

**FIFTY YEARS A PASTOR.**

1897

FIFTY YEARS A PASTOR:

A

SEMI-CENTENARY DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED IN THE

SPRING GARDEN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

PHILADELPHIA,

DECEMBER 31, 1854.

BY THE

REV. JOHN M'DOWELL, D.D.,

PASTOR.

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PHILADELPHIA:

JOSEPH M. WILSON,

SOUTHWEST CORNER OF NINTH AND ARCH STREETS.

1855.

CORRESPONDENCE.

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PHILADELPHIA, January 3, 1855.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR:—

At a meeting of the congregation of the Spring Garden Presbyterian Church, held last evening, the undersigned were appointed a committee to request from you a copy of your late Semi-centenary Discourse, with a view to its publication.

With great pleasure in performing this duty, we may be allowed to express the strong hope, that considering the interest with which the people of your charge and your numerous friends will regard these reminiscences, and still more their historical value, and their natural tendency to encourage and to invigorate Christian effort, you will not refuse the request of your people.

Very respectfully and truly,

Yours,

H. D. GREGORY,

P. WYCKOFF,

JAMES COWDEN,

THOMAS ORR,

W. M. RICE,

Committee.

GENTLEMEN:—

In compliance with your request, and that of my congregation, through you, the Semi-centenary Discourse, which I delivered on the last Sabbath, is placed at your disposal.

Your affectionate pastor,

JOHN M'DOWELL.

MESSRS. H. D. GREGORY,  
P. WYCKOFF,  
JAMES COWDEN,  
THOMAS ORR,  
W. M. RICE,  
Committee.

January 5, 1855.

In consequence of the two following communications, this Discourse was repeated in the Seventh Church, January 3d, 1855.

PHILADELPHIA, December 29, 1854.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR:—

Believing that it will gratify many members of our churches to have an opportunity of hearing your Semi-centenary Discourse, who cannot enjoy that privilege on Sunday next, we would respectfully request you to repeat the same at the Presbyterial meet-

ing on Wednesday, January 3d, at seven and a half P.M. in the Seventh Presbyterian Church.

Very affectionately, your brethren in Christ,

JOSEPH H. JONES,  
G. W. MUSGRAVE,  
JAMES WOOD,  
E. P. ROGERS,  
LEWIS CHEESEMAN,  
WILLIAM NEILL,  
HENRY STEELE CLARKE,  
H. A. BOARDMAN,  
CHAS. W. SHIELDS,  
WM. M. ENGLS,  
WILLIAM E. SCHENCK,  
WM. CHESTER,  
JOHN MILLER.

To REV. JOHN M'DOWELL, D.D.

*Extract from Minutes of Presbytery of Philadelphia, January 3, 1855.*

The following resolution was introduced by Dr. Cheeseman, and passed unanimously; viz. :—

Resolved, That the Rev. Dr. John M'Dowell be and he hereby is respectfully requested to deliver his Semi-centenary Sermon, as a pastor, which he preached to his people last Sabbath, as a part of

the religious exercises at the Presbyterian prayer-meeting, on to-morrow evening, in this church.

DANIEL GASTON,  
Stated Clerk of Presbytery.

In consequence of a letter from the Rev. Dr. Nicholas Murray, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Elizabethtown, New Jersey, under date of December 6, 1854, this Discourse was repeated in that church, January 14th, 1855. The following is an extract from Dr. Murray's letter.

MY DEAR DR. M'DOWELL:—

“Because I thought it would be pleasant to you, and agreeable to our people, I laid the matter of your preaching your fiftieth annual sermon here, before our session, last Friday. They unanimously desire you to preach it here, and on the second Sabbath of January.”

## SEMI-CENTENARY SERMON.

JOB XV. 17, LAST CLAUSE.

“That which I have seen, I will declare.”

BRETHREN:—

I stand before you, this morning, a special monument of God's preserving mercy. Very few ministers of the gospel live to say, what I am at this time permitted to say, I have now been a pastor half a century. Tuesday last (December 26th), completed fifty years, since I was ordained to the work of the gospel ministry, and installed pastor of a congregation. As a licentiate, I had preached eight months, previous to my ordination. Since my first installation, I have been continuously a pastor, with the exception of only three weeks.

In these circumstances, it is expected by many, that I would improve the occasion; and I have felt it to be my duty so to do, I hope to the glory of God and the edification of my hearers. A man who has been fifty years in the ministry, in public situations, in such an age of activity and rapid progress, and such a country as this, must have been a very neglectful observer, and a very dull scholar if he has not seen and learned much calculated to interest and instruct others. I have had opportunities to see much. And in the language of the text, “That which I have seen, I will declare.”

In giving a history of my ministry, and of what I have seen in connection with it, I am placed in delicate and embar-

rassing circumstances; as I must say much about myself. I hope I may be enabled to do it with becoming modesty; and that my respected audience will make due allowance for me from the peculiar circumstances of the case.

