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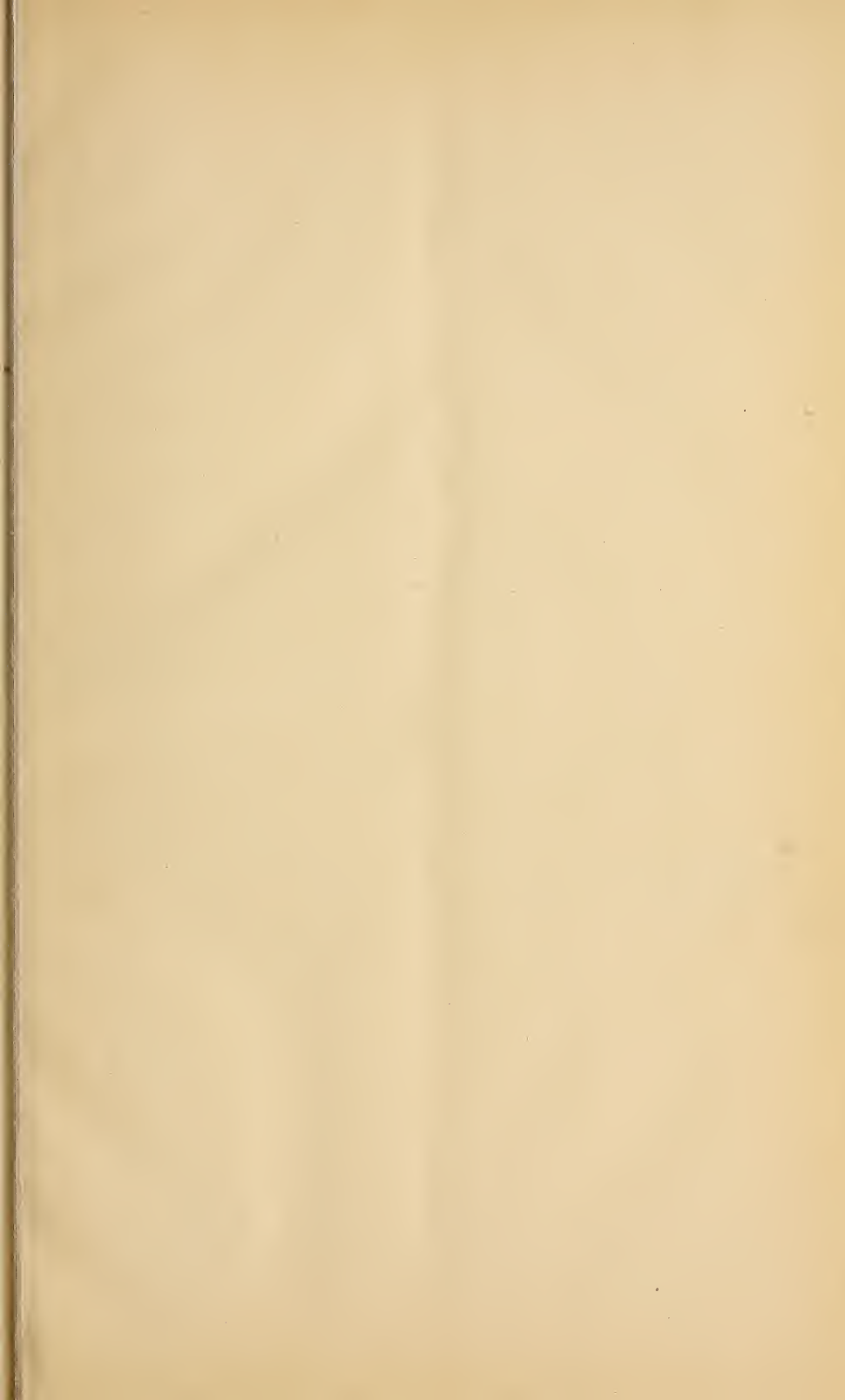
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A

DISCOURSE

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH,

NORWICH, CT.,

PREACHED SEPTEMBER 24th, 1865,

BY

SAMUEL GRAVES, PASTOR.



NORWICH:
BULLETIN JOB OFFICE, FRANKLIN SQUARE,
1865.

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DISCOURSE.

“But call to remembrance the former days.”—HEB. 10: 31.

It is equally a pleasure and a duty for the people of God to recall the past; to trace in the memories of former days the hand which has led them, which has strewn their way with blessings, and brought them deliverance in times of trouble. Such reviews, when they are devoutly made, and especially when they cover a series of years, or eventful periods, serve greatly to strengthen faith in God, to inspire gratitude for the past and hope for the future. It is in this way, as well as by direct promise, that God gives assurance to his people that he who has been with the fathers will also be with the children; and that he who has taken care of his cause in other days will take care of it in days to come.

In our *individual* experiences such reviews are most profitable, and the men of God in all ages have frequently made them. David sings, "But I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. Therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizah." And after him, Asaph sings of the "Vine that was brought out of Egypt;" how God had planted it and caused it to take deep root and fill the land; how the hills were covered with the shadow of it; how she sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river. "So," exclaims he, "will we not go back from thee." Moses, long years before, when he had brought the people through the wilderness to the borders of Canaan, and just as he was about to go up into the mount, whence he never returned, was commanded to write a song in which should be rehearsed the former dealings of God among the people. "Now therefore write ye this Song for you, and take it to the children of Israel; put it in their mouths that this song may be a witness for me." Thus did the works of the Lord, in the days of the fathers, recounted in their national Songs of deliverance, chanted in their psalms of "Mercy and Judgment," keep alive in the bosom of the Hebrew people a sense of the presence and power of Jehovah, and hold them back from utter apostacy amidst their idolatrous surroundings, and the frequent defection of their kings and priests.

To-day we are called as a Church to this grateful and pious duty,—to go back to "the former days," when God planted the seed in a few devout hearts, which sprang up into a Church of Christ; to record the

early struggles of those who covenanted together in its formation, to speak of their hopes, their fears, the sacrifices they made, the faith by which they walked, and by which they wrought; and beginning thus, to come down to the present, parting company, step by step, with one and another of these men and women of God, as they pass on before us to "the better land."

