

A  
HISTORY  
OF THE  
*Presbyterian Church in America,*

FROM ITS ORIGIN UNTIL THE YEAR 1760.

WITH  
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF ITS EARLY MINISTERS.

BY THE  
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WITH  
*A Memoir of the Author,*  
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AND  
*An Historical Introduction,*  
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## HAMILTON BELL

WAS a student at Neshaminy in 1738. He offered himself to the synod for examination, September 29, 1739, and, being recommended by the commission in May, 1740, he was taken on trials by Philadelphia Presbytery, and licensed, September 30. Having spent some time at Nottingham, he was received by Donegal Presbytery, October 27, 1741, and on the 7th of April he received a call to Nottingham. He was also invited to Donegal and to Lancaster, and to White Clay; but, having accepted the invitation to Donegal, he was ordained pastor, November 11, 1742. The next spring he was admonished, and in the fall he was suspended. In February, 1744-5, he published his renunciation of the presbytery in the newspapers. He "materially appealed" to the synod, in May, 1744, and they, at his request, appointed a committee to meet on the ground and determine the affair. It met at Donegal the second Wednesday in June, and deposed him; and the synod approved the sentence in 1745.

## JOHN ROWLAND

WAS a native of Wales.\* He studied at Neshaminy, and was taken on trials by New Brunswick Presbytery at its first meeting, August 8, 1738, in disregard of the act requiring, in accordance with the direction of the Westminster Assembly, a degree from a university, or, in lieu of it, a certificate from the synod's committee. They licensed him, September 7, and directed him to Maidenhead, the congregation having leave from Philadelphia Presbytery to ask for supplies. Cowell, of Trenton, informed Rowland that his going there would produce dissension; but he went. On the 19th, some of the people of Maidenhead and Hopewell complained to Philadelphia Presbytery of his having done so: Benjamin Stevens, John Anderson, Samuel Hunt, and Joseph Birt asked for a new erection, and for leave to come under the care of New Brunswick Presbytery; Enoch Armitage, Thomas Bur-

\* Professor Kinnersley's defence of himself for having blamed the Baptists in Philadelphia for admitting him to their pulpit.

rowes, Edward Hart, and Timothy Baker appeared on the other side, and it was decided not to consent to their transfer yet. "The presbytery advised them that Rowland was not to be esteemed and improved as an orderly candidate of the ministry." He, however, continued his labours; and the presbytery referred the matter to the synod, and his friends complained of the presbytery, and asked to be set off as a new congregation. The synod first heard the objections of New Brunswick Presbytery to the act, and resolved:—"It being the first article in our excellent Directory, that candidates be inquired of, what degrees they have taken in the university, and it being our desire to come to the nearest practicable conformity to its incomparable prescriptions, therefore, all candidates not having a diploma shall be examined by the synod or its commission before any presbytery take them on trials." The proceeding in licensing Rowland was declared to be highly disorderly, and "such divisive courses are to be avoided;" and Rowland was required to submit to the appointed examination, and not to be admitted as a preacher in the bounds till he do so. They condemned the indecency of those of the congregation who had "improved" him, in disregard of their presbytery, in uttering unmannerly reflections and unjust aspersions against their presbytery and the synod. They refused their request to be made a separate congregation till they had submitted the matter to their presbytery with two correspondents from New Brunswick and three from New York Presbytery.

The church doors were shut against Rowland, and barns were opened. Gilbert Tennent preached for them, and administered the sacrament,\* and printed the sermons, with warm epistles of dedication to those who had heard them. Rowland laboured also at Amwell,—“an agreeable people;” and they asked to have him for their minister, October 4, but the presbytery chose to ordain him as an evangelist, and performed that service, November 6.

In a letter to Foxcroft, of Boston, Rowland says,† for the first six months there was no marked success, he having strove to convince them of their lost and guilty state. Then he changed his method with immediate happy effect. A sermon, in May, 1739, from John xi. 28–29, “The Master is come, and calleth for thee,” and another from Matthew xxii. 4, “All things are ready; come unto the marriage,” were blessed to many souls. On the 6th of October, through misinformation, only fifteen assembled; but, while he preached, eleven were convinced, and cried out. He preached, December 30, from Isaiah xl. 6:—“And he said, What shall I cry?”—showing that man knoweth not what to cry until guided by the word and by the Spirit of God. In the evening there was a great

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\* Sacramental Discourses.

† Christian History.

impression made. At Maidenhead, while preaching on the "Parable of the Net," many were entangled in the meshes: not a few slipped out of them as soon as they could. After service, July 24, about fifty stopped at the "Christian houses," and the fifty-first Psalm was sung: the next day the mighty power of God was seen. There were also amazing manifestations at Amwell, July 27, and at Maidenhead, August 23. There was still a great revival in September, 1740.

He mentions that the zeal and diligence of the "Christian people" were especially serviceable to the converts, in promoting their stedfastness; while, in Amwell, the same good effect was secured by "both the husband and the wife being taken," in many instances, and brought into the fold.

When the division took place, he was sent by New Brunswick Presbytery to the New-Side congregations in Pennsylvania, in the track of James Campbell, beginning at Fagg's Manor, as far as Pennsborough, (Carlisle,) and Conecocheague, (Chambersburg,) and returning by way of Pigeon Run, Christina Bridge, and Greenwich, in West Jersey. Charleston and New Providence, in the Great Valley, asked for him, October 12, 1741.

