



Chap. 4

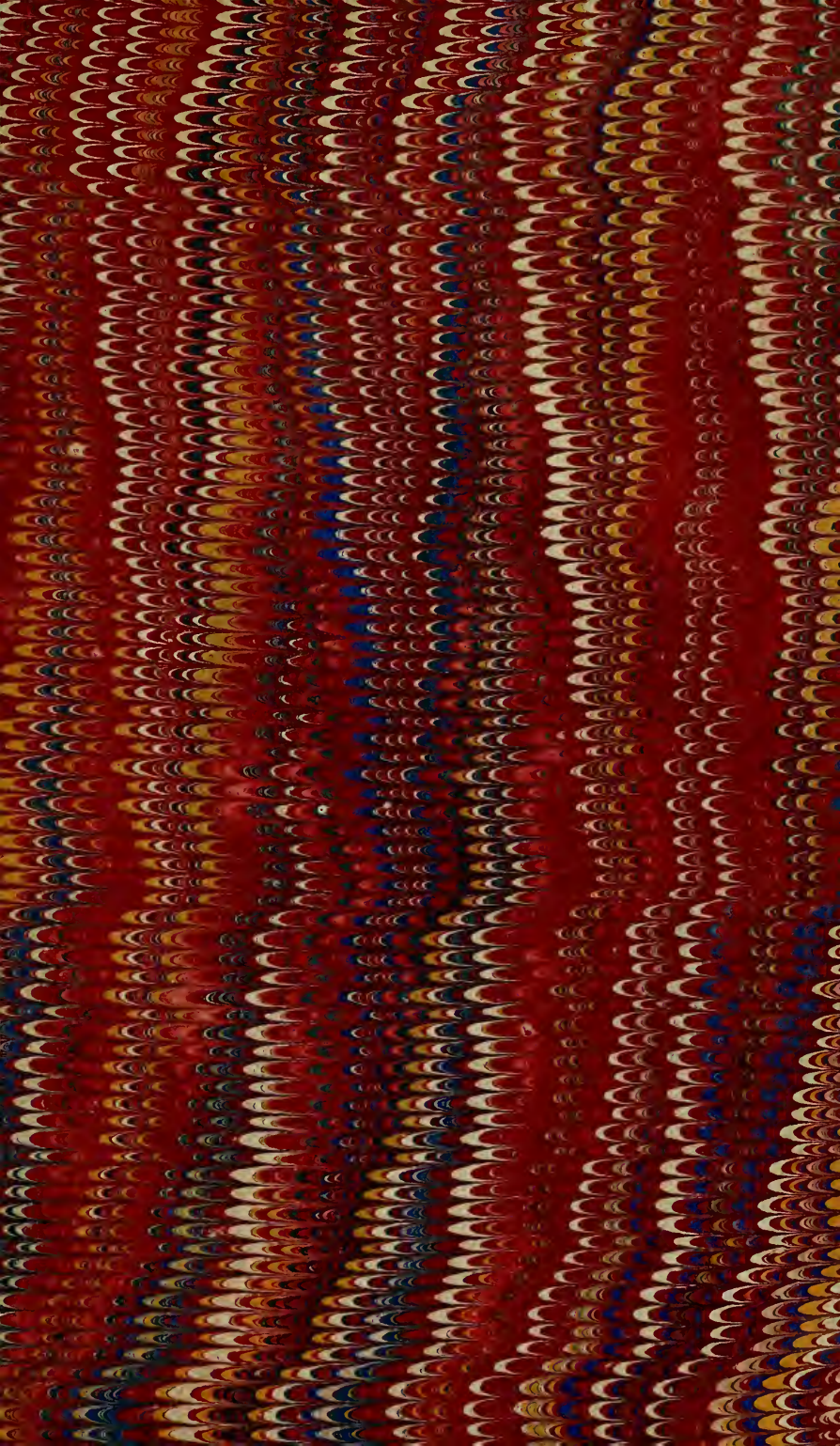
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



Miss Maryant Bradford, from
her sincere friend
The Author

DR. RIPLEY'S

HALF CENTURY DISCOURSE.

HALF CENTURY DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED NOVEMBER 16, 1828,

AT

CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS.

BY EZRA RIPLEY, D. D.

Published at the request of the Hearers.

CONCORD: *F*

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1829.

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- A few sentences are omitted; and one paragraph has been added since the discourse was delivered. It is presumed that the subscribers will not object to these alterations.

HALF CENTURY DISCOURSE.

Psalm lxxvii. 11, 12.

I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy works, and talk of thy doings.

It is wise to note and improve the current of time and the events which that current is continually exhibiting. This is the main object of the present discourse. In this subject the inhabitants of this town are interested, and especially their minister, whose official labours have been protracted to half a century. Last *Tuesday* completed *fifty* years since his ordination in this place.

The psalmist thought it his duty to remember the works and ways of God in years then past,—to meditate on them, and to speak of them. It is no less proper for us to engage in similar services, which we ought to perform in a religious manner, with our whole mind and heart.

Our text is an address to God, and a devout acknowledgment of his wonderful works and doings. We also should realize that we now set ourselves to

recollect and meditate on the works, the providence, and the grace of God. It is with *Him* we have to do;—*His* doings we are to remember and speak of; and therefore in his fear, and with gratitude to him, we are to act, and by his aid make application and form resolutions. Religious sentiments should pervade and sanctify our recollections and render them useful.

I propose the following method of discourse, viz. to make some observations on the passing of time,—give a brief historical sketch of this religious society,—and close with application adapted to ourselves.

Time, how still and swift it flies! Although we know it to be true, it requires some effort to realize and to feel that *fifty* years have passed away since my sacred connexion with this people. The succession of days, months, and years is so silent, yet constant, we scarcely perceive it. Engaged in the various cares and business of life, we are too often insensible to the progress we have made towards its close. At length, our attention being arrested by some interesting event, or period, we look around us, and are almost surprised at the changes we perceive, and that meet our eyes from every quarter. “One generation has past away, and another has risen up.” Those who were aged half a century ago, are gone to the grave. “Our fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live forever?” Those who *then* were in middle life, if yet living, are become old; the youth have past their best estate; and the little children are now the citizens for business, and

pillars in society. Grey hairs are upon those who were infants when the speaker first settled here. Thus one generation is pressing close upon the heels of another, while the foremost is fast falling into the grave and eternity. But this is not the full picture of human life; many of the younger classes have been untimely snatched away. We often witness, and many deeply feel, what the scriptures affirm, that "childhood and youth are vanity, and man at his best estate is altogether vanity."

When I cast my eyes over the assembly that stately worships here, I see, not only many new faces, but a new face to the whole. Here and there only is a countenance which I beheld *fifty* years ago. Full well do I remember the white locks that adorned the long seats which here stretched before me. *Now* the heads that are white and grey were *then* on the shoulders of children. This house too is changed. I have not forgotten its former figure and inconvenience. There were two galleries flat and deep, and a high ceiling, which rendered speaking in it very difficult. But it has, long since, undergone a general repair, and been rendered handsome and convenient and easy for the speaker.

It is vivid in my recollection, that Harvard College was here collected in the summer of 1775. I was then a member of the Senior class. I listened with attention and respect to my worthy and eloquent predecessor, with whom I became personally acquainted.

It was not my expectation, when young, to live so long as I have. I was supposed to be slender

and very liable to fail in early life. The only man who voted against my settling here, personally assured me, that the reason of his vote was my feeble appearance, and the expectation that I should live but a little while. So true it is, that "God seeth not as man seeth." Although I have been repeatedly sick and apparently threatened with dissolution, yet, through the power and goodness of God, I continue to this day, and enjoy a good degree of health and strength. Two ministers only in this county are living, who were ordained before me. And I know not of more in the Commonwealth, who yet are able to perform public services. There are now living only two male members of this church, who were active in my settlement.

It is very interesting to me, to recollect the many scenes of joy and of sorrow, in which I have alternately rejoiced and wept with your fathers, and with many now living. I do not indeed forget some unpleasant scenes; but with joy and gratitude I remember the many expressions of affection and respect from my beloved people.

It sometimes fills my mind with grief, and always with solemn reflections, to observe the changes that have taken place in the town, in neighbourhoods, and in families. In some instances, whole families have disappeared; in other, they have been diminished or dispersed. But changes have not always been grievous. In many instances they have been for the better, and gloomy clouds have been dispelled. New families have risen up, or have emigrated to us, to repair the ravages of time and death. We have often

seen that “instead of the parents are the children,” who have done worthily. The doings of the Lord have a bright as well as a dark side. I will notice both sides.