But before entering on a history of my ministry, it may not be improper briefly to notice some incidents of my earlier life. The knowledge of these may be gratifying to surviving friends when I have finished my days on earth; and some of them may be instructive and useful to others.

I was born in Bedminster Township, Somerset County, State of New Jersey, September 10th, 1780. The parents of both my father and mother came to this country from the North of Ireland. Their ancestors were originally from Scotland; having, as far as I have been able to ascertain, emigrated to Ireland with many other Presbyterians, for the sake of religious liberty, to escape the operation of the oppressive Act of Uniformity, in the reign of Charles the Second, about between the years 1660 and 1670. My ancestors, as far as I have information respecting them, were pious; and from generation to generation, in visible covenant with God, which I conceive to be an invaluable blessing.

My pious parents early dedicated me to God in the ordinance of baptism, in the Presbyterian church of Lamington, New Jersey, to which they belonged; and agreeably to their baptismal vows, endeavored to bring me up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. From my earliest years I was blessed with the important privilege of family worship; and was brought up with a strict regard to the Sabbath, and to attendance on public worship. Sabbath evening, after the public worship of the day, was always devoted to religious family instruction, such as reciting the Catechism, by the children; repeating the texts, and giving an account of the sermons we had heard; and hearing remarks from our parents calculated to instruct us, and impress divine truth upon our minds.

And here allow me to remark,—if Sabbath evenings were now more generally spent in this way, by heads of families, I believe it would be a great blessing to their children, and to the Church, and the community. With regard to our invaluable Catechism, through the faithfulness and diligence of my pious mother, repeating them to me, before I could read, I knew them all by the time I was five years old. For the instruction, and at the same time, the encouragement of pious parents, I would say,—to this early training, by the blessing of God upon it, I owe very much of what has been good, and useful, in a religious respect, in my life since.

At the early age of eleven years, my mind became deeply impressed with a sense of my sinfulness, guilt, and need of salvation; and after a time of much distress and anxiety, the Saviour, as I fondly hope, was pleased to reveal himself to me as able and willing to save; and I was enabled cordially to accept him, and put my trust in him, and devote myself to him. And here let me say to the youth of my audience; that, while I have great reason to be humbled, and mourn that I have not lived nearer to God, and done more for his glory, I have never regretted that I commenced a religious life so early.

Directly after I found peace in believing in Christ, and had a discovery of his loveliness, I earnestly desired to become a minister of the Gospel, that I might preach Christ to others, and tell them of his loveliness, and persuade them also to love him. The prospect of having my desires realized was small. There was no classical school near where I could pursue the necessary studies. My father was unwilling to incur the expense of sending me from home; and there were, at that day, no education societies from which I could obtain assistance. For several years, my daily, sincere, and earnest prayer was, that God would open a door for me to receive an education that I might become a minister of the Gospel.

At length, when I was fifteen years old, a classical school

was opened about two miles from my father's residence, and I became a scholar. This school continued until I had finished my course of study preparatory to entering College, and soon after closed. The opening and continuance of that school, as far as I was concerned, I have often viewed with thankfulness, as a signal answer to prayer.

In the fall of 1799, I entered the junior class in Princeton College, then under the presidency of the Rev. Dr. Samuel Stanhope Smith,—a finished gentleman and accomplished scholar, highly esteemed as a preacher and writer, and of much prominence in the judicatories of the Presbyterian Church in his day. At the time I was in College, and for some years previous, open infidelity greatly prevailed in this country, especially among young men. It was the age of infidelity in revolutionary France, the poison of which was widely diffused in this country. A majority of the students of the College were avowed infidels, and scoffers at religion; and the number of pious students, or of those who made any pretensions to religion, was very small. In this respect there has been in our colleges, and indeed in our country generally, I believe, a great change for the better.

In September, 1801, I graduated at Princeton. Looking back to that period ought to excite within me solemn reflections. A large majority of my classmates, many of them long since, have finished their course on earth, and gone to their account. Only six of us are left.

At that time there was no theological seminary in our Church. Candidates for the ministry then studied under the direction of some pastor, or minister. They had not then the advantage of the instruction of several professors, freed from pastoral duties, and devoting their whole time to particular branches of the studies to be pursued by students. Nor had they the advantage of a large and select library. The Rev. Dr. John Woodhull, pastor of the Church of Freehold, N. J., was, for many years, resorted to by students

preparing for the ministry. He was a man prominent in the Presbyterian Church in his day; and was highly respected and useful. Under him, I pursued my theological studies.

On the 25th day of April, 1804—fifty years since, last April—I was licensed to preach the Gospel by the Presbytery of New Brunswick, then met at Baskenridge, N. J. After licensure, I preached several Sabbaths in neighboring congregations, on invitation of their pastors. I then, by appointment of Presbytery, spent a month preaching in vacant congregations, and destitute places, in the northern part of New Jersey, and adjoining parts of Northampton County, Pennsylvania.

