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DISCOURSE

DELIVERED

ON THE FIRST SABBATH AFTER THE COMMENCE-
MENT OF THE YEAR

1802.

BY JOHN ELLIOTT, A. M.
PASTOR OF A CHURCH IN GUILFORD.

Published by request.

Your fathers, where are they ? and the Prophets, do they live
forever ? *Prophet Zechariah,*
Remember the days of old ; consider the years of many gene-
rations. *Deut. xxxii. 7.*

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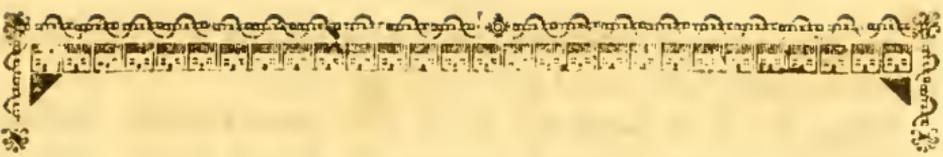
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A DISCOURSE, &c.

1 Corinthians, VII. 29.

—————“*Brethren, the time is short.*”—————

REFLACTIONS on the mortality of man and the fleeting nature of all worldly good, cannot too often, or too seriously, employ our minds. Fading are the honors, uncertain the enjoyments, and imperfect the bliss, of the present state. Successive scenes; the beauties of the morning, the splendors of noonday, and the shades of evening, present themselves to our view. The gentle breeze, the howling tempest, the gliding stream, the boistrous deep, alternately, refresh, alarm, delight, and overwhelm us. The voice of experience loudly gives the solemn warning, “Boast not thyself of to-morrow: for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.” The events of to-morrow are as far beyond the sight of mortals, as those of an hundred, or a thousand years. Another morning’s sun may rise with splendor, and irradiate the earth with his effulgent beams, but multitudes, who now gaily, or busily, walk the round of life, may not behold the light. They may have finished their earthly course, and gone to the bar of GOD. Vicissitude attends all earthly scenes, and instability is engraven upon the highest monuments of human art. The affairs of men rarely proceed in one continued course. Unforeseen events occur, the most promising prospects are clouded, and the fairest projects terminate in disappointment. The clouds soon gather

after the clearest sunshine, and the darkness of night is succeeded by the most enchanting day.

MAN himself, with all his noble powers and distinguishing faculties ; man, the lord of this lower world, the glorious resemblance of his Maker, is destined, by a righteous decree, to fall a victim to death, and sink into the grave. Divine testimony and human experience unite in support of these positions, that “one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh :” that “man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets.” The millions, who now inhabit the earth, are not the same, who inhabited it an hundred years ago, and those who now dwell on the earth, will, before another revolution of this period, pay the debt of nature, and be seen no more. The children of men have found, here, no abiding place. Every age renews the testimony, that mortals have, on earth, no continuing city. Every hour, and every moment, witnesseth the departure of some of our fellow-men. Neither the elevation of a throne, nor the horrors of a dungeon, will exempt from the blow of the great destroyer. Innumerable have already gone to the grave, and all, who now live, are following with hasty steps. When a few more suns have revolved, when a little longer space hath passed, all who now move, and act, will be laid in the lonely mansion.

WHILE shedding the tear of undissembled sorrow around the graves of those once held dear, how proper and how profitable ; to bring near in view that solemn hour, when our names will be blotted from the catalogue of the living, and our unimbodyed spirits appear before the divine tribunal ! The apostle speaks with peculiar emphasis, in this passage, “The time is short.” It will apply to us, and to every succeeding generation, not only with high authority, but with that accumulation of force, that irresistible conviction, derived from the universal experience of past ages.

LET it be our business, at this time, to contemplate several particulars, with reference to which it may be said, that “the time is short.”

I. "TIME is short" considered as an opportunity to do good and be useful. Mutual dependance and mutual wants, strongly challenge mutual kindness and beneficence. The great Creator hath furnished some with more exalted powers; with talents more splendid, than those bestowed on others. In higher spheres some are destined to act; in humbler walks, others are to spend their days. Various are the allotments of divine providence; but in every situation, high and important duties are incumbent on men.—However distinguishing the talents, or elevated the station of any individuals, the circle of their usefulness, of the good they are enabled to perform, is bounded by narrow limits. Their exertions may be great and unremitting, and such they ought to be, but they spread their influence, in most cases, only to a small extent, and will soon cease. The man of piety ardently desires to improve all his powers in the service of GOD, and for the benefit of his fellow-men, not from the principle of vain ostentation and popular applause, but from the rational and holy view, of glorifying the one, and promoting the happiness of the other.—But how narrow is the space to which these desires and these views are confined! How soon do we see the highest activity cease, the most noble endeavors end! The most hopeful measures come to naught! In the midst of the most humane and benevolent designs: while the most exalted and philanthropic plans are ripening into execution; plans, which promise greatly to alleviate human misery, and extend their beneficial influence over the community; do we behold the charitable, the righteous, the friends of afflicted humanity, cut off! Church and society are called, at times, to bemoan the untimely exit of their firmest supporters, and greatest benefactors. From the highest sphere of usefulness are mortals called away. Their hopes of doing good are frustrated, through failure of success in the means applied, or by their summons from time.

ADMITTING, all that can be supposed, that a man enjoys length of days, is blessed with health, crowned

with affluence, and elevated to high honors ; suppose that he employs all his time, and directs all his aims, to the divine object of doing good : how short is the space allotted ! how many improvements does he see, at the close of life, still to be made ! How many beneficial designs are beyond his power of execution ! How many objects of public good, are beyond his attainment ! How few were the years enjoyed by a WASHINGTON, to adorn civil society, shine in public life, and enhance the honor, and the happiness of his country, and of man. — Let this consideration, so far from discouraging any in their laudable desires and endeavors to do good in the world, animate them to the immediate and diligent pursuit of this great object. They will not be accountable for those talents, which they do not possess, and for that opportunity, which they do not enjoy. As these talents will soon be taken from them, and this opportunity soon cease, the dictate of wisdom is, that they diligently and faithfully, apply themselves to accomplish the great work, in which they are engaged : remembering, that their days are few, and the period, allotted them, short.

II. “ TIME is short” viewed as a state of probation. — Those who have enjoyed no more than the glimmerings of the light of nature have suggested the idea, and DIVINE REVELATION hath fully established it, that man is immortal ; that, as his origin is high, so also his destination. By the glorious gospel LIFE AND IMMORTALITY are brought clearly to light. The most discerning of the heathen world rather hoped, than believed, in a future state. Their hopes are realized, and their reasonings are now superceded, by the clear splendors of heavenly light. They beheld scarcely the dawns of a day, of which we behold the meridian glory. The fact is now fully ascertained, the point placed beyond all doubt. The material part alone moulders in the dust, while the spiritual enters into an invisible state. From the same infinitely high authority, we also learn, that an inseparable connexion is established, between the moral conduct of men, in

this world, and their everlasting condition, in the world to come.

THERE are two regions of spirits beyond the grave ; one of the holy, and one of the unholy ; one happy, and the other miserable. The obedient are, after death, received to pure mansions of uninterrupted bliss ; the disobedient are doomed to the doleful abodes of howling despair. Heaven will be the blest residence of the redeemed, “ and there, will they rejoice to dwell forever. That world will never want for songs, nor GOD for praise. There, shall daily arrive from these lower courts, after a triumphant flight from sense and pain, the spirits of the just. There shall cherubs ever smile, and seraphs ever burn before the throne of GOD.”—For the enemies of GOD is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. They will be sentenced to the bottomless pit, the smoke of which will never cease to ascend. There will be woes exquisite and without end. There will they be companions, through endless ages, with the devil and his angels.

