

PART II.

FROM HIS ORDINATION TO HIS DISMISSION.

We have reached the point where the ministerial life of Mr. Osborn becomes so interwoven with his church, that some anterior notice of the last becomes almost an essential introduction to a history of the pastorate now to be reviewed.

When in 1789 the Presbyterian Church in Fairfield welcomed its young Pastor, it was already venerable among the churches of this country. We have no means of ascertaining its exact age. Its records previous to 1759, were destroyed in a fire which consumed the house of one of its pastors, and there is neither documentary history, nor any preserved tradition of the date of its organization. The remotest known document bearing incidentally on the point, is a provincial law of 1697, which enacts "that a tract of land on Cohansey, purchased by several people lately inhabitants from Fairfield, in New England, from and after the date hereof, be erected into a township, and be called Fairfield."* These "several people" were a colony of Puritans, whose descendants remain, to the present day, the principal occupants of the township, with little intermixture by foreign marriages, a still less

* Contributed by Hon. L.Q.C. Elmer, to Dr. Hodge's Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church.

alloy by immigration. It would be difficult, even in New England, to find a community where the truths, order, and moralities of religion, as taught by Brewster, Hooker, and Davenport, have suffered less corruption, than in these isolated congregations which have grown out of the former parish of Mr. Osborn. Doubtless his long administration of its spiritual affairs—being himself of Puritan stock, and a connecting link between the old and new times—contributed not a little to this result.

The custom of the times suggests the probability that a church was organized in the colony before it entered the Delaware Bay. At least it would violate all our notions of Puritanical order, to suppose the settlement existed any length of time without such an organization. We are, therefore, safe in carrying its date back to 1697. Probably the truth, if it could be known, would remove it a little farther into the past distance, as the colonists may have occupied their new home a short time before obtaining a township incorporation. Doctor Hodge, in his History, makes this one of the three oldest Presbyterian Churches in New Jersey, without determining to which of the three seniority belongs. The others, he says, are Freehold, instituted in 1692, and Woodbridge, which appears on the Presbyterian records in 1708. The first mention of Freehold on the same records, is in the same year. It must be remembered that there was then but one Presbytery in the country—that of Philadelphia. It was not organized until 1705, and the churches then in

being, did not all drop in at once, so that nothing regarding their exact age can be settled by their first mention in the Presbyterian minutes.

Mr. Osborn preserved a few traditionary points in the early history of the church, which he informed me were handed down to him by Ephraim Harris, Esq., a member of the session at the time of his settlement. These were written out by him in 1846, and published in the *Christian Observer*, Philadelphia. But all which relates to the time previous to the destruction of the church records, is comprised in less than a quarter of a column. I find that the Presbyterian records, and some other reliable authorities, modify this tradition in a few particulars, and where I depart from the account in the *Observer*, it may be understood that I do it in obedience to recorded evidence.

Mr. Osborn supposes, with much probability, that the colony brought a minister with them from New England, and gives the name of Rev. John Bradnor as the first settled minister. Some doubt, however, rests upon the tradition which has placed this name at the head of the list of Fairfield pastors. A man of the same name, said in the record to be from Scotland, was licensed by the Presbytery in 1715, but there is no account of his having preached in Fairfield; neither could the first pastor be identified in him, without an anachronism.

Coming down to 1702, we have a notice of Rev. Thomas Bridge, as preaching to this congregation in that and the following year, but I find no account of his installation.

The first known settled pastor was Rev. Joseph Smith, from Connecticut. He came as a licentiate, and was here ordained to the ministry and installed in this charge, May 10, 1709. His pastorate must have been very brief, as in 1711, the church is again found vacant. So it appears to have remained until October 15, 1714, with the exception of the incidental mention of the name of a Mr. Exell, as preaching here in 1711, but not as pastor.

Under date of 1714, we have the record of the installation of Rev. Howell Powell over this congregation. He is said in Mr. Osborn's account to have been from Wales—a supposition which is corroborated by the circumstance that his name was sometimes written Howell Ap Powell. His work was soon done, and it is said, well done. The Synodical record of 1717, records his name among the deceased brethren.

In 1722, Rev. Henry Hook, from Ireland, is found ministering to this church, but without any pastoral connection to it. His name soon after appears as a minister in the State of Delaware.

Following this, in each of the years 1724 and 1726, we find notices of Rev. Noyes Paris in a similar relation, and then we are brought to the record of a more memorable installation.

In 1727, Rev. Daniel Elmer, from Connecticut, under the sanction of the Presbytery, took his position as the appointed watchman on these heights of Zion. His connection with the church continued until 1755, twenty-eight years. This was the first

long continued pastorate which the church, now more than half a century old, had enjoyed.