At this time, the Presbyterian Church of Elizabethtown, N. J., was vacant. Their last pastor had been the Rev. Dr. Henry Kollock, afterwards my brother-in-law. Dr. Kollock was one of the most distinguished, eloquent, and popular preachers of his day. He had removed to Princeton, as Professor of Divinity, in the College of New Jersey; and at the same time, pastor of the Presbyterian Church in that town. He afterwards removed to the city of Savannah, in Georgia, and took charge of a congregation, where he died in 1819, in middle life, greatly lamented.

After Dr. Kollock left Elizabethtown, the congregation became greatly divided and distracted. The cause of this was a visit from the Rev. David Austin. Mr. Austin had been the pastor of that congregation from the year 1789, or 1790, to May 1797. He was a man of engaging manners, and popular address; and was greatly beloved by the people, and had great influence among them. In the latter years of his ministry among that people, his mind became greatly excited on the subject of the prophecies. He embraced what has been called the Millenarian sentiment of Christ's personal appearance on earth, at the commencement of the Millennium. He embraced and taught what has been, in the present day, called Millerism. He went so far as to fix the

very day on which Christ was to make his personal appearance on earth. His sentiments caused great excitement in that part of the Church, and country. In this state of things, the Presbytery, at the request of a majority of the congregation, at length interposed, and dissolved the pastoral relation; and Mr. Austin returned to Connecticut, whence he had come.

When the congregation became vacant by the removal of Dr. Kollock to Princeton, Mr. Austin visited the place, and preached; and by a vote of a majority of the congregation was engaged to preach for three months. At the end of that time a great effort was made to renew the engagement. Under much excitement, a large congregational meeting was held, and by a majority of one vote, it was decided not to invite him to continue. This large minority then withdrew in a body, and hired the Methodist Church for Sabbath afternoons and evenings, and engaged Mr. Austin to preach for them for six months. Such was the state of things when I first went to Elizabethtown. I had no invitation to visit that congregation. I had set out, on horseback, for the city of Albany. On my way I passed through Elizabethtown, a stranger, without even a letter of introduction to any one in the town, and put up for the night at a public house. The landlord learning that I was a young minister, directed me to one of the elders of the church, on whom I called, and by invitation, spent the night with him. The next day I was invited to defer prosecuting my journey to Albany until after the Sabbath. I complied, and preached on the Sabbath. Nearly half the pews in the house were empty in consequence of nearly half the congregation having withdrawn to follow Mr. Austin. In the afternoon, after public worship, the Session invited me to relinquish my contemplated journey to Albany, and spend four more Sabbaths with them; to which I consented. After preaching four Sabbaths, a congregational meeting was held; and I received a unanimous call to become

their pastor. None of those who had withdrawn with Mr. Austin took any part in this meeting, or in the call.

After preaching another Sabbath, I left Elizabethtown, and by appointment of Presbytery, spent several weeks preaching in the Pines of Monmouth County, New Jersey. In the beginning of October, I procured a dismission as a licentiate from the Presbytery of New Brunswick, and put myself under the care of the Presbytery of New York. This Presbytery then embraced the city of New York and vicinity, and East Jersey, as far west as the Raritan River, and north to the northern line of the State.

On the 26th of December, 1804, fifty years since last Tuesday, I was ordained to the work of the Gospel ministry, by the Presbytery of New York; and installed pastor of the First Church in Elizabethtown, New Jersey. On that occasion the sermon was preached by the Rev. Dr. Amzi Armstrong, pastor of the Church of Mendham, New Jersey. The venerable Rev. Dr. Alexander M'Whorter, senior pastor of the First Church of Newark, New Jersey, presided, led in the ordaining prayer, and gave me the charge. And the Rev. Dr. Edward D. Griffin, co-pastor of the First Church in Newark, gave the charge to the congregation. That evening Mr. Austin preached a farewell sermon to the branch of the congregation which had employed him, and returned to Connecticut. By degrees his friends returned and resumed their place in the congregation; so that after a time they all came back.

And here I am naturally led to inquire, where are the ministers which at the time constituted the Presbytery which ordained me? I believe they are all gone to their account, while I am still left, a monument of God's preserving mercy.

And here it may be gratifying, as well as instructive, to contrast the Presbyterian Church as it was in the Presbytery of New York, at the time of my ordination, with what it is now, in the same bounds. On the ground then embraced in



the Presbytery of New York, including the two branches of the Presbyterian Church, there are now nine Presbyteries. The number of ministers in the Presbytery of New York, at the time of my ordination, was twenty-three, and of churches twenty-one. In the nine Presbyteries, on the same ground, there are now two hundred and thirty-three ministers, and one hundred and forty-seven churches. Wonderful increase, in a single ministerial life!