While preaching in the Baptist church in Philadelphia, on a Thursday evening, during the session of synod in 1740, the audience was sadly overcome by his description of their wholly-ruined condition as sinners; and the distress rose to such a pitch that Gilbert Tennent went to the pulpit stairs and cried out, "Oh, brother Rowland, is there no balm in Gilead?" Then he changed his strain, and joyfully proceeded to unfold the way of recovery.\*

Mr. Daniel Kinley, a teacher at Deer Creek, Maryland, wrote down† from the lips of Davies, the following circumstance, which may be introduced with an explanatory statement of Samuel Blair:—"Some believed there was a good work going on, and they desired to be converted: they saw others weeping, fainting, and lamenting, and they thought if they could be like those it would be very hopeful with them; hence, they endeavoured just to get themselves affected by sermons, and if they could weep or be inclined to vent their feelings by cries, now they hoped they were under conviction and in a very hopeful way."

A woman in New Jersey, hearing many cry out under sermons, became convinced of the necessity of perceiving her undone con-

\* The Rev. Ebenezer Kinnersley, a Baptist minister residing in Philadelphia, was present at this horrid harangue, and was shocked at his "designing, artful, deluding" way of working on the passions. He remonstrated with the congregation from the pulpit shortly after, and some rose up in a tumult against him. He defended himself in the public prints, and the Baptists replied.

† In a MS. volume of Excerpts from divines, in the hands of the Rev. A. B. Cross.



dition before she could heartily embrace the gospel offer. She attended wherever she thought she might be affected; but she heard the most rousing preachers and remained unmoved amid a general melting. She was concerned that she should be blind and past feeling. She availed herself of an opportunity to hear Rowland. The word was with power on many, but she felt it not. She desired to see him and open her case to him. She was shown to the room where he had retired after dinner. He was walking backward and forward, and, asking her to sit down, he continued walking in silence. He stopped of a sudden, and said to her, with a solemn voice and aspect, "Woman, did you hear there is a warrant out for you?" Instantly, struck with amazement, she replied, "No, sir." "No? not know it? that is surprising indeed!" said he; and, with much solemnity, he continued walking. She sat awfully silent and astonished, yet assured that there was no precept issued against her. He stopped of a sudden:—"It is truly amazing indeed that you have not heard of it. What! not hear that there is a warrant out for you? can such a thing be possible?" With fear and trembling she replied, "No, indeed, sir; I never heard of it before." After a considerable pause, he broke forth, with a pathetic, solemn voice, "Woman, whether you know it or no, I now tell you there is a warrant out for you, and from the highest authority; and further, I tell you, the warrant is now in the officer's hands. O woman, I am the officer; and I do here arrest you, in the name of the Eternal God, for the murder of his Son." She almost fainted, and was immediately struck with a sense of her lost and wretched condition. She soon found by experience what conviction was, and her convictions issued in sound conversion.

Davies spoke of him to Finley as eminently holy, and peculiarly endowed with abilities, natural, supernatural, and acquired, to win souls to the blessed Jesus. At Maidenhead, Rowland was admitted to use the meeting-house; but at Hopewell the New-Lights built about a mile from Pennington, towards the Delaware. In the middle of September, 1744, Tennent, of Freehold, organized the church of Maidenhead and Hopewell.

A remarkable adventurer, who has strangely escaped the notice of those who have transformed criminals into heroes of romance, appeared in the colonies about the middle of the last century. He was known by the name of Tom Bell, and performed the exploit of successfully passing off, in the South, a transported convict girl as a daughter of George II. Passing through Princeton in the twilight, he was invited by John Stockton, Esq., to his house, who addressed him as Mr. Rowland. Bell with much difficulty convinced him of his mistake, the resemblance being so strong.\*

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\* Bell was slim, thin-visaged, of middle stature, with a heavy cough. His appearance under different names is often noticed, but he never seems to have been appre-

The wretch went to a vacant congregation in Hunterdon county, where Rowland was known by face to few, and, introducing himself as Rowland, was invited to spend the week and preach on the Sabbath. While riding with the ladies to church, he professed to miss his notes, and his host took his place in the wagon, that he might on horseback seek them, and be back in time for the service. The people waited; but

“Nor hide, nor hair, nor any trace,  
Of horse or man was seen.”

Bell rifled a desk of money and escaped, proclaiming himself as Mr. Rowland. Rowland at this very time, in 1741 or '42, was with two elders of his, Joshua Anderson and Benjamin Stevens, and Tennent, of Freehold, attending a sacramental service in Maryland or Pennsylvania. On his return he was charged with the robbery, and gave bonds to appear at the court of Oyer and Terminer in Trenton. The chief-justice, who was well known for his disbelief of revelation, charged the grand jury on the subject with great severity: after long consideration, they found no bill. With an angry reproof the judge sent them back again, with the same result. They were sent back a third time, and, being threatened with severe punishment if they persisted in the refusal, they brought in a bill for the alleged crime. He was acquitted at once on the testimony of Tennent, Anderson, and Stevens. The popular feeling was against him; his friends were indicted for perjury, and he withdrew from the province, and settled at Charleston and New Providence, in Chester county.

It was not an inviting field:\* there was little piety or religious knowledge; but while he was travelling, his ministrations were blessed to a remarkable work of conviction. It was of short continuance; in two months there was a cessation of the awakening. Rowland, on becoming their minister, wisely set himself to build up the converts in their most holy faith.

In closing his narrative, he says to Foxcroft, “This is very little of what I might have said.”

He died before the fall of 1747.

Dr. Henderson, of Freehold, in his Memoir of Tennent, says he possessed a commanding eloquence, and many estimable qualities. Whitefield said, “There was much of the simplicity of Christ discernible in his behaviour.”

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hended. In 1752 or '53, he laid aside his bad habits, and taught school in Hanover, Virginia.

\* Rowland, in Christian History.