Up to the period of Mr. Elmer's settlement, all history of its spiritual condition is lost. What effusions of the Spirit of converting grace were enjoyed, how its members walked in the light of the Lord, what jealousy was exercised over the cardinal truths of the Christian system, how ministers preached and people prayed, with what unction the means of grace were sustained—all these things are without any written record, and beyond the memory of men. The lips from which we might have learned, have long been mute in death. It is, however, a very suggestive fact, that our earliest reading of the reliable history of the church, brings us into the presence of a praying people.

The pastorate of Mr. Elmer was cotemporaneous with the great revivals in connection with the preaching of Whitefield and the Tennents, and there is no reason to doubt the tradition preserved by Mr. Osborn, that this place shared largely in the prevalent influences. In 1740, Mr. Whitefield personally aided in the work in Greenwich, on the opposite shore of the Cohansey, and the influence of his presence there could hardly fail to be felt in Fairfield. Indeed, it is not an improbable supposition that his own labors were extended across the narrow channel which divides the two parishes.*

* I find in the American Tract Society's edition of the Life of Whitefield, an account of Mr. Whitefield's preaching at Cohansey. This was the original name of the Fairfield church, on the book of

Throughout the country these seasons of refreshing were seldom free from some real or supposed innovations upon Christian order, which led some good men to withhold their sympathies from the popular religious movement, and in not a few instances, to assume the attitude of bitter hostility toward them. Serious alienations followed, both in individual churches, and in the Synod, which then embraced all the Presbyteries which had been formed in this country. The rupture of the Presbyterian Synod, dividing it into what was then termed Old and New Light sides, occurred in 1741, and continued until 1758, when our Zion again returned to the blessed unity which should distinguish the kingdom of Christ. The last fourteen years of Mr. Elmer's pastorate were included in this period, and while this church enjoyed a good share of the prevalent gracious effusion, it did not escape the opposite excitement of party spirit. It, however, preserved its connection with the Presbytery of

the Presbytery, but at this time it was applied to the country on both sides of the creek. It cannot, as used in Mr. Whitefield's journal, refer to Greenwich, because that place appears under its own name, a few lines above. It is claimed for a locality near what is now Shepherd's Mill, on the same side of the creek, once the site of a Baptist church. There was also, at that time, a Baptist church in Cedarville, on the Fairfield side, which was then in the temporary possession of a party from Mr. Elmer's church, prominent among whom—strange to say—was Daniel Elmer, jr., a son of the pastor. Mrs. Ruth Davis, now a lady of great age, and very reliable memory, says that her mother spoke of Mr. Whitefield's preaching in this last church, as a well known fact.

Philadelphia, which remained in the Old Light Synod. It speaks much for the pastoral qualifications of Mr. Elmer, that under the numerous embarrassments to which this state of things must have subjected him, he was able so long to maintain his position.

Mr. Elmer's mortal remains lie among those of his flock, in an ancient burying-ground on the bank of the Cohansey. It has long been unused, and is now grown into a pleasant forest. A little human care, added to its present rural adornments, would make this one of the most beautiful sanctuaries of the dead in lower New Jersey. The descendants of Mr. Elmer are numerous in Cumberland county, and many of them in distinguished positions, and by intellectual and moral worth, have imparted an abiding fragrance to the name of their common parent.

Rev. William Ramsey, who succeeded Mr. Elmer, was ordained as pastor in 1756. His ministry appears to have been one of signal prosperity and usefulness. Harmony was restored to the church, and the new era of revivals which opened during the administration of Mr. Elmer, came out from the clouds of discord and appeared as the shining day. In relation to the most interesting period of this pastorate, Mr. Osborn has left the following minute: "In 1756, there was a remarkable awakening and revival of religion. In almost every house, one or more were subjects of the gracious work. The whole number added to the church in 1765-6, was

eighty-nine. It has been observed, that the revival was still and orderly, though powerful.”

After a ministry of fifteen years, Mr. Ramsey, at the comparatively early age of thirty-nine years, was removed by death.

In 1773, he was succeeded by Rev. William Hollingshead, who presided over the church ten years, and was then transferred to a pastoral charge in Charleston, S.C. Of his ministry, Mr. Osborn says,—“Nothing uncommon occurred until the winter of 1780-81, when the Lord was pleased to visit his people with another shower of Divine grace. In May, 1781, there were forty-eight admitted to full communion. In December following, forty-six more were added to the church, and several afterward, so that the whole number added to the church in 1781 and 1782, was one hundred and fifteen. Well may the people of Fairfield say—Hitherto hath the Lord helped us, and blessed be his name!” In one of his manuscript sermons, I find this additional remark respecting that season of special interest—“It has been said that this revival was attended with more commotion and crying out than the preceding one. ‘There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.’ ”

The time honored edifice, now so extensively known as the Old Stone Church, was built during the pastoral administration of Mr. Hollingshead, and used by him during the last two years of his continuance here. In our remotest knowledge of the congregation, we find them worshipping in a

log meeting-house, called the Cohansey Church, situated in the entrance corner of the old graveyard referred to in the notice of Mr. Elmer, and about a mile from where the present Old Stone Church stands. The log house was supplanted by a wooden structure, on or near the same site. This, in Mr. Hollingshead's time, became so decayed as to be unsafe for use, and the pulpit was removed to the open air, under the shadow of a large tree. There he continued to address the congregation until they entered their new sanctuary, September 7, 1780.* The graves of Mr. Elmer and Mr. Ramsey are where the shadow of the wooden church fell upon them. Mr. Powell was doubtless buried in the same cemetery, but no trace of the place of his interment remains.