We have lived to see, to suffer the evils, and to enjoy the benefits of a great political revolution. Some of us were eye witnesses and personal actors in the Revolutionary war, from its commencement in this town, on the ever memorable 19th of April, 1775. A revolution this, probably, the most interesting to the world ever recorded in history; and to this country important and happy beyond all calculation. In this revolution and the events connected with it, we have seen more of the wonderful doings of God, more interesting consequences as the legitimate results, than were witnessed in the course of centuries preceding. We have seen established **FREE REPUBLICAN GOVERNMENTS**, both National and State; and, in degrees unexampled, are daily enjoying the happy fruits. In this connexion, I would not omit a tribute of gratitude and praise to the memory of our fathers by whose services and sacrifices, under the conducting providence of God, we possess such high and precious advantages.

In the progress of the sharp contest with the mighty power of Great Britain, which at some periods was doubtful, my sacred connexion with this people was formed. Though the people were driven into an unnatural war with the mother country, they were disposed to be at peace with Heaven, and in all their troubles, to cling to the word and the altars of God. It was their religious confidence in the Almighty, that

sustained them in their struggle for liberty. Had not the people of the *Thirteen United States* been actuated by principles of piety and virtue, as well as the love of liberty and country, they would not have gained their freedom and independence. And let it be kept in mind, that the same principles alone can preserve them.

But many difficulties were unavoidably to be encountered. Evils existed which could not be easily nor expeditiously remedied. The rapid depreciation of the paper currency of the country involved many in great embarrassments. Numbers of the rich suddenly became poor, and some of the poor became as suddenly rich. Property rapidly changed its possessors. At some times, "taking to itself wings, it flew away," and at other, by laying still, lost its value. It is not forgotten by many, that salary-men, and generally all who lived upon their money, were great sufferers. This was the case with your minister, without any design or fault of his people. They had endeavoured, by a formal contract, to guard against the effects of the depreciation of the currency; but it seemed next to impossible. You would scarcely believe, were you told, the straits and difficulties to which your pastor was reduced. With all his exertions in various ways, as teaching scholars, manual labour, &c. he could not have waded through them, had it not been for a particular event in Providence, and the long credit given him by one benevolent trader in town.* In due time, when a

* Deacon John White; whose generous friendship will never be forgotten.

scale of depreciation was established by authority, my people, in due time, made up the loss I had sustained in settlement and salary. But it was impossible to repair the loss in ministerial studies and acquirements. My people, however, were kind, made reasonable allowance for disadvantages, supplied my pulpit during a long sickness, and generally remained satisfied with my exertions and services. From those times we have lived in peace and harmony, mutually endeavouring to promote each others' comfort and happiness. The late separation from us of a Trinitarian society is an exception, of which something may be said in the sequel.

Another change of high importance merits particular notice. After the revolution, and indeed during its progress, infidelity, imported from Europe, was embraced by more than a few in America, and industriously propagated. The writings of Voltaire, Hume, and other deistical authors were sought and read with avidity. To stem this increasing torrent, the manner in which the gospel was then generally preached, it is believed, was not well adapted. A large portion of the learning of the country, not possessed by the clergy, was leaning to deism, if not decided in its favour. Christianity and its peculiar institutions were treated with more than indifference, and not seldom directly opposed. But the religious principles and steady habits of the bulk of the people held in check the deistical and licentious. I have been an eye and ear witness of the proud boasting and confident assertions of profane and blasphemous infidels, and have seen the poison plen-

tifully cast into one fountain of literature. But, thanks be to God, the times are happily changed. Now, nearly all the solid learning in our country, especially in New England, is engaged on the side of christianity. The great current of mind sets strongly to the divine authority of the Bible, and bends to the doctrines and sceptre of Jesus Christ. Many of our learned men, and those in the highest offices and most influential stations in the National and State governments, are professed and practical christians; and others are favourable to the cause, and cheerful supporters of Christian ministers and worship: while many of those who take no active part in favour of revealed religion visibly respect its teachers and institutions, and cease from opposition and ridicule. A vast accession of power and influence is here gained to the cause of Christ and his religion. In this view of the moral state of society, I am far from saying or thinking, "the former times were better than these."

I am aware, that in one of the middle States, there is a nest of bold and artful infidels, who are diffusing their corrupt and demoralizing principles with activity and zeal. But we hope and trust in God that their race will be short, and that the light of truth, which is rapidly increasing in our country and throughout Christendom, dissipating the clouds of error and mysticism that have long shrouded Christianity, will soon convince or disarm them and all opposers of our holy religion.

We have lived to see great and honorable improvements in the science of government, in legislation and

the administration of the laws. Our Judicial courts, supreme and subordinate, are, we believe, the most enlightened, upright, prompt in business and respectable, of which any country can boast. Our seats of justice being filled by men of talents, learning, piety, and exemplary lives, become a blessing to the community not easily nor sufficiently appreciated.

The improvements that have been made in the course of the last *fifty* years, in our primary and higher schools, in Colleges, useful arts, manufactures, agriculture, commerce, &c. are astonishing as well as highly gratifying to observers. Learning, invention, and enterprize have taken strides and made progress unexampled in the same period. The establishment of *Sabbath* schools, which is of recent date, promises to be highly beneficial, both in a civil and religious view. We scarcely begin to perceive the happy influence which these schools are designed and adapted to exert on the minds and the morals of the young, and through them, on the community at large. Preparatory to these are *Infant* schools, which are gaining attention, and are actually in operation in England and in some cities in this country. The inhabitants of the city of Boston are attending to the subject in earnest. A plan is now in operation for collecting money to defray the expense of instruction to the little children of the poor. These schools, it is highly probable, will be multiplied, and will produce the most salutary effects on the health, manners, and character of the generations rising up, and those yet unborn. They are best adapted to populous towns and are peculiarly favorable to the labouring and

poorer classes of people. Such establishments are not insulated, not confined to the places, the period, and the scholars that first attract our attention. Their influence is diffusive, progressive, and will gradually extend to the great body of the people. In these and similar institutions, farther improvements will, doubtless, be made. These are the seeds now sowing, which, under the smiles of Heaven, are to spring up and yield a rich harvest of blessings to our country. These institutions of *Sabbath* and *Infant* schools, if they shall be conducted with wisdom and pursued with energy, will, I have no doubt, influence and form the civil and moral character of the community more than any human measures that have been hitherto adopted. This is beginning with the child, the little boy and girl, where education ought always to begin, but where it has been sadly neglected. When these modes of instruction shall be well understood and perfected, and the people in general shall see and feel their importance, the fruits will be great and good. Even Sabbath schools are yet so new, that many parents and heads of families do not appear to understand them, do not appreciate and improve them.

Among other changes, which we may consider as improvements, are those in the art of sacred music and the matter of the holy song. Some of us well recollect the discordant singing in public worship, and when the tune was interrupted by the reading of the psalm or hymn, line by line. This practice of reading the lines by the deacon, or some other person, probably, was first introduced on account of the scarcity of books and the poverty of the people.

Now books are plenty and cheap, and the people are able to buy. Every intelligent and serious worshipper ought to have a hymn book at church. And I do soberly recommend, that every pew be furnished with books, and that every adult person at least have before his eyes the words in which we sing praise to God. Money expended for Bibles and Hymn books is put to the best interest, and will afford the best reflections.

The attention that has been given by this society to the support and improvement of sacred musick is very gratifying and praise worthy. We are specially obligated to the singing society for their assistance in divine worship, and for their persevering exertions and sacrifices to make improvements and render their services acceptable and pleasant.

The first regular version used in this church was that of Sternhold and Hopkins; many parts of which could scarcely now be read with sobriety in the assembly. Next was used, and until very lately, the version of the pious and excellent Dr. Watts. The Cambridge Collection is now in use, which, we trust, will be an additional aid in our religious services, till one more improved and perfect shall be provided and chosen. All human compositions may be improved and changed, and vital religion be thereby better promoted: but the Bible, "the word of the Lord abideth forever." No man, nor body of men may add to or diminish from the sacred volume. It is our duty and our proper work, to understand, explain, enforce, and obey the Bible. The light of this blessed book, in ages of ignorance, and in the hands of Papal pow-

ers, has been obscured and Christianity has been corrupted. But considering the state of the Christian world in ages past, and before the art of printing was invented, nothing otherwise could be reasonably expected. The bold and pious reformers from popery, to whom we are highly obligated, partook, unavoidably, of the imperfection, spirit, and bigotry of the age in which they lived, and were educated. But their spirit of *reform* has descended to our times; a spirit of inquiry and improvement has gone forth, and while it rejects the superstition and corrects the errors of the *Reformers*, it fearlessly, but reverently, searches the scriptures, penetrates the clouds of mysticism, discovers truth, and presents Christianity to the public and private eye in its own native simplicity and purity.

