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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

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BY WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D

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VOLUME II.  
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## NATHAN PERKINS, D. D.\*

1771—1838.

NATHAN PERKINS was a son of Matthew and Hannah Perkins, and was born in Lisbon, (then a part of Norwich,) Conn., on the 12th of May, 1748. His father was an extensive landholder, and the family moved in the more respectable walks of society. Nathan was early placed under the instruction of Dr. Lathrop of Norwich, by whom he was fitted for College. When he was not far from eighteen years of age, he entered the College of New Jersey, and was graduated in the year 1770, under the Presidency of Dr. Witherspoon.

Of the state of his mind in regard to religious things during his earliest years, nothing is now known; but, in the latter part of his College life, his mind was greatly wrought upon through the joint ministrations of Witherspoon, Whitefield, and William Tennent. So extraordinary were his convictions and conflicts during three months, from April to July, (1770,) that his bodily health was materially affected,—insomuch that he was obliged to avail himself of the assistance of his classmates, in walking from one apartment of the College to another. At length his mind was suddenly relieved of its burden, and filled with unspeakable joy. From this time, he showed himself an active, decided and earnest Christian.

Shortly after leaving College, he commenced the study of Divinity under the direction of the Rev. Dr. Lord of Norwich, and remained with him till he was licensed to preach, by the New London Association, sometime in the course of the next year. After his licensure, he was employed to preach for a while at Wrentham, Mass., and had an opportunity to settle there, but declined it. Thence he went to West Hartford to supply the church which had been vacated more than two years before, by the death of the Rev. Nathaniel Hooker.† The people, meanwhile, had become greatly divided, in consequence of having employed a number of candidates. He commenced preaching to them on the first Sabbath in January, 1772; and so far succeeded in harmonizing their views and feelings, that, in due time, they gave him a call, and he was ordained as their pastor, on the 14th of October following. Here he continued to labour with great diligence and fidelity, during the long period of sixty-six years.

\* MS. from the Rev. Dr. Brace.—Puritan Recorder for 1856.

† NATHANIEL HOOKER, the son of Nathaniel and Eunice (Talcott) Hooker, was born at Hartford, Dec. 15, 1737; was graduated at Yale College in 1755; was ordained pastor of the Fourth church in Hartford, (now West Hartford,) in December, 1757, and died June 9, 1770, in the thirty-third year of his age. He published a Sermon entitled "The invalid instructed," 1763; and after his death six sermons were published from his MSS., 1771.

In 1801, the degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him by the College at which he was graduated.

In the course of his ministry, Dr. Perkins preached ten thousand sermons, attended more than a hundred ecclesiastical councils, assisted more than a hundred and fifty young men in their preparation for College, and had under his care, at different times, more than thirty theological students. He was one of the original founders and most active patrons, of the Connecticut Missionary Society; and was a liberal contributor to the Connecticut Evangelical Magazine.

In October, 1822, he preached his Half-century sermon, which was published. In it he gives an outline of the history of the church and parish of which he had the pastoral charge, and especially of his own ministry. He states that, at that time, there had been six extensive revivals of religion in connection with his labours, and the whole number added to the church during his ministry had been six hundred.

On the 12th of June, 1833, the Rev. Caleb S. Henry was installed as his colleague in the pastoral office. Mr. Henry resigned his charge on the 25th of March, 1835; after which, Dr. Perkins remained sole pastor until two months before his death, when Mr. E. W. Andrews became associated with him in the pastorate. He continued to preach, as occasion required, not only at home, but in the neighbouring parishes, almost till the close of life.

On Sabbath morning, January 14, 1838, as he was preparing for public worship, he was struck with paralysis, and rendered at once both speechless and helpless, though his mind still remained clear. Two days after, the Rev. Dr. Brace of Newington, who had been his theological pupil, and for many years his intimate friend, visited him for the last time. As he spoke to the venerable man of the glorious future, and expressed to him his belief that he had reached the gate of Heaven, the Doctor actually shook with emotion, and he pressed his hand hard and long, as a token of assent to what he had said. He continued until the evening of the 18th, and then gently passed into the eternal world, being within about four months of ninety years of age. His funeral sermon was, by his own request, preached by Dr. Brace.

In 1774, he was married to Catharine, daughter of the Rev. Timothy Pitkin of Farmington, who was spared to him, during a period of sixty-three years. They had six sons and three daughters. *Nathan*, the eldest son, was graduated at Yale College in 1795. He studied Law in Hartford, but never entered the profession. He officiated, for several years, as a magistrate for the county of Hartford, and at the same time carried on a farm in his native town. Having experienced a decided change in his religious feelings during a revival in the year 1807, he studied Theology under the direction of his father, and was licensed to preach in the spring of 1810, when he was in his thirty-fourth year. Shortly after, he received a call from the Second church and parish in Amherst, Mass., and on the 10th of October following, was ordained as their pastor. Here he continued until his death, which took place on the 28th of March, 1842. He died in the sixty-sixth year of his age, and the thirty-second of his ministry. The Rev. Dr. Humphrey, then President of Amherst College, preached his funeral sermon. In it he represents him as "a man of highly respectable talents, good common sense, and uncommon prudence;" as "kind, affec-

tionate, and cheerful in his social and domestic relations;" as "a solemn, persuasive, and affectionate preacher;" as "an excellent pastor;" as "instant in season and out of season in times of revival;" as "deeply interested in the cause of popular education" as well as "in all the benevolent enterprises of the day," and as "a pattern of punctuality in all his engagements."