After the removal of Mr. Hollingshead, in 1783, the congregation appears to have lived under the precarious and comparatively thriftless ministry of occasional supplies, until in the winter of 1788-9, when in the manner already described, the providence of their covenant God guided hither the youthful minister whose long walk and labors among them now come up for notice.

Much of Mr. Osborn's pastorate was like his general life, tranquil and not abounding in historical points. The quiet every-day labors of a faithful

* For this date I am indebted to the researches of Judge Elmer.

minister of God, will fill a large space in the revelations of eternity, but they present few biographical incidents. The leading events of his ministry are the special effusions of the Holy Spirit, which, from time to time, swelled up the numbers of the church, and preserved the wholesome tone for which it was distinguished in the times now under review. In his own account of his pastoral administration, revivals were his historical eras—the landmarks by which he kept himself historically accurate. Still the first twenty years of his ministry appear to have passed with only the ordinary amount of spiritual prosperity. Writing to the *Christian Observer*, he says that in 1790, (immediately following his settlement,) the number of church members was one hundred and twenty-five. In his historical sermon, he informs us that in April, 1809, there were one hundred and twenty-four, thus barely keeping up with the current losses. Of the state of things during this time, he says—

“Regular discipline in the church was kept up, and the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was administered. Members of the church very generally walked in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless. Small additions were made to the church from time to time, so that the number remained nearly the same.”

This “regular discipline,” in those days, took a high rank among the means of spiritual edification. In the Fairfield church, the administration of it was sometimes rather unique, but it was applied in a gracious mood, and generally to the purpose. Let

us take an example from the records of the Session, under date of August 25, 1792:

“Mr. John Ogden having brought a complaint against Mrs. —, they both appeared and produced their evidences before the Session, which being heard, it was judged that Mrs. — deserved a severe censure for accusing Mr. Ogden of stealing her corn, *and that both of them should be cautioned concerning several things.*

“Mr. Zeb Woodruff also brought a complaint against Mrs. —, [same defendant again.] The evidence being given in, the Session judge that both of them should be admonished to lay aside ill-grounded suspicion and all contentions, and live as becometh the Christian religion.”

This defendant’s tongue appears in the end to have been an overmatch for the diligence of the Session, for we find eight months afterward, a record of her “exclusion” for falsehood.

Another example:—

“1st May, 1797. The Session met, and was constituted with prayer. Present—Ethan Osborn, Amos Westcott, Jeremiah Harris, Jedidiah Ogden, William Bateman, and Thomas Burch. Several members of the church were mentioned as persons faulty, either in commission of offences or omission of duty. After due consideration of their particular cases, it was agreed that Mr. William Bateman make inquiry of — concerning a complaint made against her for breach of the Sabbath; that Amos Westcott, Esq., inquire of —, his reason for absenting himself from the Lord’s Supper; that Mr. Thomas Burch inquire of — his reason for not having his children baptized; and that Mr. Jer. Harris inform —, that it is the desire of this Session that he refrain from the sacraments till a certain criminal allegation now depending in law, is cleared up. The reports of these several cases to be made at the next meeting of the Session. Concluded with prayer.”

Near the close of 1805, Mr. Osborn, in connection with some neighboring pastors, entered upon a course of co-operative effort for the advancement of religion in the region around them. An extract from a letter to his familiar and much beloved friend, Gen. Ebenezer Elmer, of Bridgeton, then in Congress in Washington, will exhibit the character of this effort. It is dated January 11, 1806.

“We had a monthly meeting at Bridgeton. We began them at Fairfield the first Tuesday in last month. The next is to be at Deerfield, the first Tuesday in February. These meetings, agreed upon by the neighboring ministers, are to be by rotation from one congregation to another, where ministers reside, on the first Tuesday in every month.

“A little past the middle of last month, Mr. Freeman and myself took a preaching tour three days successively, at Alloway’s Creek, Pittsgrove, and Deerfield, and talk of taking another after awhile. Last Tuesday evening, we four* agreed to preach at seven places, mostly in the outposts of our congregations, on the same day and hour at four of the places, and about once a fortnight by rotation. The general object of all these meetings is the promotion of religion.”

