

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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VOLUME IX.

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NEW YORK:  
ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS,  
530 BROADWAY.  
1869.

## SELAH STRONG WOODHULL, D.D.\*

1805—1856.

SELAH STRONG WOODHULL, a son of James and Keturah (Strong) Woodhull, was born August 4, 1786, in the city of New York, where his father was a merchant. His mother died when he was only four years old, and his father when he was twelve. He was very early fitted for College, and entered the Freshman class at Yale in 1798, about the time of the death of his father.

One of his classmates there† writes thus concerning him:—"He was the youngest in the class, and hardly advanced enough to appreciate fully the value of thorough scholarship; still he appeared well in the recitation room, showed that he acquired his lessons easily, and possessed a mind capable of great acquisitions. Had he been sixteen or eighteen when he entered College, he would probably have ranked among the very best scholars of the class."

He graduated in 1802, at the age of sixteen. Shortly after, he commenced the study of the Law in the city of New York, but soon relinquished it for the study of Theology. His mind had been somewhat seriously exercised in regard to his spiritual interests before he left College; but it was not till some time after, when he was on a visit to his venerable relative, the Rev. Dr. John Woodhull, of Freehold, N. J., that his religious impressions became so deep that he felt himself justified in looking towards the ministry as a profession.

He commenced the study of Theology under the direction of his uncle, Dr. Woodhull; but, after having continued with him for some time, went to Princeton, where, during the residue of his course, he enjoyed the instruction of the Rev. Dr. Henry Kollock. He was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of New Brunswick, in April, 1805; and was ordained and installed as Pastor of the Church in Bound Brook, on the 6th of December following; the Sermon on the occasion being preached by Dr. Kollock. Here he remained but about eleven months. On the 25th of November, 1806, his relation to this people was dissolved, and he accepted a call from the Reformed Dutch Church in Brooklyn, L. I. In the year 1814 he held, for a time, the office of Chaplain in the army of the United States, in connection with the War with Great Britain. In 1820 he was appointed Secretary of the American Bible Society for Domestic Correspondence, and continued to hold this office as long as he retained his pastoral charge. In September, 1825, he was chosen by the General Synod of the Reformed Dutch Church to the Professorship of Ecclesiastical History and Pastoral Theology in the Theological Seminary at New Brunswick; and, at the same time, was appointed, by the Trustees of Rutgers College, to a Professorship of Metaphysics and the Philosophy of the Human Mind. In consequence of his acceptance of these appointments, he removed to New Brunswick in November following; but he had done little more than enter upon his new duties, when death terminated his earthly career. After having suffered severely from the influenza, from which he never entirely recovered, he was attacked with an inflammatory fever, of which he died, after ten days of great suffering, February 27, 1826, in the fortieth year of his age. In an early stage

\* Ref. D. Ch. Mag. 1826.—MS. from Rev. Dr. David D. Field.

† Rev. Dr. Field.

of his disease the idea was impressed upon him that he should not recover, and he bowed in humble submission to the Divine will. A Sermon was preached on the occasion of his death by the Rev. Dr. Brownlee,\* a part of which was published in the Magazine of the Reformed Dutch Church for December, 1826. It is remarkable that when Dr. Woodhull died, he had fifty-two sermons written out that he had never preached.

He was married, in April, 1806, to Cornelia, daughter of Aaron and Hannah Vancleve, of Lawrenceville, N. J. They had seven children, all daughters but one.

FROM THE REV. CORNELIUS C. CUYLER, D.D.

PHILADELPHIA, November 6, 1849.

My dear Sir: The Rev. Dr. Woodhull, of whom you ask me to give you some account, was, for many years, my intimate friend; we were often visitors in each other's houses, and, after his death, I preached a Sermon Commemorative of his life and character. It is grateful to me, therefore, to comply with your request, in giving you my general impressions and recollections concerning him.

Dr. Woodhull was uncommonly favoured in his original constitution. He was easy and affable in his manner, humane and generous in his disposition, cautious in forming his opinions and purposes, diligent and persevering in the pursuit of his object,—but not inordinately elated by success or depressed by disappointment.

