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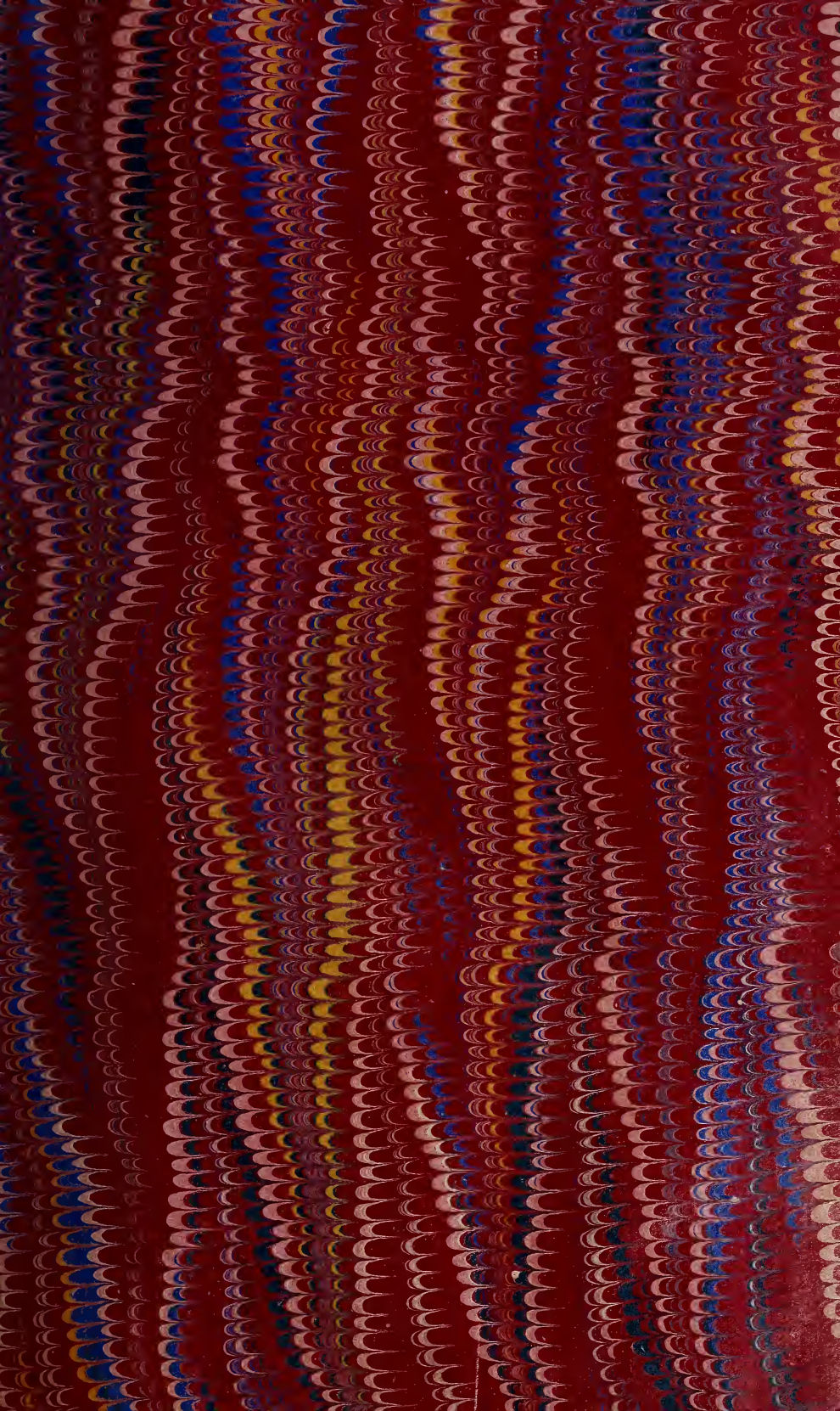
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.





A

SERMON,

PREACHED TO THE

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AND SOCIETY

IN HOLDEN,

OCTOBER 25th, 1863; THE SUNDAY FOLLOWING

THE THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

SETTLEMENT OF THEIR PASTOR,

REV. WM. P. PAINE, D. D.

WORCESTER:

PRINTED BY EDWARD R. FISKE,

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To the earnest request of a friend, who was present when the following sermon was preached, that it might be published, and that he might be permitted to assume the pecuniary responsibility thereof, the author gives his assent; and this is done the more willingly on account of the historical and statistical features of the discourse.

S E R M O N .

“Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary.”—Psalms, 77 : 13.

It is quite customary for ministers, who are sufficiently stationary, to preach, occasionally, memorial sermons. Some do it annually, others at longer periods. I have preached several such discourses, at irregular intervals. Those more especially of this type, were preached at the expiration of a ministry of seven, fourteen, twenty and twenty-five years. The close of another decade, to which we have now come, seems peculiarly appropriate to another somewhat formal review of what is quite rare, if not indeed a real wonder, in these days — a thirty years' pastorate.

The text warrants, and seems to favor by inference, occasional memorial sermons. God's way with a community is largely in and through the sanctuary. While there are other institutions and influences of great importance and power, there are surely none so intimately and vitally connected with our present and future destinies. If you were to designate the influence which has been more distinct and potent than any other in affecting and defining the interests of those who have lived and developed their minds and characters in this place, would you hesitate to declare most emphatically, that your religious institutions are that power? The results of your *educational* interests cannot be

compassed and weighed. But your *sanctuary* has exercised far greater power. But for this one interest, how exceedingly would all others have suffered and languished, if indeed they had had a being, or had not totally died! While, therefore, other memorial occasions may be quite suitable and useful, this is much more so. The way of God with *us* is, and ever has been, peculiarly in and through the sanctuary. The character and destiny of every one of us have been materially affected by the ministry under which we have lived, and whose influence we can never escape. Hence it may be highly profitable to take special reviews, occasionally, of periods of these sacred influences.