This movement on the hearts of these pastors may have been the dawning of a special operation of the Holy Spirit, which in Fairfield, three years afterward, culminated in the first great revival under Mr. Osborn’s ministry. We will take our account of this work of grace from his own pen.

“The Lord once more appeared for his favored church in Fairfield. Through the summer and fall of 1809, a general awaken-

* The four present at the monthly meeting in Bridgeton, Mr. Osborn, Mr. Freeman, Pastor in Bridgeton and Greenwich, Mr. Davis, Pastor in Millville, and a fourth now unknown.

ing to the concerns of the eternal world prevailed among the people. Conference, or prayer-meetings, were held in different parts of the congregation, not less than six or seven evenings in the week. It was truly a revival time, both to saints and sinners; the Spirit of grace was poured upon each. Some were severely experienced and brought into deep distress; others were exercised in a mild manner. Though there were divers operations, yet the same God wrought in all. In a few months, a considerable number entertained a hope, and thanks to God! he continued his gracious work for many months. On December 3, 1809, just twenty years from my ordination, twenty-four were admitted to the church. In April, 1810, thirty were admitted to full communion; in August following, twenty-seven more, and small numbers at the two communions following, so that in the space of two years, there were added to this church one hundred and twelve. The Lord hath done great things for us, and blessed be his name!

“Though various means were used, yet it was evident that the excellency of the power was of God, and not of men. This appears from the great change wrought, and the good fruit following. Though I was not idle during the revival, yet it seemed as if I was a spectator beholding the wonderful operation of Divine grace convincing and converting sinners. My brethren of the Session were alive and diligent in prayer and religious conversation, and perhaps I may have aided, in some measure, the good work of the Lord. But I was only one among a multitude of agents who were active in the same employ. Truly my soul rejoiced to see many return unto the Lord and enlist under the banner of King Jesus.”

This revival, Mr. Osborn informs us, was followed by a maintenance of prayer-meetings, and an orderly walk in the church generally, “keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” but “no remarkable occurrence in the state of religion,” until the year 1819. Then the soul of the Fairfield pastor was again enlarged in a year of the right

hand of God. The revival of that year was first manifest in prayer-meetings, commenced in the part of the township known as Sayre's Neck, but its influences were felt in other parts of the congregation. As the result of it, fifty-six were added to the church.

In the sermon which contains the account of this revival, Mr. Osborn again speaks of his own agency in a tone of humility, which his friends will not fail to recognize as in keeping with his uniform spiritual temper. Those who are familiar with this temper, will have no doubt that he felt as he spoke when he said—

“Though I promptly seconded the proposal, yet a Christian brother whom I shall forever esteem and love, first proposed the prayer-meeting, which was so signally blessed for the spiritual good of the congregation. I think that brother, as an active instrumental agent, has done much more in promoting the good work than I have.”

He then adds some reflections on the power of lay agency in promoting revivals, which come with a double interest to us in this year of our Lord, 1858—a year in which the use of this agency forms so prominent a feature of the stupendous work of grace now in progress over our whole country. He says—

“I now speak it as my candid opinion, that in any revival of religion, the ministry is only one among many agencies which co-equally operate in promoting the blessed work of God. If a lay brother is active in prayer and exhortation, the people are more impressed with his sincerity, so that what he says and does

may have more influence on their minds. And not a little have my Christian brethren and sisters, as agents under God, contributed to maintain and promote the blessed religion of our Lord Jesus Christ. I thank them for their labors of love, and I thank my God for moving them to labor. Mine exhortation to them is, not to be weary in well-doing, for in due season they shall reap a glorious harvest.”

During the next few years, there was only the ordinary amount of spiritual movement in the church. The pastor labored as usual, faithful and affectionate, in public and private, and some Divine influences distilled as the gentle dews. About this time, Mr. Osborn preached to his people a sermon descriptive of his pastoral visits to families—a mode of effort which he had reduced to a system. I have the manuscript of this sermon before me. An extract from it will afford a fine specimen of the man in the character of a Christian shepherd.

“In the first place, I aimed to represent religion as the most important of all things with which we have any concern, and that it ought to be the chief object of our desire and pursuit. I aimed to show that our neglect of religion must lead to everlasting ruin. I also represented religion as good and amiable in itself, as it assimilated us to the blessed God, and generally said some things concerning the nature of religion, as it consisted in a heart and life conformed to God. And as we are fallen, depraved creatures, I urged the necessity of a change, by the renewing and sanctifying influences of God’s Spirit. As such a change is all important to us, I urged it home to the conscience by this serious question—‘*Do you really think you have experienced such a change, or possess true gospel religion?*’ I generally observed, that though we may not know as certainly as God knows, yet we ought to make it a frequent serious question to

ourselves, in order to form a right judgment of our religious character and present preparation for eternity, whether if we should now die, our eternity would be happy or miserable. I put this or a like question to heads of families; indeed, it ought to be the great question with all, both old and young.

