

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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plentiful harvest of precious souls to the Redeemer, that shall be as so many sparkling diamonds in that untarnished crown of glory, which adorns his victorious brow. He lived God's time, which is the best time."

Regretting my inability to comply more fully with your request,
I remain your friend and brother in Christ,

THOMAS BRADFORD.

JOHN ROAN.*

1744—1775.

JOHN ROAN was born in Ireland, about the year 1716, and was brought up a weaver. He came to this country in his youth, and studied for some time at the Log College. He was licensed to preach by the "New Side" Presbytery of Newcastle. As early as 1741, he was engaged in teaching a grammar school on the Neshaminy; for Dr. Rodgers of New York (according to Dr. Miller) entered his school there that year, and continued in it several years afterwards.

In the winter of 1744, the Presbytery of Newcastle with which Mr. Roan was connected, sent him on a missionary tour to Virginia. He preached with great effect in Hanover, and the neighbouring counties; and many in different places were awakened and hopefully converted through his instrumentality. He was bold, energetic, earnest, but had less of caution and prudence than the peculiar circumstances in which he was placed, required. He inveighed against the clergy of the Established Church with great freedom, charging them not only with neglect of their official duties, but with gross moral delinquencies. His offensive statements and scathing satire quickly attracted the attention of the parish clergy and their friends; and they resolved that he should no longer be tolerated. Affidavits were laid before Governor Gooch, representing that this man was not only earnestly engaged in efforts at proselytism, but had actually been guilty of blasphemy. The matter came before the Grand Jury; and, after the Governor had delivered a vehement charge, they agreed to "present John Roan for reflecting upon and vilifying the Established Religion, in divers sermons, preached at the house of Joshua Morris in James City Parish, on the 7th, 8th, and 9th of January, before a numerous audience unlawfully assembled." Mr. Roan returned to Pennsylvania, before the meeting of the Court at which this charge was given. The charge was published, and an order forbidding any meetings of "Moravians, Muggletonians, and New Lights," was issued. The people of Hanover laid the case before the Synod of New York in May, 1745; and the Synod sent, by the hands of Messrs. Gilbert Tennent and Samuel Finley, an address to the Governor. These gentlemen were very graciously received by His Excellency, who readily granted them liberty to preach at Hanover. Before their arrival, the individual who had been chiefly instrumental in inflaming the government against Mr. Roan, and who was believed to have done it at the expense of perjuring himself, had fled never to return. The trial came on, on the

* Hodge's Hist. Presb. Ch.—Webster's MSS.

19th of October; but the six witnesses cited by the Attorney General, fully proved that he had uttered none of the expressions imputed to him, and the indictment was dropped.

In 1745, Mr. Roan was settled over the united congregations of Paxton, Derry, and Mountjoy. The union of the Synods placed him in Donegal Presbytery, and points of difference continually arose, which admitted of no concessions. The licensing of a young man by the name of William Edmeston was a trial of strength. He was a student of Sampson Smith,* and had been a prominent witness in his defence,—which was any thing else than a recommendation in the view of Roan; and, at the close of his examination for licensure, Roan expressed his dissatisfaction with what the majority had accepted as evidence of the young man's piety. Edmeston subsequently prosecuted Roan for various offences; the sum of which, however, was that he was a party and a principal mover in a conspiracy to destroy Smith by perjured or dishonest witnesses. The trial was protracted; trivial questions almost without number were asked; and the whole was apparently a matter of studied annoyance. In 1765, Edmeston appealed to the Synod, and the Presbytery also referred the case to them, and a large and respectable committee was appointed to determine the affair. The matter was finally dropped, and Edmeston went to England for holy orders.

Mr. Roan continued his labours with the congregations over which he was first placed, during the rest of his life. He informed the Presbytery, on one occasion, that his congregations were deeply indebted to him; and there is also a record of his having been sent as a missionary for eight weeks, to the South Branch of the Potomac. But the notices of him that remain are so few and scattered, that they only give us a clue to his character and his course.

He died on the 3d of October, 1775, aged fifty-nine years. He lies buried at Derry, beneath a stone that bears the following inscription:—
“Beneath this stone are deposited the remains of an able and faithful, courageous and successful minister of Jesus Christ.”

* SAMPSON SMITH came from Ireland, and was received by Donegal Presbytery, April 3, 1750. His ordination was reported to the Synod in 1752, and in the spring of that year, he spent eight Sabbaths in Virginia. He was settled at Chestnut Level, and was married to a daughter of the Rev. Adam Boyd of Octorora. He taught an Academy, for many years, with great success. The union of the Synods placed him in connection with the New Side ministers; and a charge of intemperance being preferred against him, he regarded them as the movers of it; while they viewed the Old Side men as determined to clear him, by excluding all the evidence on which the prosecution relied. The result was that he was acquitted; and the prosecution appealed to the Synod, who, by a committee, took up the whole matter *de novo*, and ultimately judged that he was worthy of at least a degree of censure. He withdrew from the Synod; joined the Newcastle Presbytery in 1768; and was suspended the next year, but was restored in 1771. The Synod then sent him to the South Branch of the Potomac for six months, and the next year for two months. His suspension was renewed in 1774, and was never removed. His death was in consequence of being struck by lightning.

[ADAM BOYD, mentioned above, was born at Bally-money, Ireland, in 1692. He came to New England as a probationer about 1723. He had formed a purpose to return to his native country, and with a view to this, had received from Cotton Mather a commendatory certificate, dated June 10, 1724. Having, however, formed an attachment to a young lady on this side the water, he subsequently changed his purpose, and determined to remain in this country. He was taken under the care of the Newcastle Presbytery in July, 1725, and in September following received a call from the congregations in Octorora and Pequea, Pa. This call he accepted, and in October following was ordained at Octorora. The Forks of Brandywine composed part of his field, till 1734. In the division of the Presbyterian Church, a large part of his congregation went to the New Side, and as his own sympathies were with the Old Side, he asked leave (August, 1741) to accept of an invitation given him by a fraction of the Brandywine Congregation, which adhered to the Old Side, and offered to pay for half his time. His relation to this part of his charge was dissolved (very irregularly according to his own statement) in 1758. He died on the 23d of November, 1768. On his tomb-stone is inscribed—“Forty-four years pastor of this church.”]