A significant and serious feature of the period now to be surveyed is, that it embraces just the length of time allotted to a generation of men. It has been computed that a generation passes away in about thirty years. This thought is impressive and serious when viewed in connection with a pastoral relation covering just this period. How solemnly suggestive! how admonitory! how earnest in instruction and appeal! How many sacred influences seem to be uttering their voices. A large portion of one generation gone, and another come! O, death, what hast thou done! O, eternity, what everlasting interests hast thou, during these swift years, hid away! O, God, who is sufficient for these things!

Moments pass so gently and noiselessly, that it is difficult to feel that each is sure to change our place and state. What are single sands? Yet how soon the glass of life is run! To the young, a generation in prospect, is almost as eternity. But how soon the record closes, and the seal is put on the account. Standing here thirty years ago, looking at the period of a generation then before me, how con-

tracted was the vision, and slight the impression, compared with the compass of view and depth of emotion which now attend the retrospection of the same period. Then it was looking with great indistinctness and uncertainty *at* the moving generation; now it is looking entirely and clearly *through* it. Then it was only dreaming of what *might* be,—much of which, time has shown to have been only in the imagination, now it is, with the greatest historical assurance, *knowing* what *has* been. If all those of the generation of whom we are speaking, who have passed away — if all who were present at my ordination exercises and have since gone to the other world, and all who have since commenced and closed their earthly existence, should now enter this sanctuary, you would all be obliged to go out to give them room. And what an assembly that would be, of the dear ones for whom we have mourned and wept! Parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives. Some worn out in the service and trials of life, others stricken down in the midst of their greatest vigor and usefulness, without a moment's warning, and others still, called away in the early morning of their days, just as the bud of life was unfolding in beauty and promise. What experiences, and instructions, and admonitions they would bring along with them! But they will not come back to hear our record, or to rehearse their experiences to us. Yet being dead they still speak; their utterances on this occasion are peculiarly distinct and intensely significant. Regard the record I now rehearse, then, as partly their message of wisdom and admonition.

It will be pertinent to this occasion, and useful, to connect historically, the present pastorate with those which preceded it, so that there may be a connected, though brief history of

our religious interests from the beginning of the settlement of the place. I shall make only such historical references as have a religious or moral bearing, and have a direct or remote relation to those objects for which the ministry has been established and sustained.

On the fifteenth of May, 1667, the General Court appointed a committee to view and report on a tract of land, of which Holden is a part. They made their report the following year, in which they say, "We do offer unto the court that which follows, viz: that there be a meet portion of land granted and laid out for a town, in the best form the place will bear. That a prudent and able committee be appointed to lay it out; that due care be taken by the committee that a good minister of God's word be placed there as soon as may be, that such a people as may be there planted, may not live as lambs in a large place without a shepherd."

Certain men, called proprietors, early obtained possession of territory embracing this town, obtaining their right to the said soil, both by a grant of government, and by a deed from the aborigines. In 1733, a petition, headed by James Thompson and sixteen others, was sent to the proprietors, praying that the land might be taxed to defray the expenses of erecting a meeting-house and supporting a minister. This reasonable request was at first denied. But the importance of establishing religious institutions so weighed upon the minds of the petitioners, and feeling that it was just that property which through their influence would be safer and more valuable, should be taxed, they repeated and persisted in their application until they prevailed. In 1736, a vote was passed by the proprietors, "to erect a meeting-house fifty feet long and forty feet wide, and twenty-two between

joints." At the same meeting it was voted, "that said house be erected about sixty rods south of where four roads meet." The place of the meeting of the four roads referred to, is about sixty rods in a northeasterly direction from where the four roads now meet, by our common; and the site of the meeting house is about on the spot on which the house of the late Col. Damon now stands. It was an unpainted tabernacle, with windows of small diamond shaped glass, set in leaden sashes. About the same time that it was voted to build a meeting-house, it was also voted "that provision be made for supporting an orthodox clergyman for three years next to come." To defray the expenses involved in executing the above votes, a tax was assessed "of fourpence per acre the first year, and twopence the second, and threepence the third, on all the land of the precinct."

In the winter of 1739-40, measures were adopted to obtain a town charter, which was accomplished in the early part of 1741. On the fourth of the following May, the town was duly organized by the choice of officers. In one hundred years from that date, May 4th, 1841, the town celebrated its first centennial with appropriate and interesting exercises.

In two weeks after our municipal organization, a town meeting was called, when, of the six votes passed, two were the following: "Voted to have the gospel preached in town. Voted to have a writing and reading school." On the 19th of July, 1742, the town (there being no church,) unanimously invited Rev. Joseph Davis to settle with them in the gospel ministry. He was ordained on the 22d of the following December, and on the same day this church was formed, consisting of fourteen members, all of whom were males. The council called for these purposes consisted of four

churches — Lancaster, Shrewsbury, Worcester and Rutland.

Misdemeanors in the early history of this town, do not appear to have been very frequent; but when they did occur, offenders were looked after. In 1753, as we learn from the town record, two boys were fined one pound and sevenpence, for breaking glass in the meeting-house. Either the boys are now more circumspect, or the powers that be are less rigid in enforcing the laws.