“When the answer was in the affirmative—that they entertained a prevailing hope of being in a gracious state, I reminded them of their constant need of the grace of Christ to keep them in such a state, and their obligation to live near to God, by walking as Christ walked. I observed, that to live thus would conduce to their own peace and comfort, as well as to the glory of God. I also cautioned them against the deception of a false hope, and exhorted them to be always willing to examine themselves by whatever might serve as a test of their sincerity. So doing, they might be either undeceived, or find their piety and faith made more evident.

“When the answer was in the negative—that they did not consider themselves in a gracious state, I reminded them of the lamentable character of such a conclusion, and their gloomy prospect beyond the grave. I solemnly warned them of the danger of resting there, and exhorted them immediately to seek for mercy by imploring God to bring them out of a state of condemnation, and to pardon and save them through the redemption by Jesus Christ. Here I frequently enlarged, by putting them in mind of life’s uncertainty, of the folly of risking their salvation on their possible repentance at some future day, and how dreadful their eternal state must be, should they die impenitent and unpardoned.

“After mentioning some essential duties, such as repentance, faith, love, and obedience, I spoke of the relative duties of parents and children, and urged on parents and guardians the important duty of bringing up their children in the fear of God. I observed that they should discourage in them what is evil, and endeavor to restrain them from it, and encourage them in what is commendable and right. At the same time, they must pray God to prosper their endeavors for the good of their children.

“After this, I led on the conversation to the duty of family

prayer, and inquired whether it was performed in the family. When the answer was in the affirmative, I observed that we should pray to God with reverence, in sincerity and faith. I mentioned some good effects which, by the blessing of God, it tends to produce in the minds of both parents and children. When the answer was, that family prayer was not attended, I then observed that the neglect of it must certainly imply a fault in them; that they either had no grace, or neglected the proper exercise of it. I told them they ought to pray, and do it right, and I exhorted them seriously to consider it, and to pray for a spirit of prayer.

“After this I turned my conversation to the children and others present. Here I urged the importance of obtaining religion in early life, as youth is the most favorable time for it. I represented religion as conducive to their own peace and welfare, the welfare of others, and the glory of their Heavenly Father. I recommended it as Divinely excellent, and of absolute necessity, for without it, we must be miserable, but in the spirit and practice of it, we shall be like angels, and qualified for the joys of heaven. Sometimes I asked them questions, and counseled them to learn, and advance in goodness as well as knowledge. I reminded them of their duty to their parents, and solemnly charged them not to neglect that or any other known duty, but to be dutiful and pious children. And in order to move them to it, I led on their thoughts to the solemn day of judgment, the joys of heaven and the sorrows of hell. After speaking of our present state of probation and the all-important consequences which must follow, I concluded with prayer.

“Such, my brethren, was the general line of conversation which I pursued in those religious visits, aiming to bring into view things of universal concern, our duty and happiness in time and throughout eternity.

It is a suggestive, as well as interesting fact, that a round of pastoral labor, similar to what is here described, preceded the last general effusion of the Holy Spirit noticed above.

In this connection, we ought not to pass over another form of pastoral labor which Mr. Osborn performed with strict punctuality, until the growing up of denominational jealousies in after years, forced him to abandon it. Once in three months, he visited all the schools in the parish, for the purpose of hearing from the scholars recitations of the Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism, and affording such explanations of its doctrines as he thought adapted to their age and condition. It must be remembered, that during the early part of his ministry, his church stood alone in the township. The Baptist Church in Cedarville, (since resuscitated,) was scattered and dead, and the Methodists had not come in. The custom of teaching the Shorter Catechism in the public schools, brought from New England, was agreeable to the antecedents of the people, and there is not doubt but it contributed largely to that clear, discriminating appreciation of preaching which prevailed among hearers thus trained. It would not be an unprofitable meditation, to reflect here upon the contrast between that practice, together with the general Scriptural knowledge of the people under it, and the times when prejudice has expelled the primary catechism of our church, even from many of our own parish Sabbath-schools.

One of the three remarkable preservations from death, in moments of imminent peril, which were registered in the memory of Mr. Osborn, occurred

during one of these catechetical instructions?*

It was some forty or fifty years ago, in a school-house which stood near the present residence of Ephraim H. Whitticar, Esq. While he was standing with the children around him, the house was struck by lightning, and the fluid, apparently following the course of a row of nails in the floor, entirely tore away a toe from one of his feet, without inflicting upon him any other injury beyond the temporary shock of his system.