"Just gone within the veil where we shall follow,
Not far before us, hardly out of sight,
We, down beneath them, in this shady hollow,
And they, far up on yonder sunny heights."

Twenty-five years have now elapsed since the formation of this Church. A quarter of a century is no inconsiderable part of a life-time. It measures almost the period of an entire generation. Twenty-five years ago, and those to whom we now look, as under God the future hope of the Church, were unborn; and you who are now in the prime of manly strength—the fathers and mothers of growing families, and upon whom to-day rest the yoke and burden of Christ—so light and easy to willing necks—were children. Twenty-five years ago, and you whose heads are now white with "the snows that never melt," whose brows are furrowed and whose forms are bent, whose steps are faltering, but whose loved and venerable forms are still an ornament in the house of God, were in the vigor of your manhood. Twenty-five years;—how have they thinned your ranks! Your early companions in prayer, and faith, and toil,—how few are here! how many are there! Let us write for them this Epitaph to-day, in these our Memorials: "They did what they could;"—"Blessed are the dead which die in the

Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, for they do rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.”

It was on the 1st of April, 1840, that the Rev. Miner G. Clarke came to this city, a stranger and an invalid. He inquired if there were any Baptists in the place, and was directed to the shop on Shetucket street—where the Bank Building now stands—of Dea. Dewey Bromley. The First Baptist Church, or as it is called, the *West Side Church*, was then without a Pastor, and Mr. Clarke was urged to remain over the Sabbath and preach. This he was not able to do; but by promise, returned and spent the next succeeding Sabbath. Overtures were made to him to become Pastor of the Church. But after preaching a few times, Mr. Clarke became convinced that any permanent progress for the Baptist cause in this community required a place of worship more centrally located, and of easier access to the people generally; and therefore declined the call.

These convictions had also been growing for some time in the minds of many of the more enterprising members of the Church, and of a number of Baptist men and women who had recently come to the city to reside. The question of removing the Church on the West Side to some more eligible site, was raised and discussed. But this was deemed unadvisable, in view of the fact that the ground occupied had been held by the Church for forty years; and especially as an annuity which was soon to become available, would be forfeited if the Church were removed to this side of the river. Accordingly, after much prayer and consulta-

tion, the time seemed fully to have come, in the providence of God, when a new interest should be commenced. The Town Hall was engaged; twelve men interested in the enterprise, became "severally and jointly" responsible for the salary of a minister for six months, and Sabbath worship was commenced under these auspices about the 1st of July following. The congregations at once became large; the preaching was earnest; the meetings were solemn; the presence of God was manifest, and the approval of the Head of the church evidently rested upon the enterprise. The faith of this Christian band was of the working kind; their prayers were *effectual*—that is, effected *themselves*,—set them to work, while they moved God. Soon there were anxious souls, and rejoicing souls in their gatherings. As yet, however, there was no church.

On the 2d day of September, a number of persons met at the residence of Mr. Elisha W. Beckwith, and there formed themselves into an *Ecclesiastical Society*, to be known as *The Central Baptist Society of Norwich*. Prayer was offered on the occasion by Dea. Dewey Bromley. Mr. George Child was chosen Moderator, and Lucius Thompson, Clerk. A constitution and by-laws were adopted, and a call extended to Mr. Clarke "to become the preacher," on the salary of \$600 a year.

On the 15th of the same month, a number of brethren and sisters, not connected with the First Church, met at the house of Mr. Avery Bromley, on Union street, to consider and act upon the question of forming a new Baptist Church in this city. Capt. Josiah Rogers was called to the Chair, and Edward Ray was

chosen Clerk; prayer was offered by Rev. Mr. Clarke. After a full interchange of views and feelings, they proceeded to organize themselves into a church of Christ, by passing the following resolution, and then adopting *Articles of Faith*, and a *Church Covenant*.

Resolved, That after a due examination of all the circumstances in which we are placed, we deem it our solemn and imperative duty to proceed to organize ourselves into a Baptist Church.

The Church thus constituted, extended to Mr. Clarke a unanimous call to become its Pastor.

The number of constituent members was thirty-seven; and their names, which it will be interesting for you to hear, are as follows:*

†REV. MINER G. CLARKE, Pastor.

‡EMELINE C. CLARKE,

*DAVID L. MAPLES,

*LUCINDA C. MAPLES,

†EDWIN B. GARDNER,

‡EUNICE GARDNER,

‡GEORGE CHILD,

*BERIAH S. RATHBONE,

‡JOSIAH ROGERS,

*ELIZABETH ROGERS,

†PAULINE H. BIDWELL,

CHARLES DEAN,

MARY DEAN,

‡CHRISTOPHER B. ROGERS,

‡RACHEL ROGERS,

*MORGAN SAFFORD,

‡WILLIAM P. BENNETT,

†ERASTUS C. KEGWIN,

‡EDWIN PARK,

BETSEY PARK,

*ADELIA P. HAVEN,

†EDWARD RAY,

*LUCIUS THOMPSON,

*ANN C. THOMPSON,

†GEORGE LOVIS,

†ORRA W. LOVIS,

BETSEY CUMMINGS,

‡PHEBE CUMMINGS,

JOHN CHIPMAN,

†ALPHA R. CAMPBELL,

†CLARISSA CAMPBELL,

†ROWANNA CAMPBELL,

——— STOUT,

MINOR CLARKE, *Palmer*

ESTHA PALMER,

†HANNAH P. KEGWIN,

HARRIET COLLINS.

With these, deserve to be mentioned the three BROMLEY Brothers:—* DEWEY, † AVERY, and^X ISAAC, who, though not constituent members, were from its inception most intimately and earnestly identified with the Church.

* Those marked [*] are still members of the church. Those marked [†] are supposed to be living. Those marked [‡] are known to be dead. Of the others, nothing is certainly known.

On the 22d of September, one week from the organization of the Church, an Ecclesiastical Council convened, composed of delegates from the following Churches, viz: 1st Norwich, Bozrah, Lebanon, Colchester, Jewett City, Preston City, and Voluntown. Beside these delegates, Rev. Ira R. Stewart and Rev. Erastus Denison were present by invitation. The Council, after a full hearing, voted to give them a public recognition as a church of Christ in gospel faith and order. The services were held in the Town Hall, on the ensuing evening; the sermon was preached by Rev. Tubal Wakefield, of Canterbury; and the hand of Fellowship was given to the Church, through the Pastor, by Rev. Benajah Cook, of Jewett City. And at the next meeting of the New London Baptist Association, which was held in the city of New London, on the succeeding week, the Church was received into that body, sending as its first delegates, the Pastor, M. G. Clarke, and Br. C. B. Rogers, E. C. Kegwin and George Lovis.