When I took charge of the congregation of Elizabethtown, I was placed in critical and trying circumstances, which if they had been foreseen and duly considered, I would most probably have shrunk from undertaking the charge. I was young, with inadequate preparation, and no experience, and without a single sermon prepared which I had not already preached to them. The congregation was in a divided state, and including the two parties, large; and belonging to it were several of the most intelligent and prominent men and families in the state; and they had been accustomed to much pastoral labor, and looked for it; and my predecessor was a man of uncommon eloquence and popularity. I have often looked back to that period, and been ready to accuse myself of presumption for venturing on such a charge in my circumstances. But it arose from a want of knowledge of what I was undertaking. There were many eminently pious and praying people in the church, who held up my hands; and God, in his kind providence, I believe in answer to their prayers, sustained me, and enabled me to surmount the unforeseen difficulties.

My labors in that congregation were many and great. The congregation covered a territory of at least five miles square. I preached regularly in the church edifice, twice in the day, on the Sabbath; and then attended a meeting in the lecture-room, or some other place, in the evening. On Friday evening I uniformly preached in the lecture-room. On Wednesday evening, stately, I attended a large Bible class

in the town. And as a standing rule, I spent every Thursday afternoon in some one of the country neighborhoods of the widely extended congregation, and catechized the children; and then in the evening preached in the same neighborhood. My funeral services were many, and required much labor, and took much time. In addition to these duties, regular pastoral visiting was attended to, during the whole of my ministry in that congregation. Besides visiting the sick and afflicted and inquiring, every family in the congregation was in course, visited by the pastor, accompanied by an elder, several times during my ministry; and every family was conversed with on religious subjects, and prayer was offered in every house. This pastoral visiting was productive of great good. In addition to these duties in my congregation, I have, during the whole of my ministry, had much public duty to perform in relation to the Church at large.

The period of my ministry in Elizabethtown was a period of frequent, powerful, and genuine revivals of religion, especially in that region of the Church. In these revivals the congregation of Elizabethtown largely shared. The first revival under my ministry commenced in August, 1807. I had never seen a revival before; and was therefore placed in a peculiarly solemn and trying situation. The revival continued with unabated interest about eighteen months, and the number added to the communion of the church, as its fruits, was about 120. In this, and the other revivals in that church, of which I will give a brief account,—at some of the communions, large additions were made, which it may be interesting particularly to notice. In the revival just mentioned, which commenced in August, 1807, there were admitted on examination, at the communion in the following March, 16; in June, 52; and in September, 32. The second revival under my ministry commenced in December, 1812. It continued about a year, and as its fruits, there were added

to the church about 110. Of these there were added at the communion in March, 16; in June, 52; and in September 21. A third revival visibly commenced in February, 1817; and continued about a year, and the number added to the church, as its fruits, was about 180. Of these there were received at the communion in June, 77; and in September, 79. At one of these communions, I baptized at the same time 52 adults. About the close of the year 1819, God again visited that church with the special influences of his Spirit; and in the course of a year, about 60 were added to the communion of the church. Of these, 43 were received at the communion in June. In the years 1824 and 1825, there was a more than ordinary attention to religion, and during these two years about 60 were added to the communion of the church. But the special work did not terminate with this ingathering: The influence of these two years was but as the drops before a copious shower. In December, 1825, the work was greatly increased, and continued through the year 1826; and as its fruits about 130 were that year added to the communion of the church. Of these, 97 were received at the communion in June; and 26 in September. In the winter and spring of 1829, a partial season of refreshing was experienced; as the fruits of which, about 25 were added to the communion of the church. The same was the case through the winter and spring of 1831, the fruits of which were the addition of about 40 to the communion of the church. Not long after this, my ministry in that highly favored part of God's heritage terminated.

Between these seasons of special refreshing, the church was not without additions. There were some at almost every communion. And with regard to the revivals, I would remark, as far as means were concerned, they were not the result of any extraordinary efforts, such as protracted meetings, the visits and labors of revival evangelists, and the adoption of what has since been called new measures; but of the ordinary

means of grace. Great care was taken by the Session, in the admission of new members. Seldom were the subjects of the revivals admitted to the communion of the church, in less than six months after their seriousness commenced. As to the genuineness of the work, time has tested it; and it has been abundantly shown that it was of God. Among other fruits of these revivals, as many as *twenty* of the young men who were subjects of them became ministers of the Gospel.

The whole number of communicants, at the time of my settlement in that church, was 207. In 1820, they numbered 660. At that time, on account of the largeness of the First Church, a colony from it was organized into a Second Presbyterian Church. The act of organization I had the pleasure of performing. Of that church, the Rev. Dr. David Magie, a native of the town, and a subject of the revival of 1813, in the First Church, became the first pastor. Dr. Magie is still the highly respected and useful pastor. Under him that church has become large, and among the most important churches in our connection.