I am well aware that what many of us look upon as the discovery of truth and the disclosure of error, is by others considered as erroneous and heretical, among whom are, I doubt not, many who love our Lord and his holy cause. They may be conscientious in opposing what we ardently advocate, and cannot be persuaded to renounce. But do they not prove the want of the spirit of Christ by withholding charity from us and affecting to treat us as though we were not *Christians*? They seem to fear that error will be embraced in our search after truth,—that Christianity will suffer loss by being freely examined, and the pillars of the church be shaken, if not supported by human creeds, priestly power and policy. So thought the church of Rome, and therefore silenced inquiries, chained the human mind on religious subjects, and

held the people in ignorance. And what was the result? True, the people all thought alike,—all subscribed the same human creed, and tamely gave up their bibles to their priests, and blindly worshipped in an unknown tongue. But it was a death blow to vital religion. Christianity became a mere name, enveloped in a thick cloud of mysteries and ceremonies that had no tendency to inform the mind, interest the heart, or mend the life. We live in a happier country and age,—we may inquire for truth freely under a sense of accountability to God only. Our fathers, though not perfect, were inspired by the spirit of religious and civil liberty. They could not endure unreasonable restraints on their rights and consciences. They fled from the oppression of civil government and of the priesthood. Here they found an asylum from tyrannical men in church and state;—here they could breathe a free air, though surrounded by savages and wild beasts, and subjected to privations and hardships which we, their posterity, can scarcely realize. Religious liberty they chiefly sought, and here the precious boon was found.

Another improvement of the present age I would not fail to notice, I mean *Peace Societies*, whose great object is the abolition of war and the establishment of peace among all Christian nations. This Commonwealth has the honor of forming the first Peace Society in the world. This society was instituted, Dec. 25, 1815. The father* of it and the author of the *Solemn Review* and *Friend of Peace*, has immortal-

* Dr. Noah Worcester.

ized his name, and done vast benefit to the community, and eventually to the world. Many similar societies have since been formed in this country and in Europe, having in view the same benevolent objects. The efforts of this society have produced great and happy effects, especially in diffusing a pacific spirit, in throwing light on the subject never before perceived by ordinary observers, and converting thousands from the spirit of war to that of peace. By the writings above mentioned any person of ordinary capacity may understand that war, except when it is strictly defensive, is altogether inconsistent with the spirit and principles of Christianity, and that, were these latter to prevail through Christian nations, the spirit and practice of war would be banished from christendom. In generations and ages to come, in all countries where the peaceful religion of the Gospel shall prevail, the Peace Society in Massachusetts, and its pious and benevolent founders will be highly honored and had in everlasting remembrance. It seems to me, there can be no doubt of great benefit to the community, were the *Friend of Peace* more generally read. Those numbers would inform and correct the public mind respecting the spirit and the practice of war, and respecting the nature, design, and spirit of Christianity.

Though I may be thought to wander, it is my purpose to attend principally to things that are directly or remotely connected with religion. The psalmist affirms in the words following our text, that "God has his way in the sanctuary." By this we are to understand that God exercises a moral government

over men,—that he graciously regards the church in every age, and in every country. The Christian church is the peculiar care of Heaven, and is divinely assured that “the gates of hell,” the powers of wickedness, “shall never prevail against her.” To this “little flock,” compared with the world of men, “it is the Father’s good pleasure to give the kingdom.” We will advocate her cause, and recollect the wonders of divine providence and grace in her behalf, and especially in reference to this church and society. And this brings me to the matter of history, a brief sketch of which I proposed to give. On this subject, I shall make free use of a sermon delivered in this place, on a general repair of this house and its dedication to God and christian worship, in 1792. But before I bring to view the particulars of our history, I ask your attention, for a few minutes, to the fathers, the first settlers of this town. They have been too much overlooked and forgotten by their descendants. It is time, high time, to redeem our character, and to stir up our minds by way of remembrance, that we may be excited to praise the Lord, and to honour the memories of the godly men whose piety, labours, and sufferings laid the foundation of our prosperity, and that of our fathers for almost two centuries.

We have read or listened with satisfaction and delight to the learned and eloquent discourses and orations, on the anniversaries and centuries of our *Pilgrim* fathers of Plymouth and Salem. We have felt an exciting interest and sympathy in those characters and events. Our joy has been in common with the great

family of New-England, which has descended from those pious and benevolent adventurers. But who has duly remembered and honored, with hearts swelling with gratitude to God, the character and memory of Bulkeley, Jones, Willard, Spencer, and others, who *here* first planted the standard of the cross and of liberty? This is our work, our binding duty.

It was scarcely, if any, less adventurous, or perilous, at that day, to come from Cambridge to Concord, than from Holland to Plymouth, in 1620, or from England to Salem, seven or eight years afterwards. This was the first settlement in the wilderness away from the sea and shipping:—it was a pathless desert, except the paths of the Indians, which were dangerous. The Savages were here at home on their native soil, jealous of the white strangers, and often making war upon them in various parts of the sea-coast. The wild beasts were numerous and terrifying. The war-hoop of savages was continually dreaded, and the dismal howl of ferocious animals disturbed the slumbers of the night. But terrific sounds were not the chief causes of fear. The fire arms, the tomahawk, the scalping knife, and fire-brands were hourly in vision before them. In what fear must they labour by day, and repose themselves at night! With what anxiety and trembling must the affectionate mother have clasped her tender babe on her couch of rest and sleep!

In this fearful situation, provision was scarce and poor. Repeatedly they had reason to fear perishing with hunger, at least those who were more feeble and helpless. (For the truth of these statements, I

shall soon adduce authorities.) Yet with all these difficulties our fathers had to contend. They trusted in God, and they were delivered. Some of them were rich and of honourable descent, had lived in affluence, and never known hardships and privations of this kind. But the love of God, and the love of religious and civil liberty induced them to undertake and to endure such extreme hardships and dangers. O religion, how mighty thy influence! how invincible thy power! Let it affect our hearts to realize, that we are enjoying, in peace and plenty, the fruits of their toils and sufferings,—yea more, of their holy prayers and tears!

But what have we done or thought that can be considered a proper return to the memory of our sainted fathers and mothers, and to their God and ours? Who has been and is now thankful for what God has done for us by the instrumentality of our pious ancestors? He is thankful, who, remembering the days of old, and the fathers before whom the savages were driven out, and for whom the Lord wrought wonders, does like them devoutly worship and obey the God of his fathers,—does sanctify the sabbath day,—observe conscientiously relative duties, and does believe and follow Jesus Christ; not he who merely rejoices with a loud voice, and expresses his gladness by feasting.

I come now to historical facts and particular characters. But here I have to lament the loss and the omission of records. I shall give but a general sketch of the civil history of this town, and leave to other hands and younger eyes many things that are

interesting to this people, and that might gratify reasonable curiosity.*

This town was incorporated, as a plantation, Sept. 3d. 1635, by an act of the General Court of the then province, sitting at Newton. The Indian name of the place was Musquetequid. The town was fairly purchased of the natives, and payment was made to their entire satisfaction. The tract of land first purchased was six miles square, the centre being very near the spot where the meeting house now stands. Additions were afterwards made by grant or purchase.

The first settlers of this town were very careful to possess a fair title to the soil. They were not only just, but generous. Piety and righteousness marked their transactions, and proved that they "feared God and regarded man." Before the savages and the world they exemplified the religion of the Gospel, the love of which induced them to encounter innumerable hardships in this then dreary wilderness. They suffered extremely, both from want and fatigue, and endured with singular patience and firmness the greatest difficulties and "sores labors that ever any people with such weak means have done." As has been observed, it was a tedious journey from Cambridge to Concord: it was through a dismal wilderness, without any road, abounding with brush, briars, and swamps, so that

* It is understood, that a very accurate history of the local situation and civil affairs of this town, is now in preparation by a Gentleman, who has been indefatigable in his researches after interesting facts and proper materials.

not only their clothes, but their flesh was torn, and their strength sometimes exhausted. It was extremely difficult to procure comfortable food. Scarcely ever did they enjoy such as would now be counted tolerable. Compared with them, the poorest of us “fare sumptuously every day.” And yet, how little do we think of those destitute pilgrims, who endured hardships that we might live at ease,—who fasted that we might feast,—who mourned that we might rejoice,—who served God in the desert that we might worship him in a pleasant and populous country!