ALL mankind must give an account, at the bar of the infinitely wise, holy and righteous Judge, of their conduct in the present life. “ *For GOD shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*”* Conformed to his law and will, it will be approved, and highly rewarded : opposed to his law and will, it will be condemned, and awfully punished. An eternal separation will be made between the righteous and the wicked ; a separation founded upon their different characters. The former “ shall enter into life eternal,” but the latter “ shall go away into everlasting punishment.”

THE part which man is here to act, assumes a vast importance, from its connexion with another world, and another state of being. Infinite and eternal consequences are to be the result. They do not regard the empty pageantry of worldly grandeur, the fascinating sound of empty titles, or immense treasures of golden ore. Compared to these consequences, “ how

* Eccl, xii, 14.

little is this world ! Its pomps, its pleasures, nonsense all ! The crowns of monarchs, and the wealth of worlds ; how trifling in this view !” The interests to be secured, by the obedience of the just, are inconceivably valuable, they are IMMORTAL. They refer to the happiness of the soul, through the countless ages of eternity ; to joys which will experience no interruption, no alloy, and what renders them unspeakably more important, will have no end. Saith the Redeemer, “ *What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul.*”*

IN proportion as the object before us, in a probationary state, is great and glorious, that state must, *in itself*, appear clothed with solemnity and importance. A most arduous work demands high exertions and a great length of time. As the failure of success, or rather the neglect of the precious opportunity, in *this* case, will produce an infinite loss, that period, in which the blessings are to be secured, is invaluable.—Can it then be supposed, that human life is longer than is necessary, to lay up treasure in heaven ; to secure the favor of the Lord and an interest in the once bleeding Lamb ; to discharge those various duties, which pertain to a life of godliness, on earth, and are preparatory to a state of glory, in the kingdom of heaven ? Does not the good man often wish that it were longer, that he might more fervently love, and more faithfully serve, and obey, his heavenly Father ?

HUMAN wisdom usually allots to every branch of business, a length of time, proportioned to the difficulty of its performance, and the necessity of its completion. Calculating upon this principle, with reference to our present subject, who will hesitate to declare, that none is to be lost, none misimproved ?—Is any one about to take a journey into a very distant part of the country, or to sail on a voyage to a remote region of the earth ; what preparations does he make ! what time does he consume ! what care and assiduity does he manifest ; that every thing may be in order, for health, for busi-

* Mark viii. 36.

ness, for comfort, for pleasure? And if men thus labor, to prepare for a journey on earth, shall they not more abundantly labor to prepare for that world, into which, after death, we are to pass? Is it less important to be prepared to enter into the invisible state, than to visit distant countries or climates? Is temporary good preferable to that which is eternal; that which endures for a few months or years, to that which endures forever?

The allwise Creator hath placed us in the world, assigned us our lot and course, opened to view an unchanging and eternal state, pointed out the method to obtain infinite treasure, and declared that "*now is the accepted time and the day of salvation.*" Our everlasting All depends on its right and diligent improvement. Were man, like the brutes, to perish, and return to his original nothing; were there to be no judgment-day, no state of retribution, no existence beyond the grave; were no everlasting consequences to result; the motives which are now urged to virtue and obedience, would lose more than half their force. These are drawn, though not entirely, yet principally, from that high view, that distant prospect, afforded by the word of GOD.—A great work is to be done, in the present world; to prepare for that which is to succeed. Every day brings us nearer to the period, when we must cease from this work, whether finished, or not. Mortal life doth not so soon conclude, as to forbid the hope of obtaining the great object, and thus to reflect upon the goodness of the Sovereign of the universe; but in a rational view of it, compared with the design of heaven in its bestowment, as a period of preparation for a more glorious and endless state, "the time" may justly be called "short."

III. Consider "time" as the space allotted to human life, and it will appear "short." The scenes of the present state are various and fluctuating. The actors on the great theatre are continually changing.—One performs the part assigned, and retires. Another

succeeds, continues for a short space, and is quickly gone. The amazing concourse who surround us on every side, and people, and fill the earth, are hastening to the congregation of the dead. We ourselves are not to be excepted. *“Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days also, like the days of an hireling.”**

VIEW an individual in his earthly career, and how soon doth the end arrive! He rises from the cradle, he passes through the scenes and period of youth, he assumes the business, and performs the functions and duties of man: and the hoary head, the harbinger of dissolution, soon is seen. He bows under the infirmities of age, and sinks into the grave. Even what he termed *length of days* is but a narrow space. The aged, in the review of life, acknowledge that it is vanity.---Beside this, by far the greatest proportion of the human race are summoned from time, in infancy and youth. The grave never saith, “I have enough,” but opens its jaws, to devour, the young, the blooming, the vigorous, the useful, the pious and the honorable.

THE flight of an eagle in the skies, darting upon its prey; the velocity of a ship, skimming the surface of the ocean; the speed of a post or messenger, sent on matters of urgent necessity, and public concern; a flower, the beauty of which fades in a moment, a shuttle, which quickly flies through the loom, are some of the lively images, by which the fleeting nature of the life of man is described. Saith Job, in the view of our transitory state. *“Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also, as a shadow, and continueth not.”*†--Saith the pious Psalmist, *“Lord make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is: that I may know how frail I am. Behold thou hast made my days as an hand breadth: and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man, at his best state, is altogether vanity.”*‡--Saith the word of unerring truth, *“All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness of man as the flower*

* Job vii. 1. † Job xiv. 1, 2. ‡ Psalms xxxix. 4, 5.

of grass: *The grass withereth, and the flower thereof fall-
eth away.**---“*Surely the people is grass.*”†

WITH such declarations accords the experience of men in every age. When Pharaoh enquired of Jacob his age, Jacob replied, “*The days of the years of my pilgrimage, are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been.*”‡--- Thus mankind spend their years, as a tale that is told, and finish their earthly course. Their houses are houses of clay, and their foundation is in the dust. The shadows flee away, and they die, and return to the earth.

IV. CONSIDER “time” as it regards worldly enjoyments and connections, and the same fact will be established.--- The experience of every age hath shewn, that all dependence upon the things of time is built on sand, and may soon be undermined. No sooner is the mighty fabric of human expectation raised, than the corner stone may be removed, and the edifice fall in ruins.--- Affluence exalts above many of the evils of life, but soon riches take to themselves wings, and imitate the flight of the eagle; and are forever gone. Honors crown the man of ambition, and he rises to stations of eminence, but while he fondly muses on the beauty of the flower, it fades and dies. To the summit of fame the child of popularity is exalted, but the fickle breath of the populace is soon turned to an opposite direction, veering like the changing wind, and he looses, in an hour, what he gained in years. The aspiring despot through carnage and havoc of the human species, mounts the throne, and grasps the sceptre, but soon the just rage of suffering humanity breaks the shackles, and hurls the tyrant from his lofty seat. Health, now, blooms on the countenance, and indicates a firm constitution; but soon, very soon, pining sickness may spread over it a deathlike paleness. The worm may gnaw at the root, and the stalk lie mouldering on the ground.

