

AN

HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

IN

NEW CASTLE, DELAWARE.

BY THE

REV. J. B. SPOTSWOOD, D.D.,

PASTOR.

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“Hæc olim meminisse juvabit.”—VIRG.

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NEW CASTLE, DELAWARE, May 11, 1854.

REV. J. B. SPOTSWOOD, D. D.

DEAR SIR: Having heard last evening, with deep interest, your Sketch of the History of the Presbyterian Church at New Castle; and believing that it is of great general as well as local interest, by reason of its bearing on the earliest period of the planting of the Presbyterian Church in this country; we would very earnestly request you to make its facts, collected with so much labor and arranged with so much care, generally accessible by committing it to the press. By so doing you will contribute a valuable fragment to our ecclesiastical history.

Very truly yours,

SHEPARD K. KOLLOCK,  
JAMES W. DALE,  
THOMAS B. BRADFORD,  
J. D. DUDLEY,  
THO. G. MURPHEY,  
J. N. DANFORTH.

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At a meeting of the congregation of the New Castle Presbyterian Church, held on Monday, the 15th day of May, 1854, ELIHU JEFFERSON was appointed Chairman.

The object of the meeting having been stated, it was, on motion—

*Resolved*, That the thanks of this congregation are due, and are hereby cordially tendered to our Pastor, the Rev. John B. Spotswood, D. D., for his able and instructive history of this Church, delivered on Wednesday evening, the 10th day of May, inst., and that he be respectfully requested to furnish a copy of the same for publication and general distribution in pamphlet form.

*Resolved*, That Dr. Spotswood be requested, if compatible with his own views and other engagements, to continue his history so as to bring it down to the period of the dedication of the new church on Thursday last.

*Resolved*, That an attested copy of the foregoing resolutions be addressed to the Rev. Dr. Spottswood by the officers of this meeting.

ELIHU JEFFERSON, *Chairman*.

THE following discourse was delivered to the congregation in their old church, on the 10th of May, 1854, being the day preceding that on which their new church was dedicated. Its publication has been deferred to the present time with the hope of discovering materials calculated to throw additional light on some periods of the history, but this hope not having been realized, longer delay is deemed unnecessary. The writer desires to express his grateful acknowledgment to the Rev. Dr. Dewitt, Vice-President of the New York Historical Society, for valuable information respecting the Dutch Church here; and also to the Rev. Dr. Hodge, of Princeton, for the use of interesting manuscripts in his possession.

NEW CASTLE, DEL.,

February 4, 1859.

## HISTORICAL SKETCH.

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THE early religious history of Delaware is so closely connected with the civil, that in considering the one, we are compelled to give some attention to the other. From the year 1637, when the country was first settled by the Swedes under the command of Peter ~~Menewe~~, to that of 1664, when it was conquered by the English under Sir Robert Carr, it was alternately in the possession of three rival nations. The contests for supremacy prevented either from accomplishing much calculated to be permanent; and it was not until the close of the 17th century that sufficient confidence could be reposed in the stability of the government to encourage the establishment of religious and literary institutions. But it is obvious from the existing records of that period, that each of the three nations which sought to plant a colony on these shores, was far from being indifferent to the interests of religion.

The Swedes appear to have been a people deeply imbued with the spirit of the Gospel, and have left behind them no doubtful memorials of their zeal and enterprise in their ecclesiastical affairs. Their first minister was the Rev. John Campanius, who came over with Governor Printz in 1642. His was the high honor to be the first to pro-

claim in this part of the western world the glad tidings of salvation. The Swedes settled chiefly on the Christiana Creek, but had small settlements both above and below on the Delaware, one of which was at this place, which they called Sandhukén. Here they built a fortress, and named it Fort Casamir, which afterwards was known as Fort Trinity. Higher up the river, at a place called Tinicum, they built Fort Gottenburg, and in 1646 erected a house of worship. They retained possession of the country only for the short period of seventeen years, during the greater part of which time they were much annoyed by their neighbors the Dutch, who had established themselves firmly at New Amsterdam, and viewed with a jealous eye the settlements on the South River. After several skirmishes the Dutch succeeded in dispossessing the Swedes of all their forts, and assumed the sovereignty of the country. This event occurred in 1655, the Dutch being led by their governor, the celebrated Peter Stuyvesant. From this period the Swedish colony ceased to exist. Many of them returned to their native land, many were carried to New Amsterdam as prisoners of war, and some were permitted to remain, the descendants of whom are with us to this day. Considering the smallness of their number, and the frequent interruptions to which they were exposed, they accomplished a great deal, and may justly be regarded as a pious and energetic people. The Dutch, by whom they were succeeded, had visited the river previous to their conquest of it, and in 1651 had captured this town, to which they gave the name of New Amstel. They, however, retained possession of it but a

short time, it being recaptured by the Swedes. Immediately after the conquest by Stuyvesant a regular government was instituted, and John Paul Jaquet was appointed governor. His administration was short, not exceeding four or five years. He was succeeded by Peter Alrichs, who remained in office during the continuance of the Dutch dynasty.

Although the period of their power was limited to the short space of ten years, yet the Dutch, like their predecessors, lost no time in doing what they could for the improvement of the country. Many of those who accompanied Stuyvesant from New Amsterdam were induced to remain, and turn their attention to the cultivation of the soil, liberal grants of which were made to them by the government. Their number was rapidly increased by emigration, both from New Amsterdam and Holland. Whenever a number of emigrants was sent from the mother country, it was the invariable practice to send with them either an ordained minister or a schoolmaster. The latter was required to be a man of accredited piety, and in full communion with the Reformed Dutch Church. It was made his duty, not only to teach school and lead as chorister in public worship, but in the absence of the minister to lead in prayer, read a sermon to the congregation, and visit the sick. In the year of 1657 or '58, a Dutch church was organized in this town by the Rev. John Polhemus, while on his way from Brazil, where the Dutch at that time had a colony, to New Amsterdam, near which he settled and died. The same year a schoolmaster was sent from Holland by the name of Evert Peter-

son; and the year following the Rev. Everardus Welius was commissioned by the classis of Amsterdam as minister of the church in New Amstel, where he arrived soon after. He was the first ordained minister of any denomination who was settled in this town. He was permitted to labor but a short time in his new field, as he died two years after his arrival. He is said to have been a man of piety and learning, and his death was very much deplored. Peterson, the schoolmaster, was likewise a pious and devoted man, laboring in his vocation, and supplying as far as practicable the want of a minister, and had to contend with many difficulties. In a letter dated in 1658, which he addressed to the classis at Amsterdam, he refers to a very considerable number of emigrants who came over with the Rev. Mr. Welius, as being then in this town. He remained a number of years at his post, and at length removed to New Amsterdam, where, highly esteemed, he lived and died.

