

THE
ORIGIN AND HISTORY
OF THE
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,
MILFORD, Conn.

A
DISCOURSE
PREACHED IN MILFORD

ON
Thanksgiving Day, November 25, 1852.

BY
JONATHAN BRACE,
Pastor of the Church.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

NEW HAVEN:
PRINTED BY B. L. HAMLEN,
Printer to Yale College.

1852.

By the Committee of the First Church and Society.

Resolved, That the thanks of this Committee be presented to the Rev. JONATHAN BRACE, for his valuable Thanksgiving Discourse, and that a copy thereof be procured for the Press.

Attest,

SAMUEL B. GUNN,

Chairman of Committee.

Milford, November 27, 1852.

DISCOURSE.

EXODUS, XIX, 4.—“*Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bear you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself.*”

THE inspired penman of the text, could appeal directly to the Israelites, as witnesses of the mighty works which God had wrought among them. The very people whose illustrious leader he was, had by a series of prodigies unprecedented and unparalleled in the world’s annals, been delivered from the yoke of Pharaoh, and led along the Arabian desert to the borders of the promised land; and Moses standing before them, could remind them of what they had themselves experienced, and say in the name of that divine Being by whose commission he acted: “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself.”

This allusion to the wings of the eagle, is a beautiful and striking one. As that noble bird, of all birds most remarkable for strength of pinion, quickness of eye, and soaring flight;—that monarch of the clouds, in that it can mount above them, and high amidst ether, look down upon them;—that bird of the sun, because its eye can bear its rays;—that bird of Jove, because peerless among the feathered race;—as the majestic eagle, cherishes and defends her young, puts them upon her back, thus interposing her own body between them and the shafts of the archer, and sails away with them to a safe locality;—so

had God with the genial wing of His Providence, guarded, succored, and conducted Israel!

Marvellous indeed had been His interpositions in their behalf. Judgment after judgment had been launched against their oppressor Pharaoh, to humble his pride, subdue his obstinacy, and effect their emancipation;—a passage had been opened for them through the Red Sea,—the floods standing as crystal walls on the right hand and on the left until they had reached the opposite bank, and then returning, engulfing in their impetuous recoil, the chariots, horsemen, and all the hosts of the Egyptians;—manna from heaven had fallen for them as the dew,—water gushed from the sterile rock to quench their thirst,—the “cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night” marked their path, complicated difficulties been mastered, and they after a long period of forty years, made qualified to take possession of a fertile and populous country. Thus as “on eagles’ wings,” had Jehovah borne them through embarrassments and dangers, and brought them to the confines of their inheritance.

Upon the same uplifted wing of Providence, were our forefathers, the early settlers of New England, delivered from oppression, and brought to this home which God had provided for them. Nor is it difficult to trace an analogy between them, and the Israelites. Were the Israelites ground down by despotism and “sighed they by reason of hard bondage?”—unjust laws weighed heavily upon our ancestors, who were subjected to civil disabilities, persecutions, and cruelties. Were the Israelites brought across a sea into a desert land?—our ancestors were brought across the ocean, to these inhospitable shores,—then a waste, howling wilderness. Were the Israelites in the

désert, though encompassed with perils, wonderfully preserved?—so our ancestors, though compelled to do battle with cold and tempest, savage beasts and savage men, came off conquerors. Had Jehovah a great and good design to subserve in the exodus of the children of Israel?—as great and good a purpose had He to accomplish in the coming hither of our forefathers,—a purpose, the unfolding grandeur of which, is more and more manifest as centuries roll on!

One of the first settled States on this Western Continent, was Connecticut; one of the first settled towns that in which we reside; and one of the first organized churches, that with which we are connected.

No history of this church has been written.* This is to be regretted, both because local histories of towns and churches are preparatory and necessary to a general history of our Commonwealth,—which is yet a desideratum;—and because many important materials which might have been furnished at an earlier date, are now irrecoverably lost. Some things, however, of interest relative to the First Church in Milford, may be gathered up, and what little I have been able to glean, I avail myself of this festival of Thanksgiving, and in the way of an ordinary preparation for the pulpit, to throw before you.

The passion for liberty is no mere flourish of poets and orators. It lies deeply seated among the original elements of humanity, alike the cherished desire of the human heart, and the potent spring of human life. This strong motive passion it was, which brought the colonists to Plymouth Rock in 1620,—to Salem on Massachusetts Bay in 1628,

* Unless Lambert's History of New Haven Colony, and the few items in the Church Manual, are to be so regarded;—of which I have availed myself.

to Boston in 1630, to Hartford and Saybrook in 1635, and to New Haven in 1638. Fettered at home, they sighed for freedom, and looked beyond the ocean as to the spot where it could be secured and enjoyed. Their object in emigration was simple, direct, and laudable. It was no other than to possess a country, where that sentiment of liberty which God has implanted in the breast,—liberty in thought, liberty in speech, liberty in government and liberty in religion, might have free and full development.