My ministry in Elizabethtown lasted 28½ years. During this time the number of members added to the communion of that church, on examination, was 921; and on certificate from other churches, 223; making a total of members added to that church, during my ministry there, of 1,144. During the same time the baptisms in that church were 282 adults, and 1216 children; making a total of 1498 baptisms, while I was pastor of that church.

When I entered the ministry, the sentiment was deeply impressed upon my mind, that the pastoral relation was very solemn and binding, and ought not to be dissolved, except for very cogent reasons. This sentiment respecting the permanency of the pastoral relation, was at that day, far more prevalent among both ministers and people, than it probably is at present. The change I think has not promoted the cause of religion. Under the influence of this sentiment as

the prominent reason, several calls to remove elsewhere were declined.

When the call came to me from the Central Church, in this city, my health had for some time been in a very precarious state, and I was seriously threatened with a pulmonary affection. This was the prominent reason that led me to accept the call, that I might be removed from the influence of the sea air; and time has abundantly shown, that as far as health was concerned, this was a wise decision.

On the Sabbath preceding the meeting of the General Assembly, in May, 1833, I preached my farewell sermon in Elizabethtown. On the afternoon of that day, a committee of that congregation waited on me, and requested that I would procure some member of the Assembly to preach for them on the next Sabbath; and one whom I would approve of as my successor; an act highly creditable to that congregation. When I arrived with my family in this city, I found that the Rev. Dr. Nicholas Murray, then of Wilkesbarre, in this state, and whom I had favorably known before, was a delegate to the General Assembly, which was then convening in this city. Him I invited to preach in Elizabethtown, on the next Sabbath, to which he consented; and the result was a call, which after due consideration, he accepted. He has ever since been, and is still, the acceptable and successful pastor of that congregation. So that they really had no vacancy, which is generally a very serious trial to a congregation; and sometimes productive of very disastrous consequences. And as the congregation really had no vacancy, so it was also with the speaker. I preached my farewell sermon at Elizabethtown on one Sabbath and my introductory sermon, as pastor of the Central Church, in this city, on the next.

The Central Church had then been organized about a year, and worshipped in what was called the Whitefield Academy, or Chapel, situated in Fourth below Arch Street. (That congregation laid the corner-stone of their church edifice at

the corner of Eighth and Cherry Streets, on the same day they called me, which was April 22d, 1833.) My installation as pastor of the Central Church, by the Presbytery of Philadelphia, was June 6, 1833. The installation took place in the Whitefield Chapel, in Fourth below Arch Street. On that occasion the Rev. Dr. William M. Engles preached the sermon; the Rev. Dr. Wm. Neill presided, and proposed the constitutional questions; and by invitation, though not members of the Presbytery, the Rev. Dr. Samuel Miller, Professor in the Theological Seminary at Princeton, gave the charge to the pastor; and the Rev. Dr. John Breckinridge, then Secretary of the Board of Education, gave the charge to the congregation. Of those who officiated at my installation, on that occasion, Dr. Miller and Dr. Breckinridge have both finished their highly useful course on earth, and have gone to their account, and their gracious reward.

And here it may excite solemn and useful reflections to remark on the changes which have taken place in the Presbytery of Philadelphia, since I became a member of it, which embraces a period of twenty-one and a half years. Not one of the churches which existed then, in what is now the Presbytery of Philadelphia, have now the same pastor, and of the thirty-nine ministers, who, according to the statistical report made to the General Assembly last spring, now belong to the Presbytery, only three were members at the time of my settlement in the city. Several have been numbered with the dead;\* others, still living, have removed to other Presbyteries. Truly, the fashion of this world passeth away!

On the 23d of February, 1834, the Central Church edifice was opened for public worship, and dedicated to the service of God. On that occasion, the pastor preached in the morning,

\* Among these are the venerable Rev. Dr. Ashbel Green, one of the most distinguished, influential, and useful men of our church in his day; Rev. Dr. Wm. Latta, Rev. George C. Potts, and Rev. Samuel G. Winchester.

the Rev. Dr. Samuel Miller in the afternoon, and the Rev. Dr. William Neill in the evening. That congregation became large, and among the most efficient in our city, in promoting plans of benevolence; which they still continue to be. Among other acts of benevolence during my ministry among them was planting a missionary in Cohocksink, then a very destitute neighborhood, in the northern suburbs of the city, and sustaining him for a time, which resulted in the organization of the Church of Cohocksink. To the building of their church edifice, the Central Church largely contributed. The Cohocksink Church, now large and self-sustaining, is a standing monument of their efficient benevolence. My ministry in the Central Church lasted twelve and a half years. During this ministry, my labors were not attended with the signal blessing which accompanied them in Elizabethtown.