From this period to 1684, we have a good deal of information respecting this church, and are able to ascertain the names of several of its pastors. The Rev. Warnerus Hadsen was sent from Holland to minister to it, in 1662, but died on the voyage. In 1678, the Rev. Petrus Tasschemakers settled and labored here between two and three years. There is a letter extant, written by him, in which he speaks of his ministerial labors in this town. He eventually removed to the north, and settled at Schenectady, where he came to an untimely end, being one of the victims of the dreadful Indian massacre which occurred at that time.

In 1684, there died in this town a French clergyman,



concerning whom we can learn nothing. It is presumed that he was one of the exiled Huguenots, who were then flying to this country, and of whom we shall have occasion to speak more particularly hereafter.

In 1684, the classis of Amsterdam sent a pastoral letter to the church at New Amstel, in which they deplore the dissensions and difficulties which had arisen, and exhort them to conciliation, and common effort in promoting the Gospel and securing a ministry.

In order to account for this state of things in the church, we must revert to the civil history of the time. Twenty years previous to the date of this letter, a complete revolution had occurred in the government. In 1664, Sir Robert Carr, at the head of an English expedition, sailed up the Delaware. He found Fort Casamir to be the only military post on the river, and it was so feeble that it surrendered without resistance. In the articles of capitulation the common people only were included, all the officers both civil and military being retained as prisoners. The inhabitants of the town, on taking an oath of allegiance to the British crown, were left in undisturbed possession of their property and prerogatives—and it was expressly stipulated “that the people be left free as to the liberty of conscience in church as formerly.”

Here it may be well to notice, that in the records of this period it is stated that “on Sandhook stood a small wooden church.” In this building the Dutch continued to worship, as an independent congregation, although with diminished numbers. The name of the town was

now changed from New Amstel to that of New Castle, and was incorporated in 1667.

Charles II. granted to the Duke of York all the Dutch possessions in America called New Netherlands, but which from this time bore the name of New York. In this grant were included the three counties of New Castle, Kent and Sussex, on the Delaware.

From this time the population underwent great changes by the arrival of emigrants from various parts of the Old World. The state of things in Great Britain was such as to expel from her bosom many of those choice and noble spirits, who prized the rights of conscience more than home, kindred, or native land. The act of uniformity, which was put in force in England, and the attempt to impose prelacy on Scotland, drove to this country large numbers of non-conformists and Presbyterians from England, Scotland, and the North of Ireland. Some of these devoted men found their way to this town, where they received a cordial welcome from their Calvinistic brethren. About the same time a similar but more violent persecution for the truth was raging on the continent, and more particularly in the kingdom of France. The Huguenots, a people dear to every Christian heart, a noble army of confessors and martyrs, to the number of 500,000, were, in 1685, by the revocation of the Edict of Nantz, driven from their native mountains and valleys to seek asylums in foreign lands. A very large proportion of these fugitives directed their way to this Western World, which seemed to have been reserved until this time by the Almighty as a refuge for his persecuted people.

The Huguenots, on their arrival in America, settled, some in New England, many more in the southern colonies, and a few on the Delaware. It is obvious that, as these emigrants from France and Great Britain arrived here, in small numbers, and often one by one, they, in all matters of religion, united with their Dutch brethren, who worshipped in "the small wooden church" on Sandhook. For the Dutch were Calvinists in doctrine, and Presbyterians in discipline, while the Confession of Faith adopted by the Huguenots was drawn up by John Calvin himself, so that in doctrine and discipline there was a close resemblance between the Church of Holland and that of France.

Thus, it appears that, towards the close of the 17th century, there were gathered in this town individual members of the churches of these several nations, drawn together, not only by a common sympathy in each other's trials, but by the stronger influence of a common faith in the same grand system of religious truth. And here we are tempted to pause for a moment to contemplate the interesting spectacle that this congregation must have exhibited, a spectacle of people of various nations and languages, exiles from their native lands, persecuted for righteousness sake, meeting in these ends of the world, and uniting together in the worship of that God whom alone they regarded as the Lord of their conscience, and to whose heavy dispensations they so meekly bowed. How pure and spiritual must have been their worship! How fervently must they have united in their prayers and praises to that Saviour for whose sake they had suffered, and in whom they trusted for all their future. Would that they

could have looked but a little into that future, to see the glorious things God had in reserve for them, and to know that their persecution, and that of their brethren in other portions of the land, would be instrumental in laying the foundation of the freest, happiest, and strongest government that the world has ever seen.

The letter from the classis of Amsterdam to the Dutch Church in New Castle, dated in 1684, alludes to some dissensions and difficulties in it. As this allusion is accompanied by an exhortation to conciliation, and a common effort in promoting the Gospel, and securing a ministry, we infer that the chief cause of the dissension and difficulty was, as to which of the countries represented in the congregation the pulpit should be given. The Dutch, by this time, had fallen into a minority, in consequence of the frequent arrival of emigrants from Scotland and the North of Ireland. The great body of the people spoke the English language, and did not understand the Dutch, while the smaller portion were gradually becoming more familiar with the former. It was quite natural that the Dutch should be reluctant to yield to the demand of their English brethren, that the preaching should be in that language most generally understood. The point was for some time, no doubt, warmly contested; but at length the piety and good sense of the Dutch induced them to yield, and the worship was conducted in the language, and made to conform to the mode most familiar to the majority of the people. Accordingly, from this time, we lose all traces of the Reformed Dutch Church in New Castle, it having been merged into the Presbyterian. This

Church is therefore a succession, or rather a continuation, of the original Dutch Church founded in 1657.