ALL these, however, except the last, little concern the bulk of mankind, and were no other evils felt in the

* 1 Peter i. 24. † Isaiah xl. 7. ‡ Gen. xlvii. 9.

world, its inhabitants would still be an happy race.---The number who aim at distinction is small, and fewer still, the numbers by whom it is obtained. It is far more easy to fall, than to rise; to lose, than to gain; to sink into oblivion, than to rise into power.---But the uncertainty of worldly connexions is a point deeply interesting to the feelings of all who dwell on the shores of time. The pangs occasioned by the dissolution of these connexions reach the monarch on the throne, and the peasant in his cottage, and all, in every intermediate station.---By a thousand ties are we linked together in life; ties, natural, social, and moral. These ties, in many instances, are no sooner formed, than broken; or, if long continued, will, at last, be dissolved. Every link, by which we are chained to one another, and to the world; every cord must be loosed. In the awful desolation of the human race, who are the victims? Whose remains, cold and lifeless, do we, from time to time, see deposited in the grave? Are they those of foreigners, born in a distant climate, and to whom we bear no special affection? Are they, to us, strangers and unknown? Are they not rather our countrymen? Are they not our fellow citizens? Are they not our neighbors? Are they not our friends? Are they not our kindred? Are they not those, who are dear to us, as our right hands and right eyes? Are they not our fathers, our wives, our children, our brethren? The voice of experience saith, they are. How keen the anguish, which, in these cases, pierces the bleeding heart! The "*harp is turned into mourning, and the organ into the voice of them that weep.*"* Whose heart has not bled? whose eyes have not flowed with tears? Visit the chambers of the dying! behold the passing funeral! see the fond parent bending over the remains of a beloved child! see the kind husband following to the grave, the mortal part of her, whom he most tenderly loved! or, the affectionate wife, taking the last farewell of her beloved husband! hear the shrieks and piteous moans of the weeping children,

* Job xxx. 31.

when the mother, to whom they were chained by a thousand endearments, is consigned to the grave!-- But why attempt to describe scenes which are beyond the power of description? Scenes, not the less distressing, because familiar! Hear the plaintive language of the devout Psalmist, in the day of divine visitation; "*Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness.*"* Bitter are the lamentations of afflicted Job, "*Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of GOD hath touched me.*"† Under sore bereavements, mourners are constrained to adopt this language, from generation to generation. How suddenly, how unexpectedly, do these events occur! Who cannot recount instances of the tenderest friendships soon broken? Who can with certainty predict, that this will not be the case, with those that now exist.——Let us even suppose the longest possible continuance to these endearing connexions, yet the period of their duration is soon passed away. A lapse of years will soon bring to old age, and this will open the door of the invisible world. Thus, in this point of view, it appears that "the time is short."

V. "TIME is short" compared with eternity.--- Consider "time" as the whole duration of the world, from the creation to the final consummation of all things, and it appears, comparatively, but a moment. Mighty projects have, from age to age, engaged the attention, and called into exertion, all the energies of the ambitious and aspiring. Extensive monarchies have been established; long successions of kings, in various quarters of the globe, have adorned or disgraced the throne. Empires have risen, and have fallen. Revolution hath succeeded revolution, in almost every state and kingdom. Splendid cities have raised their tall spires, shone in opulence and splendor for a season; and their lofty domes, their superb superstructures, have fallen into ruins. Proud heroes have fought, and bled, and conquered, and died. Fertile tracts have become barren, populous countries depo-

* Psalms lxxviii. 18.

† Job xix. 21.

pulated, new regions discovered; seas, before unknown, explored; powerful nations have lost their strength, and those, which were weak, have become great. Vast improvements have been made, in arts and sciences, in husbandry, commerce, and navigation. Society hath assumed a new and more pleasing form; hath gradually emerged from a barbarous, to a polished; from an untutored, to a refined; from an ignorant, to an enlightened state. Numerous and important events are now in train of execution, and unknown changes, unforeseen events, and unexpected revolutions will still, probably, take place, before the end of the world.

BUT the time in which all these scenes have passed, these events happened, these changes taken place, these improvements made, will bear no comparison with a period of endless duration. "A thousand years are" with GOD, who is eternal, "as one day, and one day as a thousand years." What are a few thousand years compared with millions, with unnumbered ages? Time bears no more comparison to eternity, than a single sand to the grains on the sea shore; than that which may be numbered, to that which is numberless; that which may be measured, to that which is immeasurable; that which is finite, to that which is infinite. To a being who could survey the whole system of earthly events, from the foundation to the dissolution of the world, and bring them into comparison with the endless ages of eternity, they would appear but as a drop to the ocean, a ray to the glorious orb of light, a moment in the existence of the universe. Human conception is swallowed up and lost in the fathomless abyss!

THUS, from various considerations, does it appear that "time is short."

R E F L E C T I O N S.

I. OUR attachment to the richest outward comforts should be regulated by the view, which religion affords:

RELIGION teaches us to consult our whole nature; and the different states of our existence. While it

cautions us against placing the affections too strongly upon worldly objects and concerns, it draws aside the veil, and gives us clearly to discern, objects and possessions, higher and more durable. While it weans from the vanities and attachments of time, it places before us the bliss and glory of the upper world; while it calls off from that which fades away, it points to that which is unfading and eternal. "*Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth,*"* is the dictate of inspired wisdom. The value of objects should be estimated, not by the motives which govern those who are wise for this world, but by the directions of the divine word. Earthly possessions are enjoyed but for a season, but everlasting riches are treasured up in the heavenly kingdom. The soul is of more value than the body; riches which endure forever, than those, which soon fly away. The future, then, justly claims our attention more highly than the present. While engaged in the latter, the eye should be constantly fixed on the former. To neglect the most important interest is the mark of the most extreme folly. To place our highest happiness in the possession of those things, of which every day may deprive us, is to lean on a broken reed, or build on a sandy foundation. Connected as we are with both worlds, our love and attachment to each should be regulated by the pure and exalted motives of the gospel. The transitory scenes of time cannot so deeply interest the feelings of a rational being, while in reality, under the influence of reason, as the ceaseless joys of eternity. Hear the inference of the Apostle from the consideration of the shortness of life; in the verses succeeding our text; "*It remaineth, that both they that weep, be as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away.*"† Let your affection toward all these things be moderate. Consider the situation in which you will soon stand with respect to them;

* Col. iii. 2,

† 1 Cor. vii. 30, 31.

for changes may take place, which will essentially affect your connexion with them. Be not too highly elated with their possession, or too deeply afflicted with their removal. Neither love inordinately any object enjoyed, nor mourn immoderately for any blessing, of which you are deprived. The same hand of heaven which gives, may also take away. Outward blessings are bestowed by the Divine Benefactor, that you should improve them to his glory, and the good of your souls. If you contravene this design, you bring down upon your guilty heads swift destruction.

THE consideration of the shortness of time, and the uncertainty of human life, should inspire us with moderation toward the highest earthly good. We should carry ourselves forward, in imagination, to the eternal world, and contemplate the ineffable scenes, of which Revelation hath given us assurance. While the fashion of this world changeth, we should lift our eyes to that GOD, who dwelleth in heaven, and liveth forever. While we are forbidden to love this world, we should supremely love him, who is GOD over all, forever blessed.

II. THE prospects of immortality are high, and glorious.—Since the objects with which we are surrounded, are far inferior to the nature, or desires of such beings, as we are; how happy, how ravishing the thought, that a state, every way adequate to this nature and these desires, is clearly revealed! The gospel gives noble and exalted views, opens a prospect without bounds, a prospect which stretches forward through endless duration. Inspired with the animating idea, that he is to live forever, man looks upwards with high exultation, and upon terrestrial things, with sovereign contempt. These are to endure but for a little while, and even while they endure, afford but imperfect felicity; but in the world to come, are objects permanent, friendships unbroken, and scenes of the highest and everlasting delights. The just now live by faith. The disciples of Christ now live in hope. The objects of this faith and hope will all be realized. They “*now*

*desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore GOD is not ashamed to be called their GOD: for he hath prepared for them a city.** Into this glorious city they will finally enter. Translated from a world of toil, of sorrow, and of sin, to regions of tranquility, of joy, and of purity, the friends of GOD will reach the consummation of all their wishes, and drink from beatific streams, which will forever flow.

