

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.

Alexander let no man outstrip him in his violation of all rules in his treatment of those whom he esteemed "opposers of the work." He intruded into Black's congregation to carry the gospel to a people burdened with a lifeless ministry. When* called, in October, 1740, to answer for his neglect to attend the stated meetings, he excused himself on account of his bodily weakness, and because the presbytery were too superficial in examining candidates, and opposed the work of God, and the ministers chiefly instrumental in carrying it on; and also because they opposed the crying out during sermons. He withdrew, and refused to answer a citation for intruding into Black's field.

The presbytery met at his church to consider a charge against him of intoxication. He took the pulpit and preached. He acknowledged the intoxication at a funeral, and the presbytery judged it not so heinous as had been represented; but they suspended him till "satisfaction was given for his disregardful conduct to us, and his refusal to submit to the government of Christ's church in our hands." Yet he was suffered to sit in the synod of 1741, and he withdrew with the excluded brethren. The conjunct Presbyteries of New Brunswick and Newcastle appointed him, on account of "the necessity in the Great Valley," to supply there.

From that time he passes out of sight.

JOHN ELDER

Was born in Scotland, and educated and probably licensed there. Paxton and Pennsborough, having obtained leave to apply to Newcastle Presbytery for candidates, in August, 1737, Elder was sent the next month to those vacancies. The people of Paxton asked for him in November, and called him April 12; and he was ordained November 22, 1738, Black presiding.

As the Great Revival spread, it entered Elder's bounds, and he was accused to the presbytery of preaching false doctrine: they cleared him, in December, 1740, but the separation was made soon after, and the conjunct presbyteries answered the supplications sent to them the next summer, by sending Campbell and Rowland to those who forsook him. He signed the Protest. His support being reduced, he took charge of the Old-Side portion of the Derry

* MS. Records of Donegal Presbytery: quoted by Dr. Hodge.

congregation. In a few years after, Roan became the pastor of the New-Side congregations of Paxton and Derry, and on his death the two congregations united in receiving Elder as their minister.

When associations for defence were formed throughout the province, his hearers, being on the frontier, were prompt to embody themselves: their minister was their captain, and they were trained as rangers. He superintended their discipline, and his mounted men became widely known as the "Paxton Boys." He afterwards held a colonel's commission from the Proprietaries, and had the command of the block-houses and stockades from Easton to the Susquehanna. In tendering this appointment to him, it was* expressly stated that nothing more would be expected of him than the general oversight. His justification lies in the crisis of affairs. Bay at York, and Steel at Conococheague, and Griffith at Newcastle, with Burton and Thompson, the Church missionaries at Lancaster and Carlisle, headed companies, and were actively engaged; for no one can conceive the dreadful state of uneasiness on the borders from 1750 to 1763. Many a family mourned for some of their number shot by the secret foe, or carried away captive. Their rifles were carried with them to their work in the field, and to the sanctuary. Elder placed his trusty piece beside him in the pulpit. Death often overtook his flock as they returned to their scattered plantations. In 1756, the meeting-house was surrounded while he was preaching; but, their spies having counted the rifles, the Indians retired from their ambuscade without making an attack. The next year, when leaving the meeting-house, they were assailed, and two or three were killed. Friendly Indians would come and stay with them in the summer. Murders occurred in the fall, and the criminals could not be found, having, it was supposed, a hiding-place among the Conestogas. Elder† besought Governor Hamilton to remove them, because, although on the whole a harmless tribe, they harboured murderers. He engaged, September 16, 1763, that, if this were done, he would secure the safety of the frontier without expense to the province.

The proposal was not accepted. A party of rangers determined to destroy the tribe, and they called on Elder, as one knowing the necessity of breaking up the den of miscreants, to lead them on. They were ready to set off: he was then in his fifty-seventh year, and, mounting his horse, he commanded them to desist, and reminded them that they were about to destroy the innocent with the guilty. They replied, "Can they be innocent who harbour murderers?" They pointed to instances in which their wives and mo-

* Colonial Documents: edited by S. Hazard, Esq.