Thus was planted, amidst alternate hopes and fears, the little vine which the rain, and the dew, and the sunshine of the Divine presence and favor have made to flourish; which we trust has borne much fruit for the garnerers of life, and under whose shade we sit today in the enjoyment of so many blessings.

Almost immediately after the recognition of the Church, about sixty members of the First Church obtained letters and united with the Central,—making a membership of about one hundred.

On the 9th of January, 1841, the following additional Church officers were chosen, viz: Elisha W.

Beckwith, Erastus C. Kegwin and George Lovis, *Deacons*; and Dewey Bromley, *Treasurer*.

Under the earnest and faithful ministry of Mr. Clarke, the zeal which inspired this new interest, and the manifest blessing of God, the place of their worship soon became too strait for them. The Spirit of God was in their assemblies and in the families of the congregation; men were found asking, "What must we do to be saved;" converts were rejoicing in the peace and joy of pardoned sin; and for nearly a year the waters of baptism were monthly visited by those who sought to follow the example of Christ in this delightful and impressive ordinance. In their second Associational Letter, the Church say: "There has not been a day during the past year when there have not been awakened sinners in our assemblies." All *worked* in the vineyard; all felt that they were called to be *laborers*. The field was divided, and each one was allotted his portion of it to cultivate, and what was recorded of the church in Jerusalem, was almost literally true of them, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

The blessing which had thus attended the organization and early labors of the Church, made it manifestly their duty to provide a house of worship. The Town Hall was inconveniently located, and beside, afforded no facilities for evening meetings.

The Society was composed of persons of limited means,—not a man of wealth among them, and but two, it is believed, who had property which was not already incumbered. Yet, true to their original sense of duty, and the necessities of the case, they felt that

a site in some central place should be obtained, and a house built sufficiently commodious to meet the growing demands of the congregation, and the larger increase in years to come which their faith embraced.

Accordingly, on the 27th of October, 1840, a committee was appointed, consisting of David L. Maples, George Lovis and Avery Bromley, "to report a site suitable for the erection of a house of worship." And finally, after much pains-taking in examining different locations, the committee reported in favor of the location where we are now assembled. It was then a vacant lot, the dwelling which formerly occupied it having been removed across to Bath street; and at the time of purchase was owned by the late Joseph Backus, of whom it was purchased for the sum of \$2,500.

Plans were immediately procured, estimates made and proposals received to do the work. The several parts were let to different parties, and the house was erected and finished under the direction of the following named persons as *Building Committee*, viz: George Lovis, John Murry, David L. Maples, Avery Bromley and Charles Dean; and Morgan Safford, *Treasurer* of the Committee.

These men went forward, stayed up by brethren of the same spirit, whose devotion to the work which they had undertaken, whose untiring zeal and whose sacrifices freely offered upon this altar, give them a lasting claim to our grateful remembrance.

The cost of the house when completed was \$11,000, which was a large per centage of the entire wealth of the Society. Few churches have moved forward with more energy and zeal in so great an undertaking with

such scanty means, and put to the practical test of dollars and cents the motto of Modern Missions, inscribed upon its banners by the sainted Cary: "*Attempt great things for God; expect great things from God.*" There are some here to-day, and some yonder in the "Upper Sanctuary," who still remember, we doubt not, those anxious months from the time when you first broke ground until the house was completed. You well remember how often, together and in secret, you carried this work to God when it pressed too heavily upon your hands and hearts; when the only hope of success was in him; when the only ray of light came from above, and the only relief you found from the burden that bore you down was in prayer, and the promises and the unmistakable ongoings of Providence. There were heroes in that day. The martyr spirit possessed the Church. Men came forward and mortgaged their farms and homesteads, embarked their earthly all in the work,—trusted God; trusted their brethren. Nor were the sisters behind the brethren in the spirit of willing sacrifice. They plied the needle; they dispensed with luxuries;—their tables, their wardrobes, and in some cases even the necessaries of life were put under tribute to carry forward this enterprise.

It was the common talk among the shrewd and calculating outsiders that the house could never be built by the Society; or if built and finished, could never be paid for; but that it would eventually and inevitably fall into the hands of some more wealthy denomination. So current was this belief, that on one occasion, after the time for dedicating the house had been fixed, the painters refused to proceed further with their work

until they had received fresh assurances that they should have their pay when their work was done.

The house, nevertheless, was completed at the appointed time, and the contractors paid ; leaving a debt upon the Society, after all that could be collected by subscription, of over \$8,000.

On the 14th of December, 1841, the house was publicly and appropriately dedicated to the worship of Almighty God. Rev. Rollin H. Neal, D. D., of Boston, preached the sermon from the words of the Psalmist, "*The Lord reigneth : let the earth rejoice.*"

At this time, be it remembered, there was no such house of worship, nor had there ever been in the city. The Broadway church had not then been built, nor the 2d Congregational church, now standing on Church street, nor Christ's church, on Washington street.

The success which had crowned these labors, stimulated our Congregational brethren to a similar work of faith. A number of members went out from the Second Church and commenced meetings in the Town Hall ;—a movement which finally resulted in the formation of the Third Congregational Church, now worshipping on Broadway.

While the material structure was thus rising, God was rearing the spiritual building. At the close of the year, the Associational Letter shows an increase of sixty-eight members by baptism, and ninety-three by letter, making one hundred and ninety-eight ; of these, six had been dismissed and two had died during the year, one of whom was the Pastor's wife ; leaving a total membership of one hundred and ninety. During the second year, the Church report fifty-two additions by bap-

tism and forty-one by letter, with an aggregate membership at the close, of two hundred and fifty-eight.

In the autumn of this year a state of unusual religious interest existed in the Church and congregation, which soon ripened into a powerful revival.

The Pastor was assisted by Rev. Ira R. Stewart, then of Mystic. As the result of this revival chiefly, there were added to the Church ninety-three by baptism and fifty-four by letter.