And here, it may be proper to remark, that this was a period of the absence of revivals in the church generally; and it has, in a great degree continued so, down to the present time. The second quarter of the present century has been, in this respect, very different from the first. But still, my labors in the Central Church were, through the blessing of God, not without considerable success. At one time, which was in the year 1840, there was a degree of special seriousness, and there were added to that church, on examination, at two successive communions united, 38; and it is worthy of remark, that this special seriousness was while they were engaged in the Cohocksink enterprise; according to the declaration of God's word, "He that watereth shall be watered also himself."

The whole number added to the Central Church during my ministry among them, on examination, was 218. During the same time, there were added on certificate from other churches, 312; making a total of members added to the Central Church, during my ministry there, of 530. With regard to the baptisms, administered in that church, during my mi-

nistry, they amounted to 66 adults, and 286 children; total, 352.

Towards the close of my ministry among that people, a state of things occurred which led me to believe that it was my duty to resign my charge. I accordingly asked of the Presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relation, which was done. This took place November 20th, 1845. At that time, I had no plans for the future. I knew not, but my work in the ministry, especially as a pastor, was done. In these circumstances, I endeavored to commit myself to Providence, and calmly await the indications of his will.

Very soon, and unexpectedly, a door was opened, which time has abundantly shown was a door of usefulness. A great, and important, and arduous work was presented; and I was called to be a leading instrument in endeavoring to accomplish it. It has been accomplished, as this noble house of worship, and the respectable congregation regularly meeting here every Sabbath, and the large Sabbath-schools taught in the basement, abundantly testify. Unworthy as I am, I have often as a minister been graciously honored of God. But of all the honors God has conferred on me as a minister, I have sometimes viewed the part he called me to act in gathering this congregation and rearing this house of worship, the greatest. Shortly after this house was opened for public worship, that good, and great, and wise man, Dr. Archibald Alexander, preached for me; and as he came out of the house remarked to me, "You have been useful in the ministry in former days, but, in my opinion, you have probably done more for the cause of Christ, in the last two years, than in all your previous life."

Soon after I left the Central Church, a petition, signed by one hundred and ten names of the people belonging to that congregation, was unexpectedly presented to me, requesting that I would preach to them, with a view of becoming their pastor. To this request, after due consideration, I consented.

The Whitefield Chapel, in Fourth Street below Arch, was obtained; and in that we first met on Sabbath, the 14th of December, 1845—three weeks after the dissolution of my pastoral relation to the Central Church. The day was very stormy, but the attendance was good; and there was an unusual seriousness manifested. Encouraged by the attendance and interest that appeared, the people met on the evening of December 31st, and unanimously resolved to apply to the Presbytery for organization as a church; and for this purpose drew up a petition, addressed to the Presbytery, and appointed a committee to present it. This petition was signed by one hundred and thirty-six persons of my then late charge; ninety of them communicants. It was presented to the Presbytery the next week, January 6th. The Presbytery, after much deliberation, unanimously resolved to grant the prayer of the petition; and a committee, consisting of Rev. Dr. Cornelius C. Cuyler, Mr. Alexander Symington (elder), and myself, was appointed to organize the church. The two respected and beloved brethren, who acted with me on that committee, have gone the way of all the earth.

On the 18th of January, 1846, the church was organized with eighty-seven communicants; and two of them were ordained ruling elders. The church took the name of the Spring Garden Presbyterian Church. January 21st, the congregation met and voted a call for the speaker. This call was accepted; and February 3d, 1846, I was installed pastor of this congregation. This installation took place in the Whitefield Chapel, where I had before been installed pastor of the Central Church. On that occasion, the sermon was preached by the Rev. Dr. Thomas L. Janeway; Rev. Dr. Cornelius C. Cuyler presided, and gave me the charge; and the Rev. Archibald Tudehope gave the charge to the people.

Soon after this, measures were taken to provide the means for procuring a lot, and erecting a house of worship. Con-

sidering the circumstances of the congregation, at that time, this was a very heavy undertaking. The attempt to procure the means was made,—first among ourselves, with success beyond the most sanguine expectations. Application was then made to others, of different denominations, in the city and elsewhere, and met with signal favor and success.

The lot on which this house now stands was purchased; and June 6th, 1846, the corner-stone of this church edifice was laid with religious solemnity. And here it may be proper to remark on the very great change which has since taken place in this part of the city. Then, there was not a house on this whole square, or the adjoining squares north of it. And the same was the case with several squares in the immediate vicinity; while the buildings on many others in the neighborhood were few and scattered. The change in the eight and a half years which have elapsed since, as will be acknowledged by all who knew the district then, and know it now, has been very great. How much influence the location of this church has had, I cannot say. The change commenced with the commencement of this edifice; and many think it had an important influence. And if this be so, it is a strong argument in favor of church extension. Not to speak of the importance in a spiritual respect, the temporal interests of a neighborhood are vitally concerned in the establishment of an evangelical church, in the midst of them.