† Redmond Conyngham's Notes.

thers had been murdered and the destroyers traced to the homes of the Conestogas. He still entreated, and, at last, placing himself in their road, declared that only by cutting him down they could advance. They then prepared to kill his horse, and he, seeing his efforts all fail, left them to take their course. They were chiefly, if not wholly, Presbyterians, from Paxton, Derry, Hanover, and Donegal; not all young men, but some of them of Elder's own age, their leader, Lazarus Stewart, having been a commissioner from Monada Creek in 1735. They did their errand thoroughly and mercilessly, destroying, in Conestoga and Lancaster, nearly every remnant of the Indian race.

The Indians were removed from every exposed place to Philadelphia, and the citizens apprehended the "Pextang" Boys would pursue them thither. The Governor published a proclamation, setting a reward on the heads of Stewart and others. Elder wrote to the Proprietary, January 27, 1764, "The storm which has been so long gathering has at length exploded. Had Government removed the Indians, which had been frequently, but without success, urged, this painful catastrophe might have been avoided. What could I do with men heated to madness? All that I could do was done. I expostulated, but life and reason were set at defiance: yet the men in private life are virtuous and respectable; not cruel, but mild and merciful. This deed, magnified into the blackest of crimes, shall come to be considered as one of those ebullitions of wrath caused by momentary excitements, to which human infirmity is subjected." His pay was suspended, and he promptly laid down his commission.

Pamphlets without number, truth, or decency, poured like a torrent from the press. The Quakers took the pen to hold up the deed to execration; and many others seized the opportunity to defame the Irish Presbyterians as ignorant bigots and lawless marauders.

A dialogue between Andrew Trueman and Thomas Zealot speaks of "Saunders Kent, an elder these thirty years, that gaed to duty" just before the massacre, and while he "was saying grace till a pint of whiskey, a wild lad ran his gully [knife] through the wame of a heathen wean." This, and much more that is worse, lacks the first requisite of a good lie; it does not look like truth: it makes Irish Presbyterians talk like English Churchmen, to whom the phrase "saying grace" is peculiar. "Gaeing to duty" is a thrust at family worship, in use among Presbyterians, but highly ridiculous to godless "sayers of grace."

The Presbyterians replied that "the infamous Teedyuscung" confessed that he would not have complained of the new settlers if he had not been encouraged by prominent Quakers. They produced affidavits that the Indians who were killed were drunken,

debauched, insolent, quarrelsome, and dangerous; they refer to the Christian Indian, Rénatus, as notoriously bad, and assert that the Indian who shot Stinson, in Allen township, while rising from his bed, was secured, in Philadelphia, from justice, and comforted in a good room with a warm bed and a stove. They also charged that the representation in the Assembly was unequal, and that Lancaster, with a larger population, was allowed fewer members than other counties.

In all the virulent attacks and retorts, Elder is never stigmatized as abetting or conniving at the massacre; nor is his authority or concurrence pleaded by the actors in their defence. Lazarus Stewart, and forty families of his neighbours, removed, and settled Hanover, in the Shawnee Flats, in Wyoming, under the Connecticut jurisdiction. Little did they think a few years before, when Elder marched them thither to disperse the New Englanders on the Susquehanna, and found, on reaching there, only the burned cabins and the mangled bodies,—the savages having vindicated their title to the land by an exterminating attack,—that they would soon make their home there, and stand for the defence of their hearths against the Pennsylvania troops. Stewart, with many of his friends, fell in the disastrous battle of Wyoming, July 3, 1778.

The union of the synods brought Elder into the same presbytery with Roan, Robert Smith, and Duffield, they being at first in a minority, but rapidly settling the vacancies with New-Side men. Elder, by the leave of synod, joined the Second Philadelphia Presbytery, May 19, 1768, and, on the formation of the General Assembly, became a member of Carlisle Presbytery. He died in July, 1792, aged eighty-six, having, for fifty-six years, preached in the Old Paxton meeting-house, two miles above Harrisburg.

RICHARD SANCKEY,

A NATIVE of Ireland, was taken on trial by Donegal Presbytery, October 7, 1735: he was licensed, October 13, 1736, and was sent to Monada Creek. This congregation is first mentioned in October, 1735,—Lazarus Stewart appearing to supplicate in its behalf the next year. Bertram, of Derry, moderated the call which was brought to the presbytery for Sanckey by John Cunningham and Robert Green, June 22, 1737. It is from that time