

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.

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VOLUME III.

NEW YORK:
ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS
530 BROADWAY.
1858.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1856.

BY ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern
District of New York.

FRANCIS MAKEMIE.*

1683—1708.

FRANCIS MAKEMIE was born in the neighbourhood of Rathmelton, Donegal County, Ireland; but the date of his birth is not known. It is supposed that he prosecuted his academical, if not his theological, course, at one of the Scottish Universities. All that is known of his early religious exercises is that he became hopefully pious at the age of fourteen, chiefly through the instrumentality of an excellent school-master, under whose instruction he was placed. He was introduced by his pastor, the Rev. Thomas Drummond, to the Presbytery of Laggan, in January, 1681, and was licensed by the same Presbytery some time before the close of that year.

In 1678, application was made to that Presbytery, by a Captain Archibald Johnson, for assistance in procuring a minister for Barbadoes; and in December, 1680, Colonel Stevens, from Maryland, made a similar application in behalf of that Colony. Mr. Makemie was designated as a suitable person to undertake this mission; and, having consented to do so, he received ordination, *sine titulo*, with a view to coming to America. He preached for a while at Barbadoes; but how long does not appear. He was also, for some time, in Somerset County, Md., and is supposed to have been the founder of the church in Snow Hill. In this latter place his memory has always been gratefully cherished; and there are still many traditions there, illustrative of the good work which he performed, and the reverence with which he was regarded.

Mr. Makemie was married about the year 1690, to Naomi, the eldest daughter of William Anderson, a wealthy merchant of Accomac County, Va. By his marriage he became possessed of considerable property, so that he was afterwards quite independent in his circumstances. His residence from this time was in Virginia. In connection with his professional duties, he seems, for a time, to have carried on mercantile business; and there is a record of several suits which he instituted about the year 1690, to recover debts which were contracted in his commercial transactions.

In 1691, Mr. Makemie made a visit to England, and returned either the same year, or the beginning of the next. In July, 1692, he was visited by the celebrated George Keith, who had separated from the Society of Friends, and was travelling in the Southern Provinces, with a view to promulgate and give currency to his peculiar views. Having seen a Catechism written by Makemie, he professed to consider it as containing very grave errors; and the avowed object of his visit was to endeavour to expose and refute them. Makemie declined a public discussion with Keith, from an apprehension that his false reasonings and show of learning would mislead and injure many who might be present. Keith then wrote an examination of the Catechism, charging the author with "denying or wholly overlooking our need of the influences of the Holy Spirit, and of running to the Pope and Church of Rome." Not long after this, Makemie issued from the press

* Webster's MSS.—Smith's Hist. N. Y.—Miller's Life of Rodgers.—Spence's Letters.—Hodge's Hist. Presb. Church.

at Boston "An Answer to George Keith's Libel on a Catechism, published by Francis Makemie." It was recommended by Increase Mather, and several other leading clergymen in Boston, as "the work of a Reverend and judicious minister."

In October, 1699, Mr. Makemie obtained a formal license to preach, agreeably to the requirements of the Toleration Act,—having previously received a certificate of his qualifications at Barbadoes. There is a tradition that, through the influence of some of the clergy of the Established Church, he was arrested and carried to Williamsburg, to answer for the alleged irregularity of preaching without a license; and that he made so favourable an impression on the Governor, that he immediately became his friend, and not only licensed his dwelling-house as a place of worship, but also gave him a general license to preach any where within the limits of the Colony. In this same year, he published at Edinburgh a pamphlet entitled "Truths in a new light, in a Pastoral Letter to the Reformed Protestants in Barbadoes;" which contains an able and earnest vindication of the Non-conformists.

