



THE PASTOR
OF THE
OLD STONE CHURCH.

MR. HOTCHKIN'S MEMORIAL, JUDGE ELMER'S EULOGY,
AND MR. BURT'S ADDRESS,

COMMEMORATIVE OF

REV. ETHAN OSBORN,

LATE PASTOR OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, FAIRFIELD, NEW JERSEY.

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Memorial
OF
REV. ETHAN OSBORN,

WHO DIED MAY 1, 1858,
IN THE ONEHUNDREDTH YEAR OF HIS AGE,

By Rev. B.B. HOTCHKIN.

[Provided here below is the text of a letter which was located inside the copy of this book purchased for the PCA Historical Center's library. This page is blank in the original printed version of the book]:

Chicago, March 2, 1877

Many thanks for your thoughtful kindness in sending me your memorial of good "Father Osborn". I got it last night from Mr. Minelley and became so interested in it that I have kept at it till it is all read through. I have been exceedingly interested in it. It has to me a peculiar interest as I sat one year under Father Osborn's ministry. I knew him well, as also his son Robert, Miss McQueen, and very many of those to whom reference is made. I visited Fairton some ten years ago & stood by his grave & thanked God for the influence of such a man. What a reward he now has in heaven! — I hope if life is spared, soon to go to Jersey & live over those old days again. —

I thank you for your letter yesterday. I had opportunity to talk with Mr. Minelley on the subject of which you write, and I strongly advised him to remain with your good people. I think it the best thing both for him and for you. I have also talked with Prof. Hyde who agrees with me on the subject & had so advised him. I am glad Prof. Hyde is to be with you next Sab. Your people will then have seen us all. I hope you will hear good news from your son soon.

In haste and with kind regards to your family, I remain yours very truly,

F. N. Fisk

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

The filial relation which I sustained toward the subject of the following sketch, as his eldest son in the pastorate of the Fairfield Church, was probably the reason why the duty of preaching a Funeral Discourse at his burial was assigned to myself. I was afterwards requested by members of his family and others to furnish a copy of the Sermon for publication. This I engaged to do, provided material could be obtained for improving the biographical notice which formed perhaps its only point of interest. Having had only the time of the evening before the funeral for preparation, I regarded its historical details as too imperfect to be placed into permanent form. The matter which I have since found, has enabled me to make such corrections and enlargement that I do not regard it proper to claim for the present production any identity with the Funeral Discourse. I have therefore dropped the form of a Sermon, and in its place I herewith present to my bereaved friends this "Memorial" of their venerated and glorified parent, an affectionate tribute to his memory, and a testimony to the grace that was in him.

B.B.H.

WALLACE, PA. 1858.



THE OLD SPANISH CHURCH.

MEMORIAL OF REV. ETHAN OSBORN.

PART I.

FROM HIS BIRTH TO HIS ORDINATION.

WHEN we laid the remains of the sainted father, of whom I write, in their last resting place, a Christian minister stretched his hand over the grave and said—“*Mark the perfect man, and behold the up-right, for the end of that man is peace!*” Around him stood an audience—in numbers almost an army—but it is believed there was not a heart among them all to withhold the responsive “AMEN.” Whether we consider the length of time during which such a character was borne, the uniformity with which it was sustained, the blending of energy and inoffensiveness in acting it out before the world, or the consistency of the various experiences and acts which make up the life, we are impressed with the propriety of applying the highest Scriptural terms for describing the good man, to the late Fairfield Pastor. We adopt them not in their unqualified meaning, but in the comparative sense which alone justifies their application to beings this side of heaven.

A stranger, brought for the first time into the company of Father Osborn, would observe an air of general goodness and Christian simplicity in his speech and deportment; but he might wonder what were the striking traits—the strong salient points of character—which created his high reputation, and preserved it in growing strength through more than two human generations. Closer intimacy would reveal the secret of this wonder. The strength of his character did not lie in individual traits, and this memorial of his life will have little to say of salient points. In the *unity* of his excellences lay the hiding of their power. His life, as a whole, was a striking life. All its parts revealed the ever-present influence of Divine grace. In the intimacies of home or out among men, in sacred or secular duties, in seasons of festivity or in the chambers of the dying, in the church or in the world, his demeanor was uniformly marked by habitual communion with God. It is true, there were fine traits in his mental constitution; still we feel our chief indebtedness to the grace of God that was in him, for the precious fragrance of his memory.

Rev. ETHAN OSBORN, the subject of this memorial, was born in Litchfield, Connecticut, August 21, 1758. I am indebted to one of his relatives residing in that place, for a few statistics respecting his family, which his near friends will be glad to see

preserved. The remarkable longevity which the record exhibits, will also engage the attention of the general reader.