The disasters of the day were not, however, ended. In the evening, the house was accidentally set on fire by a light carried by one of the family into the attic, while searching for a bandage for his foot. It was first discovered by some person in the road, and for the second time in the history of this parish, the wild cry of *fire!* Rung fearfully out from the pastor's house.† Help was gathered in sufficient time to save the building, but not without injury extending to the destruction of a considerable portion of the roof.

It was on the whole, a gloomy night for the family, but doubtless a good one for the man who was armed with the life-long habit of faith, and to

* One of these providential deliverances was experienced during his boyhood, in connection with the upsetting of a loaded wood-sled. The second has been recorded as following the capture of Fort Washington. The third is now related.

† The house of Mr. Elmer was consumed by fire, in, or a little previous to A.D. 1759, involving the loss of the records of the church, already noticed.

whom the trial of this grace was more precious than gold. *The Lord will provide.* The earnest of it was not long in coming. The next morning, almost before the family had time to deliberate upon measures of relief, parishioners were seen coming up with boards, rafters, shingles, nails, saws, hammers, and whatever else the occasion demanded, and before night, the household were snug and dry under a sound roof, and went quietly to their rest, after blessed thanksgivings, mingled with many prayers for that "kind people" who were so often on Mr. Osborn's lips and in his heart.*

Returning to the spiritual history of Mr. Osborn's pastorate, we find no strongly marked events until the year 1826. That year closed amidst another extensive work of grace in the congregation. The most full account which I have obtained respecting it, is in a letter to his brother, Capt. Eliada Osborn, of Litchfield, May 19, 1827.

* In relation to the peril of this house, one might almost say, as a Fairfield gentleman once said to the writer, at another strife with the consuming element. In the spring of 1848, I believe, while a township election was going on within it, the Old Stone Church was fired, through a defect in the stove-pipe, between the ceiling and roof. Men were plenty, but it was not so with ladders, buckets, and the all-important article of water. For some minutes, the salvation of the building was regarded as an impossibility. The gentleman referred to, (not a professor of religion,) was standing near me. I said despairingly—"The church must go." "Not a bit of it," was the reply, "it *can't* burn down." "Why not?" I inquired. "*Because,*" said he, "*the good man above won't let that building be burned; mind I tell you.*" I may add, the fire was subdued, with only some inconsiderable damage to the roof.

“The Lord, we believe, has been carrying on a wonderful gracious work among us since last November. There seemed to be some unusual seriousness among the people through the fall, and nine were added to the church on the first Sabbath in December. From that time, a general awakening seemed to prevail, and a wonderful spirit of prayer was poured out on old and young. Prayer-meetings were multiplied, and that cold weather in January could not stop the people from going to them. They were often crowded.

“Such a degree of general earnestness and anxiety in religion, I never before witnessed, either here, or in any other place. Many were seriously inquiring what they should do to be saved; and there were several instances of alarming conviction and distressing fears, sinking almost in despair. One young man, after conversing with another in the evening, on the interesting subject of religion, while returning home, felt such a burden of guilt that he could hardly move along. He said it seemed every moment as if the lightning would strike him. After going along awhile, he kneeled down by the fence and prayed; he went further and prayed again, and again after he returned home. The heavy rain of that evening had thoroughly soaked his clothes, but he scarcely thought of that, so intensely was his mind occupied with the concerns of religion and eternity.

“A meeting for prayer and conversation with the anxious, was established, and afterwards another, but so many crowded in, that in a few weeks they became common prayer-meetings. The boys, of their own accord, began a prayer-meeting, and afterwards another, both of which are yet continued. You will understand that all these prayer-meetings are weekly, on fixed evenings. But besides these, there were in the winter, frequent extra meetings collected in the two villages,* on two or three hours’ notice. One week our people counted nineteen meetings, fixed and extra.

“Previous to the sacrament, the Session appointed two days to converse with those who should come forward. The total num-

* Fairton and Cedarville, four miles apart, with the Old Stone Church nearly midway between them.

ber propounded and admitted to full communion with the church was fifty-one. This we believe is the Lord's doing, and while it is marvelous in our eyes, we would rejoice and give thanks. Among the aforesaid number were five men with their wives. A large proportion of the new members are young people, and two of the age of thirteen, one of whom—thanks to God! is our dear son, Robert.* The gracious work seems to be still in a measure progressing.”

In Mr. Osborn's notice of the church, published in the *Christian Observer*, he says, without adding any particulars—“IN 1831, we were blessed with another revival, during which about eighty were added to the church.” But in this account, his mind evidently embraced the work of 1827, which is not otherwise noticed in that article. The year 1831 was certainly a season of peculiar religious interest. On March 30th of that year, he writes to Litchfield—

“The state of religion is more encouraging. Four or five were added to the church last December; nine are coming forward next Sabbath. We are to have a three days' meeting, beginning on Friday and continuing on Saturday and Sabbath. Four or five neighboring ministers attend and preach, and one of them stays with us over the Sabbath.”