Mr. Makemie was, at this period, at once abundant and successful in his labours; and his heart was much set on procuring from the mother country a number of competent persons to engage in the work of the ministry in Maryland and Virginia. He made preparations for a voyage to England in the summer of 1703; but was prevented by some unexpected occurrence from carrying out his purpose. He went, however, the next year, and was absent nearly a twelve month. He visited London, and made arrangements for the supply of the congregations with evangelical clergymen; and at least two ministers from Ireland accompanied him on his return. During his stay in London, he published a work entitled "A plain and loving Persuasion to the inhabitants of Virginia and Maryland, for promoting towns and co-habitation." He notices it as an unaccountable humour, that, in these Provinces, no attempts were made to build up towns; and one of the objections to it he supposes to be, that, if there were towns, there would be ordinaries, and that would lead to drunkenness. His answer to this is, that "the giving away of liquor makes drunkards—if there were ordinaries, liquor could only be obtained by purchase—if there were towns, there would be stocks, and sots would be placed in them."

The two ministers who returned with Mr. Makemie were John Hampton* and George McNish. In the autumn of 1705, we find Mr. Makemie before the County Court of Somerset, endeavouring to procure the requisite certificates for the unmolested exercise of their ministry; for though, when he began his labours there, some twenty years before, there was the fullest religious liberty in Maryland, the Church of England had become the Established Church in 1692, and it was therefore necessary that these gentlemen should obtain a license in order to the safe and quiet exercise of their ministerial functions. The application in their behalf met with strong opposition, but was finally referred to the Governor, who decided in their favour.

Not long after Mr. Makemie's return from Europe, the Presbytery of Philadelphia was formed; but whether this took place in the year 1706, or

* It is not known whether JOHN HAMPTON was born in Scotland or Ireland. He was called to Snow Hill in March, 1707, and was "inaugurated" by his friend McNish. He was for a long time afflicted with ill health, and in 1717, made a visit to his native country, in the hope that it might contribute to his restoration; but it seems to have been to little purpose, as he asked and obtained leave of the Synod, in the autumn following, to demit his pastoral charge on account of his continued indisposition. He died sometime before February, 1721.

at the close of 1705, it is impossible now to determine, on account of a defect in the Presbyterian Records. The ministers who formed this Presbytery, or united with it previously to December, 1706 were Francis Makemie, George McNish, John Hampton, Samuel Davis,* John Wilson,† Nathaniel Taylor,‡ and Jedediah Andrews. Mr. Makemie was Moderator of the Presbytery in December, 1706.

In January, 1707, Mr. Makemie and his friend and fellow labourer, the Rev. John Hampton, stopped a few days in New York, on their way to New England. Lord Cornbury, the Deputy Governor, hearing of the arrival of these strangers, invited them to the castle to dine with him. No preparation had then been made for either of them to preach, nor was there any regular Presbyterian congregation in the city. After dining with the Governor, Mr. Makemie was invited by some of the citizens to preach on the ensuing Sabbath; and he consented to do so. Without his knowledge, application was made to the Governor for permission for him to preach in the Dutch church; but the answer was promptly in the negative. When the Sabbath came, he preached in the house of one William Jackson, on Pearl street, and baptized a child. Mr. Hampton preached on the same day at Newtown, L. I., to a regular congregation, which had already conformed to the requirements of the Act of Toleration. Mr. Makemie remained in New York on Monday, and went the next day to Newtown, intending to preach there on the day following. Immediately on his arrival, both these ministers were arrested on a warrant signed by Lord Cornbury, charging them with having "taken it upon them to preach in a private house, without having obtained any license for so doing; which is directly contrary to the known laws of England:"—and, as they were reported to have "gone into Long Island with intent there to spread their pernicious doctrine and principles, to the great disturbance of the Church by law established, and of the government of this Province," the Sheriff was directed to bring the bodies of both of them to Fort Anne. The next day, (Wednesday,) they were taken by a circuitous route through Jamaica to New York, where they were carried before the Governor, and, by his order, imprisoned; and, in consequence of the absence of the Chief Justice, they continued there nearly two months. At the end of that time, they were brought before that officer by a writ of *habeas corpus*, and admitted to bail; though no bill was found by the Grand Jury against Mr. Hampton, as he had not preached in the city,—and he was therefore discharged. In June following, Mr. Makemie returned from Virginia to New York to stand his trial; "in the course of which," says Dr. Miller, "it is difficult to say whether he was most conspicuous for his talents as a man, or for his

* SAMUEL DAVIS was residing in Delaware as early as 1692, for at that time, George Keith visited him; but the date of his arrival in this country has not been ascertained. The scene of his labours from 1705 or '06, onwards, was the churches planted by Mr. Makemie in Maryland, or those in their immediate vicinity. He finally succeeded Mr. Hampton as minister of Snow Hill, and died in the summer of 1725.