Our fathers had little else to eat than alewives and shad, indian corn, meal and water, pumpkins and squashes, and sometimes a little wild meat. They had given up their earthly treasures and comforts for those of religion and heaven. But the Lord our God was with them;—he protected and fed them in a wonderful manner. It may be said of them as of ancient Israel, that they were *made to know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord, doth man live.* Ye opulent and delicate, could you live one year, one week, as did our ancestors, for the sake of religion and conscience?

In the infancy of this town, it was remarkably protected from the often enraged savages. It is rationally supposed that the full satisfaction which the Indians received, when they sold the land, rendered them more peaceable towards the inhabitants. But especially did the God of his praying people of this place lay his restraining influence on the aborigines.

While other settlements round about were greatly disturbed,—their houses burnt, men, women, and children killed and scalped, and others carried into captivity, dreadful as death, no attack was made on this town, and only three persons killed by the Indians within its bounds.

The authorities, which I offer to confirm these statements, are *Dr. Mather's Magnalia*, *Johnson's Wonder-working Providence of Zion's Saviour in New-England*, and *Hubbard's Narrative of the Indian wars*. Some other records show that these authors are substantially, though not perfectly correct.

Omitting to quote farther from the Discourse above mentioned, and many things more suitable for common history than a sermon, (which history I have understood is already commenced,) I shall attend to the affairs of the church. Here, also, we are destitute of records during the ministry of the four first pastors. We are able, however, from other historical sketches, to trace with certainty the succession of ministers, and that of deacons since the ordination of the Rev. Mr. Bliss.* Our church records begin with the settlement of the Rev. Daniel Bliss. By him it is recorded that, "in the year 1636, the Rev. Peter Bulkeley, the Rev. John Jones, Maj. Simon Willard, and others, brethren and members, came to this town and erected themselves into a church."†

* The names of the deacons, prior to the church records, are left for the history above mentioned, which, it is expected, will be not only correct, but entertaining and useful.

† Thus it appears that the church was gathered in the year after the purchase and incorporation of the town.

This agrees with the author of *Wonder-working Providence* who mentions the coming of the same men, about the same time, to this place. And it is confirmed by Dr. Mather's account of the Rev. Peter Bulkeley. To me it seems due to the memory and character of that truly great and good man, here to quote from Dr. Mather a considerable part of his Biography of the first minister of this town,—the first adventurer and principal purchaser of this then wilderness, now pleasant and fruitful town. I shall be excused for dwelling on this character, not only because we are furnished with materials, but because we are more indebted to the piety, enterprize, and labours of Mr. Bulkeley, than to any other individual adventurer. All were worthy, and merit a grateful remembrance, but this man excelled, and is worthy of double honour.

Of the Rev. Peter Bulkeley* it is written by Dr. Cotton Mather in his *Magnalia*, that “He was descended of an honourable family in *Bedfordshire*; where for many successive generations, the names of Edward and Peter were alternately worn by the heirs of the family. His father was Edward Bulkeley, D.D. a faithful minister of the Gospel. He was born at *Woodhil*, (or *Odel*) in *Bedfordshire*, *January 31, 1582*. His *education* was answerable to his *original*; it was *learned*,—it was *genteel*, and which was the top of all, it was very *pious*. At length it made him a *Bachelor of Divinity*, and Fellow of *St. John's College* in *Cambridge*: the college whereinto he

* The proper name is *Bulkeley*; but Dr. Mather uniformly spells it *Bulkly*.

had been admitted, about the sixteenth year of his age; and it was while he was but a junior bachelor, that he was chosen a fellow. When he came abroad in the world, a good benefice befel him, added unto the estate of a gentleman, left him by his father; whom he succeeded in his ministry, which one would imagine *temptations* enough to keep him out of the *wilderness*.

“It was not long that he continued in conformity to the ceremonies of the church of *England*; but the good bishop of *Lincoln* connived at his *non-conformity* (as he had done at his father’s), and he lived an unmolested *non-conformist*, until he had been three prentice-ships of years” [I suppose 21] “in the ministry. Towards the *latter end* of this time, his ministry had a notable success, in the conversion of many unto God.” But soon after this time, under Archbishop Laud, “complaints were made against Mr. *Bulkeley*, for his non-conformity, and he was therefore silenced. To *New-England* therefore he came, in the year 1635; and there having been for a while, at *Cambridge*, he carried a good number of planters with him, up far into the *woods*, where they gathered the twelfth *church*, then formed in the colony, and called the town by the name of Concord.* Here he *buried* a great estate, while he *raised* one still, for almost every person whom he employed in his husbandry. He had many and godly servants, whom, when they had lived with him a fit number of years, he still dismissed them with bestowing *farms* upon

* Winthrop’s Journal, which is more correct, reckons it the *thirteenth* church. Mather appears to blend the gathering of the church and incorporation of the town.

them, and so took others after the like manner, to succeed them in *their* service and in his kindness."

The same author goes on to say of Mr. Bulkeley that, "he was a most excellent scholar,—that he endowed the library of Harvard College with no small part of his own," that "he was therewithall an excellent *christian*,—an exact sabbath-keeper,—an example many ways worthy to be imitated by every one that is called *a minister of the Gospel*,"—and that "his first sermon [meaning in this place] was on Rom. i, 16. *I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ*. Moreover, by a sort of winning, yet prudent *familiarity*, he drew persons of all ages to come and sit with him, when he could not go and sit with them.—Such was his pious conduct that he was had much in reverence by his people. And the observance which his own people had for him, was also paid him from all sorts of people throughout the land; but especially from the ministers of the country, who would still address him as a *father*, a *prophet*, a *counciller*, on all occasions." It is farther stated by Dr. Mather, that "upon his importunate pressing a piece of *charity*, disagreeable to the will of the *ruling elder*, there was occasioned an unhappy *discord* in the church of *Concord*; which yet was at last healed, by their calling in the help of a *council*, and the ruling elder's abdication. Of the temptations which occurred on these occasions, Mr. Bulkeley would say, *He thereby came*, 1. *To know more of God*. 2. *To know more of himself*. 3. *To know more of men*. Peace being restored, the *small things* in the beginning of the church there, increased in the hands of their faithful

Bulkeley, until he was translated into the regions, which afford nothing but *concord* and *glory*; leaving his well fed *flock in the wilderness*, unto the pastoral care of his worthy son, Mr. Edward Bulkeley.” Dr. Mather has recorded many more things of Mr. P. Bulkeley, particularly his then highly esteemed treatise of the *gospel covenant*,—his dying charge to New England, &c. I will now notice only his marriages, family, death, and epitaph. “His first wife was the daughter of Mr. *Thomas Allen* of Goldington: a most virtuous gentlewoman, whose nephew was the Lord Mayor of *London*, Sir Thomas Allen. By her he had nine sons and two daughters. After her death he lived a widower eight years, and then married a virtuous daughter of Sir *Richard Chitwood*; by whom he had three sons and one daughter. Age at length creeping on him, he grew much afraid of outliving his work.” And he wrote an *Epigram* in *Latin*, on the subject. “He was *ill*, as well as old, when he writ those verses; but God granted him his desire. He recovered, and preached nearly two years after this, and then expired, *March 9, 1658–9*, in the seventy seventh year of his age.”

The Epitaph on his tomb-stone is somewhat enigmatical, but very expressive of his character. It is in *Latin*, and as follows,—

“Obiit jam qui jamdudum obierat Bulkelaus:
Nec patriam ille mutavit, nec pene vitam:
Eð ivit, quò ire consuverat, et ubi jam erat.”

In English, thus,

“Bulkeley is now gone, who had long since gone; nor hath he changed his country, nor scarcely his life: thither he has gone, whither he was wont to go, and where he already was.”

And must it be added, in truth, that this inscription is not to be found in the grave yard,—that no stone designates the spot where this distinguished saint was buried or entombed ! If the spot can be ascertained,* (which is probable,) I would that at least a plain block of granite should there be placed, with his name indelibly inscribed.