THE idea of annihilation, of ceasing to exist, is one of the most gloomy and distressing which can afflict the mind. From this awful and horrid apprehension, the gospel hath mercifully delivered us. The deliverance is great, and justly challenges high expressions of gratitude and praise.—What is man? Is he a child of yesterday? Is he a worm of the dust? He is more. He hath an immortal spirit. “The dust,” of which he is composed, “shall return to the earth, as it was; but the spirit shall return unto GOD who gave it.”† His spirit is immortal. He will live, when the earth, with all that is therein, shall be burnt up, and the sun in the firmament shall set, to rise no more. How implacable an enemy to man is he, who attempts to destroy the hope and expectation of a future state! He would deprive man of his highest dignity, his most exalted glory, his most substantial supports; would break down the very pillar on which rests the superstructure of his richest consolation; would spread a dark and impenetrable cloud over his brightest prospects; would sink him to a level with the brute creation, and destroy one half his earthly bliss, by aiming a deadly blow at that which is heavenly. To adopt the language of a late writer, “Shall limy argument, shall subtil sophistry, and nicewrought scepticism, unsoul the man, and reduce to a level with the lower creation, the image of GOD? Shall not the soul of the mother meet the soul of the child in the world of glory;” if washed in the blood of Christ, and sanctified by the Spirit of GOD? “Shall not the son, who in his youth, was sunk into a watery grave, see his father again? Yes! the graves

* Heb. xi. 16.

† Eccles. xii. 7.

shall give up their dead, and friends, who parted with aching hearts, shall," if duly prepared, "meet in a world, where tears shall be wiped from every eye."

"LET others boast that they are brutes, I glory that I'm a man. Let others wish for eternal sleep, I shall be forever awake. Let others spend their golden hours in proving that GOD is false, I feel something within which proves that his word is true. Tho' others consign soul and body to the dust, the clods of the valley cannot cover my soul. No! Legions of angels can't confine me to the grave. My body was designed for the dust, but my soul shall inherit the world of souls. Alas! what is life, if we live not forever!"

TRUE believers may look forward with assurance to the most delightful and enrapturing scenes.—The un-failing promise of the Most High hath secured to them an undefiled, and incorruptible inheritance. How high are the honors, how rich and undeserved the rewards of spiritual conquerors! "*To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*"* Many have already attained, and are now in the blissful enjoyment of the glorious prize. Through floods of tears have they waded, pangs of deep distress have they endured, the buffetings of Satan have they undergone; the raging billows have rolled on the tempestuous ocean of human life; the winds have howled, and the conflicting elements have fiercely contended; but they have been shielded by the wings of the Almighty, been protected by Divine care;—the deluge hath swept, but they have been safe; the inundation hath destroyed, but their mountain hath stood strong:—and now have they reached that world, where sorrow is an eternal stranger; where disgrace never covers the head; and where crowns are not the object of envy, of strife, and of every evil work.—We are encouraged by a "great cloud of witnesses." Could the veil which obscures heaven from our sight be drawn aside,

* Rev. iii. 21.

we should behold a glorious and happy throng of our once fellow-mortals surrounding the throne of the Almighty, and pouring forth loud hosannas to his holy name.---There---should we behold the long list of Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, and faithful Believers---should behold Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob---Isaiah, Jeremiah---the learned St. Paul, and the eloquent Apollos, together with an "innumerable company" who persevered unto the end---whose robes are washed in the blood of the Lamb, and who are now admitted into the celestial kingdom. In the world of everlasting bliss will all the redeemed unite with the angelic choir, and tune their golden harps to that triumphant song; *"The song of Moses, the servant of GOD, and the song of the Lamb; saying, Great and marvellous are thy works Lord GOD Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."**

III. CONTEMPLATE the constant succession of men on the theatre of the world. Generation passeth away after generation. The page of history exhibits to our view kingdom, after kingdom, and people, after people. Where are our fathers, who first settled this country, this town, or this society? Where are the venerable men of GOD, who preceded me, in the work of the ministry, in this place? And where are the people, who hearkened to their voice, and listened to their words?---They have gone to the land of silence, and rest in their graves. How vast the congregation of the dead?---There lie the ministers, and there lie the people; and there must the present speaker, and the present hearers also, shortly lie.

THESE reflections have paved the way for the usual information at the commencement of the year, which shall be preceded by a brief sketch of the history of this Society.

AMERICA was discovered by Columbus in the year 1492. The first settlement in New-England, by our ancestors, was at Plymouth, in the state of Massachusetts in 1620. A permanent settlement, in Con-

* Rev. xv. 3.

necticut, was made at Weathersfield in 1634. The first emigration to New-Haven arrived in April 1638. The colonies of Connecticut and New-Haven were united in 1665. The town of GUILFORD* was settled the next year after New-Haven. The inhabitants who first purchased, and settled this town, were among the adventurers who arrived at New-Haven with Gov. Eaton. They came from a town of the same name, in England. The tract which lies west of East-River, was purchased of a sachem squaw, who, with the other natives, were to remove from it. The tract eastward of that, to Tuxis-pond, of Uncas, a Mohegan sachem. It appears that the land from this pond to Hammonasset-river, which is the eastern boundary of the town, was a present from Mr. G. Fenwick of Saybrook, upon condition, that the town should accommodate Mr. Whitfield, the first minister, who had expended a large property in the service of the plantation, with land, according to his choice and to his satisfaction.† Immediately after the purchase, in the fall of 1639, planters took possession. The conveyance was made to six persons,‡ as trustees until a future arrangement. Parts of these same tracts were also purchased of other claimants. Our ancestors fled from the iron rod of oppression, to enjoy, in the wilderness, liberty and rights of conscience. In 1643 a church was regularly gathered under the pastoral care of the Rev. Henry Whitfield, who came into this country; with part of his former congregation §--- He was not ordained here, as he had been consecrated by a Bishop, in England. This was the case with almost all the first ministers in our churches.--- After the gathering of the church, those who held the property

* Called by the natives *Mennucatuck*.

† A strong, stone house built by Mr. Whitfield is still standing, and a comfortable dwelling.

‡ Henry Whitfield, Robert Kitchel, William Lect, William Chittenden, John Bishop, John Cassinge.

§ The manner of gathering the church was singular. Seven principal persons were chosen, called the *seven pillars*, and to these the other members were gathered.

of the plantation in trust, resigned to the church their right, and the four persons, who had been previously invested with civil power, for the administration of justice and preservation of the peace, declared that their trust and power, had, by the forming of the church, terminated. It was then expressly agreed, that the body of freemen should consist of church-members only, and that they should be the sole electors of magistrates, deputies, and all other officers of importance.

THE form of civil polity established, was as follows. A fixed General Court was to be holden yearly, for the election of town officers. At this time, deputies for the Particular Courts, who were to be church-members, were chosen. These Particular Courts were composed of a magistrate,* and deputies chosen for this purpose. They held quarterly sessions, and had cognizance of all civil cases. Their power extended, also, to the probate of wills, and dividing inheritances.--- Other General Courts were holden, at different times, composed of the great body of freemen, and planters, which managed all the affairs of the town, relative to the division of lands, fences, and all bylaws for the well-ordering of the plantation.†

THE lands, which had been purchased, were divided in the manner specified in the original agreement, according to the sum put into common stock, and the number of persons in a family. These divisions were, however, subject to two restrictions; the one, that no planter, without special liberty, should put in more than £.500; the other, that no division of land should, in any way, be alienated, without the consent of the

* Samuel Desborough is the first magistrate on record. He returned to England.

† By the regulations, it appears that planters, who did not attend public meetings, or who came late, were subject to be fined, a church-member more, a planter less. The manner of choosing deputies was by marking on the book of records, against the name of some person.— Medicines, the first half century or more, after the settlement of the town, were purchased and used as common stock. In 1646 the planters were notified, as a matter of course, to bring in their *College corn*, by a given time. This contribution was continued from year to year,

community. Punishments were, at different times, inflicted, for the violation of the last of these restrictions.*
 —The first settlers kept constant watch, through fear of the natives.† The place of worship was guarded on the sabbath. Many of the houses were secured by palifadoes.