As a Friend, he was kind and faithful. You might rely on him with confidence, and he would never disappoint your expectations. When he had tried you, he would open to you his heart with the utmost freedom. Few, if any, who ever enjoyed his friendship, subsequently became alienated from him.

His mind was of a high order. His judgment was sound and discriminating; his perceptions clear and vivid; his memory retentive; his taste exact and delicate. He was remarkable for his regard to system, as well as for the

\* WILLIAM CRAIG BROWNLEE, the fourth son of the Laird of Torfoot, Scotland, was born in 1783, at Torfoot, the family homestead for many generations, dating back to the reign of Queen Anne. His mother's maiden name was Margaret Craig. At a proper age he passed through the University of Glasgow, and received his Master's degree, and subsequently received from the same institution the degree of Doctor of Divinity. After studying Theology under the Rev. Dr. Bruce, he was licensed to preach the Gospel, in 1808, by the Presbytery of Sterling, shortly after which he migrated to this country. His first settlement was in the Associate Church of Mount Pleasant, Pa. Thence, in 1813, he was called to the Associate Scotch Church in Philadelphia. In 1816 he removed to New Brunswick, to take charge of the Academy connected with Queen's (now Rutgers) College. In 1819 he again assumed the pastoral work in Baskingridge, N. J., in connection with the charge of a Classical Academy. In 1825 he returned to New Brunswick as Professor of Languages in Rutgers College, and in 1826 was elected a Pastor of the Collegiate Church in New York, to supply the vacancy caused by the removal of the Rev. Dr. Milledoler to the Presidency of Rutgers College. Here, for nearly seventeen years, he pursued his ministry with great assiduity and acceptance, until September 23, 1843, when, in the full vigour of his powers and usefulness, he was stricken down by paralysis. His physical functions, especially his speech, he never fully recovered, though he still retained some degree of mental activity. He died on the 10th of February, 1860. He published, *On Quakerism*, 8vo.; *The Roman Catholic Controversy*, 8vo.; *Lights and Shadows of Christian Life*, 8vo.; *Christian Youth's Book*, 12mo.; *The Whigs of Scotland* (a romance), 2 vols. 12mo.; *Christian Father at Home*, 12mo.; *On the Deity of Christ*, 24mo.; *On Baptism*, 24mo.; *Papery an Enemy to Civil and Religious Liberty*, 24mo.; *The Roman Catholic Religion Viewed in the light of History and Prophecy*; *St. Patrick, or the Ancient Religion of the Irish*. He was also the author of several pamphlets and Premium Tracts, and edited the Dutch Church Magazine through four consecutive volumes. He was distinguished for a noble, generous spirit, for a vigorous intellect, for varied and extensive acquirements, for great astuteness and boldness in controversy, and for untiring devotion to his work.

power of concentrating his faculties on any subject to which his attention was directed.

As a Preacher, he was eminently instructive and methodical. His manner of delivery had in it more of solemnity than animation. He was a thorough Calvinist, and his views of Christian doctrine were made quite prominent in his preaching.

He was a diligent student, and his attainments in classical and general literature, in science and theology, were highly creditable not only to his talents, but to his application. He was familiarly acquainted with all the forms and details of business in every department in which he was called to act. As a Presiding Officer in our ecclesiastical assemblies particularly, it may be doubted whether he had his superior in his denomination.

You may judge of his capacity for business from the fact that, over and above his pastoral engagements, his diligence in study, his active concern in all the principal affairs of the Reformed Dutch Church, he, for five years, conducted, with great ability and fidelity, the domestic correspondence of the American Bible Society.

As a Pastor, he was attentive, faithful and beloved. Though his ministry was not attended by any remarkable revival, his church had a steady and healthful growth.

He was an earnest friend of the Reformed Dutch Church, with which he was more immediately connected, but still had his arms always open to welcome all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Indeed, he was a fine example, not only of charity, but of all the Christian graces.

In person, Dr. Woodhull scarcely reached the medium height; his features were somewhat prominent; his nose inclining a little to the aquiline, and his countenance expressive of great benevolence and fine intellect.