On the 16th day of May, 1847, this house was opened for the worship of God, and dedicated to his service. On that occasion, the pastor preached in the morning; the Rev. Dr. Willis Lord, then of this city, preached in the afternoon; and the Rev. Dr. C. C. Van Arsdale, of the Reformed Dutch Church, and then also of this city, preached in the evening. After this, the congregation continued to increase and prosper, until a heavy calamity, attended with great mercy, befell it.

On the 18th of March, 1851, about five o'clock in the morn-

ing, after a very heavy and wet snow-storm, which commenced the previous afternoon, and continued through the night, the building fell. The side walls fell out each way, nearly to the floor; and the roof came down on the pews, and crushed many of them. This was a very heavy trial, but it was attended with great mercy, in that no one was injured, either in the house or out of it. On this occasion, great public sympathy was felt and manifested. Several church edifices, of different denominations, were offered for the accommodation of the congregation on Sabbath afternoons. Voluntary contributions to assist in rebuilding were, unasked, sent in from individuals and congregations, of various denominations, both in and out of the city; and applications for aid were cheerfully and liberally met. And here may be applied with great force, two lines of one of our hymns,

"Darkness shows us worlds of light,  
We never saw by day."

By means of the great liberality of the public, with what we did ourselves, a sufficiency was soon raised fully to meet all the expense of rebuilding the house, with greatly increased strength, and more beautiful than it was at first. The restoration cost about \$10,000. The work of rebuilding was commenced immediately after the fall, and while it was progressing, the congregation worshipped in the Spring Garden Commissioners' Hall.

On the 5th of October, 1851, the church edifice was reopened, and re-dedicated to the worship and service of God. On that occasion, the pastor preached in the morning; the Rev. Dr. Nicholas Murray, of Elizabethtown, N. J., in the afternoon; and the Rev. Dr. Henry A. Boardman, of this city, in the evening.

The present number of communicants in this church is 237. The whole number added to this church during my ministry

here of nine years, exclusive of the 87 members with which the church was organized, has been, on examination, 68, and on certificate 196; making a total of admissions to church membership, in this church, during my ministry, of 264. The baptisms in this church during my ministry have been 12 adults and 100 children, total 112. The whole number of members added to the communion of the *three* churches during my ministry among them, has been, on examination, 1207, and on certificate 731; making a total of members added under my ministry of 1938. And the whole number of baptisms, in the same churches during my ministry among them has been, adults, 360, children, 1602; making a total of baptisms of 1962.

The number of sermons, which I have written in full is 1796; of these, 107 were intended to be a system of Theology in the order of our Westminster Shorter Catechism; and have been published. Several others of my sermons have been published, in the National Preacher, the New Jersey Preacher, and similar collections of sermons by different contributors, and also several on funeral occasions; and in addition to these publications, it may not be improper to mention, a system of Bible Questions, on the historical parts of Scripture, prepared and published in the year 1816. This, I believe, was the first book of Bible questions published in this country. They had an extensive circulation; and I hope and believe, under the blessing of God, were productive of much good. About 250,000 copies were published, and circulated; when they were in a great measure superseded, by the Union Questions of the American Sunday School Union.

I have lived to see great changes, and great progress in our country, and in the Church. I can remember when the population of this country was about 3,000,000; when I entered the ministry, it was about 6,000,000. It must be now, at least 26,000,000. Steamboats and railroads, by which the facility of travelling has been increased manifold, and

distant places been brought near to each other, came into operation years after I entered the ministry.

Most of the benevolent institutions in this country, for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, and which are the glory of the Church, and of our country, commenced since I entered the ministry. The Presbyterian Church, from its first organization in this country, took a deep interest in domestic missions, and paid attention to them. But when I entered the ministry, very little was raised for this object, and the missionaries were very few, and generally appointed for a short time, while the field assigned them was extensive. As a specimen of this, I was once appointed, after I became a settled pastor, in company with the Rev. Dr. Robert Finley, of Baskenridge, New Jersey, a missionary for six months; and the field assigned to us was, the Atlantic coast, from the city of New York, to Savannah in Georgia. The mission was not fulfilled.

Foreign missions, in this country, which have done and are doing incalculable good among heathen nations, have all taken their rise since my ministry commenced. The same may be said of Bible Societies. Of the convention that formed the American Bible Society in 1816, I was a member. I had been in the ministry ten years, when Sunday schools were commenced in this country. I have seen also the rise in this country, of education, and tract, and other societies, which are doing incalculable good. With regard to Theological Seminaries, of which we have now a number connected with our Church, I was a member of the General Assembly which founded the first one in our Church, at Princeton, New Jersey, in 1812; of which I have been a director and secretary of the board of directors ever since. During my ministry, I have witnessed a great and wonderful increase of the Presbyterian Church. The first time I attended the General Assembly was in 1807, in this city. The General Assembly, you know, is a delegated body. The ratio of delegation then was

one minister, and one elder, for every six ministers in a Presbytery. The ratio now is and for several years has been, one minister and one elder for every twenty-four ministers in a Presbytery. The Presbyterian Church was divided in 1838; since which time, there have been two General Assemblies. Both Assemblies should be taken into the account, in comparing the Presbyterian Church, as it now is, with what it was fifty years ago. In the General Assembly of 1807, the first I attended, the number of delegates in attendance was 54; the number of delegates in the two Assemblies which met last spring, was 467.