That this conclusion is correct, we argue, first, from the reasonableness and probability of such a result from the causes just stated; secondly, from the fact that in Presbyterian documents of about that time we find the names of English, Dutch, and French, either as members, Trustees, or Ruling Elders; and, thirdly, from the fact that in a case of discipline, brought before the Presbytery, in which a Dutch member is charged with having married his deceased wife's sister, it is recorded that, "the Presbytery, considering some circumstances in regard of different sentiments between the Dutch ministers and us in this affair, thinks fit to defer further consideration upon it till our next meeting, against which time, we may have occasion to hear more from the Dutch ministers about this case." It is evident from this record that the individual under discipline had married a second time while under the care of the Dutch Church, and that at the time of his arraignment he was a member of the Presbyterian Church.

We are not able to designate the precise locality of the "small wooden church" found here by the English in 1664, and concerning which Penn speaks in his letter to London, dated in 1683, but there is good reason for believing that it is a part of the lot on which our new Church has been erected, and adjoining which is the graveyard of the old Dutch Church.

The first Presbyterian minister who labored in this town, and the country adjacent, was the Rev. John Wil-

son. That he preached here prior to 1703 is evident from the following extract from a letter dated February of that year, written by a Mr. Keith, an Episcopal minister, while on a tour of inquiry through the country, a copy of which is to be found in the "Collections of the Prot. Episcopal Historical Society for 1851." "At New Castle, 40 miles from Philadelphia, there is at present no minister; they had a Presbyterian minister called Wilson, but he had been gone about half a year." Again, on the 10th of April of the same year, Mr. Talbot writes as follows: "This (New Castle) is a pretty town on the Delaware River, between Pennsylvania and Maryland. There is no church, as yet, neither ever was an orthodox minister settled here, but one Mr. Wilson, a Presbyterian, that preached to the people in the court-house. He has left them the last winter, but, finding it not for the better, he means to come again this summer; he has disoblged some of his people there, which makes them more favorable to the church which I hope, by God's blessing, to found here speedily."

By a church and an orthodox minister, the writer means those belonging to his own denomination; it not being any more in accordance with the spirit of that time than it is of the present, to regard any other as orthodox.

Mr. Wilson did return, and not only continued to preach, but commenced making arrangements for erecting a new house of worship. For by this time "the small wooden church," built by the Dutch Church, had fallen to decay, and was, moreover, not sufficiently large to accommodate the congregation, which had been very much

increased by the continued emigration from the old country. The lot on which this church stands was purchased, one portion of it from John Brewster, and the other from Thomas Janvier, and Sarah, his wife. The two deeds are in our possession, each dated the 15th of August, 1707, and executed “to Roeloffe De Haes, Sylvester Garland, and Thomas Janvier, merchants and undertakers, or agents for erecting and building a Presbyterian church, or house of worship, in the town of New Castle.” The consideration money for both was twenty-two pounds, Pennsylvania currency.

On this lot was erected the house in which we are now assembled, and in which, for a century and a half, the worship of God has been maintained.

It is highly probable that this is the oldest congregation of our denomination in this country. The only two which claim to be more ancient, are the First Church in Philadelphia, and the one in Snow Hill, Maryland, both of which had settled pastors in 1701. We have no means of ascertaining the precise date of our organization, but there is a strong probability that it was in 1684 or 5. In 1703 it appears before us fully established, possessing all the elements of a church that had been in existence for some time; a bench of Elders, a Board of Trustees, and numbers and wealth sufficient to justify them in building a new house of worship; moreover, we find it at this date deprived for a season of the services of their minister, who must have been with it for some time, as he had become discouraged, and was absent, seeking another field of labor, but finding none, he returned, and

remained until his death. The congregation increased so rapidly, that it was necessary to enlarge the church building, which was done in 1712. To do that, it was necessary to purchase from Mr. Brewster eighteen feet of ground adjoining. The deed for this portion is dated April 3, 1712.

Mr. Wilson was a native of Scotland, and came to this country soon after his ordination. He appears to have been an active member of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, which was the first, and until 1716, the only one in the country. He was moderator of that body in 1707, and was appointed to conduct its correspondence with the Church of Scotland. His field of labor was not confined to the town of New Castle, but extended to Appoquinimy, and to White Clay Creek. As is usually the case, whenever the means of grace are enjoyed at such long intervals as must have occurred in each of these congregations; the people became dissatisfied, and importuned the Presbytery to make a different arrangement. Those residing at White Clay Creek, sent a petition to the Presbytery "to have the ordinances of the Gospel administered with more convenience and nearness to the place of their abode; promising withal due encouragement to the minister that shall be appointed to supply them." On the same day was read a letter from "several persons in New Castle, wherein they crave that the people of White Clay Creek may not be suffered to set up a meeting-house in the country; that their meeting-house and congregation in New Castle may not be damaged by this rupture of their fellow-members of White Clay Creek." The Presbytery



“ordered that the people of New Castle and the country, should not be divided by setting up two separate meeting-houses.” It appears from these extracts from the records of the Presbytery, that the people residing at White Clay Creek were in the habit of coming to this place to worship, as was also the case with those residing at Appoquinimy.

During the excitement occasioned by the attempt to build a church at White Clay Creek, the Rev. Mr. McNish, who had accompanied the Rev. Francis Makemie on his return from Europe, in 1705, and was settled as pastor of the churches of Monokin and Wicomico, visited this town, and made such a favorable impression, that the people made out a call for him, which they sent to the Presbytery, with a letter, stating the difficulties with which they had to contend, and urging the settlement of Mr. McNish. To this letter the Presbytery sent a reply, which we deem worthy of inserting here at length, as characteristic both of the men and the times.