In the following August and December of that year, there were twenty-seven received on profession into the church, so that regarding the movements of this time as a continuation of the interest of 1827, we have the “about eighty” much more than made good.

* Now Rev. Robert Osborn, of Point Pleasant, Western Virginia.

At this time, with but little numerical increase of the population of the township, the number of communicants in the church had increased from one hundred and twenty-five at the time of Mr. Osborn's settlement, to three hundred and thirty-six. The Old Stone Church had become so filled that not a pew, and scarcely a sitting, either on the floor or in the spacious galleries, remained without rent.

In 1836, (Mr. Osborn then being in his 78th year,) Rev. David McKee, from Kentucky, was installed as co-pastor, to take part in the labors of this large parish. During this year, the Spirit was once more poured from on high, in a work of grace which the aged pastor characterized as the most powerful which had occurred during his ministry, with the single but lamentable exception of its short continuance. In August of that year, sixty-one united with the church, the largest number received at any one communion during his pastorate.

As this closes the history of ingatherings under his pastoral administrations, it may here be said the number received on profession under his ministry, is a fraction over six hundred. And it is recorded with peculiar satisfaction, that notwithstanding his was so eminently an administration of revivals, still the aggregate number which we have counted up as the fruit of those revivals, makes but little more than one half of the total accessions just named. Almost one half were the occasional dropping in of new members as the fruit of the every day faithfulness and faith of the pastor and people, in the regu-

lar means of grace. It is a notable evidence that the absence of great outward religious demonstrations, is no evidence that Christ has forsaken his ministers, or is not present in their administrations.

Mr. McKee's pastoral relation to the church continued only about two years. After his dismissal, *Father Osborn*, as it is now time to call him, under his weight of four-score years—the time when men are generally expected to

“Rather sigh and groan than live.”

was once more left alone in the pastorate. His labors would have been sufficiently arduous, even if the sky had been as serene as formerly, over his administration. But he was now to pass under some clouds and meet some anxieties and cares which were new in his experience.

Though calm in his spirit toward *men*, he seldom failed to take his position on *questions*, and it was done in such a way that all knew where to find him. In the troubles of the Presbyterian church previous to 1837, and which then resulted in the organic division into what are now known as the Old and New School, *Father Osborn's* sympathies were with the latter, while some influential members of his session and church, and a majority of his Presbytery were with the former.

Although he believed and preached the doctrines of personal election and the certain perseverance of Christians, still his friends never claimed that he was a strongly Calvinistic theologian; and in this time of unusual sharpness in searching out heresies, he

made several free exposures, (once at least before an assembly of co-presbyters, under much provocation as he averred,) of views of the atonement which were sure to be offensive to a rigid Calvinist.

It was in the midst of these excitements that the Presbytery of West Jersey, which geographically includes Fairfield, was set off from the Presbytery of Philadelphia, and in the new Presbytery he stood alone among the ministers, on the questions which were rocking the church. Although he had for long years been an acceptable co-presbyter with men of the highest orthodox stamp, such for example as Doctor Ashbel Green, still his ecclesiastical position was now seriously imperiled. Measures did not, however, reach the length of formal charges of heresy, but there was much earnest discussion of the matter, both in and outside of the meetings of the Presbytery. The final result of the agitation was the dismemberment of his church, and the organization of the Presbyterian church in Cedarville, known as the Brick church, and finally the transfer of himself and the old church, from the Presbytery of West Jersey to the Third Presbytery of Philadelphia.* In this last connection he continued to the

* It is proper to say that the Cedarville organization is not wholly due to this disturbance. The necessity of a separate church in that village, had long been a subject of thought, and without the excitement of the times, things were nearly ripe for it. There is, however, no question that the events recorded above were the immediate occasion of the separation, and it is certainly owing to the earnest strife of that day, that the village of Cedarville now contains *two* Presbyterian churches.

end of life, in great peace with all branches of the church of our common Redeemer.

But while Father Osborn took his position strongly, and maintained it amidst a warm excitement rising sometimes to asperity, he was enabled to maintain in the view of all sides, his character for integrity and piety. The settling away of the first excitements of the dispute, found him still high in the confidence of both Old and New School, and in the society and pulpits of all, he was once more the dear and honored minister of Christ. The difference, so far as it affected his personal relation to his brethren, was soon forgotten by almost all, and by none sooner than himself. I believe I may say that at the time of his death, every church in Fairfield bearing any relation to his former charge, and every minister of the Presbytery to which he formerly belonged, regarded him with the same unaffected reverence as if the times from 1836 to 1840, had never had an existence.