The pastoral relation of Rev. Mr. Davis continued about thirty years, till January, 1773. In a memorial sermon preached by him, he says, "At first, your increase was slow, and little alteration for the term of five years; but afterwards the increase was more rapid, for at the end of ten years, your number of families was fifty-five. For the second ten years, the increase of families was small — only ten. The last ten years of my ministry, the increase was fifty-one; the whole number at my dismissal being 106 families. At the end of twenty years the church consisted of seventy-five members, and when I was dismissed, of eighty-six, thirty-eight were males and forty-eight females." In the same sermon, Mr. Davis speaks of a remarkable sickness, about seven years after his settlement, when twenty-two died; and of another about six years after, when there were forty-five deaths, mostly of the young.

After the dismissal of Mr. Davis, the church remained without a settled pastor till Decembêr 21, 1774, a little less than two years, when Rev. Joseph Avery was ordained and installed. At this time our political relations to Great Britain were becoming very delicate; and in the following spring the war of the Revolution commenced in a tangible and earnest form. It is peculiarly pertinent, in view of the present state of our country, to quote two of a series of

fourteen resolutions passed about this time by the citizens of Holden :

“Resolved, That liberty, both religious and civil, is a most precious and inestimable gift of the great and glorious Creator of all things, granted to all rational creatures. Neither can any person or persons give or sell it away from himself, any more than he can take it from another.

Resolved, secondly, That if any have been so unfortunate as to surrender their liberty, such act of theirs cannot impose any moral obligation of servitude on them personally, especially if they were enslaved by irresistible power ; surely, then, it cannot reasonably bind their successors in every future generation.”

Such were the sentiments which our fathers entertained and boldly expressed in regard to human liberty, as an abstract and general principle. If it had been so accorded to all others by this nation, as well as demanded for themselves, the occasion of this cruel and bloody war in which we are now involved, would never have existed. It will be well to bear this in mind in relation to our future action and destiny.

The ministry of Mr. Avery, which continued about fifty years, was one of general peace and quietness in this place, though for some portion of this period Massachusetts and the nation were much excited by political strife, and the country passed through two wars with Great Britain. Mr. Avery was a man of more than ordinary ability ; he was amiable, and kind and faithful to his flock. By general consent he was called a “peace-maker.” Though he wrote many sermons, none were printed ; and I am unable to avail myself of any memorial sermon of his to supply what might be pleasing and instructive in the history of his min-

istry. From other sources, however, items of public interest may be gathered.

The meeting-house having become somewhat dilapidated, the question was agitated in a town meeting, held December 10th, 1787, whether the old meeting-house should be repaired, or a new one built. The opinion being prevalent that it would be wiser to build anew, a committee was chosen to draft a plan, and estimate the cost. The house was erected during the year 1789, which is within the memory of very few in this audience. The following vote stands on the town records. "Voted, That the committee chosen to provide rum and sugar to treat spectators at the raising of the meeting-house, be appointed to settle with Capt. Davis for the money he laid out in rum and sugar, and to take part of the fine money in the treasury to settle it with." When the pews were disposed of, it was provided, "that the wives should sit opposite to, and equal in rank with their husbands;" also, that the audience "should not leave their seats until the pastor and deacons had passed out." Verily, times do change!

The good influence of a new and suitable sanctuary was soon visible, and manifested in the erection of better school houses. This is one of the results of the "way of God in the sanctuary," giving a higher appreciation of the value and instrumentalities of general knowledge.

In 1809-10, occurred a very extensive religious awakening, usually called by our elder inhabitants, the "first revival;" as the results of which, more than sixty united with the church. Such a general religious interest was quite new, both to pastor and people, causing for a while considerable opposition, and awakening in the minds of the community much wonder and excitement at such new manifes-

tations, of which they had heretofore been ignorant. Though the externals of religion had been well sustained, the vital principle had apparently almost died out. But little was thought of piety of heart, and now that the spirit of God was deeply moving the religious sensibilities, it almost of necessity occasioned great and even strange commotion. The result was most auspicious for vital piety in this place. The distinguishing type of religion experienced a marked change from that time. Those who have since been on the stage of action have been no strangers to revivals. Few places indeed, have been more blest with special divine influences.

The church was destitute of articles of faith for about seventy years after its organization. There was only a covenant. Under this, some, as now, associated themselves together as regular members of the church, entitling them to all its rights and privileges. Others did what was called, "owning the covenant;" that is, assented to its requirements and obligations, which entitled them to the baptism of their households, but not to the participation of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. December 18, 1809, it was voted that the method of owning the covenant, as practised in this church, should be discontinued, and soon after, it was unanimously voted to adopt a confession of faith; but by some neglect, no vestage of such a document can be found on record.

Mr. Avery held the pastorate nearly fifty years. Rev. Horatio Bardwell was installed junior pastor on the 22d of October, 1823. His ministry, of about ten years, was highly acceptable and successful. In 1827, it was voted to subject the meeting-house to a process of repairing and remodelling, which was carried into execution the following year.

The result was, the house in which we are now assembled. It originally stood about midway from its present site to the highway in front. It was moved back, the roof turned a quarter round, a vestibule and dome added, and the inside made entirely new, to correspond with the prevailing mode of construction at that day. Towards the close of Mr. Bardwell's ministry there was an extensive revival and a large addition to the church.