Mr. P. Bulkeley was succeeded in the ministry by his son, the Rev. Edward Bulkeley, who was first settled at *Marshfield*, Ms. We are not informed when he was installed, but have reason to believe, it was soon after the death of his father. He was born and partly educated for the ministry in England; and died in this town, Jan. 2, 1695-6. Dr. Mather calls him the *worthy* son; and this is all the character of him I have been able to obtain. It appears, however, from some accounts, that he was an infirm man, lived to be old, and some years longer than he could preach. Dr. Mather classes him with those “*young scholars, whose education for their designed ministry, not being finished, yet came over from England with their friends, and had their education perfected in this country, before the College was come unto maturity enough to bestow its laurels.*”

The Rev. *John Jones*, who came here with the first company, as colleague with Mr. P. Bulkeley, left this place, with a part of the settlers, in a few years after planting themselves here; and Mr. Jones therefore is not reckoned as one of the ministers in succession.

* There is reason to believe that the three first ministers, viz. Peter Bulkeley, Edward Bulkeley, and Joseph Eastbrook, were laid in the same tomb.

The Rev. *Joseph Estabrook* was born at Enfield, in England, and graduated at Harvard College, in 1664. He was ordained colleague with Mr. Edward Bulkeley; the year I cannot say. He died, May 23d, 1711; his age is not ascertained. We know little more of him than that he was a man of distinguished piety and very respectable abilities. He was accounted faithful and his praise was in all the churches.

The Rev. *John Whiting* was ordained in May, 1712, and continued in the ministry upwards of twenty years; his pastoral relation was dissolved before he died. He was some time a tutor in Harvard College,—was a gentleman of learning, and possessed a large estate; his monument still remains.

The Rev. *Daniel Bliss* was ordained, March 7th, 1738. He was born at Springfield, Ms. and educated at Yale College, New Haven; he was a Calvinist in his sentiments, and very zealous in preaching and conversation. He was a man of respectable talents, of ministerial gifts, and of commanding manner and eloquence in preaching.

At the time of his ordination, the church consisted of 80 members;—a number of them belonged to those sections of the town which are now Lincoln and Carlisle. During his ministry of about *twenty-five* years, 290 persons were admitted to full communion, and 1424 baptized in this church. He was very active and laborious in his profession,—wrote his sermons in characters,—and often preached without notes, or wrote only the heads, or scheme of the sermon. Under his ministry there were two periods of

great religious excitement, or revival. And it is believed that a goodly number of those, then awakened to religious consideration, became true penitents and sincere christians.

Some few years after Mr. Bliss' ordination, a number of his people, and most of the neighbouring ministers, became dissatisfied with his religious sentiments, and with his conduct in going into other towns to preach, at the invitation of individuals, without the consent of the ministers of those town. Complaints and charges were brought against him by a number of the church, who were supported by others in the town.* These things are mentioned in the church records. In this state of affairs, a new church was formed, authorized by the neighbouring ministers, with which a small part of the people joined, and had preaching and worship by themselves. They did not build a meeting-house. It was customary, in those days, to count the cost, and to collect a sufficient society before building a church. There were then no charitable funds to assist feeble churches. I am informed, by a respectable lawyer, that there was a law of this then province, that "no persons should build, or appropriate, a house for religious worship without the consent and vote of the town." Laws

* There are reasons, which seem to me sufficient, for not bringing particularly to view, in this discourse, the difficulties that subsisted, and the councils repeatedly called for advice during the ministry of Mr. Bliss and Mr Emerson. Besides, it would swell this pamphlet to an unreasonable size. In a future day, some useful facts may be collected from the existing records of the church.

and customs have very much changed. The new society, however, did not long continue, and gradually returned to the old church and society. Mr. Bliss died, May 11th, 1764, aged 49; and his monument has been kept in repair.

The Rev. *William Emerson* was ordained Jan. 1, 1766. He was born at Malden, where his father was pastor, and graduated at Harvard University in 1761. He was a gifted, eloquent, and popular preacher. His ardent love for his country, involved in a distressing war, prevailed over the tenderest ties of social, domestic, and pastoral connexions. *That* love must have been strengthened by the firm belief of duty and the hope of greater usefulness, or it had not been so invincible. He left his endeared family and beloved people, Aug. 16, 1776, to join the army at Ticonderoga, in which he was appointed chaplain. On his return he was arrested by sickness, and died, October following, at Rutland, Vermont, aged 33. His premature death must be viewed a striking instance of human frailty, and an affecting proof that "God destroyeth the hope of man." Mr. Emerson was distinguished for his ministerial talents, social disposition, love for his country, for human happiness, and immortal souls; his rising character promised extensive usefulness. Alas! *that star*, to which nature and grace had given peculiar lustre, fell untimely! His body lies in the place where he finished his course; and this town have erected a handsome monument to his memory, on the burying hill.

Under Mr. Emerson's ministry, almost eleven years, 66 persons were admitted to full communion, and 506 were baptized. Soon after his settlement difficulties arose in the church. Some blame was attributed to the pastor, but, it is believed, unjustly, by those well acquainted with the origin and progress of the matters of controversy. Several councils were called in to hear, and to give advice; but the difficulties were not healed, until they were swallowed up and buried in the commencement of the Revolutionary war. Peace and harmony being restored, the pastor and church thought proper to renew their covenant with God and one another in a public manner. Accordingly, on the 11th of July, 1776, a day set apart for fasting and prayer, a covenant was signed by a large majority of the male communicants, 43 in number. Afterwards, 19 others, chiefly new members, signed the same covenant. Several of the members lived in Lincoln and Carlisle: those in Lincoln continued their connexion with this church until their death. But there were a few of the church who did not join in this transaction, nor put their names to the covenant. This solemn obligation is too long to be here inserted; it is on file with the church records. How many the church consisted of, when Mr. Emerson died, is not ascertained. I find no list of members, except of those males who signed the covenant. I well recollect several of the church, whose names are not among the signers. If, then, we reckon the males at 68, and add the usually larger number of females, we may suppose the whole were about 150.

I come now to the commencement of the ministry of your present pastor, who is the *seventh* minister of this town in regular succession.

Taking the charge of this flock of our Lord was to me very solemn and interesting. I did not covet nor eagerly embrace the opportunity. The greatness of the work, in a place so conspicuous and populous, caused trembling and hesitation. Although an invitation was given by the church the first of June, 1778, and I supplied or preached here from that time, yet I did not give my answer of acceptance, till the September following. In reference to that time and the early part of my ministry, I can feelingly adopt the words of St. Paul; * “and I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling;” and as he elsewhere says, “in many tears.” But I have been sustained, far beyond my early expectations, by the good and merciful providence of God, which I admire and adore.

Previous to my ordination, and at that and other times, I endeavoured unreservedly to devote myself to God in the work of the Christian ministry. It was my ardent desire to be an able, faithful, and successful minister of Christ. How I have performed the duties of my office it does not become me to say. I was then, and ever since have been, sensible of the very great disadvantages sustained by the interruption of my collegiate studies, and by numerous impediments to the acquisition of theological knowledge, occasioned by the Revolutionary war, and the unexampled

* 1 Cor. ii. 3.

depreciation of the paper currency of our country. If those disadvantages have been in any measure repaired by redoubled exertions, God is both witness and judge; he gave the disposition and the strength, and to Him be the glory.

