

HISTORY
OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
IN
SOUTH CAROLINA.

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was not inattentive to the distant churches of South Carolina. Agreeably to a resolution to correspond with foreign churches, it addressed the churches in South Carolina, the letter being prepared by the Rev. Alexander McWhorter, of the presbytery of New York.—(Minutes, p. 399.)

BOOK ELEVENTH.

1770-1780.

CHAPTER I.

THE decennium on which we now enter covers most of the stirring period of the American Revolution. And though the method we have pursued, of taking the several churches in detail, is liable to many objections, yet, for the purpose of exhibiting the progress of events in each church, we will endeavor to pursue it, though in many respects little satisfactory to ourselves and perhaps tedious to our readers.

We begin again with the oldest of the churches which were then called Dissenting, and, as we commenced, by giving the history of the Congregational churches, we will go through these before entering on the others.

The INDEPENDENT CHURCH in CHARLESTON was served still by the Rev. John Thomas. But early in the year 1771 his health began to fail, he had leave of absence, was instructed to look out for an assistant, and to request Rev. Mr. Simpson, Mr. Alison, Mr. Martin, and other suitable ministers to supply his pulpit. On the 13th of October, Rev. Mr. Zubly officiated, and the church hearing of Mr. Thomas's increasing indisposition wrote to him, with Drs. Witherspoon and Rogers and Joseph Treat, to recommend a minister. Mr. Treat in reply informs them of Mr. Thomas's death, and that just before his exit he had partly engaged the Rev. William Tennent to undertake the pastoral office among them. The circumstances of Mr. Thomas's life, death, and his character, are thus set forth by Dr. Ramsay, in his History of the Independent church:—

"Rev. John Thomas was born in Wales, and educated at a dissenting academy there. In early life, he was sent from England, by the Rev. Drs. Conder and Gibbons, dissenting ministers of London, to whom the church had applied by letter to procure for them a suitable minister. The Rev. Josiah

Smith preached a funeral sermon observes as follows:

"He was a man of superior general gifts. His conceptions were he well knew how to distinguish the polite parts of learning. If we *seraph*. His compositions were in a man of fire and pungency, nor the passions. His principles were *ist, though* he was much *on the side* men of all persuasions, yet would purity. The guilt, pollution, and Christ—the redeeming efficacy of the influences of his spirit—the before God, and of good works to often insisted upon, and strongly others."

"Mr. Thomas left two daughters, the other Adam Gilchrist, merchants have eight living descendants; his nine years.

"The circumstances of Mr. Thomas's moral and medical view. Six months but in two or three hours of physical disease which brought him to his he paid particular attention to instructing him to suffer the highest in conversations with this unfortunate to believe that he was a true penitent. This naturally produced a strong him; every kind office was rendered adopted to save him from dissection private till the shades of night afforded to James' Island for interment. attended the corpse, and at ten o'clock consigned it to a grave. Mr. Thomas's services usual at funerals. On this instantly seized with a violent cold, blood, and other symptoms so alarming obtained leave from his church to give up of his health; all was in vain. the foundation of a consumption, was September 29th, 1771, in the twenty

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H, CHARLESTON. [1770-1780.

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1770-1780.]

DEATH OF REV. MR. THOMAS.

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Smith preached a funeral sermon on the death of Mr. Thomas, in which he observes as follows :

" He was a man of superior genius, and adorned with many excellent natural gifts. His conceptions were clear, his judgment solid and piercing—he well knew how to distinguish, and had a good taste and relish for, the polite parts of learning. If we consider him as a minister, he *prayed as a seraph*. His compositions were ingenious, methodical, and rational ; he was a man of fire and pungency, nor was he a stranger to the art of addressing the passions. His principles were sound and orthodox—a thorough Calvinist, *though* he was much *on the side of liberty* and moderation, and loved good men of all persuasions, yet would he contend for the primitive faith and purity. The guilt, pollution, and propagation of original sin—the divinity of Christ—the redeeming efficacy of his blood—his full and proper atonement—the influences of his spirit—the necessity of faith to a sinner's justification before God, and of good works to his salvation, were doctrines which he often insisted upon, and strongly defended against Arians, Socinians, and others."

" Mr. Thomas left two daughters, one of whom married Samuel Beach, Esq., the other Adam Gilchrist, merchant ; they are both now living (in 1815) and have eight living descendants ; his widow is still alive, at the age of sixty-nine years.