In 1795, Dr. Perkins published an octavo volume, entitled "Twenty-four discourses on some of the important and interesting truths, duties, and institutions of the Gospel, and the general excellency of the Christian religion; calculated for the people of God of every communion, particularly for the benefit of pious families, and the instruction of all, in the things which concern their salvation." Besides this, he published three Sermons in the American Preacher, Vol. III. and IV., 1791 and 1793; four Letters, showing the history and origin of the Anabaptists, 1793; a Discourse at the ordination of Calvin Chapin, 1794; two Discourses on the grounds of the Christian hope, 1800; a Sermon at the ordination of Oliver Wetmore, 1807; a Sermon at the General Election, 1808; a Sermon at the ordination of Elihu Mason,\* 1810; a Sermon at the interment of the Rev. Timothy Pitkin, 1812; a Sermon on the State Fast, 1812; a Sermon at the interment of the Rev. Nathan Strong, D. D., 1816; a Half-century Sermon, 1822.

FROM THE REV. DANIEL WALDO.

GEDDES, August 25, 1851.

Dear Sir: You wish me to tell you something about the dead before I become one of their number. Dr. Perkins, about whom you inquire, was my intimate friend, from the time of my first entering the ministry, till the close of his life. We were born within a mile of each other, but he was many years my senior, and I had no personal knowledge of him until after I was licensed to preach, when,—I think in the year 1790,—I resided about two months in his family. I was there, by invitation, as a guest, and though I did not profess to be exactly a theological student, I nevertheless availed myself, to a considerable extent, of the benefit of his instruction.

Dr. Perkins, in person, was rather short, and thick set, and had a countenance and manner expressive of dignity and self-respect. Perhaps it would be fair to say of him that, in his ordinary intercourse, he was somewhat stately, though not in any such sense or degree as to be inconsistent with all due urbanity. He inherited a very considerable estate, and, until misfortunes overtook him in the latter part of his life, may be said to have been a rich minister; and though this circumstance never rendered him supercilious, it is not improbable that it gave him more of an independent air than he would otherwise have possessed.

Dr. Perkins would be found in any society an intelligent and agreeable companion. He was always ready to converse on any subject, and was particularly

\* ELIHU MASON was born at West Springfield, Mass., January 14, 1782; was graduated at Dartmouth College in 1808; studied Theology chiefly under the Rev. Dr. Perkins of West Hartford; was ordained pastor of the church (then Congregational, but afterwards Presbyterian) in Herkimer village, N. Y.; resigned his charge after three years, and in March, 1814, was installed pastor of the church in Barkhamsted, Conn.; remained there two years, and then engaged in missionary service in the Western part of the State of New York; was installed in 1829, pastor of a Congregational church near Le Roy, N. Y., where, after labouring four years, he was obliged, on account of the state of his health, to retire from the active duties of the ministry. During many of the latter years of his life he was afflicted by the disease called Corea, or St. Vitus' dance, by which he was ultimately disabled for all exertion, and under which he gradually sunk to his grave. He died on the 2d of April, 1849, in the sixty-eighth year of his age. He had the reputation of being an eminently godly man, and a laborious and useful minister.

at home on subjects connected with Theology. In his theological views he was substantially of the school of the first President Edwards, and he looked upon Arminianism, and all kindred speculations, with strong disapprobation. He wrote a great many sermons, and wrote them with great care. They were generally very much of a doctrinal cast, though he was accustomed to exhibit doctrine in its practical bearings. His mind had acquired, in rather an unusual degree, a habit of expanding any subject that was presented to it, though not in any such way as to diminish materially the effect of his discourses. It was with reference to this trait of mind that his neighbour, Dr. Strong, when Dr. Perkins expressed a wish that some hint that had been given by some member of the Association to which he belonged, might be spread out on paper,—replied in his boundless facetiousness,—“ I should like to see it spread out too; and I nominate Brother Perkins to do it.”

Dr. Perkins was eminently devoted to the interests of his flock. He visited them frequently and familiarly, and was regarded by them all as their common friend, though his relations to them were never otherwise than highly dignified. He was instant in season and out of season, and seemed always to be watching for opportunities of doing good.

Among the most prominent attributes of his character were judiciousness, sobriety, equanimity, patience, and perseverance. He had little of the imaginative, and rarely indulged in sallies of wit. But he was instructive both in his preaching and conversation, was an eminently serious and devout man, and was generally much respected by his brethren in the ministry. His conversation was rich in interesting anecdotes in respect to the past, and there were not a few of the distinguished men of the country whom he ranked among his personal friends.

I am, sincerely, your friend,

DANIEL WALDO.

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## DAVID ELY, D. D.

1771—1816.

FROM THE REV. THOMAS F. DAVIES.

NEW HAVEN, December 20, 1849.

Rev. and dear Sir: Your request that I should give you a sketch of the life and character of the Rev. Dr. Ely of Huntington, is like requiring a portrait from a man, who had not, for more than thirty years, beheld the face of which he is to present the similitude. While, however, memory performs its office, I shall not forget the tall and venerable form of him into whose presence I was ushered, about forty-three years since. I was a lad of thirteen years; and when my father introduced me as one whom he wished to leave with him as a pupil, Dr. Ely placed his hand upon my head, and with kind and searching looks,—moving me about withal in the intervals of his earnest and rapid elocution,—commenced an acquaintance which is among the pleasing remembrances of my life. For portions of three successive years, I was an inmate of his family, and left it for College in 1809. In 1816, I received a call to succeed him in the pastoral office.

Dr. Ely was born of respectable parents at Lyme, Conn., July 7, (O. S.) 1749, and was graduated at Yale College in 1769. He was licensed to