In the September following, a series of meetings were held by Rev. Jacob Knapp, then in the fullness of his power as an Evangelist. The meetings resulted in the quickening of the saints and in the conversion of sinners; and in an addition, during the year, of fifty-three by baptism, and fifty-two by letter; making at the close of the third year in the history of the Church a total membership of four hundred and thirty-three—two hundred and sixty-six had been baptized, and two hundred and forty received by letter.

The next year witnessed a marked falling off in the religious interest; only four were added by baptism, and twenty-six by letter.

In 1844 the house of worship belonging to the 2d Congregational Church was injured by fire, and for nearly two years, while its present substantial house was being erected, the Church worshipped in this house—occupying it at hours when we were not using it. At the close of this season, Rev. Dr. Bond, Pastor of the Church, preached to the united congregations an appropriate discourse, which was afterwards published.

In the spring of 1845, the members who were living

in the vicinity of Greeneville, felt it their duty to raise the standard in that growing village. Accordingly, about sixty asked for letters, and were dismissed to form themselves into a Church.

This was felt by the parent church to be a loss which it could illy sustain. And yet they had reason to rejoice that in less than five years God had made them "two bands."

In the autumn and winter following, another revival season was enjoyed; as the fruit of which forty were added by baptism and eighteen by letter; nearly making good the loss sustained in the formation of the Greeneville Church.

Another of its members was needed to serve in the Deacon's office, and the Church, after prayer for direction, made choice of Isaac Bromley to fill the office. This was done June 23d, 1845.

In the spring of 1846, the Pastor, who had served the Church so faithfully and so much to its edification and enlargement, felt it his duty to resign, and dissolve the connection which had existed between him and the Church from its origin. His resignation was accepted with many regrets, both on the part of the Church and of the numerous friends whom his courtesy and Christian fidelity had drawn around him. On the last Sabbath in March, he preached his farewell sermon, closing a pastorate of six years. Under God he has built his monument here, in this house of worship, which he was so largely instrumental in building, and in this Church of Christ, which he was permitted to plant.

For an entire year following the resignation of Mr.

Clarke, the Church was without a Pastor; and the pulpit was supplied by Rev. Messrs. Muzzy, Brown and Field.

On the 1st of April, 1847, Rev. Edward T. Hiscox, who had been chosen Pastor the preceding fall, entered upon his labors. The interests of the Church had suffered during the year from the lack of pastoral labor; and beside, the removal of a large business firm, with which were connected many members of the Church and congregation, the numbers and pecuniary ability of the Church were very much lessened; and furthermore, the falling due of a debt which still remained upon the house, and which at this time amounted to \$5,500, added greatly to the embarrassment and discouragement of the Society.

Most strenuous efforts were at this time made by the Society, led on and encouraged by the newly elected Pastor. The indebtedness was divided into shares of \$25 each, and as many shares assumed by the members as their ability would allow. Those who could not take a full share, contributing—some ten dollars, some five, some one, and some fifty cents, and others twenty-five, and even twelve-and-a-half cents. This was the most general and the most generous contribution which the Society ever made.

In the January following, the committee which had the matter in charge, reported that but \$3,700 had been subscribed. A new effort was immediately commenced to reach the figure of \$4,000, when the amount pledged should become binding. At the same time, a new paper was started to raise the remaining \$1,500.

In lifting this debt, the Church passed through its

severest pecuniary struggle; it seemed to many little less than impossible in the weakened condition of the Church, to pay this debt, and yet meet the current expenses, and the calls of benevolence which were made upon it. But the honor of the cause, and the very existence of the Church seemed to hinge upon this effort; and in time their sacrifices were rewarded, and their persevering efforts crowned with full success. In the following October the debt was paid.

In the year 1849, the organ still used in our Sabbath worship, was purchased at a cost of \$800. This was done by a number of persons interested in the singing, who formed themselves into a voluntary club, called the "Organ Association."

In the following year, repairs and alterations were made in the house. The pews were shortened and arranged in tiers, with three aisles instead of two, as they were at first; and the "South Side-room," as it was called, was fitted up for holding evening meetings. These expenditures, together with deficiencies in the current expenses, involved the Society in another debt of about \$3,200; which was paid the next December. During the four years through which these pecuniary struggles continued, the Church report in their letter to the Association, that they had raised and expended for the purposes of religion at home and abroad, more than \$14,000.

This fidelity to the cause of Christ, which surely was not in word only but in *deed*, was followed by a delightful revival, which continued with gentle but most gracious results for nearly six months. The congregations were large; harmony and brotherly love

prevailed and abounded among the members ; thirty-five were added by baptism, and thirteen by letter ; and the Church report a total of four hundred and three members.

In May, 1851, the Church called three more of its members to serve it in the office of Deacon, viz : Dewey Bromley, who had for many years been a Deacon in the First Church ; B. T. Cranston and H. S. Gates.

In the summer of 1852 the Church was again called to separate with its Pastor, after a faithful and successful pastorate of five years. The additions in membership during those years were few ; being but forty-four by baptism and seventy-nine by letter ; while the decrease by dismissions, exclusions and deaths, was one hundred and forty-two.

The first pastorate—that of Mr. Clarke, might be characterized, as the season of *planting*, and of the *vigorous shooting forth* of the vine ; the pastorate of Mr. Hiscox, that of the *training* and *pruning* ; when less stock and more root is grown.

During this time especially, we find the Church engaged in one almost continuous course of *discipline*—to revive the fainting, to restore the wandered, and to cut off those whom Christian discipline could not reclaim. This added much to the burdens of the Church, and gave an undertone of sadness to the joys which they experienced. Few pastors have more endeared themselves to their people than Mr. Hiscox ; and the separation was made in mutual sorrow. The seed which he sowed is still growing fresh upon these fields ; and his memory is fragrant in all your households.

In August, the Church called Mr. Joseph A. Goodhue, a recent graduate of Newton Theological Seminary, to become its Pastor, and in the October following he was called to ordination, and set apart to the work of the gospel ministry.

