

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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things.' I imagined, in a sermon on such a text, we could not miss of having some morality. He confined himself to five points only, as meant by the apostle:—Keeping holy the Sabbath day, Being diligent in reading the Scriptures, Attending duly the public worship, Partaking of the sacraments, and Paying due respect to God's ministers. These all might be good things; but, as they were not the kind of good things I expected from that text, I despaired of ever meeting with them from any other, was disgusted, and attended his preaching no more. On Hemphill's defeat, (in 1735,) I quitted the congregation, never attending it further, though continuing my subscription many years for the support of its ministers."

NATHANIEL TAYLOR

WAS probably ordained in Scotland in 1702 or '3, and came immediately to Marlborough, on the Patuxent. The settlement was made in 1690, by Col. Ninian Beall, who purchased a large tract on the Potomac and drew thither his friends and neighbours from Fifeshire.

The mouth of Patuxent was a great commercial emporium;—There George Fox and Edmundson anchored in 1651; and there Chalkley and Richardson, who followed them as Public Friends, left the ship.

Taylor was a punctual attendant on every meeting of presbytery till his death in 1710. His elder in 1707 was William Smith; and, in 1708 and '09, James Bell (Beall?)

Mr. Foot, of Port Penn, supposes him to have been related to the Taylors,* who, as early as 1683, settled at Drawyers. He may have been a brother of Elias Taylor, who married Makemie's sister-in-law, Comfort Anderson.

GEORGE McNISH

CAME to Maryland with Makemie and Hampton in 1705. Dr. Reid says that he was from Ulster; but Mr. Poyer,† of Jamaica, calls him a North Briton. He preached at Monokin and Wicomico; but, being poorly supported, he declined their call in 1710. The presbytery left it to himself to determine the affair between

* Historical Discourse at Drawyers.

† Albany Documents.

Jamaica and Patuxent, but advised him not to delay fixing himself somewhere.

Makemie states that there was, at the time of his trial, a Dissenting minister at Jamaica by a "during-pleasure license" from Cornbury.* The chiefs of the sect petitioned Lord Lovelace on his assuming the chair of State; but his untimely death occurred before it was answered. "No sooner was his Majesty pleased to remove Col. Ingoldsby, he having administered the government from the death of Lovelace in 1709, but the very next day (April 11, 1710) the more violent of that sect took possession of the church, and detained it against the justice. He committed them. They were released on bail, fined three shillings each, and the fines were remitted."

On Governor Hunter's arrival, "the two great patrons of the sect" waited on him, and, in the presence of Colonel Morris, discussed the Ministry Act of 1693; but he gave them no encouragement. He, however, removed some who were in the Commission of the Peace, and substituted, unintentionally, some who were not Churchmen. This drew on him the anger of the clergy, who sent many strong representations against him to the crown. To answer them, he sent minute specifications of his zeal, energy, and liberality in behalf of the English Church in New York and the Jerseys.

The Presbyterians, on the day the Church missionary was expected in town, entered the parsonage and dispossessed Mr. Urquhart's widow, with her connivance; for her daughter by her first husband was married to the Rev. Benjamin Woolsey, an Independent, at that time a student of theology. She was soon admitted as a tenant of the congregation. In the spring of 1710, the churchwardens and vestry, being all Independents, called "one Mr. George McNish, an itinerant Dissenting minister;" but, at the governor's order, Mr. Poyer was inducted, by Mr. Sharp, chaplain of the forces. Hunter advised Poyer to sue for the parsonage and his stipend, promising the use of his purse, and offering to bear the whole expense of the suit. The clergy in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware, advised to the contrary, and joined in a complaint to the Bishop of London, got up with all secrecy, against the governor, for having "lately advanced judges who were professed implacable enemies of the Church, in the room of men of character, who were actually doing justice to the Church;" and also for not having "written to the judges to enforce them in their duty." The governor had consulted with Chief-Justice Mompessom, who said that any attempt to put Poyer in possession of the parsonage, without due course of

* Letters to the Venerable Society: quoted by Macdonald in History of Jamaica.

law, would be a high crime and misdemeanour. He wrote in his defence to the Venerable Society; and his statements were fully sustained by Lewis Morris, Esq., Colonel Heathcote, and Mr. Sharp, the chaplain. Mr. Vesey, of New York, and Mr. Henderson, of Dover, Delaware, were chiefly zealous in getting up this petition, Poyer being a weak man and used as a tool by Vesey. The petition of the clergy prevailed; and her Majesty, in council, granted them leave to appeal in any suit, without limitation of sum, to the governor and council of the province. The petition was resented by Hunter and his friends; and the Bishop of London wrote, May 12, 1712, to Poyer:—

“I must now entreat you for the future to have a care of foolish and unwary advisers. Pray, therefore, think your governors to be wiser than yourself; and, if you miscarry under that conduct, you will come off with reputation, for I must tell you that your application over into England has done you and your brethren no great service. Be wiser, therefore, for the time to come.

“The clergy,” says Morris, “are a gigg (agog) to be meddling with politics,—an inclination I wish our missionaries had less of.” “All the Assembly which passed the Act of 1693 were Dissenters, except the speaker, (James Grahame, a relative of the Marquis of Montrose.) They knew nothing of the Church, and intended to raise a maintenance for a Dissenting minister. The act, without wrestling, will admit a construction in favour of Dissenters.

