

HISTORY

OF THE

San Francisco Theological Seminary

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

IN THE U. S. A.

AND ITS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION.

BY

JAMES CURRY, D. D.



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JAMES EELLS, D. D., LL. D.

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The supreme end for which a Theological Seminary exists is to prepare young men to make proclamation of the Gospel for the salvation of sinners. For this work they need not only to be instructed in the fundamental truths and doctrines of the Gospel, but also to be trained to deliver the message in the most effective manner and to do the work of a pastor most efficiently. A man well fitted to give such training was found in Rev. James Eells, D. D. He was a scholarly man, well versed in the word of God, and one who had had a wide and successful experience as preacher and pastor. He was thus prepared to give both the technical and practical instruction that men need for such a work, and also to inspire them with love for, and earnest devotion to, the cause of Christ.

The aim of the minister should be fruitage. Christ chose and ordained His Apostles that they "should go and bring forth fruit." And a man who has been successful in this work himself should be able "to teach others also" how best to sow the seed, cultivate the field and reap the harvest.

For this reason Dr. Eells was chosen to give instruction in the department of Practical Theology. He brought rare gifts to the work and used them with good results during the time of his Professorship.

He came of good Presbyterian stock. His ancestor,

Colonel Samuel Eells, came from England to America about 1660. His son, and his son's sons for many generations, were Presbyterian ministers. There were four of them named James.

Dr. Eells was the sixth in this ministerial line, and his son James, who also became a Presbyterian minister, was the seventh.

Dr. Eells was born in Westmoreland, New York, August 27, 1822. He died in Cincinnati, Ohio, March 9, 1886, in the sixty-fourth year of his age.

Like many others, Dr. Eells had to make his own way in the world, and both before and after being in college he was engaged in teaching.

He went with his parents to Worthington, Ohio, when nine years of age. His father was a Home Missionary and later moved to Amherst, Ohio. This was near Oberlin, and Dr. Eells took the first years of his college course at Oberlin College. He entered the Junior class of Hamilton College, N. Y., in 1842, and graduated therefrom in 1844. Several years were spent thereafter in teaching. He then entered Auburn Theological Seminary and graduated in 1851. He was married to Miss Emily Paige of Auburn the same year, with whom he lived and labored in the Master's service for thirty-five years. She still survives him.

From the Seminary he went direct to become pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Penn Yan, N. Y. He remained there for four years, and became afterwards pastor of the following churches successively:—Second Church, Cleveland, O., 1855-59; Brooklyn, N. Y., Dutch Reformed, 1859-67; San Francisco First, 1867-70; Cleveland, O., Second, 1870-74; Oakland, Cal., 1874-79.

During the last two years in Oakland he also served

the San Francisco Seminary as Professor of Practical Theology. In 1877 he was Moderator of the General Assembly at Chicago, which is the highest honor in that line our Church can bestow. In the same year he was a delegate to the first meeting of the Presbyterian Alliance of the World, which was held in Edinburgh, Scotland.

He received the degree of D. D. from the University of New York in 1861, and of LL. D. from Marietta College, Ohio, in 1881.

He resigned his charge in the Oakland church and the San Francisco Seminary in 1879 to accept the Professorship of Practical Theology in Lane Seminary, Cincinnati, Ohio. He continued in that work, preaching most of the time in different churches in the city also, until his death, March 9, 1886. He died suddenly of paralysis of the heart at his home in Cincinnati, and was buried at his old home in Cleveland.

The most marked results of his work were in the Oakland church. Under his wise pastorate the church that had almost been rent asunder was reunited. The membership increased from 116 to 404 in five years, and the present fine house of worship was built. He won hosts of friends, and his farewell reception was largely attended. At that gathering one of the prominent men of the city remarked to me: "What a grand statesman Dr. Eells would have made had he turned his talents in that way."

Dr. Eells rendered efficient service to the San Francisco Seminary in three ways:—

First—He was for many years a Director. As such he took a deep interest in its welfare, gave wise counsel

in directing its affairs, and devoted much time to its interests.

Secondly—He was at different times its Financial Agent. Even when at Lane Seminary he proposed to undertake to raise money for our Seminary, and his efforts did much toward securing the endowment for the first chair established therein.

Thirdly—He was for two or three years a Professor in this Seminary. For this work he was eminently qualified by his natural abilities, education, and his experience as a teacher and a pastor. And thus during the few years he was there he did much to help educate and fit the students of the Seminary for their life work in preaching the gospel.

Dr. Eells also assisted in founding and sustaining our church paper on this Coast, "The Occident," and often wielded his facile pen in contributing to its columns and those of other periodicals.

In Dr. Eells there was a combination of excellent qualities. He was a man of commanding personality. He was tall, graceful and dignified in all his manner. His mental equipments, both natural and acquired, were of the first order. He was a superior preacher. He studied to know the gospel of salvation, and then, with warm heart, clearness of expression and moving eloquence, he delivered his message. As a Presbyter he was faithful and efficient and won the highest esteem and honors from his brethren.

It was the privilege of the writer to have been in his early ministry closely associated with Dr. Eells, and he found him ever taking a deep interest in his younger brethren especially, and ready to give counsel and help in many ways.

Not long before his death he preached his last sermon to his old church in Cleveland, from the text: "After he had served his generation by the will of God, he fell asleep." His last words on that occasion were, "Such men cannot die." These words seemed almost prophetic, for the speaker had served his generation well, and soon after this he fell asleep.

His departure was a glorious translation, for the Master whom he had served so well had a higher work for him to do, and said to him, "Friend, come up higher."