Faithfully yours,  
C. C. CUYLER.

FROM THE REV. THOMAS M. STRONG, D.D.

FLATBUSH, June 17, 1859.

My dear Brother: My relations with Dr. Selah S. Woodhull were such as to give me a good opportunity of observing his peculiar traits, and my estimate of his general character such as to render it only a pleasure to me to record them. I will hint at a few of them in the order in which they happen to occur to me.

Dr. Woodhull was remarkable for his industry. He was always engaged in business pertaining to his profession, and seemed seldom to have a leisure hour. But he never suffered his work to drive him,—never allowed himself to be in a hurry. While Secretary of the American Bible Society, he conducted all the correspondence, and not unfrequently had all his letters for the day written before breakfast. Indeed, his death may be ascribed, in a great degree, to his habit of severe and uninterrupted occupation. It was a favourite object with him to have his Lectures, as Professor of Church History, Ecclesiastical Government and Pastoral Theology, completed as soon as possible; and, at the time of his death, which was only about four months after his appointment, he had all his Lectures on one, if not more, of the branches on which he was to give instruction, ready to be delivered. He was a man of great decision of character. He never seemed to waver in his opinion or purpose—if his mind was once deliberately made up, you always knew where to find him afterwards. He was a model of promptness and punctuality. He was most conscientiously exact in keeping all his appointments. No one could ever complain of having lost time in waiting for him. His piety was deep and all-pervading, but not ostentatious. Those who knew

most of the economy of his religious life, knew that, whatever else might be declined or postponed, his regular seasons for private devotion were always sacredly observed. Sometimes, and under certain circumstances, he might have been thought stern and dictatorial; but he really possessed a most amiable and affectionate disposition, and whatever of apparent sternness there may have been, was attributable to his unflinching decision in all matters which involved important principles or results. He was a person of strong, vigorous intellect, and sound judgment. As a Counsellor, as well as Friend, he was highly esteemed by all who knew him, and especially by those with whom he was in more intimate relations. By his fine social qualities and bland and gentlemanly manners he made himself a universal favourite.

In executive ability he had few, if any, superiors in the Church. In consequence of his great familiarity with financial matters, he was chosen by the General Synod a member of their Board of Corporation, and held the place till the close of his life. He was very likely to be appointed on Committees in which an acquaintance with worldly business was required. As a Preacher, he was energetic and earnest, pungent and evangelical. His exposition of Scripture was at once simple, lucid and forceful. His delivery was graceful and attractive. Though he used notes, he had cultivated the habit of taking in several lines at a glance, so that many of his hearers supposed that he was preaching either memoriter or extempore.

I may add, he was remarkable for his spirit of perseverance. He was not easily turned aside from any pursuit in which he was engaged, or any object to which his thoughts or efforts had been seriously directed. If he were only satisfied that he was moving in the right direction, you would find him still moving forward against all obstacles not absolutely insurmountable.

With sentiments of the warmest affection and highest esteem, I remain,

My Dear Sir, yours very truly.

T. M. STRONG.

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## ALEXANDER GUNN, D.D.\*

1807—1829.

ALEXANDER GUNN, a son of George and Sarah (Ballard) Gunn, was born on the 13th of August, 1784. His father, who was the son of a respectable farmer in Sutherlandshire, Scotland, migrated to America about the beginning of the Revolution, and, soon after his marriage, in 1783, removed to Digby, Nova Scotia, where this, his eldest, child, was born. His parents subsequently returned to the United States, and, after a temporary residence in Philadelphia, settled permanently in the city of New York.

After the death of his father, in 1797, his mother placed him in a counting house as a clerk, with a view to his engaging ultimately in mercantile pursuits. Though he was then but thirteen years old, and had not made a public profession of religion, he was of such a decidedly serious turn that he immediately took his father's place in conducting the family worship. While he was attending faithfully to the duties of his clerkship, his mind was exercised not a little on religious subjects, and he began soon to indulge the wish, and at length formed the purpose, to devote himself to the ministry of the Gospel. His

\* Ref. D. Ch. Mag., 1829.—MS. from his son, Dr. Gunn.