“There is no comparison of our numbers anywhere but in the city of New York. I believe, at this day, the Church had been in a much better condition, had there been no act in her favour; for in the Jerseys and Pennsylvania, where there is none, there are four times the number of Churchmen there are in New York, and most of them are so upon principle; whereas nine parts in ten of ours will add no great credit to whatever church they are of. Yet the poor man Poyer and his friends, are weak enough to think their superiors in England will enter into measures to displace the governor, for not dragooning in their favour, as his predecessor did.”

The church was wrested from the Presbyterians; but McNish, on accepting the call, was put by the town in possession of the parsonage and glebe, and the stipend fixed by the Act of 1693 was raised and paid to him.

Poyer complained, in 1713, that the governor had appointed one Baird, a North Briton and a Dissenter, high-sheriff; and he, though ordered by the justices, refused to thrust out the tenant whom the town had placed in the parsonage.

The Venerable Society obtained from the Dissenting ministers, Robinson and Reynolds, the letter of Cotton Mather in relation to Jamaica; and, having seen the statements on both sides, agreed to pay Poyer's expenses in an ejectment suit and in an action for the

stipend. He commenced suit in 1716, and recovered of the churchwardens £16 11s. 3d., and "proceeded* such lengths that several of the principal inhabitants were harassed with severe persecutions, heavy fines, and long imprisonment; others fled out of the province, to avoid the rage of Episcopal cruelty." Their steadfastness was stigmatized as obstinacy; and "they are encouraged† in it by their minister, a very designing man, who persuades them to what he will." The Venerable Society were gravely informed that the miller refused to grind Poyer's grain, saying he might eat it whole, as the hogs did; and the society, in consideration of his many hardships, sent him a gown, a cassock, and ten pounds.

Before McNish came, the people had unanimously, at their own expense, built a meeting-house. In this he preached during his life.

Governor Hunter sent to the clergy in the province, copies of the 72d article of the Queen's instructions, requiring the vestry of each parish to admit the minister as a member of their body, and to transact no business without his presence. In January, 1713, Poyer met with the vestry and produced the instructions. McNish was with them; and they refused to do any business till Poyer retired. This was duly represented to the governor and the society.

The Rev. Thomas Reynolds, of London,‡ wrote to Cotton Mather, June 9, 1715, "I must now acquaint you that Mr. McNish has not been forgotten by me, who have endeavoured, upon all occasions, to solicit the concern of the foreign plantations, and have stirred up my brethren to counteract the designs of the missionaries. Endeavours have been used and much time spent for this purpose. The society proceeds, and is not without hopes of gaining bishops to be sent into his Majesty's plantations." He urges that an agent be sent over; "and that if Mr. McNish or any other can send any thing which may afford matter of further remonstrance to the society, we pray he will do it with all expedition, and with authentic testimonials."

In the fall of 1718, there was "a prospect of his going to Britain on important business;" but he did not go.

Pumry, of Newtown, having joined the presbytery, and the congregation of Southampton having come under its care, it was, on the erection of the synod, earnestly recommended to McNish and Pumry to use their best endeavours, with their neighbouring brethren, to form a presbytery. In this they were successful; and, with the Rev. George Phillips, of Setauket, they constituted the Presbytery of Long Island, and probably held their first meeting April 17, 1717, and ordained Gelston.

There is a tradition that he had a grant of one thousand acres

* Rev. Dr. Elihu Spenser: quoted by Macdonald.

† Mr. Poyer to the Venerable Society.

‡ Mather MSS. Am. Antiq. Soc.

from the King on the Wallkill in Orange county. Eager mentions him among the land-owners in 1721.

He died March 10, 1722, leaving one son, who married* a daughter of Joseph Smith, of Jamaica, and removed to New Jersey, where he was educated and licensed; and whether ever ordained is not ascertained. He resided in Orange county, New York, and, in 1738, married Mary Fitch. He died at Wallkill, at the age of sixty-five, in 1779. His descendants remain there. He† preached at Newtown, Long Island, between 1744 and '46.

McNish gave reasons in 1716 for the absence of his elder. He was attended at synod in 1717, by John Rhodes, and in 1720 by Daniel Smith.

JOHN HAMPTON.

WHETHER he was a native of Scotland or Ireland is unknown. Lord Cornbury speaks of him as "a young Presbyterian minister lately come to settle in Maryland." He made application to Somerset Court to be qualified, in Jan. 1706; the matter was referred to the governor, and he went northward with Makemie, and, having preached at Newtown on Sabbath in "a meeting-house offered to record," was arrested with Makemie and carried before Cornbury. He remained silent until the governor began to make out an order for his commitment, when he demanded a license to preach, according to the Toleration Act. Cornbury refused, and sent him to prison.

He was not indicted, the attorney-general having dropped his name when the matter was laid before the grand jury.

He was called to Snowhill in March, 1707, the salary to be paid * in tobacco. He was "inaugurated" by McNish.

He was long in feeble health, and visited his native country in 1717 for his recovery; and the synod, in the following fall, accepted his demission of the pastoral care of his people, because he could not perform his duty to them "without apparent hazard of his life through bodily indisposition."

He made his will† October 28, 1719, and died before February, 1721. His widow (probably his second wife) survived him and her two previous husbands, Colonel Francis Jenkins and Rev. John Henry, and died in 1744.

He also served Pitt's Creek; and the united congregations were

* Macdonald.

† Riker's History of Newtown.

‡ Spence.