His father, Capt. John Osborn, died January 7, 1814, aged eighty-six years. His mother, (maiden name, Lois Peck,) died November 28, 1819, aged eighty-seven. They were the parents of nine children, five of whom died at ages ranging from seventy-nine to ninety-nine, viz: John, who died at the age of seventy-nine; Ethan, ninety-nine; Eliada, eighty-six; Rebecca, (Mrs. Samuel Seymoure,) eighty; and Elizabeth, (Mrs. Ebenezer Marsh,) seventy-nine. One daughter, Anna, (Mrs. James Riley,) died at the earlier age of forty-six. Two children died in youth—Heman, while a member of Dartmouth College, at the age of nineteen, and Lois, aged twenty-one. There is one survivor, Mrs. Thalia Kilbourn,* Widow of Whitman Kilbourn, now eighty-one years of age, in good health, and a regular attendant at church in Litchfield, three miles from her home.

It may not be without interest to give, in this place, another table of longevity among the early friends of Mr. Osborn. It was communicated to me from the necrological records of Dartmouth College, through the kindness of Rev. John Richards, D.D., of Hanover, (N.H.,) the seat of the College. Of Mr. Osborn's class, seventeen in number, eleven are known to have died at the following ages respectively: Mr. Jacob Osborn, (cousin to Ethan,) sixty-two; Rev. Christopher Page, sixty-

* [marginalia: "Died at Litchfield, May 8, 1865, aged 89.]

four; Rev. Gilbert Tennent Williams, sixty-four; Rev. Solomon Aiken, seventy-five; Rev. William Montague, seventy-six; Rev. John Wilder, seventy-eight; Rev. Nathan Church, eighty-two; Rev. William F. Rowland, eighty-two; Rev. Thomas Gross, eighty-four; Rev. David Porter, D.D., eighty-nine; Rev. Ethan Osborn, ninety-nine. Almost contemporaneously with the death of Mr. Osborn, a college associate of a previous class, Rev. Zechariah Greene, of Hempstead, L.I., at the age of ninety-eight years, passed to the world of spirits.

The records of Mr. Osborn's early life are few. There are almost none living to tell us the incidents of his childhood and youth, or even his entrance upon public life. My chief resources for his personal history until the first third of the duration of his pastorate had expired, are two auto-biographical discourses, and his occasional reference to the events of that period in conversation with myself or others who have favored me with their recollections.

In the year 1822, having been the Pastor of the Fairfield congregation more than thirty years, he gave to the people an account of his life and labors up to that time, in the two discourses mentioned above, preached on consecutive Sabbaths, using for his text, Acts xx.18—"Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons."* These sermons will

* For a copy of the first of these discourses—the most important, because reaching back beyond all other means of information—I am

contribute largely to the narrative which follows. He approached his subject through the following apology for bringing himself so prominently into the pulpit—an apology which the reader will not require, when it is remembered that he had even then filled out an ordinary day and generation of ministerial labor.

“Having lived and labored among you in the gospel ministry for more than thirty years, it seems reasonable that we should take a brief review of the ground we have traveled over, and of God’s dealings with us. It is hoped that such a review may afford us some lessons of useful instruction. The general design of these discourses is to lay before you some of the principal events which have occurred during my residence among you, and as I pass along, to express my thoughts and opinions respecting them. This I shall do with the utmost freedom, and shall perhaps disclose to you some of my secret thoughts which have never yet been made known. The time has arrived when I have nothing to fear from such a frank disclosure. My motives of action, my regard or disregard of your welfare, are known to God, and must ere long be known to yourselves, whether I speak them out or not. You have been eye and ear witnesses of the principal events of providence and grace which we shall review, and thanks to God! many of you have been heart witnesses by your own happy experience.”

He then introduced the review of his pastoral labors with some notice of his childhood and youth, including his early religious experience, and his

indebted to the care of J. Barron Potter, M.D., of Bridgeton, whose reverential regard for its author led him many years ago, to secure it from the oblivion which otherwise would probably have befallen it. The last I was fortunate enough to find among the manuscripts of Mr. Osborn.

entrance upon the great work of his life, the ministry of salvation. The account must have been highly welcome to his people of that day, but his giving it was especially providential for us, after this lapse of thirty-six more years. Beginning with his childhood in Litchfield, he proceeds—

“My condition and school education were like those of other children in my native place. I was favored, thanks to God! with religious parents and a religious education. My parents are gone to their long home, and I trust sleep in Jesus. They trained me in the habit of attending public worship, but for some years I went to meeting rather reluctantly, or against my inclination. Some alarming providences impressed my mind with serious thoughts of death and the judgment.* This was perhaps before the age of nine or twelve years.† After my serious impressions began, I went to religious meetings without persuasion or driving. I then went, not to see and be seen, but to hear the word of God, and to learn how I must escape the wrath to come and obtain eternal life. The Sabbath became a most welcome day, which I tried to keep holy, and improve for my best spiritual interests, for this was my principal concern. Compared with my soul’s salvation, every affair of this life appeared low and trifling.

