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A
HISTORY
OF THE
Presbyterian Church in America,

FROM ITS ORIGIN UNTIL THE YEAR 1760.

WITH
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF ITS EARLY MINISTERS.

BY THE
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WITH
A Memoir of the Author,
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AND
An Historical Introduction,
BY THE REV. WILLIAM BLACKWOOD, D.D.

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Whitefield heard of his distressed state, and wrote to him from

“GLOUCESTER, ENGLAND, February 5, 1742.

“I bless God for delivering Brother Rowland out of the hands of his enemies. I am persuaded he will deliver your brother William also. By your desertion and temptations, I believe God is preparing you for a fresh work. I believe you would be better if you would always evangelize.”

The following letter will serve to illustrate the state of Mr. Tennent's mind at this period:—

“GILBERT TENNENT* TO JONA. DICKINSON.

“February 12, 1742.

“I have many afflicting thoughts about the debates which have subsisted in our synod for some time. I would to God the breach were healed, were it the will of the Almighty. As for my own part, wherein I have mismanaged in doing what I did, I do look upon it to be my duty, and should be willing to acknowledge it in the openest manner. I cannot justify the excessive heat of temper which has sometime appeared in my conduct. I have been of late, since I returned from New England, visited with much spiritual desertion and distresses of various kinds, coming in a thick and almost continual succession, which have given me a greater discovery of myself than I think I ever had before. These things, with the trial† of the Moravians, have given me a clear view of the danger of every thing which tends to enthusiasm and division in the visible church. I think that while the enthusiastical Moravians, and Long-beards or Pietists, are uniting their bodies, (no doubt to increase their strength and render themselves more considerable,) it is a shame that the ministers who are in the main of sound principles in religion should be divided and quarrelling. Alas for it! my soul is sick for these things. I wish that some

* Published in Pennsylvania Gazette, and reprinted in Hodge's History.

† Brainerd to Bellamy, March 26, 1743, writes as follows:—“The Moravian tenets cause as much debate as ever; and for my part I'm totally lost and non-plussed about 'em, so that I endeavour as much as possible to suspend my judgment about 'em, for I cannot tell whether they are eminent Christians, or whether their conduct is all *underhanded* policy and an *intreague of Satan*. The more I talked to Mr. Noble and others, the more I was lost and puzzled; and yet Mr. Noble must be a Christian.”

scriptural methods could be fallen upon to put an end to these confusions. Some time since I felt a disposition to fall on my knees, if I had opportunity, to entreat them to be at peace.

“I remain, with all due honour and respect, your poor worthless brother in the ministry.

“P.S.—I break open this letter myself, to add my thoughts about some extraordinary things in Mr. Davenport's conduct. As to his making his judgment about the internal states of persons or their experience, a term of church fellowship, I believe it is unscriptural, and of awful tendency to rend and tear the church. It is bottomed upon a false base,—viz.: that a certain and infallible knowledge of the good estate of men is attainable in this life from their experience. The practice is schismatical, inasmuch as it sets up a term of communion which Christ has not fixed. The late method of setting up separate meetings upon the supposed unregeneracy of pastors is enthusiastical, proud, and schismatical. All that fear God ought to oppose it as a most dangerous engine to bring the churches into the most damnable errors and confusions. The practice is built upon a twofold false hypothesis:—infallibility of knowledge, and that unconverted ministers will be used as instruments of no good in the church. The practice of openly exposing ministers who are supposed to be unconverted, in public discourse, by particular application of times and places, serves only to provoke them instead of doing them any good, and declares our own arrogance. It is an unprecedented, divisional, and pernicious practice. It is lording it over our brethren to a degree superior to what any prelate has pretended, since the coming of Christ, so far as I know, the pope only excepted; though I really do not remember to have read that the pope went on at this rate. The sending out of unlearned men to teach others upon the supposition of their piety in ordinary cases seems to bring the ministry into contempt, to cherish enthusiasm, and bring all into confusion. Whatever fair face it may have, it is a most perverse practice. The practice of singing in the streets is a piece of weakness and enthusiastical ostentation.

“I wish you success, dear sir, in your journey; my soul is grieved for such enthusiastical fooleries. They portend much mischief to the poor church of God if they be not seasonably

checked. May your labours be blessed for that end! I must also express my abhorrence of all pretence to immediate inspiration or following immediate impulses, as an enthusiastical, perilous *ignis-fatuus*."

Well might "Philalethes" array Gilbert against Tennent, when this letter issued from the press, at the very time the third edition of the Nottingham Sermon appeared. How Tennent could so entirely have forgotten his own guiltiness in the main with Davenport, is not to be conjectured. The letter is like David's condemnation to death of the rich man who furnished his guest with a feast on the only lamb of his poor neighbour. Did Dickinson reply with Nathan's rebuke to him? Probably he was so rejoiced to be furnished for his journey with this weapon of proof, that he forgot to notice the inconsistency.

Dickinson journeyed through New England to Boston; "for they were wont in old time to say, 'Surely they will ask counsel at Abel,' and so they ended the matter." He also, in concert with Edwards and Burr, used his influence to have Brainerd restored to his standing in Yale College, but to no purpose. The determination seems to have been formed in consultation at Boston to make the withdrawment of the protest the indispensable prerequisite to further continuance in union with the Philadelphia Synod, or to demanding an acknowledgment from the Brunswick party of their errors or missteps. This was in effect to constitute the synod as if the separation had never taken place, and to take up the whole controversy as it stood on the morning of June 1, 1741. The letter of Tennent to Dickinson,* with others of like import to Pemberton and Whitefield, strongly impelled them to gratify him in this tender point; and the conjunct Presbyterians, having cleared themselves of all receding from Presbyterian principles, and from all concurrence in any of the offensive things in the practices or teachings of Cross, Creaghead, and Davenport, satisfied the New York brethren that they were

* The latter was placed by Dickinson in the hands of Clap, of New Haven, who had it printed. The letters to Whitefield and Pemberton we have not seen.