The venerable P. Bulkeley commenced his preaching here from the words, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ." The first sermon of your present pastor was from 1 Cor. ii, 2. "For I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." That sermon I have repeated to you. It ever has been, and still is my undeviating endeavour and resolution to preach according to the import and design of those words. In respect to the leading and essential doctrines of the Gospel, I know not that my sentiments are materially changed. On searching the scriptures, it may well be supposed, that I have gained some further light, and acquired a better understanding of them. The manner of expressing my ideas also may be different. But I am not sensible of having departed in any degree from the doctrines properly called the doctrines of *grace*. The doctrine of *three equal persons in one God*, I do not call a doctrine of *grace*, or of the Gospel. We do not find it taught in the Gospel. Whether it be true, or not, it is not written in the inspired scriptures. The doctrine was first taught by fallible men. There were some in the Apostles' days, who had embraced christianity, and yet "had not so much *heard* whether there were any Holy Ghost."* Surely they

* Acts. 19—2.

had no idea of the doctrines of the Trinity. At first it was matter of conjecture, of inference, and then of opinion and controversy, and underwent a variety of changes and modifications; and it did not receive its modern shape and character, till hundreds of years had passed away.* No wonder that men should be long shaping and fixing a doctrine not expressly revealed, and which could be known only by express revelation from God; and especially when there was so much revealed evidently to the contrary. The time will not admit a full expression of my belief on this subject. But I have uniformly believed and preached that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah, the only and all-sufficient Saviour of sinners, owned, anointed, and authorized by God as his Son, whom he sent into the world for the great purpose of instructing and redeeming sinful men, of declaring his will, displaying his disposition, righteousness, mercy, and whole character, and of mediating between God and his intelligent creatures; and that he was endowed by the Father with all divine powers requisite to the accomplishment of the great work assigned him. I believe that he comes to us in the name and authority of God, and that therefore we owe him reverence and honour, love and obedience; and also that the time and manner of his invisible existence, the extent of his dignity, and all the relations he sustains towards God and the universe, “no one knoweth, save

* If any would know the rise and progress of the doctrine of the Trinity, let them read the notes to Dr. Lowell's sermon, on the Trinitarian controversy, preached at Dennis, at the ordination of Rev. D. M. Stearns.

the Father only.” And since our Lord has declared our limited knowledge of him as the Son of God, it seems to me presumptuous to affirm *that* of him, which is not plainly revealed, or that he is what he expressly denies. If, therefore, the charge of heresy, or error, on this subject, attaches to any sect of Christians, it does to that which attributes to Jesus Christ a rank, dignity, and mode of existence not revealed in the holy scriptures.

On other doctrines, such as the early apostacy of man,—moral human depravity,—regeneration, that is, a moral change of heart and life in sinners in order to happiness and heaven,—the need of divine influence to effect that change,—justification through faith in Christ to all who repent and obey the Gospel,—Jesus Christ the minister of reconciliation to God and the meritorious agent and medium of mercy to penitent sinners,—charity and holiness as necessary to the happiness of heaven,—a judgment to come by the Son of God, when the wicked will go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal,—on these and similar doctrines, I have been full in believing and constant in preaching. As I have advanced in life, and ought to have made improvement, I have meant to convey my ideas in better language, and in a more rational and scriptural manner. It has seemed to me the dictate both of reason and duty to aim at keeping pace with the improvements of the age, that I might gain the attention and meet the reasonable desires of the rising and more enlightened generations.

The style and manner of ordinary ministers, forty or fifty years ago, would now be very dull, if not disgusting to many of our younger hearers. We know it is often found true, that aged persons are dissatisfied with young preachers, and the young, with old ministers. An endeavour to prevent this disadvantage and to benefit the aged and the young, as long as we may be able, implies no change of religious sentiments.

But allowing that there has been such improvement in theological studies and real advancement in the knowledge of the Scriptures and Gospel doctrines, as appear to be, or really are, alterations of opinion, it is what might be expected;—it is the reasonable result of the proper use of superior advantages;—it is what the justly celebrated and Rev. *John Robinson* expected and foretold. When that godly man took his leave of that part of his church which came from Holland and landed at Plymouth, he gave them with his fervent prayers, the following affectionate and enlightened counsel.

“Brethren, we are now quickly to part from one another; and whether I may ever live to see your faces on earth any more, the God of heaven only knows. But whether the Lord have appointed *that* or no, I charge you before *God*, and before his blessed *angels*, that you *follow me* no farther than you have seen me *follow the Lord Jesus Christ*. If God reveal any thing to you by any *other* instrument of *his*, be as ready to receive it, as ever you were to receive any truth by *my* ministry; for I am verily persuaded, I am very confident, the Lord hath *more*

truth yet to break out from his holy word. For my part, I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the *reformed churches*, who are come to a *period* in religion; and will go at present no farther than the instruments of their first *Reformation*. The Lutherans cannot be drawn to go beyond what *Luther* saw: whatever part of his will our good God has imparted and revealed unto *Calvin*, they will rather die than embrace it. And the *Calvinists*, you see, stick fast where they were left by that man of God, who yet *saw not all things*.

“This is a misery much to be *lamented*; for though they were *burning and shining lights* in their times, yet they penetrated not into the *whole counsel of God*; but were they now living, they would be as willing to embrace *farther light*, as that which they *first* received. I beseech you to remember it; it is an article of your *church covenant*, that you *will be ready to receive* whatever truth shall be made known from the written *word of God*. Remember *that*, and every other article of your sacred covenant.” After some farther advice on the subject, he closes by saying, “Neither would I have you loth to take another *pastor* besides *myself*; inasmuch as a flock that hath two *shepherds* is not thereby endangered, but secured.” This counsel is wise and rational, full of the spirit of the Gospel.

If I were supposed to be a *Calvinist* when I settled, it was because they did not understand *Calvinism*. The *creed*, which I exhibited at my ordination, was, as I believed and meant, *Evangelical*,

and not *Calvinistic* ; and it was expressed in scripture language, especially on the doctrine of the 'Trinity. Though I was early educated in the principles of Calvin, yet they were not explained to me nor urged upon me : and when I became of age to think and act for myself, I rejected his *five points* as unreasonable and unscriptural. But to preach the Gospel of Christ, that is, to explain and urge its doctrines and duties, was my warm desire and paramount object. And to this work, my conscience bearing witness, I have sincerely and earnestly devoted myself.

Many obstacles, which it is needless to name, have impeded my progress in clerical attainments and usefulness. Much imperfection has attached to my performances ; and from faults I have never pretended to be free. As I have advanced in life, and been more exempted from hindrances, I have attended more exclusively to the duties of my office. Labours abroad, as far as was consistent, I have put off, that I might give more undivided attention to my people. Desired success has not attended my protracted ministry ; yet I have not been without encouragement. Much evil may have been prevented, though much good may not appear to have been actually done. Since my settlement, 364 persons have been added to the church in full communion ; 445 have made a profession in order to baptism, and 1533 have received baptism. Two years only, and those not in succession and during the American revolution, have passed without some addition to the church. The present number of communicants is 138. (The new

Trinitarian church have taken from us 7 males and 16 females)*

Some alterations have been made in the manner of admission to baptism, and a new church covenant was formed, soon after my ordination, as the records will show. A new form became necessary, as that used by my predecessor was carried with him on his last journey and lost.

This town has been remarkable for having from the first only one sect of Christians, and one meeting house at a time, until lately another sect and another house have risen up. The reasons for this, we have judged to be insufficient. Of the causes which have produced that new society, and of its number, state, and prospects, I shall say nothing at this time. As in its rise I devoutly committed the case to God, so I continue to leave it in his hands. But I should

* One person only has been excommunicated ; and this was for gross immoralities, and after long suspension and repeated admonitions. She supposed herself converted, to use her phrase, at *twelve* years of age, under the ministry of Mr. Bliss. Until she became advanced in life, and at the time of her excommunication, she was confident of her early conversion, though she did not pretend to repentance or reformation. She said, and on this occasion appeared to believe, “ that she received a spark of grace, when she was twelve years old, that she could never lose it, and that it would revive again before she should die, otherwise she should go distracted.” It is a lamentable truth, that she gave no evidence of repentance while she lived. Let this warn us not to depend upon any religious impressions or experiences that are not followed by a good and godly life. It appears from her own words, that her particular belief prevented the salutary effects of the solemn discipline of the church.

do injustice were I not to express my warm approbation of the candour and peaceable disposition which this society has exhibited towards that.

There has been but one period of noticeable religious excitement during my ministrations in this place. And I cannot say it was really beneficial in its effects. Evidence did not appear that its fruits were equal to its first promise and our hopes. Whether any person was added to the church or made really better in consequence of it did not appear. It seemed to me on reflection, to be more a work of man than of God,—more the effect of human passions and policy than of divine influence. I was disappointed and humbled, but gained, as I thought, some useful instruction and firmer resolutions to trust in God for the revival of pure religion, while we sincerely use the means which he has appointed. But though we have not witnessed such religious commotions as have existed in some other places, yet I believe we have possessed and exhibited as much real religion, and that many have been turned from the ways of sin to the ways of wisdom, and cordially reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. That we might see and enjoy a general reformation, and extensive revival of pure religion, in this place, has long been my earnest prayer and endeavour. And that I may witness and be *instrumental* of such a revival to the spiritual and eternal benefit of my beloved people, is the strongest tie to the present life which I am conscious of feeling.

