

A
HISTORY
OF THE
Presbyterian Church in America,

FROM ITS ORIGIN UNTIL THE YEAR 1760.

WITH
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF ITS EARLY MINISTERS.

BY THE
REV. RICHARD WEBSTER,
LATE PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, MAUCH CHUNK, PA.

WITH
A Memoir of the Author,
BY THE REV. C. VAN RENSSELAER, D.D.

AND
An Historical Introduction,
BY THE REV. WILLIAM BLACKWOOD, D.D.

PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

PHILADELPHIA:
JOSEPH M. WILSON,
No. 27 SOUTH TENTH STREET, BELOW CHESTNUT ST.
1857.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1857, by
JOSEPH M. WILSON,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Eastern District of
Pennsylvania.

STEREOTYPED BY L. JOHNSON & CO.
PHILADELPHIA.

tears; with equal advantage he could set the terrors of the Lord in array, and the wonders of Christ's love,—his glory and the sufficiency of his righteousness, and the blessedness of all who are reconciled to God by him. He was one of the best preachers of his day, and one of the most zealous and successful promoters of the revival. For this his name was cast out as vile by the opposers of the work.

He was ordained at Hebron in 1735, and died there in 1784, in the forty-ninth year of his ministry, aged seventy-one.

1784. 3. 1754

JOHN THOMSON

CAME from Ireland as a probationer to New York, in the summer of 1715, with his wife and child. He was recommended by the presbytery to the people of Lewes, in Delaware, and went thither. In the fall of 1716, they presented a call for him by their commissioner, William Shankland; and he was ordained and installed on the first Wednesday of April, 1717. x

In 1723, a brick church* was erected. In 1727, Samuel Bownas, † an English Friend, visited George's Creek, Duck Creek, Motherkill, Hoarkill, (Lewes,) and Cool Spring. "Friends are seldom visited, and have few ministers. The Presbyterians and Churchmen have attempted to do something; but, the people being poor, and the pensions small, they gave out for want of pay." x

Thomson left Lewes in September, 1729, through want of support. He was invited to Newcastle; and the next fall he accepted the call from Middle Octorara, sent by James Garner. His installation was appointed for the second Wednesday in October; but, being harassed by disorders among his people, he removed, in 1732, to Chestnut Level. Being in great straits, the congregations in Donegal Presbytery kindly made collections for his relief in 1733. His thankful acknowledgment was placed on the record. x

His proposal for sending an itinerant to Virginia being approved, he was charged with the duty, but was excused, because of the severity of the winter and the scarcity of provender. In the winter of 1738, he visited the Valley, and passed through the u

* Spence.

† Friends' Library.

Rockfish Gap to Concord, Buffalo, and Cub Creek. "He* took up collections, to support preachers in itinerating in the new settlements, and was active in promoting the best interests of our church." In June, both parts of Opequhon supplicated for him. In September, 1739, Alexander McDowell, from Virginia, was introduced to the presbytery, having (probably at Thomson's solicitation) determined to devote himself to the ministry. Thomson asked to be dismissed from his charge, to remove to Virginia; but the presbytery would not consent.

In the troubles of the great rupture he had his full share. The state of his congregation made it uncomfortable for him to remove; he was poorly paid, and he turned towards Virginia, where he had steadfast friends. He was not released till July 31, 1744; and then he at once made his home in the Valley. Donegal Presbytery intrusted to him and Black and Craig the charge of the missionary operations in Western Virginia. An effort was made to bring him back to Chestnut Level.

In 1744, he visited North Carolina, and again in 1751. During the last visit, he met with Henry Patillo, and engaged him to study for the ministry.

He published at Williamsburg, in 1749, † an Explication of the Shorter Catechism. He was then labouring in Amelia.

His son-in-law having removed to Buffalo, in Prince Edward, Thomson spent the closing years of his life with him, and died in 1753, in Centre, North Carolina. ‡

During the distractions following the rending of the synod in 1741, he overtured the presbytery to suffer no person to be inducted into the eldership, or to sit in any judicatory, without having subscribed the Confession of Faith,—a vain remedy, when the agitators were as zealous for it as their opposers.

His book on the "Government of the Church," and his sermon on "Conviction and Assurance," are as able, learned, judicious, and evangelical, as any of the writings of Dickinson and Blair. Even Gilbert Tennent, in 1749, quoted largely from them, with high commendation, to justify the Old Side from the misrepresentations current against them, and to prove the expediency and the duty of uniting the synods in one body, bound together by a common faith, by mutual esteem, and by fervent desire for the peace of Jerusalem.

It was told to Thomson that himself had been pointed out by some as an unconverted minister; but, if Tennent spoke thus of him, repeating the sin of Moses while God renewed the mercies of

* Dr. Foote. † In the hands of Rev. B. M. Smith, of Staunton, Virginia.

‡ Dr. Foote; but Dr. Alexander said, "He lies in the Buffalo graveyard, without a stone."

Meribah, it was to him as "waters that pass away," when he wrote his "Irenicum."

Davies knew Thomson as a neighbour in the ministry, and, in 1751, speaks highly* of his judgment, and hopefully of his piety, and says, "He acknowledged the Revival had done much good in Hanover, and rejoiced in seeing the prosperity of religion."

He did not live to see the union; but, on the proposal to prepare the way for it, he hastened to Philadelphia from Virginia, to assist with healing counsels. He lived long enough for Tennent to do his writings justice, and to vindicate his sentiments; long enough to obtain, from the devoted admirer of Samuel Blair, unsolicited testimony to his judgment and his delight in the promotion of the work of God.

His discourse entitled "An Overture, urging the Synod to adopt, by a public agreement, the Standards of the Scottish Church," was answered by Dickinson; his "Examination of the New Brunswick Apology" was a treatise on the government of the church, and called forth a reply from Samuel Blair; his sermon on Convictions was attacked by Samuel Finley, but is deservedly commended as an excellent exhibition of the truth.

JOHN PIERSON

WAS born in 1689, and graduated at Yale in 1711.

The Rev. Abraham Pierson was an Independent, and, with a company of like sentiments, came to Lynn, in Massachusetts, and from thence removed to Southampton, on Long Island. But, when the Long Island towns put themselves under the Connecticut jurisdiction, he, with those of the ancient way, settled Branford, in the colony of New Haven, as their brethren in Hartford settled Hadley, that they might not be partakers in the growing laxity of discipline. The colonies of New Haven and Connecticut united; and the aged Pierson, like another Moses, said to his people, "Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount;" and they arose and took their journey and settled the town of Newark, in New Jersey. There he died. His son, being "a moderate Presbyterian," left Newark, and became the Rector of Yale. His Presbyterianism was that of Connecticut, in distinction from the Independency of his father.

Woodbridge had vainly† endeavoured, in 1669, to secure for its pastor the younger Pierson, then settled in Newark. They built

* Letter to Bellamy.

† Newark Sentinel.