“ May, 1709.

“ *To the People of New Castle.*

“ Out of a Christian compassion that we have towards you, we cannot but commiserate your present circumstances, and are heartily sorry for the misunderstanding that is between you and Mr. Wilson ; as also for the difference between you and our Christian friends in the country. We would be glad to fall upon a healing method to remedy these unhappy divisions. And, gentlemen, you may be assured that whatsoever in duty, lies within the compass of our power, shall not be wanting ; but, after second thoughts and due sense of your condition, we fear that such changes set on foot among you in the present circumstances concerning a minister, may prove detrimental to your own

and our own common interest, especially when we take notice that nothing particular has been offered to us by you concerning our brother Mr. Wilson, why he may not continue in his pastoral charge and function among you, as formerly. A general dissatisfaction is the principal thing, it seems, which is pretended, both in your letter to us, and by your and our friend Mr. Janvier. However, out of tender respect to you, we have, according to desire, presented Mr. McNish with your call, which he, for reasons given you by himself, cannot at present comply with. We beseech you, gentlemen, to put favorable constructions upon what we do, and that in truth and sincerity we desire and pray for, and endeavor your spiritual and eternal welfare; but yourselves may easily see that the smallness of our number, the particular engagements that every one of us lie under already, render your supply any other way than by our brother Wilson, at least at present, impracticable. And therefore we entreat, nay, require you, in the Lord to concur with us; lay aside all prejudices; struggle not too much with providential, unavoidable difficulties; be submissive—which is a truly Christian temper; trust in God, use patient endeavors, and expect, without doubting, a comfortable issue, which we hope for, and shall constantly endeavor. Subscribing ourselves,

“Yours, in the work of the Gospel.”

Mr. Wilson continued to labor in his extensive and difficult field until 1712, when he entered into rest. He left a wife, but no child. It is pleasant to know that the church made ample provision for her support during her life.

Immediately after the death of Mr. Wilson, the field was divided into three parts, and each one assigned to a separate minister; White Clay Creek to Mr. Gillespie; Appoquinimy to Mr. Wotherspoon, and New Castle to the Rev. James Anderson. Mr. Anderson, the second pastor of this church, was a native of Scotland, and was ordained

by the Presbytery of Irvine. He arrived in this country in 1709, and was received into the Presbytery of Philadelphia the following year. We are not able to say where he labored previous to his settlement here. During his ministry in this town, the Presbytery of Philadelphia, which was formed in 1704, with but seven ministers, became so large, as to render it "more serviceable for the interests of religion" to divide itself into three Presbyteries, and to erect the Synod of Philadelphia, which was done on the 19th of September, 1716.

Of the three new Presbyteries, one was that of New Castle, and consisted of the following Ministers: the Rev. Messers Anderson, McGill, Gillespie, Wotherspoon, Evans, and Conn, all of whom came either from Scotland, or the North of Ireland, except Mr. Evans, who came from Wales. The churches belonging to the Presbytery were those of New Castle, Christiana Creek, Welsh Tract, Appoquinimy, Petuxen, and Patapsco. The first session was held in this house on the 13th of March, 1717. The church of Christiana was represented by Ruling Elder John Steel, New Castle by David Miller, and Welsh Tract by William Williams; the other churches had no elders present on that occasion. Mr. Anderson, in the fall of this year, received a call to the city of New York. The congregation having become very much attached to him, and setting a high estimate on his labors, made a strong effort to prevent his removal, as we learn from the following extract from the Records of the Synod.

"This day a call from the Presbyterian congregation of New York being given in to the members of the Presbytery of New Castle, in

order to be presented to Mr. James Anderson, after they had considered of the same, together with Mr. Anderson's reasons for removal, did refer the whole affair to the Synod. The Synod taking into consideration the above said business, ordered, that a committee of their number be appointed to receive and audit the reasons of the people of New Castle, against the removal of Mr. Anderson to New York, or any other place, and that said committee do fairly determine in that affair, which committee is to consist of Messrs. McNish, Gillespie, Wotherspoon, Evans, Pumry and Thomson, and to meet on Tuesday next at 10 o'clock in the morning at New Castle, and that there be a letter writ to the people of New Castle, by Master Jones and Bradner, and to bring it against the next sederunt."

The committee, after hearing all the statements and reasons on both sides, determined to put the call into Mr. Anderson's hands; and on his signifying his acceptance of it, they dissolved his pastoral relation, and "transported him to New York." Mr. Anderson is spoken of by Dr. Miller, in his Life of Dr. Rogers, as a man of talents, learning, and piety, and a graceful and popular speaker. He remained in New York as pastor of the Wall Street Church, until the summer of 1726, when he accepted a call to New Donegal, Pa., where he died July 16, 1740.

The successor of Mr. Anderson, and the third pastor of this congregation, was the Rev. Robert Cross. He came from Ireland, and was received as a licentiate by the Presbytery in 1719, by whom he was appointed to supply the pulpit in New Castle, "excepting that he shall preach every fourth Sabbath in Kent County—and without recommending to the said people of New Castle to endeavor to provide the said Mr. Cross with suitable ac-

commodations and encouragements." His labors were so acceptable to the congregation, that he received a call to settle as their pastor, which having accepted, he was ordained and installed on the 19th Sept., 1719. The sermon on that occasion was preached by Mr. Samuel Young, "lately come from Ireland, and Mr. Jedediah Andrews, of Philadelphia, being present, assisted in the exercises." This was the first ordination service held in this house, and probably the first by the Presbytery of New Castle.

At the meeting of the Presbytery in the fall of this year, this congregation was represented by Ruling Elder Mr. Thomas Janvier. He was one of the Huguenots, and a progenitor of the present family of that name.

Mr. Cross served this congregation until May, 1722, "when he represented to Presbytery, that he had not that competency of subsistence from the people of New Castle, which was sufficient, and some of the most considerable of the representatives representing the same to some of the members of this Presbytery, and the said Mr. Cross desiring to be left to his liberty, the Presbytery deliberately considered his case, and do hereby grant him an act of transportability from New Castle, and at the same time do recommend him to continue in New Castle, if his congregation can afford him a competent maintenance."