Though I have not, thus far, alluded to my own ministry, yet it has not been slightly affected by these preceding events and influences. It will be seen, that from the original settlement of the town, the rights and privileges of gospel institutions have been highly appreciated and generously provided for. Pastoral labor, cœval with the incorporation of the town has been enjoyed almost literally without interruption. But once, indeed, has it occurred for more than a hundred and twenty years; and then for a period of less than two years, between the first and second pastorates. The good results of this wise provision have been quite distinct in the good order and general intelligence, and right influence which have marked the history of Holden. In giving a sketch of my own ministry, I shall, of necessity, make some allusions to events included in former memorial discourses, though I intend to avoid a repetition. I assure you, most unfeignedly, my dear hearers, that I attempt this service with feelings of delicacy and self-reproach. It is always embarrassing to a sensitive mind to speak of one's self, and what he has done, and it seriously increases the embarrassment, to be conscious that he has come far short of his duty. In entering the pastoral office, one is apt to fear that he shall not be faithful. But when he looks on his work, which is almost completed, whose mis-

takes and imperfections cannot be numbered nor corrected, he feels condemned and grieved, and sad. He wishes he had been more earnest, and diligent and faithful, and he sometimes longs to go over his course again, hoping that he should be a wiser and better laborer in the vineyard of his Master.

In the early part of the year 1832, Mr. Bardwell signified his desire to be released from his pastoral relation to this people, and his regular services soon after ceased. A variety of candidates for settlement were then employed, and the society was becoming somewhat seriously divided, when the committee applied to me, to try my chance in a similar capacity. My first appearance in this unenviable position, was on the first Sabbath of January, 1833; and on account of the peculiar condition of the society at that juncture, it was a fiery ordeal for a young man to endure. When the candidate had been seen and heard, and questioned by those of various interests and isms, then taking form and position, he was, with a good degree of unanimity, invited to the pastorate. For various reasons, which seemed good and sufficient, the call was declined. The society then went through another season of hearing and rejecting candidates, when, as it seemed by the manifest direction of Providence, I was again invited to the pastoral office. The call was accompanied by some other communications, which seemed to make it plain that I should turn from another field of labor which I had a strong desire to enter, and come here. Under this impulse, I came, and was ordained on Thursday, the 24th day of October, 1833. And I can truly say in the Apostle's words, "that I came among you in weakness and fear, and in much trembling." I was in feeble health, and when I surveyed the field which was spread out before me,

I felt like exclaiming, "I am utterly insufficient, physically, mentally and spiritually, for these things." But I had put my hand to the plough, and must not look back. Having laid myself on the altar, I hoped that God would accept the offering, though it was not without many blemishes; and that He would mercifully be pleased to bless what I felt would be, and now know has been, a very imperfect ministerial service. I felt conscious of a desire to do better than I feared I should, and far better than I now am sure that I have. My hope in respect to a fearful number of shortcomings, is in the exceeding riches of the pardoning grace of my Master. While it might indicate arrogance and presumption, for a pastor to affirm confidently what he has accomplished, and proclaim the results of his labor, he may with propriety, on suitable occasions, declare what he has *desired* and *designed* to do, and what God has wrought through his humble instrumentality. Permit me, then, to say, that when I fully decided to become your pastor, it at once became my fervent wish and determined purpose to render you a warm and hearty service. I determined that my interests and affection should go with me, and abide with you, and be yours, as long as the Providence of God should keep me your minister. And now, I solemnly declare, that it has been ever thus to this day. I have loved no other people as I have loved you; you have had my undivided interests, labors and affections, and my pastoral concern from the beginning has been only for you. My desire has been to do you good, my joy has been to see you prosper, and it has sadly grieved me to see you afflicted. It has been my wish and purpose to be attentive and obliging and faithful to you in all relations and conditions. It has been my settled determination not to neglect any of you, and especially when

pastoral labor or visits were particularly required. But to affirm that I have in all cases come up to the full measure of this standard, would be belying my own convictions of truth. I have no manner of doubt, that in numerous cases, complaints against me would have been just; probably I have deserved many more than have been actually made. Yet I know that all such direlictions of duty have been not vicious or intentional omissions, but have occurred in spite of a fixed contrary resolution.

I came to you deeply impressed that as the way of the Lord is in the sanctuary, I must so apportion my labors, that much and sufficient time and study must be set apart, to render the service in the sanctuary as attractive and instructive and impressive as I might be able. I had been so taught by experienced and able teachers, and every year has confirmed me in the conviction that it is the true way for the greatest usefulness. It is not for me to judge how well I have executed my purpose, but this has ever been my aim. And my judgment to-day is firm, that the minister who would serve his people most profitably, and would have the longest and most quiet ministry, should give his most especial attention to his preparations for his public services in the house of the Lord. Other interests, excepting those of the sternest necessity, as funerals, and sicknesses, and bereavements, must ordinarily yield to this claim. But this course will render a pastor liable to be complained of for neglecting his people. Some not knowing, not being able to know, how much time is weekly required by the minister to satisfy them in the sanctuary, will think, and quite innocently too, that he might easily do more work, that his labors are easy, and that certainly he might visit them oftener than he does. But of this I am quite certain, that the min-

ister who spends so much time among his parishioners as to satisfy all with the frequency of his visits, will soon fail to satisfy any in his Sabbath service. You will, therefore, please to excuse me in future, as you generally and generously have in the past, if I continue to practise according to those convictions. And when the time shall come, if it has not already, when I shall fail to satisfy your reasonable requirements in the sanctuary, let me counsel you that it will be high time for a change of pastor, though you should see me in your dwellings every week of the year.