The number of synods, when I entered the ministry was 7; the number now, embracing both branches of the Presbyterian Church, according to the statistical reports made to their General Assemblies last spring, is 51; the number of Presbyteries when I commenced my ministry was 31; the number now is 254. The number of ministers in the Presbyterian Church, then was 370; now the number is 3,765. The number of churches then was 674; now the number is 4,637; and the number of communicants then was 17,871; the number now is 366,881. According to this statement, during my ministerial life, the synods of the Presbyterian Church have been multiplied 7 times; the presbyteries 8 times; the ministers 10 times; the churches 7 times; and the communicants 20 times. Surely, we have reason to thank God for what he has done, and take courage.

In reviewing my life and ministry, I find many things, which claim special thankfulness.

I was the eldest of six children, and I have outlived them all except one brother, who still survives.\* Among those deceased is the Rev. Dr. William A. M'Dowell, well known in this community, and the Church generally. He was first settled at Bound Brook, New Jersey, then in Morristown, New

\* Benjamin M'Dowell, a ruling elder in the Lamington Church.

Jersey, then in Charleston, South Carolina, and then for a number of years, was the Secretary of the Board of Missions of the General Assembly, located in this city; under whose administration the cause of domestic missions greatly increased and prospered.

Few ministers have had equal length of days; and very few have had so long a pastorate, and this too almost uninterrupted,—only three weeks of interruption in fifty years. And the Lord has graciously blessed my ministry. He has given me, what is the highest reward of a faithful minister, many seals of my ministry, who, if I am so happy as to reach heaven myself, will be there to me crowns of rejoicing. In general, I have enjoyed health. Seldom, through my long ministry, have I been kept from my pulpit by sickness. And I have to say, and say it with thankfulness, that the congregations of which I have successively had the charge, have never, I believe, in a single instance, in all weathers, all seasons, and all circumstances, been without public worship, on the Sabbath; except the Sabbath after the fall of this building. The house of worship, where I have been the pastor, has sometimes been closed for repairs, or cleansing; but in these cases, the congregation has always met in the lecture-room, or some other place procured for the purpose. And while, on a review of my ministry, I find much for which to be thankful, I find also much calculated to humble me.

Thus, brethren, I have given a brief account of my ministry. This account, I have given to my people, and my fellow-men. But I am solemnly reminded, that I have yet a far more important account to render, of my long ministry. I must give account to God. And this, according to the course of nature, must be near. This will indeed be a solemn account! And I would here remind my people of this congregation, and also such of my hearers present, as have once been my parishioners, that they also must give account to God, of their improvement of my ministry. Ministers and people must

meet at the bar of God. And not only they, who are now my people must meet me there, but also all, who have been at any time, under my pastoral charge.

Several of those who sat under my ministry in this congregation have, gone to their account before me. And among these, a much-respected elder, to whom I, and the congregation in its struggling infancy, owed much.\* Many more of those who composed my first charge in this city, have also gone; many of them valuable men and women, and much endeared to me. And among these, three† of the four most prominent and efficient men, in the founding of that congregation, and erection of their church edifice; and to whom they are, under God, chiefly indebted for the success of that noble enterprise. Men whom I highly respected, and loved, and whose memory is still, and ever will be dear to me while life lasts. And with regard to my people in Elizabethtown, the people of my first ministerial love, a majority of them—many of them eminently pious—have also gone before me to their account. I must soon meet these departed parishioners, and give account of my faithfulness to them, as they have already rendered an account of their improvement of my ministry.

And with regard to those who still survive, and have been, or now are, under my ministry, they and I must soon meet at the bar of God; and render an account of our faithfulness, in our respective relations to each other. Solemn meeting! May all concerned be prepared for it.

May I, by rich grace, abounding through Jesus Christ the Saviour, when I stand in judgment, receive the approbation of my Judge, saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." And may I, with regard to my people, be enabled to say, "Behold I, and the

\* Samuel Parker.

† Alexander Henry, Matthew L. Bevan, and Samuel Richards. The survivor of the four, is Matthew Newkirk.



children which God hath given me!" And may pastor, and people, be welcomed to the General Assembly, and Church of the first-born in heaven; and join together in the everlasting song of the redeemed: "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins, in his own blood; and hath made us kings, and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever." AMEN.