After this he remained until September of the following year, when accepting a call from Jamaica, L. I., he removed to that place. He subsequently became pastor

of the First Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, when he died in 1766.

The vacancy occasioned by his removal, was filled by supplies appointed by the Presbytery, among whom was the Rev. Mr. Hutchinson. This gentleman came from Scotland as a licentiate, and was ordained by the Presbytery of New Castle. He was deemed so important an acquisition, that the Presbytery "ordered Mr. Gillespie to write a letter of thanks to the Presbytery of Glasgow for sending him over." He afterwards ministered to the churches of Bohemia and Broad Creek.

It may be interesting to state here, that about this time the churches of New London and White Clay Creek were organized, the former in 1720, the latter in 1722.

The congregation of New Castle was visited in 1726 by the Rev. Gilbert Tennent, who had been recently licensed, and was very popular as a preacher. He very soon received a call to settle. To this call he did not give a definite reply; but continued to occupy the pulpit for several months, when he suddenly took his departure. At the next meeting of the Presbytery it was "ordered that Mr. Gillespie supply the people at New Castle the 4th Sabbath of August next, and inquire into the conduct of Mr. Gilbert Tennent, in respect to a call he received from that people, and report the same to our next." Mr. Gillespie having performed the duty assigned him, reported, "that the people in New Castle are generally dissatisfied with Mr. Tennent's conduct in leaving them disorderly, and brought in a letter to the Presbytery which he sent to them, declaring his acceptance of their

call. The Presbytery considering the letter and other reports of his willingness to accept their call, ordered Messrs. Craighead and Evans to give a full representation of said affair to the next general Synod, and likewise, to declare that the Presbytery is highly dissatisfied at such irregularity." The result was that Mr. Tennent was rebuked by the Synod, "which he seemed to accept in a penitential manner."

During the year 1727 the pulpit was supplied by the Rev. Hugh Stevenson, who had arrived from Ireland the preceding year. He was subsequently the pastor of the church in Snow Hill, Md. After Mr. Stevenson left New Castle, the congregation made out a call for the Rev. Samuel Gelston, of Long Island, but at the same time he received one from New London which he accepted. In the course of the same year, the members of this congregation residing in the country, sent commissioners to the Presbytery, to request its concurrence in the building of a meeting-house in the centre of their neighborhood. To this request, the Presbytery gave a favorable reply, with the proviso that they continued firm "to their purpose and promise of continuing members of the congregation of New Castle." This house was located on Pigeon Run, near the Red Lion. There is no reason for believing that there was ever an organized church, or an independent congregation at this place; but that it continued, as it was originally designed to be, a chapel of ease to the church at New Castle.

The effects of so long a vacancy of the pulpit on the congregation were perceptible and alarming. Those who

lived in the country began to attend at other places, and soon abandoned New Castle altogether. Some became regular hearers of the Rev. Mr. Wilson, with consent of Presbytery, which occasioned a misunderstanding between that gentleman and the people of New Castle, as appears from the proceedings of Presbytery in the spring of 1731.

“A member of N. C. congregation representing their case and desiring supplies, the Presbytery taking occasion from thence to consider the irregularity of that people with respect to Mr. Wilson, thinks it expedient to appoint Mr. Hook to preach one Sabbath before our next, and make trial whether they be inclined to return to good order.”

Of the nature of this irregularity, and how it was settled, we are not able to ascertain, for at this period of our history closes the first volume of our Presbyterial Records, and the second, containing the minutes from 1731 to 1760, has been irrecoverably lost.

A few years subsequent to this time the inhabitants of the village at Christiana Bridge obtained a grant of a lot of ground for building a Presbyterian church, and for a burying place. This grant was made in 1738, but the church was not built until 1745. The congregation at this place was united, at that time, to that of White Clay Creek, of which the Rev. Charles Tennent was the pastor.

The loss of the minutes of our Presbytery is very much to be regretted, as they refer to a period of deep interest and importance, for in it occurred the great revival of religion under the ministry of the celebrated Mr. Whitefield, which commenced in 1739. This period is also memorable for the division which took place in the Synod



of Philadelphia, when the Synod of New York was formed, and set up in opposition to it. The leading men in the new body were the Tennents, the Blairs, Mr. Dickinson, Dr. Finley, and Mr. Burr. Among the leaders of the Old Synod were the Messrs. Thomsons, Dr. Francis Allison, Mr. Robert Cross, and several others. A portion of the Presbytery of New Castle went over to the Synod of New York, so that there existed, during this time, two Presbyteries of New Castle. There is reason to believe that this congregation belonged to the new one. It should be remarked here that the schism of 1741 was not produced by any difference between the parties on doctrinal sentiments, for both agreed in the cordial adoption of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, but it was produced by a difference of opinion with regard to plans and measures for promoting the interests of the church.

This unhappy division continued for seventeen years. At length mutual concessions were made, and the two rival bodies were, in 1758, united under the title of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia.