In what I have said, I know you will not accuse me of advocating a secluded pastoral life, and an ignorance of and lack of sympathy with the condition of his flock. I think you will not feel that on this point I have egregiously erred. It is to be presumed that you have not been seriously dissatisfied with your minister's course, however numerous have been his mistakes and short comings, and that he has felt tolerably contented and satisfied, that our relation has existed for a whole age. Do you know how extremely rare such a long connection is, at the present day? There are in Massachusetts four hundred and ninety congregational churches, and how many of them, do you think, have pastors in actual and full service, that is, without colleagues, to do the labor, who have been settled as long as our relation has existed? Only three! Dr. Ide, of Medway, Dr. Storrs, of Braintree, and Mr. Fitz, of Ipswich. If there is any merit in this protracted connection, then it is surely right that you and I should take a good share to ourselves. A ministry, in these days, when neither minister or people are bound to each other by any constraint, but to the greatest extent act voluntarily, would not be likely to be so stable, unless there existed a large degree of mutual confidence and affection and forbear-

ance. Our proof of this confiding and endearing relation, is the most demonstrative that could be furnished.

This long and harmonious connection is the more remarkable, in consideration of the great general commotion and excitement which have existed through this entire period. There has not been a moment for these thirty years, but the moral and political elements have been in active, and often angry and antagonistic disturbance. This has been a fruitful occasion of unsettling ministers, and dividing societies and churches. Of course, we have felt the agitating influence. That I have not always pursued a course which has been at all pleasing to some of my best and most substantial and respected friends, I am, and ever have been, fully aware. And far am I from affirming that my course has been the wisest; but this much I am sure you will permit me to say, that I have conscientiously endeavored to do as my Master would have me in the premises, and to pursue the course in speaking and acting, which would most effectually promote your peace and good.

There has been more diversity among us, perhaps, on the treatment of slavery than on any other topic. There has been no essential difference in regard to the institution itself, for we have alike held it in abhorrence; but we have not all judged quite alike in regard to the most prudent and just method of dealing with this abomination. But the day for much difference of opinion among us has, I think, passed away, and we are now seeing eye to eye, and feeling heart to heart. Since the rebels have utterly violated all constitutional leagues and provisions, and made that accursed institution, in which the free States were in some measure connected with them by constitutional entanglements, the occasion of war, and have rendered it a necessity

that, by a purely war measure, the institution should, by executive proclamation, be declared null and void; we all see our way clear to say to all the oppressed in all rebeldom, "go free;" and not only to bid them God speed, but to do what in us lies, by ballot and by arms, to secure them the rights of freemen. May it please God that in the progress of this dreadful war, every shackle shall fall from every slave in the land. If it be asked what can be done with so many bondmen set free, I would reply, that I should have much less fear of them than of their masters while retaining them in bondage. The former state, I should be quite willing to risk, but the latter, I should most profoundly dread.

I have, in this connection, dwelt on this subject because it has been interwoven with all the relations of pastor and people for the last thirty years. But though public interests have to so great an extent deserved attention during this period, those of a more social and private order have not been the less important. The parochial and neighborhood and home mutations and scenes of a thirty year's pastorate are numerous and impressive. A *single* year of pastoral experience and observation will often furnish materials for an instructive volume; then how large and varied must be the developments and vicissitudes of a generation! What must be the pastor's observations and emotions in attending about eight hundred funerals, and witnessing the sundering of so many ties of every name and kind, and so many tears of grief and despair! What serious changes, as well as bleeding hearts have been produced by those nearly one thousand deaths which have occurred during this period, in this population! Into how few of our dwellings has the unwelcome and fatal messenger not cast his gloomy shadow! How few who have lived through this period can affirm,

that none of those deaths affected either their condition or peace?

Five hundred and forty individuals have I had the honor and pleasure of joining in the holy bands of marriage, thus assisting in giving very essential change to their condition and destiny. It has been my most delightful privilege to welcome, in my Master's name, three hundred and seventy-five who we trust were his disciples, to the fellowship and rights of the church. Many of whom I am permitted to declare, have honored their profession and their Lord.

One hundred and seventy-five times have I broken the bread and given it in Christ's name, from his own table, to his waiting flock, and precious indeed have been these seasons of love and promise.

Some 3300 sermons have I attempted to preach for the honor of Christ and the good of men, many of which I am painfully sensible were exceedingly imperfect, and few, if any, nearly what they ought to be, in power and pathos and appeal. This record is easy to make, but the result, as affecting both pastor and people, is more weighty and serious than either tongue can describe or mind conceive.

It would be an unjustifiable omission not to give grateful prominence, on this memorial occasion, to the various seasons of the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit on many who within this period have passed away, and upon others who still remain. There have been nine distinct and precious revivals, when nearly all who have united with the church of Christ became his disciples. Most vital to the prosperity of Zion, if indeed not to its very existence, have been these refreshings from the presence of the Lord. With such constant drain upon us by deaths, and especially by removals of residence, if this resource for recruiting soldiers

for Christ were cut off, his army would soon become small indeed, if not extinct.

But in all these years, our necessity for a revival has never been more urgent and distressing than at the present time. Let our prayers be fervent and unceasing, that God will not give up his heritage to reproach.

I cannot close this history of my long connection with this people without bearing the most heartfelt testimony to the uniform forbearance, kindness, generosity and sympathy which myself and family have always received. In looking back through this long period, I can scarcely recall a single occasion, when I felt that I received unjust or unkind treatment; on the contrary, our intercourse has *always* been of the most kind and pleasant nature; you have received me into your dwellings in times of both joy and sorrow, with the most perfect cordiality, and have from first to last, made me the recipient of constant and unnumbered favors; and more than all, your appreciative sympathy and aid, in those dark days when the woes of sorrow have almost overwhelmed us, have bound you to my heart by a thousand ties of gratitude and affection.