After a pastorate of only two years Mr. Goodhue resigned, to accept an appointment which had been tendered him as Associate Principal of the Connecticut Literary Institute, at Suffield;—a position for which the scholarly attainments of Mr. G. peculiarly adapted him. The Church express their regrets at parting so soon with their Pastor; and record their high appreciation of his fidelity in the pulpit and in the chamber of sickness, and bear testimony to the profit which they had received from his ministry.

During these two years, there was considerable falling off in the membership. The increase had been only thirty-two, while the diminution had been eighty-four; of these, the names of nearly forty were dropped, who for years had not been heard from, and whose places of residence had become unknown.

The Church were also called in these years to pass through trials in the discipline of many of its members, and the excision of several from its communion;—a painful yet most salutary and solemn duty which Christ lays upon his church, and which cannot be neglected, except at the peril of those graces which should ever distinguish her from the world.

The Church at this time also published an edition of the Articles of Faith and Covenant, with a list of its present and former members.

During the last year of this pastorate, the Church

and community were called to mourn the death of *Rev. William Palmer*, in the sixty-eighth year of his age.

Mr. Palmer began his ministry at the early age of twenty; and continued to exercise it for a period of forty years. For twenty-four years he was Clerk of the New London Baptist Association, of which he was a constituent member.

Like most of our pastors in his day, Mr. Palmer was a self-made man. And yet he was an earnest and thorough student, a sound preacher, well grounded in the doctrines of grace, and a devout Christian. His papers show that during his ministry, he baptized three hundred and forty persons. He died as the Christian dieth, in a well-assured and triumphant faith, and entered, we doubt not, into the joy of his Lord.

ten His wife, our sister Sarah B. Palmer, who remained with us for nearly ~~two~~ years after his death, never ceased to cherish his memory and grieve over her loss. She was the sister of Elder Alfred Bennett, of Homer, N. Y., so long and widely known as the Agent of Foreign Missions. She resembled her brother in many particulars; was a woman of unusual compass and penetration of mind, well versed in the Scriptures, and clear and fixed in her theological views. She died, as you well remember, some two years ago, and her remains were laid beside those of her venerated companion, in the beautiful grounds of the Yantic Cemetery, where they sleep side by side in the peaceful slumber of the tomb, and in hope of the Resurrection of the Just.

In October, 1854, the Church called Rev. Frederic Denison to the pastoral office. The call was accepted,

and Mr. Denison entered upon his work in the November following. During the first year of his ministry, the numbers continued to decrease. None were baptized, and but ten were added by letter; while thirty-three were removed, of whom fourteen were dropped.

This state of things, continuing as it had for some years, was justly calculated to awaken the deepest anxieties and lead the more spiritual of the Church to humiliation and prayer. In the beginning of the next year, their mourning was turned into joy. They report in the annual letter, that "a great cloud of salvation hung over the community from January to June; the meetings increased until they were held every morning and evening through the week, with many in attendance."

They report at this time seventy-three additions, of which fifty-eight were by baptism. This, it will be remembered, was the season of great revivals, enjoyed so generally throughout our land, and which broke out the next year in the north of Ireland, in Scotland, and in some parts of England and on the Continent.

In 1858 a number of brethren and sisters obtained letters to unite in forming a church in Baltic. This was the second church that was colonized from us. About the same time, the Church was called to pass through other severe trials in the discipline of its members, and to part with some with whom it had long and lovingly walked.

In the following spring, another delightful revival was enjoyed. The Pastor was aided by Rev. J. S.

Swan, of New London. As the fruit of this revival, forty-seven were baptized and twelve were added by letter. These, like former additions, were mostly from the ranks of the young, and embrace many of you who are now in the prime of life, and upon whom, under God, the Church to-day rests her hope.

Heretofore the Church had gone to the water-side whenever it had administered the ordinance of baptism; but this was rendered more and more difficult by the use of the river banks for business purposes. A baptistery was therefore built in the church during this year.

In April, 1859, the Pastor felt it to be his duty to resign; and once more the Church was called to sever this sacred relation. Mr. Denison's pastorate continued four-and-a-half years, and was marked by great earnestness and fidelity; and by the blessing of God was crowned with eminent success;—the Church having enjoyed, under his ministry, two revival seasons, and received to its fellowship one hundred and seventy-two members.

After the resignation of Mr. Denison, the pulpit was supplied by Bro. A. K. Potter, then a student in Brown University, now Pastor of the Second Baptist Church in Springfield, Mass.—who preached the word to the great acceptance of the church and congregation.

In the Autumn of 1859, the present Pastor received and accepted a call from the Church, and entered upon his duties on the first Sabbath in November. The revival influences of the preceding spring seemed gently

to continue; and during the year nineteen were added to the Church;—six by baptism.

In May, 1861, the Church again increased the number of its Deacons by calling to the office Br. David L. Gale and Moses H. Sisson.

In the summer of 1862, the Society commenced the work of repairing and enlarging their house of worship; which for more than twenty years had remained, with few alterations, as it was built.

The front was entirely changed and brought toward the street, making room for thirty additional pews. The orchestra was remodeled, the galleries lowered, a new pulpit built, the walls replastered and frescoed, the Lecture and Conference rooms, and the entrances to them wholly changed, and the house newly furnished throughout at an aggregate expense of \$7,000; \$3,000 of which was paid down, and at the present time, the remainder is nearly all provided for.

The house, thus refitted, was rededicated to the service of God, in February, 1863. Rev. E. T. Hiscox, D. D., of New York, the second Pastor, preached the dedicatory sermon.

The present Pastor will soon close the sixth year of his ministry with the Church; four of these years are covered by the strange national experience of the dark and bloody Rebellion, which has made such a draft upon the spiritual, as it has upon the mental and national resources of the land; distracting and absorbing thought, and casting us upon every extreme of expectation and experience.

Many noble spirits, both in the church and congre-

gation, heard the voice of duty in the calls of their country, and went forth to "the high places of the field" to meet and roll back the bloody surges of Treason that threatened to engulf us all. Most of these have returned. Some alas! maimed for life; some with honorable scars, and all with an untarnished record. Three of them went down in the bloody strife; and one died almost immediately after his return home. Of these, appropriate mention has been made upon a former occasion; but there are two names which deserve a repetition in this Memorial—Lieuts. *Manning* and *Jacobs*. They have left a blank in this sanctuary of our worship and in the inner sanctuary of our hearts, which has not yet been filled.

