

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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of a family, a fervently pious and exemplary Christian, and a faithful and devoted minister of religion.

He had, in all, nine children,—seven sons and two daughters. Of these, two died in infancy, and six survived him. His eldest son, who bore his own name, was bred a physician, and, under the impulse of a governing patriotism; he entered the American army, early in 1776, as a surgeon; and, on a hasty journey from the camp to visit his parents, he was taken ill and died on the road, February 28, 1777, in the twenty-fifth year of his age. His second son, *Edward*, was an eminent physician. He exercised his profession for a number of years in the city of New York, and was Professor of the Practice of Medicine in the University of that city, and died March 17, 1812, aged fifty-one years. The third son, *Joseph*, entered the profession of Law, held a high standing at the Bar in Delaware, his native State, and was more than once a member of the State Legislature: he died of yellow-fever, September 4, 1793. The fourth son, *Samuel*, was, for twenty years, pastor of the Wall Street Church in New York, and during the rest of his life was Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government in the Theological Seminary at Princeton. The fifth son, *James*, was bred to the Law, and, soon after his admission to the Bar, with the highest promise of intellectual and moral excellence, fell a victim to pulmonary consumption, April 15, 1795, in the twenty-second year of his age. The daughters both married early and are long since deceased.

ROBERT SMITH, D. D.*

1749—1793.

ROBERT SMITH was born in Londonderry, Ireland, in the year 1723. His family, who had first emigrated from Scotland to Ireland, came to this country, when Robert was about seven years old. His ancestors, on both the father's and mother's side, had been, for several generations, substantial farmers, and distinguished for good sense and earnest piety. The family, on coming to America, settled at the head waters of the river Brandywine, about forty miles from Philadelphia. At the age of fifteen, his mind became deeply impressed with the subject of religion, under the preaching of Whitefield, during his first visit to this country. Having, as he believed, received the Gospel in its sanctifying power, he had a strong desire to devote himself to its ministry; and being encouraged by his parents to do so, he placed himself under the instruction of the Rev. Samuel Blair, who was at that time the head of an institution at Fagg's Manor, Chester County, Pa., designed especially for the education of young men for the ministry. Here he made very rapid improvement in both classical and theological knowledge. On the 27th of December, 1749, he was licensed to preach by the (New Side) Presbytery of Newcastle. On the 9th of October, 1750, he accepted a call from the churches in Pequea and Leacock, Pa., and on the

* Assemb. Miss. Mag. II.—Timlow's Hist. Sermon.—Webster's MSS.—MS. from Mrs. A. M. Jones.

25th of March, 1751, was ordained to the work of the ministry, and installed pastor of those churches. The Rev. John Rodgers, then minister of St. George's,—afterwards the Rev. Dr. Rodgers of New York, was Moderator of the Presbytery on the occasion of his ordination.

Shortly after his settlement, he founded a school, designed chiefly for the instruction of youth in the Latin, Greek and Hebrew languages. In this school he employed the most respectable teachers; and it was soon resorted to by a large number of young men from different parts of Pennsylvania and Maryland, some of whom were afterwards greatly distinguished in the different professions. He exerted a strong religious influence on the minds of his pupils, and a large part of those entrusted to his care became exemplary professors of religion. Not a few whose early classical education he had conducted, returned to him, after they had completed their collegiate course, to pursue their theological studies under his direction.

In 1759, he was released from the care of the congregation of Leacock; and he subsequently asked leave to resign the charge of Pequea, on account of inadequate support; but the congregation finally prevailed on him to withdraw the application.

In 1760, he received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from the College of New Jersey. In 1772, he was appointed one of the Overseers of that College, and held the office during the rest of his life. He was the second Moderator of the General Assembly, and preached the opening Sermon the next year (1791) from Isaiah lxii. 8.

Dr. Smith was distinguished for his activity, being in labours most abundant. He not only attended with great punctuality on all the judicatories of the Church, but was often abroad visiting vacant and feeble churches, and endeavouring to strengthen the things that remained, that were ready to die. He was generally blessed with vigorous health, inso-much that never but in a single instance during his whole ministry, was he prevented from preaching on the Sabbath. And then, though confined to his chamber by a fever, he assembled the principal members of his church, and being placed in an easy chair, spoke to them of the hopes and joys of religion.

The last public act of his life was attending a meeting of the Board of Trustees of the College of New Jersey, distant more than a hundred miles, after his health had become greatly enfeebled. On his return, he suffered much from both debility and pain; and when he had nearly reached his own church, where he had expected to officiate, he stopped at the house of a friend to endeavour to recover strength for the exercise; but he began immediately to sink away, and in a few minutes life was extinct. He died on the 15th of April 1793, in the seventy-first year of his age.

He was married on the 22d of May, 1750, to Elizabeth, a sister of the Rev. Samuel Blair, his preceptor. They had seven children,—two of whom died young, two became physicians, and three ministers of the Gospel. *Samuel Stanhope* and *John Blair* are commemorated in separate articles in this work. *William R.*, the other son who entered the ministry, was born May 10, 1752; was graduated at Princeton in 1773; was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Newcastle in 1776; was settled as pastor of the Second Church in Wilmington, De., about 1786; resigned his charge in 1796, and became pastor of the Reformed Dutch Churches of Harlingen and Shannock, N. J., in which relation he died about the year 1815. The

Rev. Dr. Thomas Dewitt writes me—"I remember him, while I was studying Theology at New Brunswick, 1810-1812. He was plain in his manners, a judicious and instructive preacher, without much power of elocution, a faithful pastor, and amiable and exemplary in his spirit and deportment."