It has pleased God to continue to me life and strength in *this* place longer than to any of my pre-

decessors. My hearers have been and still are witnesses how far and in what manner I have obeyed the apostolic injunction, "Preach the word in season and out of season; rebuke, reprove, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine," both in public and in private. But the whole truth, on this subject, whether for or against me, will never be fully known by any of us, till "we shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ." If then I shall be able to say, Here am I Lord, and the numerous flock thou didst commit to my charge,—how sublime the joy! how glorious the condition! how boundless the grace!

But it is time, my brethren, to inquire how you have heard and received and obeyed the Gospel that has been so long preached to you. Some of this congregation have heard me fifty years. Not less, I believe, than 2500 sermons have been written and delivered by your pastor,* and many of them repeated, and not a few re-written. How have the aged improved under this long course of religious instruction? Many of this assembly have been baptised, catechised, and instructed by the speaker, for whom he has cherished affectionate concern and earnest desires that they might be truly religious and forever happy. How have you profited by the stated administration of the word? Has preaching had with you its proper, its designed effect? 'Though a considerable number of persons have emigrated from this town, and this society,

* When I had written 1500 sermons, I ceased to number them. The last numbered, is dated June 14, 1812. But I have continued to write new sermons to this day, whenever time and health would permit; and this is still my purpose.

yet as many, or more, have come to us and joined with us; but the greater part of this congregation, I believe, have heard my preaching ever since they attended public worship. And what real religious benefit are you conscious of having received? We believe that preaching the Gospel is an institution of Christ; and that it is well adapted to convey religious information,—to explain and enforce duty,—to enlighten and impress the minds of men on the great subjects of religion and future salvation. And if it be an appointment of Christ, it is our indispensable duty and high privilege to hear it. Have you heard to any lasting advantage? Are you any better disposed to the duties of life, and more prepared for heaven by what you have heard? Notwithstanding all the imperfection of ministers and their method of preaching, if the truths of God's word have been officially set before you, in an intelligible manner, you were bound to hear and obey. Ministers "are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us" to be reconciled to Him,—to believe and submit to his Son. The account, then, which you must give, at the great day, how you have heard and received and improved the overtures of pardon and peace that have been made to you and urged upon you, must be very interesting and solemn. Now you are addressed by men of like passions with yourselves. But then you will be called upon by the appointed Judge of mankind, whose knowledge not a thought can escape,—whose authority none can dispute,—whose power none can resist. How much, then, it concerns you, my dear flock, to consider and examine how you have heard

and improved the long course of preaching and religious instruction here administered !

When I think of the final judgment, where ministers and their people will all meet,—and I shall behold all who have been committed to my care, I am filled with a solemnity and pressed with a concern that I cannot express ! My own account rises before me with awful interest, even with the hope that it will be found joyful ;—and the now unknown condition of my beloved people,—the uncertainty on which hand of the Judge they will appear, hangs upon my mind and heart with a weight of hope and fear not to be described ! My feelings, on this subject, are not lowered nor cooled by the consideration that my opportunities with you are fast drawing to a close. “After a little while, I shall go whence I shall not return.” Nothing that I am conscious of, short of the divine approbation and presence, would render the approach of death so welcome and pleasant, as the knowledge,—the evidence, that you, my charge, “beloved and longed for,” were become real christians, blessings in the world and heirs of glory forever. “Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance ; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle.—Moreover, I will endeavour, that you may be able, after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

You are expecting, my hearers, and, I trust, will patiently and gratefully receive a few words of counsel, not only in respect to duty in general, but more especially respecting your situation and conduct, when my labours and life shall cease.

I do entreat and counsel you, my brethren, to realize and deeply consider the everlasting truth and importance of *revealed* religion. If Christianity be true, it is an *infinite* truth; if it be false, it is an *infinite* falsehood, which we are not able to unravel or comprehend. We are thrown back into a terrible abyss of uncertainty,—into “darkness that may be felt.” But Christianity *is true*;—we do not for a moment admit the contrary supposition. Christianity is amply proved to be the truth of God by internal and external evidence,—by its professed design,—its sublime doctrines,—its holy nature, tendency, and effects;—“by many signs, and wonders, and miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost.” This heavenly religion meets the exigencies of man, exalts and purifies his intellectual and moral nature, satisfies his vast desires, blesses him in solitude and in society, sanctifies all his powers, and directs them to the divine Author of his existence and the imitation of the Saviour, and thus transforms him into the divine likeness: it does more, it animates him in duty, comforts him in trouble, illumines his prospects into futurity, sustains him in death, and qualifies him for the ineffable employments and enjoyments of the heavenly world. It is certain that “God spake unto the fathers by the prophets,” as recorded in the Old Testament, and “in the fullness of time, by his Son,” as

related in the New Testament. Our religion is as clearly proved as the nature of the subject admits, and as a pious and benevolent mind can reasonably desire. Attend, then, to this religion in earnest, as a matter of prime importance; and strive to secure the blessings promised, and to escape the evils threatened.

If I should be continued a few years longer, my strength and faculties will gradually, if not suddenly fail. I shall of course be less and less able to perform the duties of a teacher and pastor. I do therefore renew my request for assistance by a Colleague. It seems to me, that "I have served out my time," and that I shall not be censured for desiring more leisure and rest than my present charge will permit. Nevertheless, I do not wish to be idle, nor excused from such service as my strength of body and mind will admit. I am willing to wear out in your service.

It is not my desire that you should feel obligated immediately to act on this subject. Consult your own benefit and interest and peace and duty, as well as my relief. But whenever you shall attend to the interesting subject of procuring a successor, or assistant, to your present pastor, let me counsel you, in the first place, to seek unto God for wisdom and direction, and keep the eye of faith steadily towards him, "who is given to be the head over all things to the church." In the next place, look for a man of sound piety and sound learning. His piety, that is, religion, will induce a faithful performance of duty; and his learning will guard him against injurious errors, and "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." You need not fear the ministrations

of a man thoroughly religious and well informed in his profession.

But you must not expect every thing in a young man; nor that he must preach and pray and conduct like any of his predecessors. He must be and act himself, and feel no restraint from those who have gone before him in office. And it is my prayer and hope, that, whenever you shall be favoured with another minister, he may be a better, a wiser, a more learned, faithful, and successful pastor than you have had the last fifty years.

But, my dear brethren, take all suitable care to live in love and peace. "Follow the things that make for peace." Keep together as a religious society, and suffer no trifling considerations to alienate your affections and cause separation. Lay not stress upon human creeds. I am thoroughly convinced that vital religion in any person does not depend on any particular creed, except the Bible. Adhere invariably to the Bible, and endeavour to understand it chiefly for the great purposes of practical piety and goodness. In the present improved state of society and learning, you must read and examine for yourselves. If a question of controversy should be pressed upon you, be sure to read on both sides, before you make up your mind upon it. Your minister will cheerfully aid you in understanding the scriptures and all your duty to God, to your fellowmen, and to yourselves.