When the Rev. Charles Tennent left the churches of White Clay Creek and Christiana Bridge, the latter formed a union with the church of New Castle. This was effected in 1756, when the united congregations made application to the Presbytery of New York to send them a minister. The Rev. Daniel Thane, then the pastor of the congregation of Connecticut Farms, was induced to pay them a visit. Being well satisfied with him, they made out a call for him, which he accepted, and he was installed over them on May 1, 1757. Previous to the union of this

congregation with Christiana Bridge, it was for a short time united to Drawyer's, under the pastoral charge of the Rev. John Dick, who was installed in 1746, and died the following year. Mr. Thane continued his labors here until about the year 1763, when he left. I am not able to find any memorials of him subsequent to this. After his departure, the united congregations remained vacant until 1765, when the Rev. Mr. Magaw was employed by them, as stated supply for one year. During that year the Rev. Mr. Kirkpatrick preached to each of them occasionally, who proved to be very acceptable to a large number, and more particularly so to those at the Bridge. When the meeting was held for calling a pastor, Mr. Magaw received the vote of New Castle, and Mr. Kirkpatrick that of the other congregation. As the former was the more numerous, they insisted on their right to settle the minister of their choice, and the minority being large, and adhering firmly to Mr. Kirkpatrick, a serious misunderstanding ensued, which gave the Presbytery no little trouble. Among the various points of difference between them was the important one of who had a right to vote in the election of a pastor. This the Presbytery settled unanimously as follows:—

“That every person who professes himself of our denomination, living in the bounds of the congregation, subject to the discipline of the church, and professing his willingness and design to support the Gospel, according to his ability, has a right to a voice in the settlement of the Gospel in the congregation; it is further agreed, that all persons coming into a congregation, during its vacancy, being properly certified, and all such professed Presbyterians as may have lived in the bounds of the

congregation, though they may have declined joining for some time past, yet now profess their willingness to join it, and resolutions to act as regular Christian members, are to be deemed as having a vote in the choice and call of a minister."

The Presbytery, after laboring in vain to induce the two parties to unite on one of the candidates, or to drop them both and unite on some third one, finally consented that the majority should prosecute their call to Mr. Magaw. It was accordingly put into his hands, and was accepted by him, but before the period arrived for his ordination, he saw proper to decline the call. The vacancy continued three years longer, during which supplies were furnished by the Presbytery. At length they united in a call to the Rev. Joseph Montgomery, who was originally a member of the Presbytery of Lewees, from which he was transferred to that of New Castle, in 1767, and settled over the church at Georgetown. That congregation being too feeble to give him an adequate support, he, after laboring among them a little more than two years, was induced to accept a call from these churches, over which he was installed April 16, 1769.

On the 25th December, 1770, this church was represented in Presbytery by Ruling Elder Thomas Moore.

Mr. Montgomery, while pastor of this congregation, manifested a deep interest in the all-important work of educating pious young men for the Gospel ministry. He laid before the Presbytery an overture on the subject, which, being discussed, was referred to a committee to mature a plan by the next meeting. In the mean time, the overture was distributed through the churches, "in

order to know their sentiments respecting it.” In the following year a plan was agreed upon, and a Presbyterial Education Fund was established. According to this plan, each minister was to contribute one pound, each vacant congregation two pounds, and all others any sum convenient. The first student educated by this fund was Mr. James Wilson, who was taken under the care of the Presbytery in 1773.

In 1772 Samuel Ruth, Ruling Elder, represented this church in Presbytery. In December, of the same year, the Rev. Samuel Stanhope Smith was licensed in this house.

The fourth volume of our Presbyterial Records has on the first page the following memorandum:—

“The troublesome times, war and distress, which took place, both in church and State, afterwards greatly deranged all affairs, civil and religious, for many years, and the enemy marching through the Presbytery’s bounds, occasioned the loss of their old records, and many of the running minutes of that distressing day are dropped aside, or turned fugitive with the enemy, and disaffected; so that it is doubtful whether any of them that are lost or fled will ever be recovered or found.”

This entry is full of interest and meaning, as it directs our attention to the great events of that period. The part taken by the Presbyterian Church in the American Revolution is not so extensively known and so highly appreciated as it deserves to be, and it may not be altogether out of place to make here a few remarks on the subject.

The King of Great Britain had not in all his dominion subjects more peaceful and loyal than the members of our

communion ; none who gave their property more liberally, or poured out their blood more freely to protect and maintain the constitutional rights of his crown. But these men believed that they owed allegiance also to the King of kings—that they had duties to perform to that great Being, which were paramount to all earthly claims, and when they were commanded to contravene his Word, to do that which their Bibles and consciences told them they ought not to do, here their obedience ceased, here their loyalty to earthly kings terminated. Such has always been the spirit of the Presbyterian Church.

Although the revolution by which our independence was achieved did not originate from causes and grievances of a religious nature, yet every one who has studied its history knows that religion had a great deal to do with it.

The act of uniformity, the operation of which had been suspended in England by the act of toleration under the reign of Queen Anne, had actually been put in force in the colony of Virginia, and the Presbyterians and non-conformists in the Northern and Middle States were in daily expectation that it would be imposed upon them. They saw in the encroachments of the government on their civil rights, the assurance of a similar encroachment on their religious rights. Had the British crown been successful in those long and bloody wars which followed, there can be no question as to the fact, that that iniquitous act would have been most rigidly enforced upon all the colonies.

“By that act it was required that every clergyman should be re-ordained, if he had not before received Episcopal ordination—that he

should declare his assent to everything contained in the Book of Common Prayer—should take the oath of canonical obedience, should abjure the solemn league and covenant, and should renounce the principle of taking arms on any pretence whatsoever against the king.”—(*Hume*, vol. vi. p. 21.)

This they would not do in England—rather than submit to such tyranny and violence to their consciences, two thousand Presbyterian ministers threw up their livings, and went forth pennyless and homeless to do and suffer whatever else might be the will of God. It could not be expected that they would conform to the act here; accordingly we find that, when the struggle commenced, they almost to a man espoused the American cause. An able historian remarks:—

“That this apprehension of danger to the religious liberty of the country was not a feverish dread of imaginary evils. It was even better founded than the apprehension of danger to our civil liberties from the claim of the British Parliament to tax the country. As the Episcopal Church was established in England, and as those who had control of the government were members of that church, the Episcopalians in America were naturally led to be constantly looking for State patronage and legal support. They claimed it as a right that the support and extension of the Episcopal Church in this country should be made a national concern.”—(*Hodge*, vol. ii. p. 455.)