I knew him when these events were yet fresh, before lacerated tempers generally have time for healing, and my relations to him were such that if he was disposed to transmit any latent grudge to any living mortal, he would probably have sought to imbue me with it. But I rejoice to say I never heard from his lips a word which would have gone harshly to the feelings of those with whom he had come into ecclesiastical conflict. It was a subject upon which he seldom spoke, and as time wore away, he as seldom thought. It is a fact full of significance

respecting his spirit, that when his memory began to be seriously impaired, the division of the Presbyterian church was the first ecclesiastical event of any importance which in his mind, was clouded with a haze. Four years previous to his death, when the outlines of the history of his pastoral charge were still clear in his remembrance, and when he spoke freshly of the formation of the Presbytery of West Jersey, he was bewildered when asked for the circumstances of his separation from it, and only succeeded with great difficulty, in recalling the fact of the division of the church. It is a mournful spectacle to witness the waning powers of a noble mind, but the thought could hardly be avoided, that if the failure of his memory had produced no obli-vions more painful than this, he might almost have been congratulated on its decline.

About the same time with the organization of the Old School church in Cedarville, Father Osborn was called to give up another portion of his people who, on account of the local inconvenience of the Stone church to them, formed a New School church in Cedarville. Most of the members of this church went in with certificates from the old Fairfield session. Thus the organization which had remained intact for about a century and a half, became suddenly multiplied into the three Presbyterian churches which now exist in the township of Fairfield, to wit: The First Presbyterian church of Fairfield, since removed to the village of Fairton, which retains the legal succession, and is now under the pastoral

charge of Rev. James Boggs; the First Presbyterian church of Cedarville, (the Brick church,) of which Rev. John A. Annin is pastor; and the Second Presbyterian church of Cedarville, (the White church,) under the pastorate of Rev. Charles F. Diver. The first and last are connected with the Fourth Presbytery of Philadelphia, and the Brick church with the Presbytery of West Jersey. All of them are in a state of thrift, perhaps exceeding that of the average of churches of their circumstances and breadth of field; and they live in as harmonious intercourse as any group of churches within my knowledge. Harmony was the spirit breathed into their parents under the ministrations of their sacramental father, and until recently, the sight of his venerable form among them, has been a gentle and living admonition—"Children, love one another!"

Father Osborn continued to preside over the mother church after its severe depletion by the drafts from Cedarville, until 1844. He had then reached his eighty-sixth year, and his weight of years seemed to present an imperative necessity for his release from the care of a congregation. He presented his request for a dismissal, to the Presbytery, and that body thereupon sundered the long, well sustained, and mutually affectionate relation between the pastor and people of the Old Stone church. It was felt by all concerned as a mournful necessity. It is seldom that a minister becomes in so many respects, the spiritual father of his flock. There was but here and there one who could remember his coming

among them. Of all who were members of the church at that time, one aged man alone remained.* Fairfield, since his settlement, had received but little increase by immigration, and consequently accessions to the church by certificate, had been rare. Almost all who were members at the time of his dismissal, had received their baptism at his hands, and their covenant vows from his lips. They were the children for whom he had travailed in birth until Christ was formed in them. But it was a necessity which should be met by submission, not rebellion; and the Presbytery, pastor, and people all bowed under it and said, "The will of the Lord be done!"

In closing the history of his pastoral administration, the minute adopted by the Presbytery, on the occasion of his dismissal, April 1844, may be appropriately subjoined. It was prepared by Rev. David Malin, D.D.

"In complying with the request of our venerable Father and Brother in the ministry, the Rev. Ethan Osborn, to dissolve the Pastoral relation between himself and the church and congregation of Fairfield, New Jersey, the Presbytery feel that there are circumstances of interest which render it worthy of peculiar notice.

"For fifty-four years, Father Osborn has ministered to this branch of Zion, during which time a degree of harmony and

* Mr. Nathan Bateman, whose subsequent death and burial are noticed in a letter to Father Osborn's sister, Mrs. Kilbourn. "Nov. 7, 1848. This morning Nathan Bateman died. Of 125 members of the church at my ordination, he was the last. I am requested to preach at his funeral to-morrow. 8th. I returned from the funeral near noon. A large number attended. My text was Heb. iv. 9."

friendship has subsisted between pastor and people, and a success has attended his ministry, highly creditable to them, and happily illustrating the beauty and importance of a permanent pastoral relation.

“Now, late in the evening of life, in the eighty-fifty of his age, after having been permitted to enjoy in connection with his labors, several revivals of religion; and after having buried all but one of those who composed his flock at the time of his installation; and after having seen the children of two generations, baptized with his own hands, succeeding to the places in the church vacated by their fathers, he comes with an undiminished regard for his people, and in the unabated enjoyment of their confidence and affection, to commit his united and happy charge to the care of this body.

“The Presbytery commend this church for providing that their worthy and venerable Pastor may continue to lean upon their arm while he lives, and recline on their bosom when he dies, and hope that other churches may follow their example.”