A meeting-house was erected in the early periods of the plantation. In 1645 it was ordered, that no more trees be cut down upon the green before the meeting-house, and in Oct. 1651, the General Court appointed the meeting house to be thatched and clayed‡ before winter. In 1668 a gallery was built, and the house repaired. In 1672 a porch was, also, built. This, probably, stood, until a new one, upon a large construction, was erected in 1712, and finished in 1713.§ In 1676 it was agreed by the town to fortify two houses,|| and to bear in common all damages done by the enemy.---Several polical characters of eminence have resided in this town.¶

THE first inhabitants of this society** attended pub-

* In cases tried before the Particular Courts, it was customary to write, at full length, the testimony of each witness.

† The original number of planters cannot be accurately known. Book A of our records goes back only to 1645. The original deeds, agreement, &c. are however transcribed into book B. Book C. is lost; report says, it was burnt. In October 1646, upon a further division of land, the number was 47. In 1650 there were 49. In 1665, from a military order, it appears, that the number of men capable of bearing arms was 68. In 1672 one hundred and one persons gave in lists. The town mill was purchased by the town, in 1646, for £.75. Deputies were, this year, chosen by 13 votes. A bridge was built over East river in 1649.

‡ It appears probable, that this was the second time of thatching.

§ Rev. Henry Whitfield—removed 1650.—Rev. John Higginson became sole teacher, October 1650—ordained Sept. 1653—removed 1659.—Mr. John Bowers preached some years, but was not ordained.—Rev. Joseph Elliott was ordained Jan. 1664—died May 24, 1694.—Rev. Thomas Ruggles was ordained 1695—died June 1728.

¶ Mr. Elliott's was one.

¶ William Leet, Gov. of New-Haven 1661, and of Connecticut in 1676. Andrew Leet, Josiah Rossiter, Abraham Fowler, Assistants.—Gov. Leet was buried at Hartford, without any monument.

** As early as 1645 the eastern part of this Society was improved as a common field, and sundry regulations concerning it made by the town.

lie worship at Guilford. After the settlement at Killingworth, they found it more convenient to attend at the latter place.* In 1672 some questions arose, and committees were appointed, by the two towns, to confer on the subject. Liberty was granted that the people on the east borders of the town might attend, and assist to support, public worship in Killingworth, until matters should be ripe for a new village, as it was then called. This privilege was afterwards relinquished, and those, who enjoyed it, united with others, in a petition to be made a new Society, and in the toil and

Mr. Fenwick's conveyance of this tract, in the form of a letter, bears date Oct. 22, 1645. By this letter Mr. Whitfield so far claimed this land, that he gave to the town a deed of it in 1650, having received land according to Mr. Fenwick's request. The land received by him was, after his removal, sold to Maj. Thompson; his heirs disposed of it, before the Revolution. In 1646 the same tract was farther improved for the common benefit. In this state it continued for several years. In 1650 the town encouraged a removal to it, by granting the use of a certain portion of *clear* land to every settler, for the term of five years. Whether any, on this condition, removed is not ascertained. In 1656, the upland was surveyed and allotted to *each planter* in the town, according to his list. This principle was adopted in all future divisions, and to render them equal, every member of a family was included in the list. In 1668 the meadows, in the East quarter, were assized, and, at different times, afterwards, divided. In 1675, it was agreed, by those who lived on this land, that the homelots should be fenced from the common field, each owner bearing his proportion of expence, and that those who built afterward, should fence their dwelling-lots at their own charge. This tract of land early claimed attention, as it was remarkably pleasant, fertile and easy of tillage. A large field had been cleared by the natives. The marsh was very rich and extensive. It is said, that women often *walked* to Guilford, on the Sabbath, attended public exercises, and returned. Tradition is, that N. Bradley, James Hill, Luke Hill, — Seward, T. Hand, E. Thompson, were the first who came to this spot. In 1672, it appears by a letter on record, that the following persons were there; E. Thompson, N. Bradley, William Lect, John Meigs, John Scranton, James Hill. What is now called *The Quarter* was laid out in the early periods of the town. N. Guilford was surveyed and divided in 1705. In 1752 the inhabitants in the Northeastern part of the town were incorporated as an ecclesiastical society, by the name of North-Bristol; the principal part of whom belonged formerly to this society. The Rev. Richard Ely was ordained over the church there established June 1757.

* In old records, *Kenelworth*; Rev. John Woodbridge was settled there in 1674.

expense attending this state. In 1693,* it appears by a petition, that the number of families was "about thirty." A petition dated August 12th 1700, signed by thirty-three persons, addressed to the town of Guilford, requested liberty to become a distinct Society, for the purpose of public worship. This liberty had not been granted in May 1702. Previous to May 1703, it had been granted. This appears by petitions and votes on the subject.

THE boundary between the town and east Society was not fixed at the time of the grant to become a Society. This was done at a town-meeting in 1704, and ratified by the Assembly as late as 1707, after the settlement of a Pastor. This boundary† was Neck-river. Our fathers, on obtaining the privilege, engaged with assiduity, in preparing to enjoy, a settled ministry. A meeting-house was erected in 1705.‡ It stood near the present. The next year a house was built for the accommodation of a minister. Whether more than one candidate was employed, or at what particular time he began to preach, is not to be found. The winter of 1705, Mr. John Hart resided and preached, in this Society. In June 1706, he was invited to settle in the work of the ministry. He was ordained in November 1707. Five of the neighbouring Elders were present, and solemnly consecrated him to the service of God, and his people.§ A church was also, at the same time, gathered, consisting of thirteen male members.

Now, my hearers, let us pause for a moment. Hear now, no more, the howling of wild beasts, which roam

* In 1690 a bridge was built over Hammonasset-river. In 1714, the town directed that there should be an *open highway* to this bridge.

† This line was carried westward in 1744.

‡ For several years after this house was built, watch was kept, in time of public worship.

§ Rev. Thomas Buckingham,	from Saybrook,
James Pierpont,	.. New-Haven,
Noadiah Ruffel,	.. Middletown,
Samuel Ruffel,	.. Branford,
Thomas Ruggles,	.. Guilford.

the forests, and the infernal yells of savage men. See the splendors of the sun of righteousness, bursting from behind the clouds! Hark, on the wings of the wind, a sweet, melodious sound salutes my ear; it is the glorious sound of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Trace our fathers from the land of oppression; reflect upon the numbers who have fallen by the way; Trace them in their various visits to the house of GOD, at a distance; and through every progressive step of their improvement, until the present hour!—How would their eyes flow with tears of joy, how would their hearts burst forth in lively emotions of gratitude and praise, to hear the trumpet of the gospel sound, in the midst of their habitations!--What reflections swell the soul, when contemplating the august and ravishing scene; a wilderness, made an habitation for our GOD, and the children of poor outcasts from foreign lands, bro't to worship in his holy temple!--One thing ought never to be forgotten, the unwearied zeal shewn by our fathers, for the honor and worship of GOD!--Should you, my hearers, constantly attend divine service, were there no place of worship within eight miles? Were the gospel and its ordinances, now, for the first time, established in this place, would not the people of GOD greatly rejoice?

THE Rev. John Hart was born at Farmington, April 12, 1682. He received the honors of the infant College,* in Connecticut, in 1703, and was immediately appointed tutor. In this honorable and useful office, he continued three years, during which time he was licensed to preach, and a considerable part of which, he spent in this Society.† In the evangelical work, to which his life was devoted, he was zealous and engaged; a *scribe well instructed to the kingdom of heaven*. He is described as “one endowed with a large treasure of natural abilities, quickness of invention, clearness of

* Then at Killingworth. He had partly completed his education at Cambridge.