But notwithstanding all the distractions caused by the war, occasional conversions have occurred, and seasons of occasional refreshing have been enjoyed; *signs* of revival have often appeared; but no general outpouring of the Spirit had been experienced till during the last winter and spring; when a series of meetings, continuing from the first of February until May were held, in which the presence of God was manifest, and his power displayed in the conversion of sinners. Our hearts were humbled before God, and many of the members were greatly refreshed and strengthened. The Pastor was assisted for several weeks by Rev. J. R. Manton, of Providence, R. I.; fifty-two were added to the Church,—thirty-two by baptism. During the present pastorate, the number received has been one hundred and eleven, of whom forty-nine have been baptized, making the present number three hundred and sixty-five. This brings us down to the present time.

SUMMARY.

During the entire twenty-five years, the Statistics of the Church have been as follows :

Number of Baptisms, - - - - -	534
Number received by Letter and on Experience, - - - - -	505
Number Restored, - - - - -	11
To which add the original Membership, - - - - -	37
	<hr/>
And we have the number received, - - - - -	1087
Number Dismissed, - - - - -	395
Number Excluded, - - - - -	103
Number Dropped, - - - - -	72
Died, - - - - -	94
Number lost, - - - - -	<hr/> 664
	<hr/>
Total of present membership, - - - - -	423

This shows an error of fifty-eight somewhere in our records.

The Church has been served by the following officers:—Revs. Miner G. Clarke, Edward T. Hiscox, Joseph R. Goodhue, Frederic Denison and Samuel Graves, *Pastors*; Elisha W. Beckwith, Erastus C. Kegwin, George Lovis, Isaac Bromley, Dewey Bromley, Horace S. Gates, Bartholomew T. Cranston, David L. Gale, Moses M. Sisson, *Deacons*; Edward Ray, and Robert M. Haven, *Clerks*; Dewey Bromley, B. T. Cranston, and Loren A. Gallup, *Treasurers*; and E. W. Beckwith, George Lovis, J. Amesbury, D. L. Gale, and J. L. Denison, have served as *Superintendents* of the Sunday School. And it is especially note-worthy, that all these officers are still living.

Thus, in an imperfect manner, have we gone through a review of our history from the origin of the Church to the present time. The record here sketched has its lessons :

1. We may mark the *faithfulness* of God. The Fathers—many of whom are yet with us, but “some of whom are fallen asleep”—began this work of building here a church of Christ, in weakness; they went forward trusting in the promises of God, and not one of his promises has failed them. I call you to record this day, Fathers and Brethren, that God has fulfilled to us all the pledges he has made; his blessings have been abundant; whenever we have cried unto him, he has heard us and brought us relief. In times of trial, when brought into strait places; when oppressed under pecuniary embarrassments; when every way appeared to be hedged up, and we seemed to stand, as Israel did upon the shores of the Red Sea, encompassed on every hand by difficulties, he has opened for us a path as he did for them.

2. Another lesson taught, is the importance of *Faith* in religious enterprises, and the *honor* which God puts upon those who exercise it.

If it had not been for *faith in God*, this Church would not have been constituted, nor this house of worship built. It seemed to worldly men an act of folly,—an attempt that was sure to end in failure; and it seemed so, I am told, to some of the churches hereabouts. But the men chosen for this work were men of faith; they walked by faith, they wrought by faith. The providences of God were clear to them, and they went forward believing that God would call them to no work which he would not enable them to do.

There are times—and they are of more frequent occurrence than we are accustomed to suppose in the

developments of providence, as touching the kingdom of God—when worldly wisdom and the deductions of a mere human reason are to be thrown aside, and his people are called to launch out upon his naked promises; nay, upon God himself, without any specific promise. Such a time had come when our Pilgrim Fathers weighed anchor while the storms of a fast approaching winter were howling on the deep, and set the prow of the immortal Mayflower toward the solitudes of

“—the wild New England shore.”

Such a time, too, had come when Cary set forth for India, in the face of all the obstacles and opposition which the East India Company could cast in his way; sneered at as “the sanctified cobbler;” deserted by his own wife—yet with a simple, single trust in God, he went forth to a work which now has the benedictions of the whole Christian world upon it, and which has brought light and civilization and salvation to the millions of the East. And what *honor* has God conferred upon the men who in such emergencies have put faith in him, and “hoped against hope!” Their names stand upon the immortal record beneath those of Noah, and Abraham and Moses!

3. Another lesson taught, or perhaps we may say another truth illustrated, is that the season of the greatest religious prosperity which a Church enjoys, is often and generally the very time when it is making the *greatest sacrifice* for Christ, and bearing its *heaviest* burdens. The first ten years of our history were years of constant struggle under pecuniary

embarrassments; and yet they were the years of our largest prosperity. The spirit of sacrifice is the spirit of Christ; and no wonder that his blessing is upon a church when such a spirit pervades it,—when its internal polity and its outside charities are prompted by such a spirit of willing sacrifice for Christ and his cause.

Again: as touching the *church itself* we learn from this record,

1. That it has always been a *Revival* church. It began in a revival, it has grown by revivals, its hope has always been in revivals; not in spasmodic efforts which are of doubtful profit in the long run, but rather in a full and faithful use of the ordinary means of grace, appointed by the Savior and used by the Apostles to this end. Seven distinct revival seasons have been enjoyed, beside many “times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord,” of less note. And as in the past so in the future, our hope is in revivals,—in those “set times to favor Zion” which God vouchsafes to his people; in the plain and pungent preaching of the Word, preceded, and followed by the Divine Spirit to the hearts of men. And when this ceases to be the hope and reliance of our Baptist Churches,—when we trust to anything else for prosperity, then we may write “Ichabod” upon our walls, for the glory will have departed.

2. The Church has always been a *Missionary* church, and in lively sympathy with all the works of Christian benevolence at home and abroad. This interest has been shown by observing from the first, the Monthly

Concert of Prayer, and by the liberal annual contributions to Missions which it has never withheld, even in the times of its greatest embarrassment. I hazard nothing in saying—and I do not speak it in the spirit of boast—that no Baptist Church in Eastern Connecticut has done more according to its ability, for the cause of general benevolence than this Church, or given its Pastors a more liberal support. And to this I believe is due very much of the prosperity that has attended it. And in this is seen another fulfillment of the Divine promise, “The liberal soul shall be made fat;” “The liberal deviseth liberal things and by liberal things shall he stand.”