† JOHN WILSON is supposed to have been a native of Scotland. As early as 1702, he preached in the court-house at Newcastle, De., but remained there for only a short time. The next year, he returned, to the dissatisfaction of a portion of the people. But he seems not to have sustained the pastoral relation to that congregation. In 1708, the Presbytery directed him to preach alternately at Newcastle and White Clay. In 1710, he ceased preaching at Newcastle, and probably devoted his whole time to White Clay, till his death which occurred in 1712. He conducted—partly at least—the correspondence of the Presbytery with Scotland.

‡ NATHANIEL TAYLOR came to this country from Scotland with his congregation, and settled in Upper Marlborough, Md., about the year 1690. Both history and tradition are nearly silent concerning him.

dignity and piety as a minister of the Gospel." The result of the trial was an acquittal by the jury. But the court would not discharge him from his recognisance till they had obliged him to pay all the fees of his prosecution, which, together with his expenses, amounted to little less than three hundred dollars.

Soon after his liberation, Mr. Makemie preached again in the church in which the French were allowed to worship—his sermon was printed, and another great excitement was produced; insomuch that the Governor issued a new process, and employed his officers, during the whole of one Sabbath, to arrest and confine him again, with a view to another trial. He had, however, meanwhile, made his escape from the Province, so that the attempt was unsuccessful. He seems to have pursued his journey to New England; as he addressed a letter to Lord Cornbury from Boston, in July, 1707, expostulating with his Lordship for thus making him the object of a protracted persecution. This is the only letter of Makemie's that has been published; though there are two others, addressed to Dr. Increase Mather in 1684 and 1685, preserved in the archives of the Massachusetts Historical Society.* An account of this whole affair, supposed to have been written by Makemie, or at least under his superintendance, was published at the time, and was republished at New York, in 1755.

Mr. Makemie, after his release from confinement, on being admitted to bail, attended the sessions of Presbytery on his way to Virginia, and preached, agreeably to previous appointment. This was the last meeting of Presbytery which he ever attended; though it appears from the record of the next meeting that he had, in the mean time, obeyed an order of Presbytery to write to the Rev. Alexander Colden of Oxnam, Scotland, (father of Lieut. Governor Colden,) to endeavour to persuade him to come to this country, with special reference to taking the pastoral care of the people in and about Lewistown, De.

Mr. Makemie died at his residence in Virginia, in the summer of 1708, leaving a widow and two daughters. One daughter survived him less than a year, and her mother quickly followed her. The other daughter was married to a Mr. Holden of Accomac, and died without issue, in 1787, leaving a large property, part of which she bequeathed to the support of the Gospel and the relief of the poor. Makemie himself also made liberal bequests to charitable objects, and distributed his valuable library among his family, and two or three other friends. An original portrait of him was destroyed in the burning of the house of the Rev. Dr. Baleh of Georgetown, D. C.

What gives Makemie his grand distinction is, that he was undoubtedly the first regular and thorough Presbyterian minister in this country; and he may justly be regarded as the father of the Presbyterian Church. His influence in the region in which he chiefly exercised his ministry, was extensive and powerful. Though no particular testimony remains concerning him from any contemporary writer, Dr. Miller, upon the authority of some venerable men of the generation immediately succeeding him, speaks of him as "a man of eminent piety, as well as strong intellectual powers, and an uncommonly fascinating address."

* Since this sketch was written, these letters have been printed in the History of the Presbyterian Church, by the Rev. Richard Webster.

is at rest, and that he now beholds without a mist, the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. As a preacher, his constant endeavour was to be faithful in delivering the message of God, and with him the trumpet of the Gospel never gave an uncertain sound."

With great respect, very truly,

Your sincere friend and brother,

DRURY LACY.