These remarks must be sufficient to show the grounds of apprehension of danger to their religious liberty entertained by the non-episcopal churches in this country at the time of the Revolution. To them the declaration of independence on the 4th of July, 1776, was a declaration of religious as well as of civil liberty. “It is not surprising, therefore,” says Dr. Hodge, “that they entered

into the conflict with a decision, which in many cases would render it more easy to prove that they did too much, than they did too little." The members of the Synod of Philadelphia and New York, whether convened in session or in their pulpits, did all they could consistent with their vocation to help on the glorious work. They prayed to the God of armies—they observed special days of fasting—they sent pastoral letters to the churches, exhorting them to maintain the union of the colonies, to cultivate and practise in their engagements with the enemy the virtues of mercy and humanity, and above all the love and fear of God. Some of them, finding their usefulness at home destroyed by the war, left their charges to serve as chaplains in the army, among whom was the pastor of this church and congregation. Others aided by their counsels publicly and privately; one was a member of the Congress of '76, and a signer of the Declaration of Independence; another was a confidential adviser of the commander-in-chief of the American army. I allude to Dr. John Rodgers, at the time pastor of the Wall Street church in the city of New York, from whose Memoirs I make the following extract:—

“On the 14th day of April, 1776, General Washington reached New York, and took possession of it for its defence. Soon after his arrival, Dr. Rodgers, in company with other friends of the American cause, waited on the General to pay him his respects. The General received him with pointed attention, and when he was about to retire followed him to the door, and observed that his name had been mentioned to him in Philadelphia, which he just left, as a gentleman whose fidelity to the interest and liberty of the country might be relied on, and who might be capable of giving him important information, and added, ‘May I

take the liberty, sir, to apply to you, with this view, whenever circumstances may render it desirable?" The Doctor, after assuring him of the readiness and pleasure with which he should render him in the cause in which he was engaged, any service in his power, took his leave. It is not improper to add, that the General did actually consult the Doctor on several occasions afterwards, concerning several parts of the public service, and, particularly in one case, received from him important information. A number of letters passed between them, some of which were found among the Doctor's papers after his decease."—(*Memoirs*, p. 208.)

I have dwelt thus long on the part taken by our ministers in the events of that period, not to indulge in denominational pride, but to do justice to forgotten merit, by directing attention to the spirit and character of those devoted men. They have all passed away; the places where many of them are buried are unknown, but their names are on record, and the time will come when they will be more familiar to the American ear. I have alluded to this subject also that we might appreciate more highly, and love more ardently that system of faith which was so instrumental in developing the noblest traits of the human character, and in producing such glorious results on the destinies of the world—that we may see that in fearing God, and obeying his word, we pursue that course by which we prove most useful to our race, and best promote the interests of our country, and that we may see how important it is to transmit to our children, unimpaired, and uncorrupted, those great principles to the maintenance of which we are so much indebted for all that we this day experience of the blessings of civil and religious liberty.



It has been said that the labors of Mr. Montgomery were so much interrupted by the war, that he resigned his charge and joined the American army in the capacity of chaplain. This he did on the 29th day of October, 1777. After the close of the war he removed to the State of Pennsylvania, and impaired health preventing him from preaching, he turned his attention to civil affairs. Such was his popularity that he was elected to represent his district in Congress, and subsequently in the Legislature of the State. We have no means of ascertaining when or where he died. The congregation remained vacant from the resignation of Mr. Montgomery in 1777 to the settlement of the Rev. Samuel Barr in 1791, during which time the pulpits were supplied by the Presbytery. Mr. Barr arrived in this country from Ireland in 1784. He was a licentiate of the Presbytery of Londonderry. Immediately on his arrival he was sent to New London Cross Roads, as a stated supply. From this place, he appears to have gone into the bounds of the Presbytery of Redstone, and then to have returned to this part of the country, and having preached for one year to these congregations, he received a call to become their pastor, which he accepted. His installation took place on the 9th day of August, 1791. The sermon on that occasion was preached by the Rev. John Burton, and the other services were conducted by the Rev. Robert Smith, D. D. In 1794, Alexander Duncan was the Ruling Elder in Presbytery from this congregation, and in 1796 William Scott.

Mr. Barr remained pastor of the two congregations

until Aug. 3, 1796, when, at his request, the pastoral relation was dissolved. He died here on the 31st day of May, 1818. For two years after his resignation, the pulpit was supplied by Presbytery.

In 1799, the Rev. John E. Latta, who had been recently licensed, received and accepted a call to settle here. He was ordained and installed on the 13th of August, 1800, the Rev. Dr. Read presiding, and giving the charge.

We can find no list of the names of the Ruling Elders of these congregations, until 1791, when Mr. Barr was installed. At that time, the bench consisted of the following gentlemen, viz., William Scott, Robert Bryan, Samuel Barr, and William Aiken. Messrs. Ruth and Aiken having died in 1792, Alexander Duncan and Samuel Ruth were elected to supply their places, and at the same time James Caldwell was added to the number. In 1800, when Mr. Latta was installed, the session was again enlarged, by the election of James Couper, Richard Hambly, Dr. Robert L. Smith, and George Pratt, all of whom belonged to the congregation of Christiana Bridge. In 1802, Charles Thomas, Jacob Belville, and Hugh Gemmill were added to the session in New Castle. In 1815, Dr. James Couper, Kensey Johns, John Belville, and Nicholas Vandyke, were elected from the congregation in New Castle; 1826, Matthew Kean. In 1830, James McCullough and James Smith, and in 1839 Elijah Start and John Gordon were added to the number of Elders in this congregation.

The ministry of Mr. Latta extended over a period of twenty-four years, and was eminently blessed to the edifi-

cation and enlargement of the church. He was an eloquent and faithful preacher, and an active and useful member of the church courts, of the highest of which, the General Assembly, he was the permanent clerk from 1807 to 1824. He died here on the 20th day of September, 1824, in the            year of his age.

The Rev. Joshua N. Danforth succeeded Mr. Latta. He was ordained and installed, on the 30th day of November, 1825. He served the united congregations until May 20, 1828, when, with the consent of Presbytery, he resigned his pastoral charge, to accept a call which had been tendered him from one of the churches in the city of Washington.