“About this time I began secret prayer, which I have continued more or less to this day, though I am conscious that I have often been too remiss in it. * * * * I felt conscious that the eyes of the Lord were upon me, and I fully resolved carefully to avoid whatever would incur his displeasure, and to do whatever my conscience and his word and Spirit should tell me was my duty. But, like David, I soon found that innumerable evils had compassed me about, and mine iniquities had taken hold upon me. I found that my own strength was weakness; temptations assaulted

* The alarming providences here referred to were two shocking casualties, each resulting in the death of a family relative.

† Does he not mean *between* nine and twelve?

me and too often prevailed against me; yet like Job, I tried to hold fast mine integrity.

“When I was preparing for college, while studying the Greek Testament, I saw more clearly than ever the amiable excellency of our Saviour. My mind was enamored of his heavenly beauty, and my soul’s desire was to be like him and with him. Ever since, I have had a trust that I have received the Saviour by faith, and am interested in the special favor of God through his merits and mediation, though it often seems too exalted a favor and blessedness for such a sinner to expect. And scarcely, if ever, do I feel that assurance of salvation that I desire. May the Lord perfect in us all that which is lacking of grace, faith, and assurance!”

We cannot now tell how much distrust of his own acceptance with God, he intended the last two sentences should express. It is certain that in his later years, he was a living illustration of the peace which the full assurance of hope affords. If the last interview which the writer had with him, a few months previous to his death, to the question, “How do you do, Father Osborn?” he replied in his cheery tone, “I am very well, thanks to a merciful Providence! well in body, and in good spiritual health.” If any regard such a reply as presumptuous, let them consider the man, the spiritual experiences of a long, long life, and his consciousness of his then present position on the threshold of eternity, and then say what other testimony they would have him give respecting the work of God in his soul.

In the foregoing outline—for it is only an outline—of a long travel from carnal security to a full appreciation of Christ his Saviour, the discerning

reader must have noticed how distinctly the *progressiveness* of Divine influences on his heart, is brought out. We first find him under the alarms of a Providential warning, and with some rising convictions of sin and righteousness, striving to do what is right. Then through years of *legal* experience—perhaps in the twilight of grace—he *tries* to hold fast his integrity, *tries* to keep the Sabbath holy, and avoids what he thinks will incur the displeasure of God, because, as he says, “I felt conscious that the eyes of the Lord were upon me.” At length “*the amiable excellency of our Saviour*” unclouds itself before his soul., and Christ is to him the end of the law for righteousness. Where should such a gradually developing experience rest, short of that faith which, standing on the shore of time, sends back the testimony—“I know that my Redeemer liveth!”

The following sentence closes his account of his early religious experience:—

“While I was a student in Dartmouth College, I was admitted to full communion with the Presbyterian* Church there. Never shall I forget the first time I partook of the Lord’s supper. My mind was solemnly and devoutly exercised, and with a good degree of consolation.”

The reader will regret the rapidity with which the foregoing account runs over the period included in it. I have no means of supplying its deficiency of incidents in his spiritual experience, except as I have heard him refer to the influences which he

* Congregational?

enjoyed under a work of grace among the students during his college course. He spoke of those influences as having wrought in his soul new and enlarged views of the blessedness of laboring for Christ, but whether they were the immediate cause of his selection of the gospel ministry for the work of his life, I am not informed. In estimating, at this distant period, the effects of that revival, there may be some significancy in the fact that thirteen of the seventeen graduates of 1784, (Mr. Osborn's class,) became ministers of the gospel.

The auto-biographical sermons pass in silence one important part of Mr. Osborn's life, previous to his entering college. Perhaps it was left without mention, under the impression that it did not properly belong to his religious experience. I refer to his connection with the army of the American Revolution. He was eighteen years of age when the colonies were in the second year of their memorable struggle for independence. During that year, his native township furnished a company of volunteers for the service, and no one who knows the readiness for self-sacrifice and intrepidity for the right, which were elemental in his natural constitution, will be surprised that the list contained the name of Ethan

* I find in the sketch of a sermon preached at the funeral of Rev. Zachariah Greene, in Hempstead, L.I., on the 20th of June, 1858, by Rev. N.C. Locke, furnished for the New York Observer, the following notice of this revival. "There was a very general awakening in the parish around and in the College. Some fifty converts were the fruits of it—all admitted to the church in Hanover, in the winter of 1782. The pastor of the church was Sylvanus Ripley, D.D."