† His class probably resided with him.

thought, soundness of judgment, and great strength of reason.* His preaching was powerful, sweet and persuasive. The graces of the christian shone, with commanding majesty, in his life and conversation. It pleased GOD to visit him, for a course of years, with sore bodily infirmities : but in the dark and tempestuous night, his faith, his patience, his resignation, his confidence in GOD, appeared with peculiar glory.--- Having served in his day and generation, according to the will of GOD, he was gathered unto his fathers, March 4, 1731 ; in the 24th year of his ministry, and 49th of his age.†

THE sermon occasioned by his death, preached by the Rev. Nathaniel Chauncey, of Durham, was published, at the expense of the society.—A solemn day of fasting and prayer was, also, kept, on account of his death, and for the purpose of imploring divine direction for the bereaved flock.

WHILE destitute, the society not only received advice from the neighboring clergy, and from the association, but the Governor and Council addressed a letter to them, in consequence of the unhappy divisions into which they had fallen. Several candidates were invited to settle, but from various causes, declined ‡ —In May 1733, Mr. Jonathan Todd was invited to preach, which invitation was soon extended, to his preaching with a special view to settlement. August 27, 1733, the society gave him a call to settle, and on the 17th September he gave notice, that the invitation was accepted. Five Pastors,§ with messengers, attended his solemn consecration, which was Oct. 24, 1733. Thus the Lord returned, to his mourning people, in love, in about the space of two years and an half.

* Mr. Chauncey's sermon on the death of Mr. Hart.

† He admitted to communion about eighty.

‡ Messrs. Abraham Todd, Thomas Weld, Job Parker.

§ Rev. Jacob Hemingway, from East-Haven,
 Jared Elliott, Killingworth,
 Joseph Noyes, New-Haven, peached the Ordina-
 Samuel Ruffel, North-Guilford [tion Sermon,
 Isaac Stiles, North-Haven.

SOON after the resettlement of the ministry, the society found that their numbers were so increased, that the house for public worship was inconvenient. In 1739, this house was erected, which, for that day, was commodious and handsome. A sermon was delivered, at its dedication, by the Rev. N. Chauncey, which was in May 1743. A steeple* has since been erected, and a bell† purchased. In 1750, and 1751, this society was visited with an awful epidemic. The numbers sick, and necessary attendants, were so great as almost to suspend the common pursuits of industry. Several heads of families, and some of these, the most worthy and respectable, were taken away. The unusual mortality which prevailed, may be seen from this fact, that forty-three died, in the last of these years, when our present average bill, though our numbers are very considerably increased, is but eleven. This period was peculiarly afflicting to Mr. Todd. His friends and supporters were swept down around him, and he was called to almost incessant labors, among the sick, and dying.

THE 19th of May 1782, was memorable to this society. In a skirmish on the seashore, a most valuable citizen fell.‡

AT the time of the settlement of my immediate predecessor, the church consisted of fifty-one members. In the first 24 years of his ministry, he admitted to communion 234. On the supposition that the same number was admitted, in the same term during his ministry, they amounted to 565.§---In the year 1770, the number of baptisms was about thirty. This, perhaps, will not be too large an estimate for a medium. The number, therefore, baptized by him,

* 1799.

† 1801.

‡ Capt. Phineas Meigs. The sacrifice of this family to national independence was great. Capt. Jehiel Meigs, who married his only daughter, died in the army, in Dec. 1776. He was an esteemed citizen, and respectable officer.

§ Our church records have, unfortunately, been materially injured by fire. From some fragments saved, I am able to make the statement above.

was seventeen hundred and forty. At length, having seen one generation pass away, and another rise up to fill their places, ; full of days and ripe for glory, he fell asleep, Feb. 24, 1791, in the 78th year of his age, and 58th of his ministry.*

THE Rev. Jonathan Todd was born at New-Haven, March 9, 1713. He graduated at Yale-College in 1732. He entered at an early period of life into the field of ministerial labors. For usefulness in this sphere, to which he was promoted by his inclination, and called by the providence of GOD; the foundation was laid, while in his academic walks. Scientific pursuits were delightful and refreshing to his active and inquisitive mind. "He was a distinguished scholar, and a judicious critic, in the three learned languages : had given considerable attention to philosophy, and had *thoroughly* studied history, both ancient and modern."† The Hebrew was his peculiar favorite. Possessed of an ardent thirst for knowledge, he was highly gratified in every acquisition. "Through a long life devoted to study, he acquired a rich treasure," and this "thirst for knowledge, united with an unbiaſſed mind, led him to a fair examination of every subject."† But though his capacious mind was delighted to drink from every flowing stream, yet his highest pleasure was derived from those studies, which had for their special object, divine glory and the salvation of immortal souls: "Assiduous in his application to reading, and preparations for the sanctuary, making the sacred oracles his guide, he fed his hearers *with knowledge and understanding.*"† His sermons were not adorned with the studied ornaments of language, or the flowers of rhetoric ; his ideas were not clothed with that tinsel, which glitters, but does not enlighten : neither did he study to embellish his writings with "round" and harmonious "periods," or to shine as a graceful orator.

* A well adapted discourse was preached at his funeral, by the Rev. Amos Fowler. Rev. J. Devotion (providentially present) and Dr. Dana, preached the two sabbaths succeeding his death.

† Dr. Dana's M. S. sermon.

They were, however, replete with sentiment, with exhibitions of important truths, with forcible arguments, solid reasoning and much practical instruction.—

CHRIST JESUS, and him crucified was the sum and substance of his preaching.

To the spiritual wants and peculiar circumstances of his flock, he paid particular attention. He knew how to speak a word in season, and always spread light about the paths of enquirers, when the great subjects of the gospel were brought into view. "He had an happy talent at conversation."* "Sweet and pleasant has been the friendship between you and your late pastor, whose instructive conversation has been your delight;" was the language of an esteemed friend, to the people of his charge, after his decease. In times of uncommon sickness and mortality, he devoted almost the whole of his time, to visiting, and praying with the sick and dying, and administering consolation to the afflicted. In this benevolent work did he engage, almost beyond example, by day and by night. This fatherly kindness greatly endeared him to his flock. He was beloved as a good shepherd, who in all "their afflictions was afflicted."* To their spiritual interests was he faithful. "He could take them to record that he was *pure from the blood of all men, not having shunned to declare the whole counsel of GOD.*"* On abstruse and difficult questions, "a clear discernment and sound judgment made him an able counsellor. He was singularly mild and amiable in his disposition, clothed with humility and plainness."* As he entered early into the vineyard, so it pleased the Lord to continue him in it "more than double the usual term. In this long period his labors had scarce any intermission, until the last year of it. At his death, not one of the sacred order, in this state, had been of so long standing in it. Not one head of a family was then living, of all who were living at the time of his ordination. During his ministry he buried about twice, his whole congregation. The calmness and resignation for which he was

* Dr. Dana's M. S. sermon.

distinguished under all the afflictions of life and of the gospel, were conspicuous in his most painful visitation, through the last year of his life.* Having uniformly and "eminently exemplified the spirit of christianity, he closed life," with serenity, with peace, with hope, with joy. "Supported by the precious promises of the gospel, he received the message of death," with undisturbed composure.

PREVIOUS to the death of this excellent man of GOD, the present speaker had been invited to supply this pulpit. His first sermon was preached in this desk. Aug. 23, 1791, the society proceeded to give him a call to settle in the gospel ministry, and the 29th of the same month, he accepted the proposals. November second he was ordained.† At this time the church consisted of 84 members. It now consists of 110. In the ten years of my ministry, 111 have died, 282 been baptized, and upwards of 270 have removed. The whole number of persons, at present in the society, is 939, in the whole town, 3597.‡

THE Lord was with your fathers, when they traversed the pathless ocean; he led them by the way, and brought them to a goodly land. But their hardships and their dangers were great, before the wilderness could become a cultivated field, before they could erect comfortable habitations to dwell in, before they could secure themselves from the attacks of their savage foes. You inherit the fruits of their labors. You have fields, and orchards, and houses, and, what is infinitely more important, you have the Gospel and its ordinances, you are furnished with means of instruction,§ both in human and divine things. You also enjoy rest, and peace, and security. No murderous savage lurks by the way-side, by day; no terrific war-hoop disturbs

* Dr. Dana's M. S. sermon.