One year after the resignation of Mr. Danforth, the congregation invited the Rev. William P. Alricks to become their pastor, he having for some months preached to them as stated supply. Mr. A. accepted the invitation, and arrangements were made for his installation, but when the time appointed arrived, he requested permission to return the call to Presbytery, and his reasons for so doing being satisfactory, his request was granted.

The next pastor of this church was the Rev. John M. Dickey, who was ordained and installed on the 19th day of May, 1830. He had not labored here more than eighteen months, before he received a call from the church at Oxford, Pa., then vacant by the death of his father. This call, after much deliberation, Mr. Dickey accepted, and his connection with this congregation was dissolved in the spring of 1832.

He was succeeded by the Rev. James Knox, who was

ordained and installed on the 21st of November, 1832. Mr. Knox, finding his health failing, resigned his charge, in the early part of the year 1834. He was succeeded by the Rev. John Decker, who was ordained and installed on the 24th day of February, 1835. Mr. Decker served the congregation until the spring of 1842, when, at his request, the pastoral relation was dissolved. The four successors of Mr. Latta are yet alive,\* and it is not proper for me to speak with any more particularity of them than to say that they were faithful and devoted men, greatly beloved by the congregation, and that their labors were blessed to the edification and enlargement of the church.

The fact that this building, which is a small one, has accommodated this congregation for so many years, shows that as to numbers, it has been, for the most part, stationary. The permanent population of the town has always been small, and the number of those who have resided here temporarily, has been much larger than is the case with most other towns. Not being a place of much business, the younger portion of the community, from which congregations are filled up, have, as soon as they became qualified for the duties of life, sought in the neighboring cities, and other portions of the country, the employment which they could not find at home. Probably no congregation of a similar size has more representatives in other churches than this. We find them not only in our eastern cities, but we can trace them, to a great extent, in various parts of the land. Not a few of them are to be

\* The Rev. Mr. Decker has since died.

found in the great West, and some even on the shores of the Pacific. When the congregation undertook the erection of the building which they expect hereafter to occupy, every pew in this house was rented, consequently no room existed for accommodating a larger number. It was thought that the interests of the congregation, and of religion, would be subserved by a larger and more comfortable edifice.

With commendable unanimity and liberality the enterprise was undertaken ; which, after many delays and discouragements, has resulted in the substantial and beautiful structure, which we are on the eve of dedicating to the worship of God—the history of which, at some far distant period, may be written by another hand, and be read to another congregation.

And now, it only remains for us to bid farewell to this venerable—this time-honored building—to these walls which have so long resounded the praises and prayers of God's people. We are not sufficiently stoical to do so without emotion. We cannot, without a swelling heart, leave this sacred desk, from which, through long succeeding years, have been proclaimed the truths of the glorious Gospel ; or these seats which have so long been occupied by the worshippers of God. How many feet have trodden these aisles, which are now walking the golden streets of the New Jerusalem ! How many voices have here sung the praises of God, which are now praising him in higher and nobler strains in the world of glory ! How often has the tear of penitence fallen here ! How many hearts have here been made to rejoice ! How often have the

followers of Christ been here comforted and supported! To how many solemn vows have these walls borne witness! How often has the sacramental table been here spread, and how many foretastes of heaven have been here experienced! We bless God for all that has been accomplished here, for all his goodness and mercy vouchsafed to his covenanted people. We bless him for all his providential care and protection of this ancient church, that here he has so long had a seed to serve him.

And it is solemn to think how many successive generations this house has seen to pass away.

“Where many a pious foot hath trod,  
That now is dust beneath the sod;  
Where many a sacred tear was wept,  
From eyes that long in death have slept.  
The temple’s builders, where are they?  
The worshippers? All passed away!  
We rear the perishable wall,  
But ere it crumbles, we must fall.”

My hearers, like those generations, we are hastening to the same eternity; we are going to appear before the same God.

The solemn lessons taught us by this review of the past are, that here we have no continuing city, and no abiding place, and that from earth and its scenes we will soon be removed forever. Let us, then, strive so to profit by the worship of God in his earthly sanctuary, as that when we go hence, we may be prepared to worship Him “in the temple not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,” and to join the great congregation that shall never break up.

## PASTORS AND STATED SUPPLIES OF THE CHURCH IN NEW CASTLE.

Rev. John Wilson, from	1700—1712	Presbyterial supplies,	———1791
“ James Anderson,	1713—1717	Rev. Samuel Barr,	1791—1796
“ Robert Cross,	1719—1723	“ John E. Latta,	1800—1824
“ Gilbert Tennent, S. S.,	1726—1727	“ Joshua N. Danforth,	1825—1828
“ Hugh Stevenson,	1727—1728	“ Wm. P. Alricks, S. S.,	1829—1830
Presbyterial supplies,	1728—1746	“ John M. Dickey,	1830—1832
Rev. John Dick,	1746—1748	“ James Knox,	1832—1834
“ Daniel Thane,	1757—1763	“ John Decker,	1835—1842
“ Mr. Magaw, S. S.,	1763—1764	“ John B. Spotswood	1842—
“ Joseph Montgomery,	1765—1777		

## RULING ELDERS, AS FAR AS CAN BE ASCERTAINED.

Thomas Janvier,	1709	George Pratt—C. Bridge,	1800
David Miller,	1717	Robert Barr,	1802
Sylvester Garland,	1719	Charles Thomas,	“
Thomas Moore,	1770	Jacob Belville,	“
William Scott,	1796	Hugh Gemmill,	1806
Robert Bryan,	“	Dr. James Couper,	1815
Samuel Barr,	“	Kensey Johns, Jr.,	“
William Aiken,	“	John Belville,	“
Samuel Ruth,	“	Nicholas Van Dyke,	“
Alexander Duncan,	“	Matthew Kean,	1826
William Ruth,	1800	James McCullough,	1830
James Couper—C. Bridge,	“	James Smith,	“
Richard Hambly, “	“	Elijah Start,	1839
James Caldwell, “	“	John Gordon,	“
Dr. Robert L. Smith, “	“	William F. Lane,	1857

