreciate the responsibilities of the work to which they were devoted. He was honoured as the instrument of bringing into the ministry many faithful labourers, some of whom, having served their generation, have already fallen asleep. He was eminently conscientious and useful in all his relations, and was much honoured and beloved wherever he was known. He was greatly blessed in his family, having three sons in the ministry, on whom his mantle may be said to have rested.

That God may eminently bless your labours is the earnest desire of

Your friend,

WILLIAM S. REID.

JAMES MITCHEL.*

1781—1841.

JAMES MITCHEL was born at Pequea, Pa., January 29, 1747. His father, Robert Mitchel, was born in the North of Ireland, but came to America when he was quite young. He was a man of vigorous intellect and earnest piety, was well acquainted with his Bible, and strong in his attachment to the Presbyterian Church. His wife, whose maiden name was Mary Enos, was of Welsh extraction, and was also distinguished as a warm hearted Christian. They removed from Pennsylvania to Bedford County, Va., where they resided many years. They both reached an advanced age, and of their thirteen children, not one lived to see less than threescore years and ten. The attention of the father is said to have been first awakened to the subject of religion, by overhearing his great-grandmother—who was then more than a hundred years old, and who lived to be a hundred and twelve,—praying in secret for his conversion.

Their son James made a public profession of religion when he was in his seventeenth year; though he dated the commencement of his religious life to a somewhat earlier period. Of the circumstances of either his classical or theological education little is known, though he was, for a time, previous to his entering the ministry, a Tutor in Hampden Sidney College. He was licensed to preach the Gospel, by the Hanover Presbytery at Concord, Va., in October, 1781.

Shortly after his licensure, he seems, by advice of his Presbytery, to have taken a missionary tour into the Western Territories. It does not appear how long he was absent, but it was probably somewhat less than a year, as there was an application made for his services from the united Congregations of Concord and Little Fallings, at the meeting of Presbytery in October, 1782.

Some time during this year, he was married to Frances, daughter of the Rev. David Rice, and granddaughter of that eminent scholar and divine, the Rev. Samuel Blair of Fagg's Manor. Soon after his marriage he removed to Kentucky, where he exercised his ministry as he had opportunity, and

* Foote's Sketches of Va., 2d Series.—MS. from Mrs. Dr. Rice.