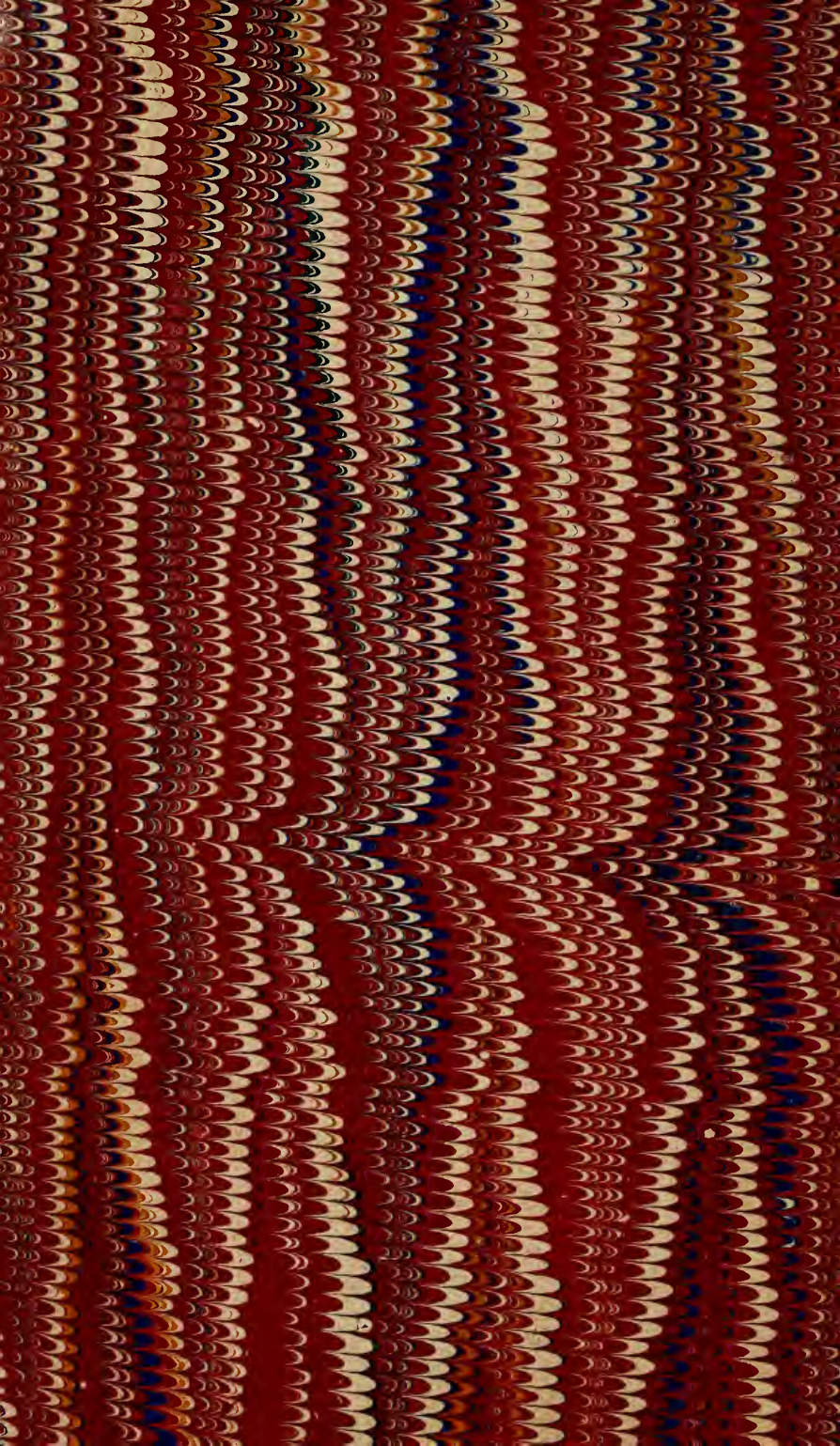
I shall not presume to dictate to you respecting the religious tenets of a successor. This does not appear to me to be my duty or my right. An attempt

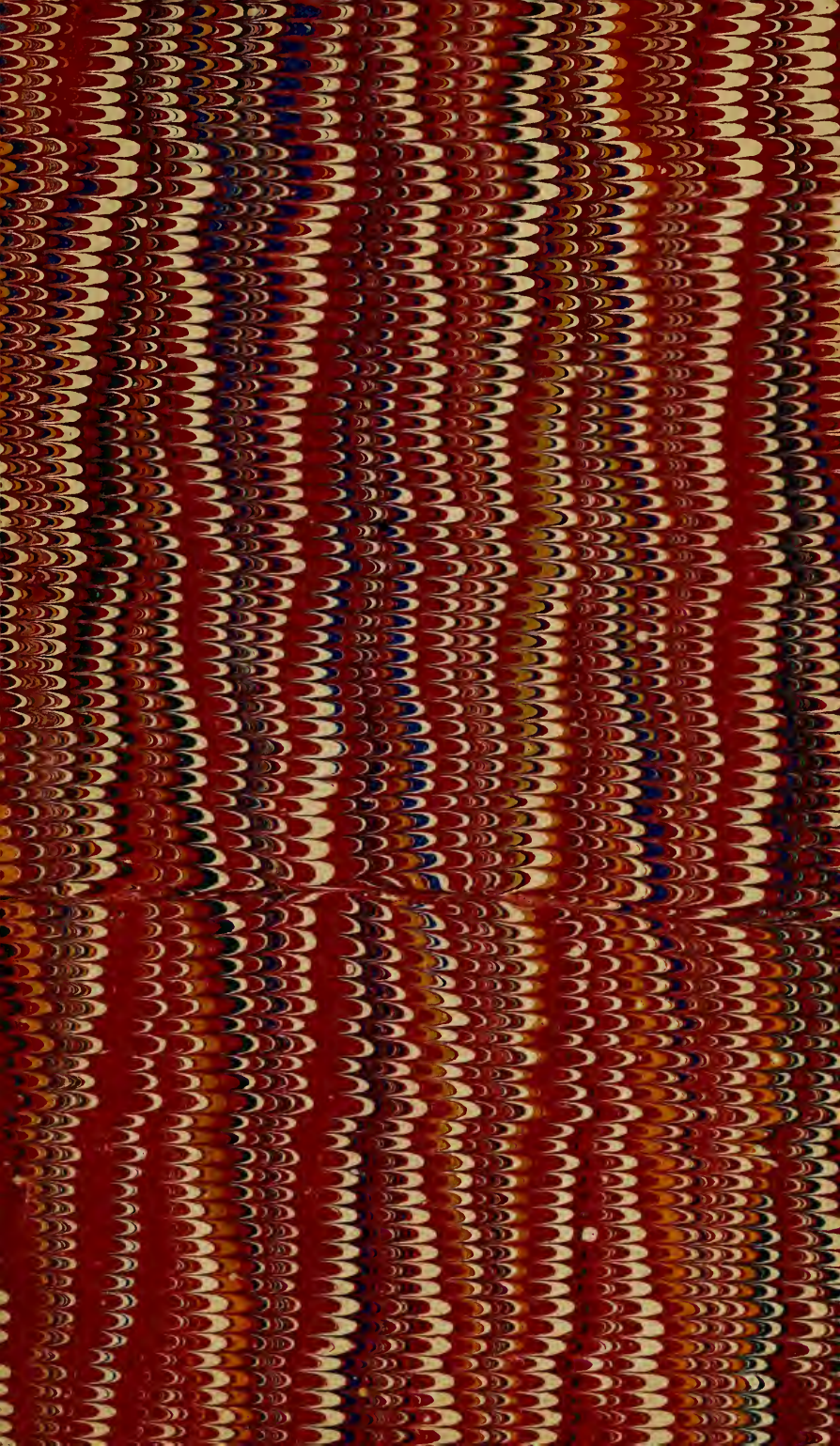
to bind you after my departure would be unreasonable and arrogant. You are to hear and judge for yourselves, and to make your election in the belief that you are nearly and forever interested in the transaction. My earnest desire is, that he may be a minister of the Gospel in theory and practice,—that he may firmly believe and teach and practice the religion of the Bible. Whether he shall understand this or that passage of scripture precisely as I do, or as many others do, I consider of little or no importance. Let him enjoy the same liberty of inquiring and judging for himself, which you justly claim for yourselves. If, however, he shall profess and practise contrary to what you honestly believe to be the word and will of God, you may, perhaps ought, to seek a remedy, a separation. But in doing this, be calm, orderly, consciencious, and look to Heaven for direction.

“Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. AMEN.”

The names of the Deacons of this Church at and since the Ordination of the Rev. Daniel Bliss.

	WHEN CHOSEN.	WHEN DIED.	AGES.
Joseph Dakin,	Unkown.	March 13, 1743.	75
Samuel Miles,	do.	Oct. 11, 1758.	77
Samuel Meriam,	do.	June 1, 1764.	unknown
Samuel Heywood,	do.	Oct. 23, 1780.	63
Samuel Minot,	May 30, 1744.	March 17, 1766.	60
Ephraim Brown,	do.	Oct. 9, 1788.	78
Amos Heald,	Oct. 24, 1751.	Left town Jan. 4, 1774.	
Thomas Barrett,	Feb. 13, 1766.	June 20, 1779.	72
David Wheeler,	June 16, 1766.	March 24, 1784.	77
Simon Hunt,	June 16, 1766.	Dec. 13, 1790.	87
George Minot,	Aug. 3, 1779.	April 12, 1803.	66
John White,	Dec. 6, 1784.	Joined Trin. church, Nov. 12, 1826.	
William Parkman,	Nov. 20, 1788.	Resigned, by reason of age, Dec. 8, 1814.	
Joseph Chandler,	June 30, 1791.	Resigned by reason of a Cancer, and died Jan. 19, 1813.	64
Thomas Hubbard,	April 30, 1812.		
Francis Jarvis,	do. do.		
Reuben Brown, Jr.	March 3, 1827.		
Cyrus Hosmer,	do. do.		





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