

451 WILSON, JAMES

Publisher

Alexandria

Publisher of a Presbyterian sermon (1798) through the Alexandria press of John V. Thomas (410) and James D. Westcott (437).

Wilson was a part of the Virginia print trade by his publishing of a single religious tract in Alexandria in 1798. That work was a sermon that he had given before an annual assembly of the Presbytery of Baltimore that met in that city in September 1787: *The Utility of the Scriptures of the Old Testament*. – a jeremiad against secular rationalism.

Little else is known of Wilson, and what is known comes from a single source – William Buell Sprague's *Annals of the American Pulpit* (1859). There Wilson is reported to have arrived in New York in early 1785 as a candidate for the Presbyterian ministry fresh from Scotland. That April he was taken into a mentoring association with the founder of New York City's original Presbyterian Church, Rev. John Rodgers (1727-1811), as a collegiate pastor. Wilson remained in that post until January 1788 when he accepted a call to lead the Presbyterian Church in Charleston, South Carolina; that posting was likely arranged to accommodate his fragile health as it was thought that "both the climate and the service required of him would be more favourable" than his situation in New York. By 1792, however, Wilson was obliged to resign his Charleston pulpit after having failed to recover his health. He returned to Scotland "for a year or two" before returning to an irregular itinerancy in the Potomac Valley as a supply minister for the Presbytery of Baltimore. The sermon he gave at that group's 1797 annual meeting was the sole imprint he published in his lifetime, though his New York Church had his valedictory sermon there published at the expense of the congregation. Sometime in the year 1799, he died "in Virginia...in the forty-eighth year of his age." No other information on Wilson had been found in surviving imprints and records.

Personal Data

Born: ca. 1751 in Scotland.

Died: In 1799 in Virginia.

Apparently died unmarried and without issue.

Sources: Imprints (Evans 35037, 21614); Sprague, *Annals* (Presbyterian).