Osborn. His connection with the army was brief, but it extended through one of the darkest periods of the war—the campaign of 1776. He was with the forces under the immediate command of Washington, in the retreat through New Jersey. From this field of personal observation, his memory gathered up many incidents illustrating the nobleness and virtue of the commander-in-chief; and during the later years of his own life, his eye was rekindled with the fire of those days, whenever his friends made a draft upon his personal recollections of the war.

He kept in his mind a catalogue of providential deliverances from imminent perils of death. One of these interpositions of heaven on his behalf, occurred during this service. While the division of the army to which he belonged occupied Fort Washington, above New York, he was compelled, by sickness, to accept a short furlough. During his absence, the fort was taken by the British, and the prisoners were removed to New York. Some were confined in the building known by the name of the Sugar House, and others were thrown into prison ships. Close confinement and a fare that was next to starvation, produced a mortality so great, that only four persons of the company to which Mr. Osborn belonged, survived. If in his then enfeebled health, he had been subjected to those exposures, there is little doubt but his personal history would from that time have belonged to another world. But there remained for him a more distinguished warfare in the army of the Cap-

tain of Salvation, and until this was accomplished, Divine providences were arranged to secure him alike from the arrow by day and the pestilence in darkness.

Mr. Osborn had become a member of Dartmouth College previous to his enlistment, probably when he was seventeen years of age; but his course there was interrupted by the temporary breaking up of the College in consequence of an invasion from Canada. This, with him, must have produced a delay of some years in his studies, as we find him a graduate of the class of 1784.

His conversational references to his college life, in after years, contained many affectionate allusions to the then presiding officer, Dr. John Wheelock. For him, he seems to have cherished a peculiar attachment, and once after his settlement in New Jersey, he paid him a visit of friendship and condolence under the trials which beclouded his declining years.

The scant outline of his auto-biographical sermons is all our clue to his spiritual history, from the time of his leaving College to his entrance upon his public ministry. He says—

“After I left College, I was disemployed* for about three years. During that time, being often exposed to vain company, I insensibly and gradually became too much conformed to the spirit and

* I give this word as I find it, presuming he does not mean to say that his time was not employed in some specific pursuit. It is certain that he was licensed to preach the gospel in 1786, and he elsewhere says that he received his licensure *after* he had studied Divinity.

fashion of the world. More than once my feet, like David's, were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. More than once I was almost drawn into the whirl of iniquity. But in mercy the Lord sternly rebuked me, stopped me in my presumptuous course, and once more turned my feet unto his testimonies. For ever blessed be his name!"

Mr. Osborn entered the ministry before the existence of Theological Seminaries in this country. He pursued his theological course of study in part, under the tuition of Rev. Andrew Storrs, of Plymouth, Connecticut, and for the remainder, with his cousin, Rev. Joseph Vaill, of Hadlyme, in the same state.

In 1786, he received his license to preach as a probationer for the holy ministry, and without any delay, he gave himself to the pursuit of his chosen work. A few weeks afterward, he was formally invited to become the pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Spencertown, N.Y. He declined this call, chiefly because he wished to take a wider observation of the great field for ministerial labor. With this view he came on to Philadelphia, and from thence, under the advice of the late Rev. Dr. Sproat, made an excursion to the lower counties of New Jersey. Those who are accustomed only to the present rapid and easy modes of journeying, may smile at the mention of this tour as a formidable enterprise. But in that day, over the country as it then was, a journey from Connecticut to Lower New

Jersey, was an event in the history of a man. It was performed by Mr. Osborn on horseback.

On his way down, he preached and remained a few days in Pittsgrove, Salem county. From thence he came to Deerfield, where he spent his first night in Cumberland county, (the night of the thirtieth anniversary of his birth,) in the house of Ephraim Foster, Esq., to whose family he allied himself, some thirty years afterwards, by marriage. He then came on to Fairfield, where, after laboring with acceptance through what was then the usual time of trial, he entered upon that pastor settlement which was destined to be so enduring, and so fruitful of blessed results. On the 3d of December, 1789, the Presbytery of Philadelphia inducted him into this charge, under the ordination formula of his church. The sermon was preached by the Rev. George Duffield, D.D., Pastor of the Pine Street Church, Philadelphia, whose descendant of the third generation was Mr. Osborn's co-presbyter at the time of his death.