Many changes have occurred in connection with this church and society, which deserve notice, did time permit, as being both affecting and instructive. To the communication inviting me to become your minister, were appended the names of five influential members of the society, who were the committee of the parish, four of whom have, for many years, been numbered with the dead. The only survivor is the eldest man in town, who has, to the present time attended public worship with exemplary punctuality, until his hearing has become so much impaired that he can derive little benefit from the service. Of the council who

ordained me, most have passed away, who officiated in the exercises of the occasion. An elder brother, who preached the sermon, he who made the consecrating prayer, he who gave the right hand of fellowship, and he who addressed the people, are all gone. The church was then large, indeed, the largest then in this vicinity; but more have since been separated from it by deaths and removals, than were then members of it. During my ministry almost five hundred have been removed from the church, averaging more than sixteen per year. This is quite remarkable, seldom occurring in a community like this. Under a process of such large and unceasing depletion, it is not easy to sustain a church and religious institutions.

At my ordination there were four deacons of the church, all of whom long ago ceased to perform the duties of the office. Two long since died, and two are supposed to be living. Those who now serve in this relation have held the office 24, 21, and 14 years respectively. Where is that large and compact assembly which was gathered here at my ordination? Most, as with the council, have passed from earth and earthly scenes. Where are the members of the choir, that left not a vacant place in those seats on that occasion, and who there sang as I thought then, and still think, as few choirs can sing? Not one has been left for these many years; and not a few have gone to join in heaven's chorus. Where are those venerable and honored fathers and mothers and many of their children, who made up the assembly and constituted my early hearers! Are you the men and women of those days? A very few of you are, but most of you, if indeed you had commenced your existence, were only in the infancy of your being. It is not so now; you are the fathers and mothers, bearing the burden and heat

of the day, and almost beginning to grow old. But *you* will not feel that because you generally were not the first to constitute my pastoral charge, you are the less cherished and beloved. Do you not remember, that though Benjamin was the youngest of Jacob's sons, this child of his old age seemed to be the dearest of all? It would seem to be the result of a wise Providence, that parents and pastors and teachers should possess that versatility of interest and affection, that they even continue to cherish and love with deep and warm emotion, all who are from time to time added to their fold. Though you did not constitute the flock chiefly of which I was originally made overseer, you are *now* my charge, and I feel as truly now as I ever felt, that I dwell among my own people.

The general condition of things in the entire town, has undergone a surprising change during the period under review. Thirty years since, nearly all the older residences, and particularly those connected with any considerable form, were owned and occupied by substantial and valuable families. There were then no foreigners in the place. There was a large number of young men and women, who seemed destined to take the places which their fathers and mothers were honorably and usefully filling. Your own observations will show you what changes have occurred. The number was then greater who were both able and willing to aid in sustaining gospel institutions than now. For many years after my settlement, there was not the slightest difficulty in obtaining all the money that was desired for this purpose. Some of you will feel quite impressed, that a change in this regard has surely come.

In the progress of my pastorate, we have had many affecting illustrations of the profound mysteriousness of divine

Providence. On the one hand, we have seen those who, in the estimation of human judgment, could least of all be well spared from the service of man and God, suddenly smitten to the earth; and on the other hand, those who apparently could be well spared, dragging out, year after year, even to extreme old age, a worthless and miserable existence, a comfort to none, and a burden to many. Often and strikingly it has appeared, that God's ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts. Many have suddenly been made desolate in the conjugal relation, when it seemed that the deceased partner was needed more distressingly than at any former period of life. Children, too, just becoming the stay and staff of aged and infirm and dependent parents, have been taken when most urgently required for support and comfort.

And I remember that while I am speaking, some of your hearts are bleeding for the untimely death of patriotic friends, who nobly obeyed their country's call, and tearing themselves from homes peaceful and dear, laid their precious lives upon the altar. O, cruel war! casting such dark shadows over all the land, bereaving thousands of homes, and marking this period as one of desolation and strife! O, accursed rebellion! accursed now, henceforth and forever, be the corrupt and corrupting occasion of it!

Death and afflictions have visited you at all periods and in all forms, the most unexpected and grievous. Some of you have greeted the dawn with smiles and hopes, and ere the sun went down you have been cast into the lowest depths of desolation and despair. We have mourned together, and I have been your companion in tribulation. Few pastors have been taught more effectually than yours, how to sympathize with their flocks in sorrow. I have on a

former similar occasion recorded the series of deaths with which your pastor's family had then been afflicted. I have now to record one more, for now

" Another hand is beckoning us,
Another call is given ;
And glows once more with angel steps,
The path which reaches heaven."

I almost fear that true delicacy forbids me to say a word more, but I feel assured that you will look with charitable indulgence on the gushings of parental fondness ; and especially as she of whom I beg to say a word, was so well known to you, socially, mentally and morally. Sarah Cornelia was our third child, born Jan. 1st, 1841, and died Feb. 5th, 1862, at the age of twenty-one years. Her organization was extremely delicate and sensitive ; too much so for an uninterrupted state of quiet and equanimity. From her earliest childhood she was extremely impulsive, and ardent and strong in all her emotional nature, requiring for her good a very gentle, yet decided parental control. Most mercifully, while she was quite young, a strong and marked religious influence came in to mould and guide. From this period little was required for her control and direction but her own lively conscience and early maturing judgment. Her religious principles had great depth and control during her brief life, yet long enough, may I say it, to make its mark. She loved most fervently that which is noble and elevating and pure, and hated with a perfect hatred all that is unworthy and false. She was endowed with the gift of poetry, and a love for all that is beautiful ; was fervently attached to literature and science, in the pursuit of which, I think I may justly say, she greatly excelled. But she loved the kingdom of God more. Her last words were, to those who watched around her dying couch, "Live in the

truth." The truth she ardently loved, she tried to live in it, and if her days had been many on the earth, I feel assured that this would have been her aim and effort. But she was early called to her heavenly home, and left in her home below a vacancy that is always there, and bleeding hearts that feel like David, "would to God I had died for thee!"