3. The Church has always been engaged in the work of *Sunday Schools*. It has seen in the young the hope of the Church, and felt it a duty to *gather them in*,—not to the *Church*, until the Spirit of God has regenerated them, but into the Sunday School, where they receive instruction which leads to Christ, and which makes them intelligent Christians when they are converted. And the Divine favor has been upon this work, as may be seen in the history of our revivals, which have gathered their fruits so largely from the Sunday School.

Again: it has always been a *Temperance* church. Early in its history, I find, at a time when the question of temperance was exciting a deep interest in this community, a committee appointed for the purpose brought in a series of resolutions designed to express the sentiments of the Church upon this subject. A minority of the committee thought the report was

not up to the demand of the times, and submitted a *stronger* set; the Church rejected the majority report, and adopted the minority resolutions.

Again: The *Pastoral relation* in the Church has been more permanent than in most of our Baptist Churches; and to this extent has avoided one of the saddest evils which afflict our denomination. Instability in the pastoral relation begets fickleness, love of novelty and captiousness on the part of Churches, and produces poverty, superficiality and a kind of hireling spirit on the part of the ministry; both of which are serious obstacles to the prosperity of churches and the efficiency of the ministry. This Church, I believe, has always *settled* its Pastor, and never hired him by the year. To this, in no small degree, is due the prosperity which you have enjoyed. No maxim is truer than this,—that long pastorates make stable churches and able ministers.

Once more: The records of the Church show that it has kept up almost a continued *discipline*; and thus has endeavored to keep that which Christ had committed to her;—to guard, if possible, the purity of her doctrine and the Christian reputation of her members, and so to preserve the one pure, and present the other faultless. When, therefore, any member has imbibed sentiments, or pursued courses contrary to sound doctrine, the Church has commenced discipline with them; and if they could not be reclaimed from their errors of faith or practice, after patient and long-continued labor, they have been removed from its fellowship.

And no church can enjoy the favor of Christ which neglects this important duty.

And finally, we record it to the special care of Christ, that the Church has been a *harmonious* body; with the freedom of opinion and the strong individualism which Baptist Churches not only allow in their members, but which they guard and foster, there has been a good degree of harmony in its consultations and in its actions.

But I cannot close this already too protracted discourse without a word for our honored dead. Of the living, whose piety and benevolence and sacrifices deserve mention—many of whom are before me to-day—both men and women, it would be indelicate for me to speak; but on some coming day, some successor of mine, who shall stand before your children as I to-day stand before you, will speak of them in befitting terms. But of the *departed* I may speak; they belong to the Church still.

“One family we dwell in him—
 One Church, above, beneath;
 Tho’ now divided by the stream—
 The narrow stream of death.”

There was Bro. John Murry—your older brethren remember him—his piety, his devotion; and how he came forward before he was yet a member of the Church, and with others mortgaged his property to erect this house of worship; how faithful he was to the end; and how you carried him forth to his burial, as the disciples did Stephen, and made great lamentation over him.

And there was that wonder of grace, known in our

Baptist Sunday School literature as "*The Old Rope-maker*,"—arrested when far down the drunkard's career; "plucked as a brand from the burning" and made, by Divine grace, one of the most devout and faithful of the flock. His face comes before many of you to-day, plowed as it was by the rough encounters of life, yet beaming with the light of faith and hope, as he sat in the sanctuary or arose to speak in the conference room;—you remember, in that day of struggle, the *seventy-five dollars* he brought, which, like the "poor widow's," was all his living, and which, like her, he "cast into the treasury of the Lord." And you remember too, his patient companion, who after waiting many years, has joined him in the "Better Land."

And there was Captain Josiah Rogers—one of the Constituent members; converted on ship-board, with no one to give him a word of Christian counsel. God met him "on the great waters," and wrought in him a hope which was ever after like "an anchor to the soul." He was a faithful man; always carried his religion with him, on land and on sea. How vividly he now comes before me, as he used to walk up this aisle or sit in that pew, which he so constantly filled; or as he stood in the place of our social gatherings, like the ancient patriarch, "leaning upon the top of his staff."

And Bro. Bennett, another Constituent member—a man of meek and humble spirit, "full of the Holy Ghost and faith." He could not talk much, but his prayers took hold upon the throne. And there was brother Joseph Reynolds, who by his bequest to the Church, still speaks and works in our Sunday School; and Bro. Joseph Adams, a man who loved the Church,

and was always willing to do his part in promoting its interests—whose sudden and violent death at his post on the cars, the Church and a beloved family were called to mourn. And Breth. Charles Beckwith and Samuel Griffin, whose widows—mother and daughter—we still mourn with. And the brothers Nelson and Henry and Griswold Loomis; and Gurdon Bromley—son of our aged Deacon—faithful men, cut down in the prime of manhood, and missed in the house of God, as they are in their desolated homes. And Bro. Thomas Cranston, so unassuming and yet so ripe for heaven, of whom we may say, as Jesus did of Nathaniel, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.”

And then of “the *women* who helped in the gospel,” there is an honorable list. We may mention sister Clarke, the wife of the first Pastor, who died so soon after coming among you. Our aged sister Maples, the parent of our senior Deacons and “a Mother in Israel.” Our sister Ray, who was called so suddenly and so solemnly from the choir below to the choirs above. Our sister Loomis, who so soon followed her sainted mother, and was so soon followed by her companion.

And “the time would fail me to speak of” sister Gardner, and Bowen, and Savage, and Lewis, and Lock, and Cole, and Herrick, and Denison and Case, and of others—brethren and sisters too, whose names are in the Book of Life.

“Earth’s transitory things decay,
Its pomps its pleasures pass away;
But the sweet memory of the good
Survives in the vicissitude.

“ As midst the ever-rolling sea,
 The eternal isles established be,
 'Gainst which the surges of the main
 Fret, dash and break themselves in vain ;

“ As in the heavens, the urns divine
 Of golden light, forever shine ;
 Tho' clouds may darken, storms may rage,
 They still shine on from age to age ;

“ So thro' the ocean-tide of years,
 The memory of the just appears :
 So thro' the tempest and the gloom,
 The good man's virtues light the tomb.”