Ebenezer Smith, M. D., another son of Dr. Robert Smith by his first marriage, settled in Wilmington, De., where was born *his* son, *William R.*, who also became a minister of the Gospel. He (the son) was hopefully converted during a revival in the year 1814; was interrupted in his collegiate course at Princeton, by ill health; was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Northumberland in April, 1820; became Pastor of the united Congregations of Northumberland and Sunbury, in May, 1822; resigned his charge in October, 1831; and after passing two years in Ohio, returned to his former charge, and continued their Pastor till his death,—September 19, 1849.

Dr. Smith was married a second time to the widow of the Rev. William Ramsey of Fairfield, N. J. She was a native of Cohansey, and her maiden name was Sarah Sealy. By this marriage he had one daughter, born in the year 1780.

Dr. Smith published A Sermon preached on the union of the Old and New Side Presbyteries of Newcastle, entitled "A wheel in the middle of a wheel, or the Harmony and connection of the various acts of Divine Providence;" Two Sermons on Sin and Holiness, 1767; A Sermon entitled "The bruised reed bound up, and the smoking flax inflamed; or the weak oppressed believer victorious through the tender care and grace of Christ," 1774; Three Sermons in the American Preacher on Saving Faith, 1791.

The following testimony to the character of Dr. Smith, is from a notice of him published in the General Assembly's Missionary Magazine for January, 1806. It is supposed to have been written by one of the fathers of the Presbyterian Church, who could speak from actual knowledge.

"Few men in the holy ministry have been more useful or more esteemed than Dr. Smith. He entered it with the purest zeal for the glory of his Redeemer and the salvation of mankind; and his whole soul was devoted to the faithful discharge of the duties of his sacred office. * * * Though remarkably modest and even diffident in the deliberative assemblies of the Church, he has often been heard to say that in the pulpit he never knew the fear of man. He was so occupied with the solemnity and importance of his duties, that the opinions of men were forgotten: his mind was so filled with the Divine presence before which he stood, that wealth, station, talents, whatever is most respected by the world, was lost to him in the majesty of God. The character of his preaching, therefore, as was to be expected from a frame of mind so habitually devout, was remarkably solemn and fervent. The Holy Scriptures, in which God has been pleased to convey his will to mankind, he regarded as containing the happiest language in which to interpret Divine truth to the people. With the sacred volume he was perfectly familiar. And his sermons were usually filled with the aptest allusions and illustrations drawn from this precious source. The doctrines of the Gospel he delighted to express in the terms of Scripture; those doctrines especially which have been in any degree the subjects of disputation, and the cause of division in the Church. An enemy to controversy, he believed that Christians were more nearly united in sentiment than in the expression of their several creeds. In the copious use, therefore, which he made of Scripture language, he hoped to gain a double advantage: on controversial subjects he would create less offence and irritation; and in illustrating and enforcing Divine truth on the hearts of his hearers, he thought that the language of the inspired writers would come home with more authority to the conscience than the finest periods of human eloquence. In this perhaps he was not deceived, particularly in that field of labour which he had especially marked out for himself; for he was uncommonly successful in convincing secure sinners, in comforting and establishing believers in the faith of the Gospel, and in conciliating the affections and confidence of pious persons of all denominations. Preaching the Gospel and publishing the grace of the Redeemer was his most delightful employment; in which he exhibited an example of the greatest diligence and zeal, not only among the people

with whom he was more immediately connected as their pastor, but throughout an extensive district of country, in every part of which he was often employed in these pious labours. He was indeed incessant and indefatigable in the service of his Divine Master, till at length he wore down to a slender thread a constitution originally vigorous, and his death at last which took place in the midst of the most active discharge of his duties, was not the effect of any particular disease, but of the gradual waste of nature occasioned by continual and extreme exertions."

SAMUEL KENNEDY.*

1750—1787.

SAMUEL KENNEDY was born in Scotland, in the year 1720; and received his education in the University of Edinburgh. The circumstances which led him to migrate to this country are not known; but he seems to have come hither not long after the completion of his collegiate course, and to have engaged in studies immediately preparatory to the sacred office, by advice of the Presbytery of New Brunswick. He was received under the care of that Presbytery, on trials for the ministry, on the 6th of December, 1749; and was licensed by the same Body to preach the Gospel, on the 18th of May, 1750. He was ordained to the work of the ministry, and installed pastor of the Congregation of Basking Ridge, N. J., on the 25th of June, 1751.

Notwithstanding much the greater portion of the Scotch and Irish clergy in the Presbyterian Church in this country were found on the Old Side, in the memorable division of 1741, Mr. Kennedy's sympathies seem to have been decidedly with the other party; for while he did not undervalue human learning as one of the requisite qualifications for the ministry, he attached far more importance to experimental piety, and believed that the Church had a right to require the evidence of this in those who were to be commissioned to preach the Gospel. It was an evidence of his supreme regard to principle that he should have thus, in the choice of his ecclesiastical relation, disregarded what we may suppose to have been his national predilections.

Mr. Kennedy was one of the eighteen ministers who, in the year 1760, rendered themselves somewhat famous by an attempted interference in the concerns of the Episcopal Church. The Rev. William McClenachan, an Episcopal clergyman of Philadelphia, who had evinced somewhat more of religious zeal than most of his brethren, was, for that reason, more highly appreciated by one part, and less highly by another part, of his own denomination; and it was feared that the adverse influence would prevail to his exclusion from the Episcopal Church in that city. During a meeting of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia in May, 1760, Mr. McClenachan's embarrassed and somewhat doubtful position happened to become the subject of conversation among some of the members, and, with more zeal probably than prudence or delicacy, several of them agreed to address a letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, requesting his official influence to enable Mr. M. to retain his place. The letter was accordingly written and

* Sketch of his life appended to Brown's Memoirs of Robert Finley, D. D.—MS. from Rev. Dr. Talmage.