I might also speak in terms of exalted commendation of many of your departed friends, whose loss to you was just as great as ours to us. I too well know, how many of you have lonely firesides, and crushed and bleeding hearts, and feel that the light of your household is gone.

"'Tis always thus, 'tis always thus with all that's best below,
The dearest, noblest, loveliest, is always first to go.
The bird that sings the sweetest, the vine that crowns the rock,
The glory of the garden, the flower of the flock."

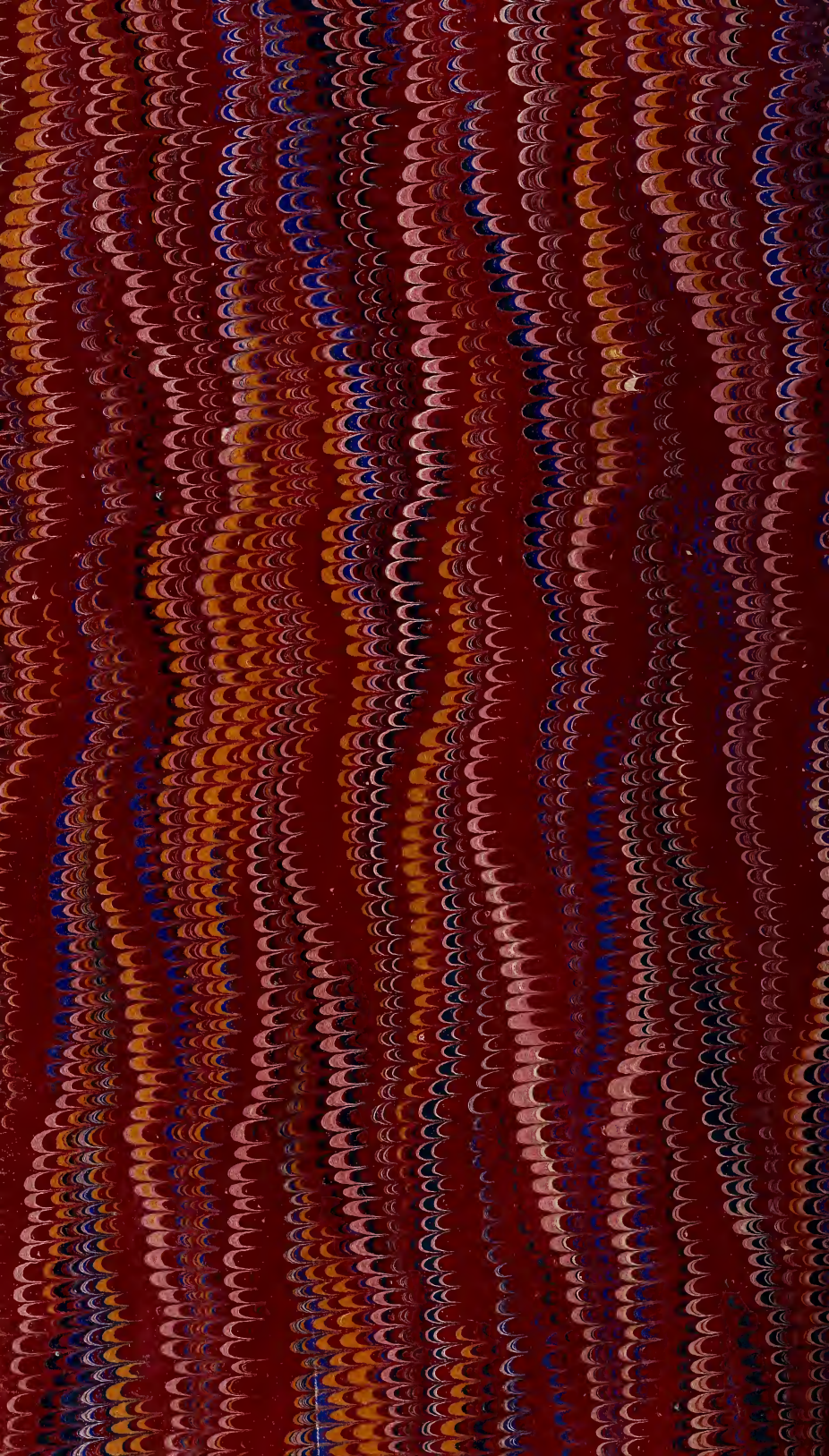
I shall omit a reference to many points of interest which are pertinent to this occasion, because they were considered, and their record made in my quarter-century discourse, which many of you have in your possession. A very cursory review of the past we have now taken, omitting much that would be interesting, yet having consumed about as much time as the proprieties of the occasion will permit. It requires a volume to give a running history of a single life, then how much space and time are needed to rehearse the affairs of a religious society, more than one hundred and twenty years old, or even thirty years of its history.