In conclusion:—This sketch is adapted to awaken in our hearts a new interest in the church, to quicken and strengthen our attachment to it. The work of God on earth centers in the church ; for her sake he made the world itself and keeps it in existence ; for her sake Christ became “ as a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” And this imperfect record which we make to-day is but the first of an endless series to be carried forward in the Annals of Eternity, as God ‘makes known to principalities and powers by the Church his manifold wisdom.”

Young men of the Central Baptist Church, the history of the next quarter of a century, whoever at its close may sketch it, will be the record you make. The lines are fallen to you not only “ in pleasant places,” but in a most auspicious and telling epoch. When were there ever such opportunities, such possibilities as these now before you ? If the horoscope of the time does not deceive us, it is the purpose of God to make this land of ours the theatre of such a Christian civilization as the world has never seen ; to display on the grandest scale the truth that “ Righteousness exalteth

a nation;"—that Truth and Justice and Godliness are the proper foundations of human governments as they are of personal character; that the gospel of Christ is not to be confined to the church, but like another Nile, coming down from the upper hills of salvation to overflow its banks and carry its life-giving waters over the whole realm of human interests. It is a solemn, a glorious thing to live in this day. As a nation, we have made a century-stride in the last half decade of years. The breaking down of the Rebellion, and the spirit of caste out of which it grew, are waking up and strengthening liberal sentiments over all the civilized world. The war has been like a storm at sea; it has raised billows that are resounding upon every shore. What occasions are these for the gospel, for the Church of Christ, for young Christian men!

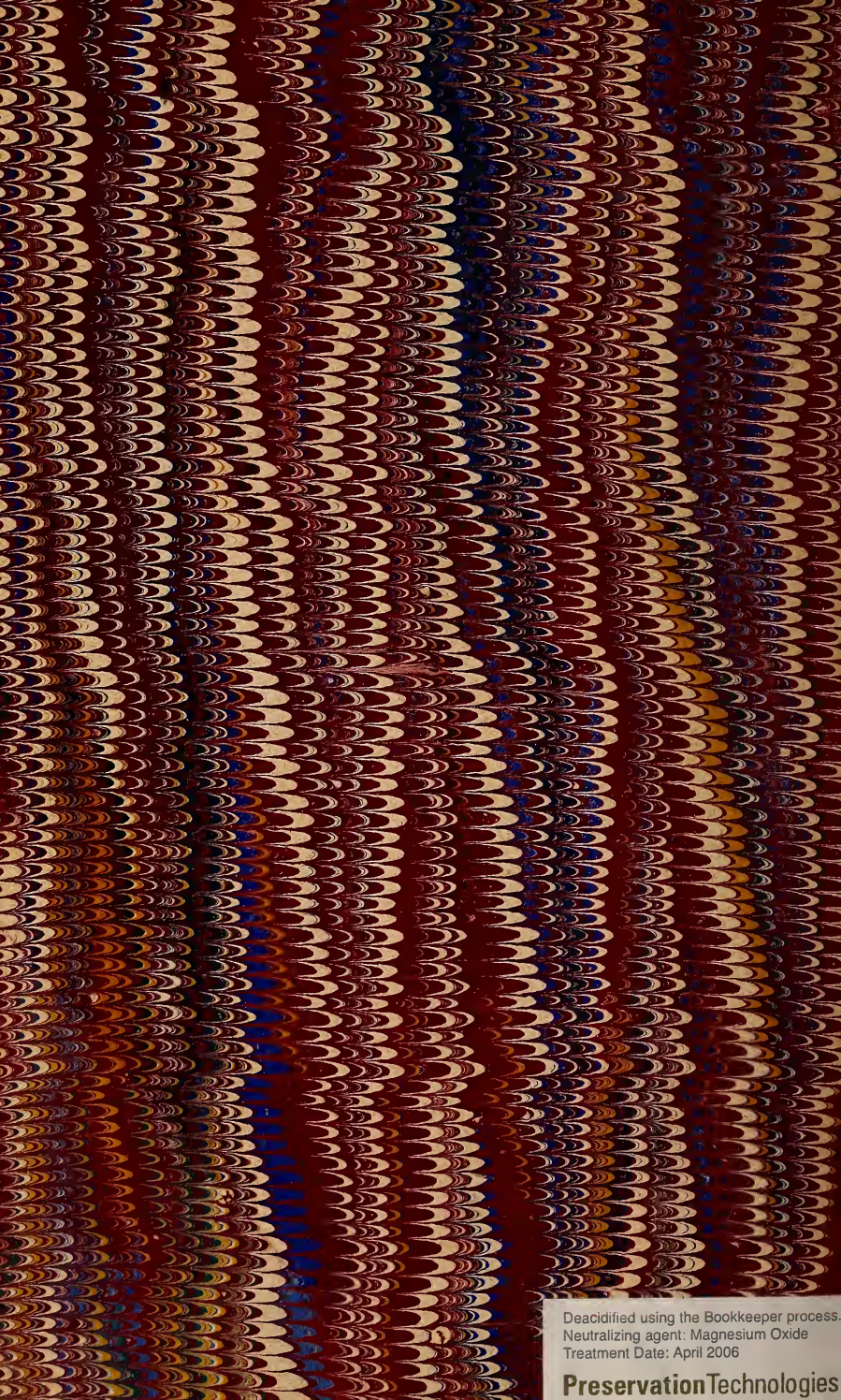
"We are living, we are dwelling,
 In a grand and awful time;
 In an age on ages telling—
 To be living is sublime.

"Worlds are changing, heaven beholding, *R.*
 Thou hast but an hour to fight;
 Now the blazoned Cross unfolding—
 On, right onward for the right.

"O! let all the soul within you
 For the Truth's sake go abroad;
 Strike! let every nerve and sinew
 Tell on ages; tell for God!"

In such a time as this, we, as a Church, are entering upon our second quarter of a century, and you are called to write its history for this period. Let it be equal to your opportunities, worthy of your age and of your character as Christians; and remember that you are not only making history here, but writing your own biographies in the Book of God.





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