† The ordination sermon was preached by the Rev. Achilles Mansfield, and published.

‡ Town 1629
N. G. 540
N. B. 489

§ In the society are four convenient School-houses, all built since my settlement. A Library is also established, at present handsome, and increasing.

your midnight slumbers. With your fathers it was next so.

HE who walketh in the midst of the golden candle-sticks hath sent to generations past, and to the present, one son of Levi, after another, to break the bread of life. Although refreshing showers have not descended, in copious effusions, upon this part of the vineyard, yet have drops fallen, here and there, and some plants been caused to flourish. In every age, a number have, hopefully, drank from the stream which flows from Horeb's rock, have fed on manna in the wilderness, and, beside the flowing of Jordan, have lifted the eye of faith to the land of promise. Humble and faithful followers of the LAMB, we hope, have gone from this militant church, to unite with that which is triumphant. Under the regular and stated ministration of divine ordinances, this church and society have, for a long time, enjoyed much order, tranquility, and union of sentiment. While we rejoice in these, and use every proper mean to preserve them, let me solemnly remind you, that something more than mere morality, than the most punctilious observance of external rites and ceremonies, is indispensibly necessary to salvation: the regenerating and sanctifying INFLUENCES of the HOLY SPIRIT.

THE fathers of this town, of this colony and of New-England, were a pious and godly race. They prized the word of GOD, they revered the holy sabbath, they taught their little ones to love, and obey, the great Creator, and trained them up in habits of order, of virtue, of undefiled religion. It is to be lamented that a relaxation of morals, highly alarming to the friends of religion, of Zion, has, since their day, taken place. The gates of hell seem to be opened wide. Infidelity has assumed an appearance much more bold and brazen, than it dared, formerly, assume. A vain philosophy, the corner-stone of which is atheism, and which hath for its object, the complete destruction of the gospel system, with all its blessings, its hopes, its joys, has been broached in Europe, and spread its

eadily corruption to the western world. In all the innumerable methods, which ingenuity can devise, man has approved and vengeance delight to execute, are the piety of our forefathers, and the religious habits of their posterity, traduced, misrepresented, contemned and brought down. Nothing, it seems, would satisfy the enemies of Christ, and his religion, and friends; but the blotting out of his name from under heaven. How far, how long, GOD will permit his foes to triumph, the wiles of satan to ensnare, is, to us, unknown. He hath, in some measure, lifted up his standard against them, by the out-pourings of his spirit, in various parts of our land. This should encourage GOD's people to hope and trust in Him.

BE not beguiled, my hearers, by this false philosophy, to forsake the truth, as it is in Christ. Dare to be, as your ancestors were, pious and religious. Scoffs and ridicule will never destroy the divine authenticity of the Bible. Revealed religion alone will afford true and solid consolation, in a dying hour. The phantoms of infidelity will then vanish, the mist which obscured the sight will be dispersed, and naked truth appear, in all its glory, or in all its horror. Should the scheme of infidels prove true, it will land its votaries on the bleak shores of annihilation; if untrue, it will leave them to sink down into unquenchable flames. Is this the boasted age of reason, and does this reason appear, in discarding the holy scriptures, in rejecting and mocking the Lord that bought us, in despising the sabbath and the institutions of the gospel, in trampling morality under feet, in counting every thing serious and religious, a mere farce, a piece of craft and deceit? As you would avoid eternal death, cleave to the gospel of the Redeemer.

YOUR fathers, when incorporated as an ecclesiastical society, an hundred years ago, were few in number; but you have become, comparatively, a great people.--- We have also, the last year, entered upon a new century in the christian æra; the end of which, few, if any of us, will live to see. As the events of the last were

momentous and highly interesting, &c, probably, will be those of the present. A convulsed world is exhibiting awful evidence of human depravity. Garments rolled in blood are still to be seen, and the nations to be gathered to the great day of the battle of GOD Almighty. Thunderings, and lightnings, and earthquakes, are to be heard, and seen, and felt, in every place. Amidst these mighty revolutions, these amazing conflicts, these stupendous scenes, which involve the liberties, the prosperity, the very existence of nations; there is one event which comes nearer still to every individual, that of death. In the day of trial, put your trust in the Lord of Hosts, and remember, that, although, you may be called to endure much in the cause of the Redeemer, your sufferings will be infinitely repaid, by the "*exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*"

IN the review of the period of my ministry, let me ask myself the question, "Have I been faithful to my Divine Lord, and the souls of my people?" Say, O my soul, in the presence of my GOD, have I set before my flock, the blessing and the curse, life and death? Have I besought, and charged, and commanded them, to obey and love the Lord?—You will reflect, my hearers, that ten years is a large portion of human life. It becometh us to adore GOD for the display of his goodness, in preserving our lives through another year. I congratulate you on the return of this joyful anniversary. May this year be a year of health, of prosperity, of joy, to you, and to yours! As you behold its beginning, so may you behold its conclusion! Or if summoned from time, be ripened for endless glory! May it, in special, be a year, in which the Lord shall graciously remember, and build up this part of Zion, increase the present earnestness of his holy Spirit, and cause the dews of grace abundantly to distil!

WHEN you enter the confines of this year, my hearers, make a solemn pause. Remember that for another year's probation you must give an account. My duty demands that I enquire of you with earnestness, in what

manner you have improved the past, and what your resolutions are, with respect to the future. I come to you, this day, with a most interesting message. Should an apostle arise from the dead, or an angel descend from heaven, nay, did the Redeemer himself stand in this holy place, as he once stood in the temple at Jerusalem, he could challenge your attention by no subject, more interesting, than that, to which I invite you, the wise improvement of time and preparation for eternity. You have not yet been called to explore that distant and unknown region, but divine prescience alone can tell how soon the awful summons of death will be issued. Many who entered the year past, with as sanguine hopes of future life, as you enter the present, have been consigned to the grave. Death hath spared neither the smiling infant, the blooming virgin, or the hoary head. You have seen, that some of your number have gone, since the last new-year, into the world of spirits. At that time, they beheld the light of the sun, and dwelt on the earth; as you now do; but they have been arrested by the great destroyer, and the light of the sun, as to them, is extinguished forever. By the revolution of another year, you may be laid in the dust, in that lonely mansion, where all is darkness.—Hearken, then, my fellow-mortals! What if, this year, nay, this night, you should be called to the bar of GOD, are you prepared to give your account? Had you been called away the year past, what would have been your present situation? In the world of glory, or the regions of torment? You are not already sunk down in hopeless despair; but have you any security that this will not be the case? No. For I assure you, upon the word of GOD, that it will be, when you are called from the world, unless you, in time, repent of sin, and fly unto Christ.—Tremendous thought, that of being forever lost! But tremendous as it is, I am bound to utter it, and give you solemn warning of impending danger!—Do you intend ever to repent and prepare for eternity? Could you ask one of the damned spirits in the world of despair, he would de-

clare, that he intended to have repented, and made his peace with GOD, in this state of probation. And why, did he not? He neglected the all important concern, until death cut him off, and his day of grace was past, ---Alas! my hearers, take warning. If you intend ever to repent, now is the time. Death may sweep you from the earth, and you may be made to repent, when repentance will only add fuel to the flame. Thanks to GOD, your case is not hopeless, you need not despair. The Lamb, who was slain, bled for the salvation of sinners. O fly to him, before this year, this day, this hour, this moment, is gone. When the solemn hour of death arrives, an end is brought to all labor, to all preparation. The sun of human life is hastening to go down, you will soon, very soon, launch into the boundless ocean of eternity. O prepare to die in the Lord. *Prepare to meet thy GOD, O Israel.* When the frame of nature is ready to be dissolved, how precious will a dying, bleeding SAVIOR appear! Were I to point you to an object completely wretched, it should be an impenitent sinner on the bed of death. On the page of futurity we are not permitted to read, but perhaps, before the return of another new-year's sabbath, these lips may be closed in silence, or you may be removed beyond the sound of my voice. Should the speaker be continued, the conclusion is rational, that some of those who hear, will not be present. To such I may be considered as giving my last charge on this anniversary.---Record it, then, in your hearts; carry it with you to your dying hour, and let each one bring home the subject to himself.---GOD grant, that the testimony of this discourse be not against you, in the day of Judgment!