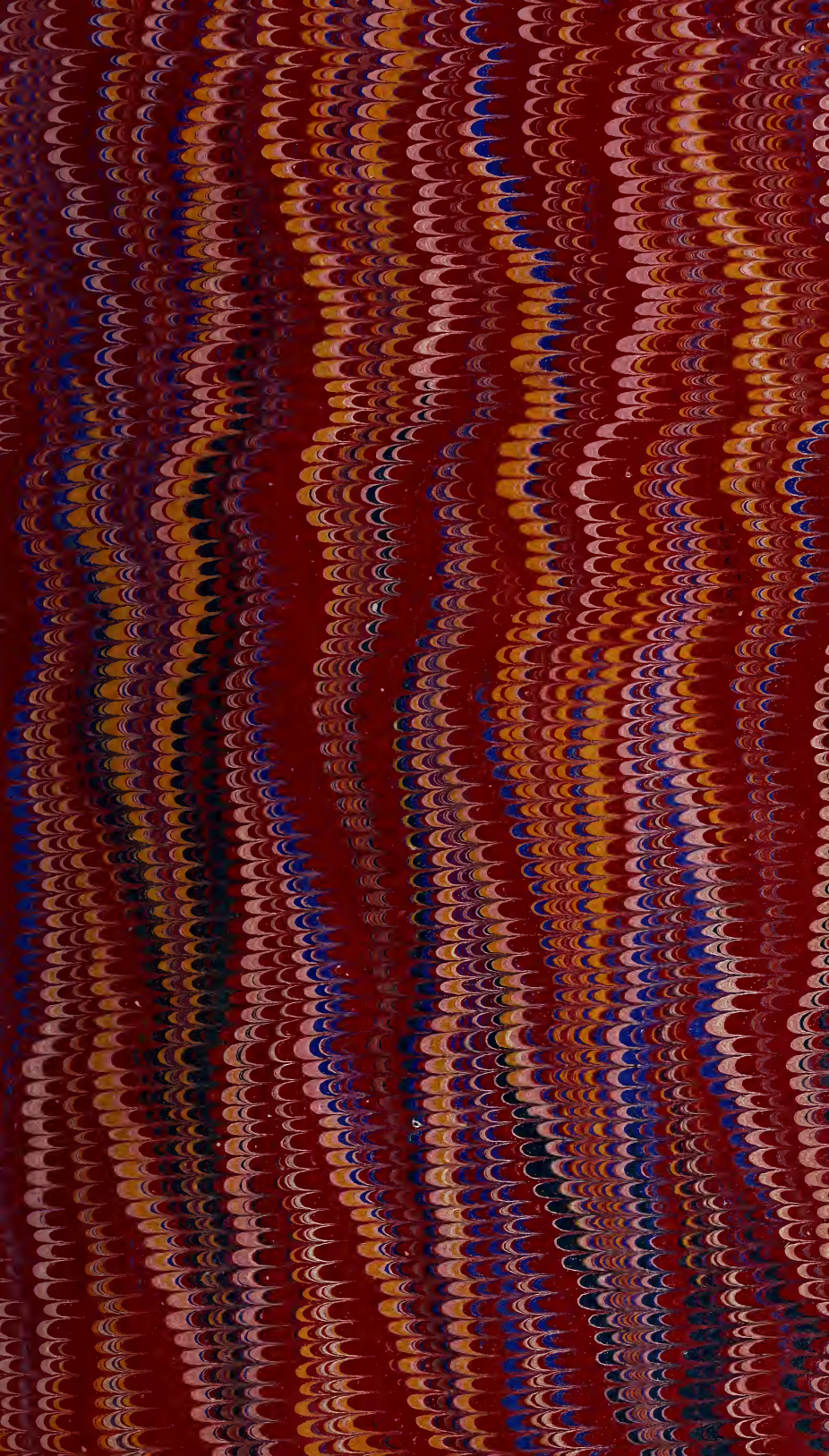
But there is a future, as well as a past, of which we should not be oblivious. Indeed it is that which is before, that clothes, with its chief value, that which is behind. There is little hazard in saying, that the future of such a community as this will, in material respects, be quite unlike the days of

the fathers. In whatever respects there may be improvement, it seems quite obvious that for a time at least, it will require far more christian zeal and effort and liberality to sustain religious institutions, and transmit them pure and unimpaired to those who shall come after you, than has been demanded in past years. It is high time that you inquire seriously what these privileges are worth to you and your children, and whether you can nearly as well dispense with them, or suffer them to be impaired, as to endure the increasing burdens which their maintenance and perpetuity may require. If I were speaking my parting words to you, I should feel impelled to say, with the deepest anxiety, if not painful concern, (and why should not I say it now?) be jealous for your sanctuary with godly jealousy. With willing minds and cheerful hearts, make all required provision to sustain a faithful and able ministry. The prosperity and peace and spiritual life of yourselves and your posterity imperiously require it. Suffer not, and God forbid that the historian of thirty years hence shall write of this hitherto so blest and prosperous church and society, the glory has departed. Nay, rather, when large sacrifices and heavy burdens come into comparison with the privileges and blessings of religious institutions, act with an enlightened judgment and large hearts, and with practical and earnest christian faith. Then shall the time never come when this place, so favored of God in past years, shall become a moral desolation, and the enemy of all righteousness in triumph rejoice that the gold has become dim, and the most fine gold changed.

Let us renew our diligence and zeal, and, by the help of God, prepare materials to be embodied in future years into a record which shall be creditable to our devotion, to our

religious faith, and which the little ones who now know not their right hand from their left, shall rehearse when we are dead, but not forgotten, as illustrative of our wise and careful provision for them, and of our faithful and earnest consecration to His honor and kingdom, who is Lord of all.





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