" The circumstances of Mr. Thomas's death are worthy of notice, both in a moral and medical view. Six months before he died, he was in good health ; but in two or three hours of philanthropic exertion, contracted a chronic disease which brought him to his grave. In the first three months of 1771 he paid particular attention to instruct and prepare for death a man who was condemned to suffer the highest penalty of the law. In the course of his conversations with this unfortunate man, Mr. Thomas had abundant reason to believe that he was a true penitent, and the subject of a saving change. This naturally produced a strong attachment and a disposition to serve him ; every kind office was rendered to him while living, and measures were adopted to save him from dissection after he was dead. His body was kept private till the shades of night afforded a screen to carry it over Ashley river to James' Island for interment. Mr. Thomas, with a few religious friends, attended the corpse, and at ten o'clock, p. m., in a cold, blowing March night, consigned it to a grave. Mr. Thomas performed in the open air the religious services usual at funerals. On this solemn but unseasonable occasion he was instantly seized with a violent cold, which speedily produced a spitting of blood, and other symptoms so alarming, that, in the summer following, he obtained leave from his church to go to the northern provinces for the recovery of his health ; all was in vain. The adventures of this single night laid the foundation of a consumption, which eventuated in his death at New York, September 29th, 1771, in the twenty-sixth year of his age."

On the 17th of November the congregation made out a call, expressed in beautiful language, for the ministerial services of the Rev. William Tennent, then settled as pastor of the Congregational church of Norwalk, Conn. This zealous and influential clergyman, the third of the name, was the son of the Rev. William Tennent, of Freehold, New Jersey, who was eminent for his piety, talents, and usefulness, and was the subject of the remarkable trance which is so familiar to all who are acquainted with the biography of the American pulpit. His grandfather was William Tennent of "the Log College" at Neshaminy, the friend of Whitefield. The father and

grandfather were both born in Ireland. He was born in Freehold, N. J., in the year 1740; was graduated at the college of New Jersey in 1758, under the presidency of Rev. Aaron Burr; was admitted to the degree of A. M. at Harvard in 1763. He was licensed to preach by the presbytery of New Brunswick between 1761 and 1762, and was ordained by the same presbytery in 1762-3. He preached in the bounds of Hanover presbytery, Va., some six months. In 1764 he was invited to settle as the colleague of Rev. Moses Dickinson, then advanced in years, at Norwalk, Conn. To this he consented on condition of his retaining his connection with the presbytery. The presbytery of New Brunswick took measures for his installment over the church in Norwalk, to which the congregation objected, believing it to be an attempt to draw them under the power of presbytery. Mutual explanations being made, Mr. Tennent was in due time installed, still retaining his connection with presbytery. After an acceptable ministry of six and a half years, he was invited to the Independent church in Charleston, having previously been invited to Boston as a colleague to Rev. Ebenezer Pemberton—(Webster, p. 402); and though his transfer was strenuously resisted by his people, he was at length released from his charge and repaired to the city of Charleston. Job Palmer, afterwards a deacon in this church, and the father of Rev. Dr. B. M. Palmer, sen., came out with him. His address to the congregation, April 12th, 1772, on accepting the call, shows his ability and energy of character. He was received with great favor, and wielded a commanding influence both in the pulpit and out of it. October 25th, of the same year, Mr. Tennent suggested to his congregation to build an additional house of worship. In a written speech, drawn up with his characteristic ability, he showed, 1st. That the exigencies of Charleston required it, there not being room in the church edifices then existing for more than two-thirds of the white population. The price of pews was enormous, some in the Church of England having been sold for £1900. 2d. The exigencies of the congregation demanded it. It had grown to its utmost extent of church accommodations, and their children would be compelled to resort to other churches. 3d. The dissenting interest required it. Numbers challenge respect and are secure from oppression. A new church opened commands its assembly. 4th. Two ministers were needed in such a place, and under such a climate. The danger of division would be small. Moreover, a sum of money was already subscribed for the object amounting to £9,000. The

congregation acceded to the building committee, who estimated at £13,000, recommended the common property of the society. The morning sermon in one sermon in the other. All the a new house, sixty-five feet twenty-eight feet in height, covered in and the pews put in. Various unsuccessful attempts were made by the colleague to Mr. Tennent. Philadelphia, was invited, and made out a formal call, promising, or £1400 currency, which both from Rev. Josiah Smith and Jones declined. February 27th Stewart to visit them as a colleague when licensed. The same year Smith, junior, made over property which, under no pretence whatever the use of the congregation. "Meeting-house" in Meeting-street. The vote at this time was sixty-eight in full communion.

Mr. Tennent, though devoted, not be indifferent to the great exertion. It early took firm hold of his mind, and he devoted no small share of his time to the cause some of his most eloquent topics into the pulpit. His neat and enthusiastic advocacy they elected him a member afterwards of the commons. He preached at different hours of the same day, and heard both in his church and in the different audiences with equal temporal interests." He was a committee of intelligence to conduct every kind of necessary inquiries, and send expresses for horses and send expresses for the year, 23d July, 1775, with the commission by the committee through the back country to disputes between Britain and