APPENDIX.

The following persons have held the office of Deacon, in this Church.

	<i>Died.</i>	<i>Aged.</i>
J OHN MEIGS,	Feb. 19, 1718	48
Benjamin Stone,	Feb. 14, 1753	76
John French,	Dec. 17, 1745	66
Timothy Meigs,	Sept. 14, 1751	38*
Josiah Meigs,	Dec. 26, 1774	74
John Grave,	July 17, 1763	74
Timothy Hill,	Feb. 7, 1781	59
Thomas Stone,	Feb. 10, 1797	77
Benjamin Hart,		
Levi Ward,		
Timothy Hill.		

The following persons have been Justices of the Peace, in this Society.

	<i>Died.</i>	<i>Aged.</i>
Janna Meigs,	June 5, 1739	67
Benjamin Hand,	Aug. 10, 1744	72
Thomas Hodgkin,	April 24, 1754	77
John Grave		
Josiah Meigs,		
Timothy Todd,	Jan. 3, 1779	56
Timothy Hill,		
Elias Grave,		
Jonathan Todd,		
Daniel Hand, jun.		

* He had received a liberal education ; was graduated in 1732 :
" a man in whom we had great and high hopes."

Mr. Todd's Sermon.

The following persons have commanded the Military Company, in this Society.

Nathaniel Stevens	} Lieut's. {	1704
Stephen Bishop		1709
Stephen Bishop	(Captain)	1714
Janna Meigs	--	1716
John Scranton	--	1731
Thomas Hodgkin	--	1737
Nathaniel Stevens	--	1741
Josiah Meigs	--	1747
Jehiel Meigs	--	1754
Timothy Hill	--	1762
Daniel Hand	--	1773
Elias Grave*	--	1778
Gilbert Dudley	--	1778
James Munger*	--	1780
Timothy Field	--	1782
Jonathan Todd	--	1785
Josiah Munger	--	1792
Benjamin B. Willcox	--	1797

Of the 111 persons who have died during my Ministry,

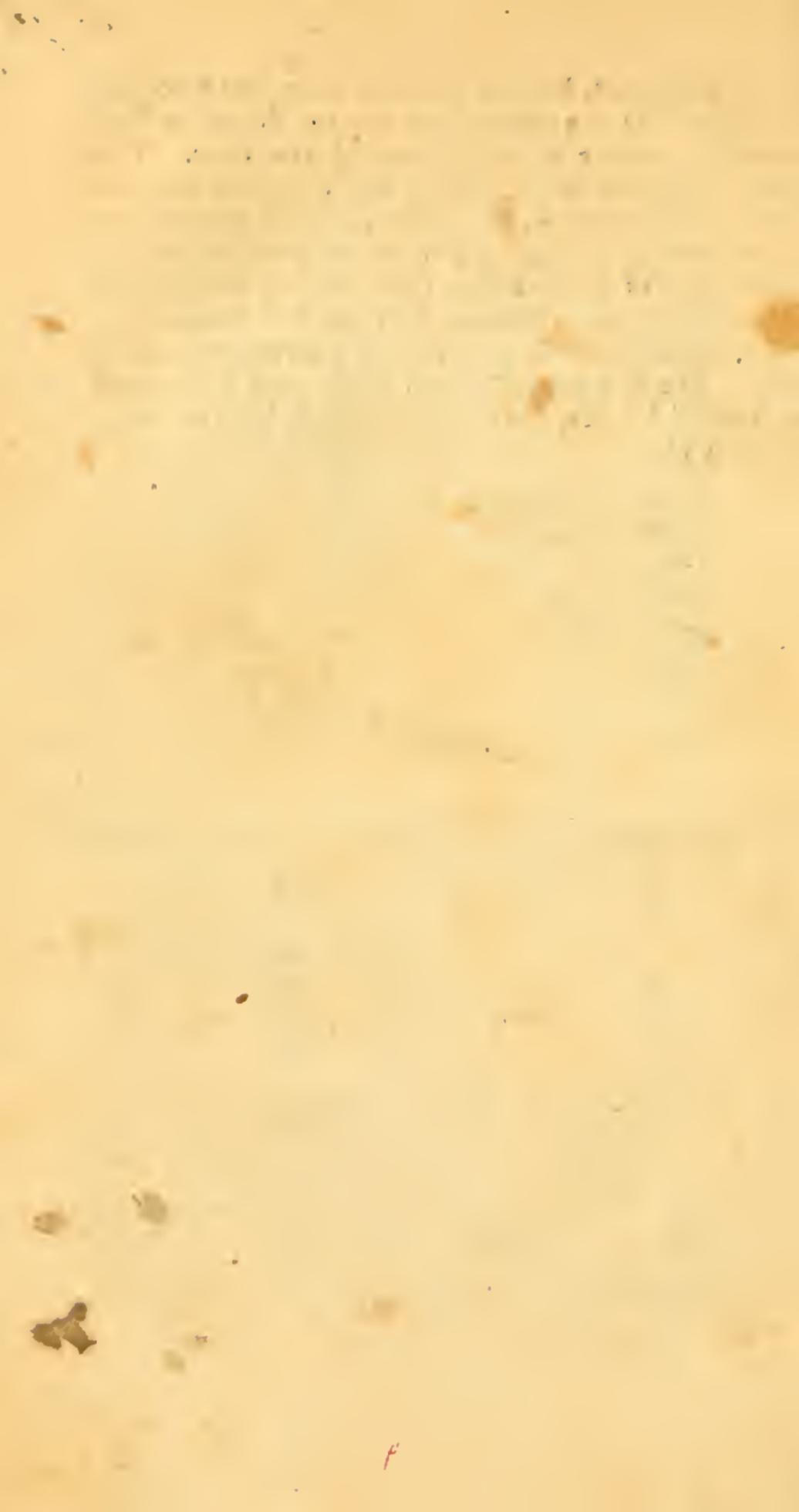
1 was	99	5 between	40 and	50	
1	97	6	30	40	
16 between	80 and	90	9	20	30
14	70	80	under	20	42
12	60	70	under	35	55
5	50	60			

From this statement the degree of health and longevity enjoyed by the people in this place, compared with that of mankind in general, may be learnt. According to the common estimate, in populous cities, one half die under 11 years of age; in the world in general, one half under 17: in this country, one half under 20: whereas according to this bill of mortality

* Alarm List.

For ten years past, half the number have lived to the age of 35. At one time there was no death, in this society, for twelve months, wanting ten days. The greatest number of deaths in any one year was 18. Life in New-England, is at least one third longer than in the world in general. The annual bill of mortality, for the state of Connecticut, upon the best calculation that can be made, is between four and five thousand.

The earliest date in our eastern burying ground is 1682. The first person buried in the west grave-yard was Samuel French, son of John French, born in 1682, and died 1688.





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