Particularly anxious were they for *religious* liberty, for in this particular they had been sorely tried; and doubtless if there was one idea more dominant than another in their minds, more potential than another in their souls, impelling them to exchange England for America, it was this,—“*freedom to worship God*” according to the pattern showed them in the word of God, as that word was read with fervent prayer for divine illumination. I am well aware that this has been denied, and that many an attempt has been made to prove that they came hither for reasons less worthy of them,—for purposes selfish, ambitious, and mercenary,—but all such attempts have failed. If history substantiates any fact it is this,—that the founders of these New England colonies, sundered the ties which bound them to home, country, and friends, and emigrated to these shores, because they were persecuted for conscience sake, and wished to be where they could act according to their honest judgment of God’s will, as expressed in His inspired oracles, and extend the kingdom of Christ in purity and power.

Says the venerable historian Trumbull: “It will ever be the distinguishing glory of these colonies, that they were not originally formed for purposes of trade or worldly en-

joyment; but for the noble purposes of religion, the enjoyment of liberty of conscience in the worship and ordinances of God. The pious fathers of these colonies wished to enjoy the uncorrupted gospel, administered in all its ordinances in purity and power; and transmit the invaluable blessings of civil and religious liberty to their remotest posterity.” And remarks Daniel Webster;—“Of the motives which induced the first settlers to seek an asylum in this then unexplored wilderness, the first and principal, no doubt, were connected with religion. They sought to enjoy a higher degree of religious freedom, and what they esteemed a purer form of religious worship, than was allowed to their choice, or presented to their imitation in the old world.” This it was, a living sympathy with civil liberty, truth, and godliness, which brought them from the tyranny of Laud, the bondage of the Star Chamber, and the High Commission Court, to make settlements in the wilds of America.

Hence it came to pass, that the First Church in Milford was placed here in the wilderness. It was organized August 22, in the year of our Lord 1639, by the colonists who came to New Haven in 1638; organized at the same period, and in the same *barn*,* with another church of the same faith and order,—the First Church in New Haven. The formation of the church is thus referred to in Mather’s *Magnalia*:—“There were then two famous churches gathered at New Haven; gathered in two days, one following upon the other; Mr. Davenport’s and Mr. Prudden’s; and with this one singular circumstance, that a mighty barn was the place wherein the duties of that solemnity were attended.”

* Mr. Robert Newman’s, as is supposed—which stood near or upon the ground now covered by the dwellings of Prof. Kingsley and Dr. Webster.

The church consisted at first of only seven members,—“*seven pillars*,” as they were called, in allusion as is supposed to the house built by Wisdom, mentioned in Proverbs 9:1. “Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars.” The names of these “seven pillars,” were Peter Prudden, William Fowler, Edmund Tapp, Zachariah Whitman, John Astwood, Thomas Buckingham, Thomas Welsh. They adopted a short, comprehensive, and Calvinistic creed as the foundation of their connection, and mutually entered into a solemn covenant with Christ and each other, to walk consistently in all the Lord’s commandments and ordinances. That covenant, copied from the records of the church, where it is found recorded in the hand-writing of Mr. Prudden, is as follows.

“Since it hath pleased y^e Lord of his infinite goodness and free grace to call us (a company of poor miserable wretches) out of y^e world unto fellowship with himselfe in Jesus Christ, and to bestowe himselfe upon us by an everlasting covenant of his free grace, sealed in y^e blood of Jesus Christ, to be our God, and to make and avouch us to be his people, and hath undertaken to circumscribe our hearts, that we may love y^e Lord our God, and feare him, and walk in his wayes: we, therefore, do this day, avouch y^e Lord to be our God, even Jehovah, the only true God, the Almighty maker of heaven and earth, the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and wee do this day enter into an holy covenant with y^e Lord, and one with another, through y^e grace and help of Christ strengthening us, (without whom we can do nothing,) to deny ourselves and all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and all corruptions and pollutions, wherein in any sort wee have walked. And do give up our selves wholly to y^e Lord Jesus Christ, to be taught and governed by him in all relations, conditions and conversations in this world; avouching him to be our only prophet and teacher, our only Priest and propitiation, our only King and Lawgiver. And we do further binde ourselves,

in his strength, to walk before him, in all professed subjection to all his holy ordinances, according to y^e rule of the gospell, and also to walk together with his church and y^e members thereof in all brotherly love and holy watchfulness, to y^e mutual building up one another in Fayth and Love. All which y^e Lord help us to perform, through his rich grace in Christ, according to his Covenant. Amen.”

By these “seven pillars” or persons, in these terms covenanting together, others were received into fellowship, until all who were approved were chosen;—and thus commenced the church. Their first Pastor, was the Rev. Peter Prudden,—the record of whose ordination, taken from the same book, reads thus:

“I, Peter Prudden, was called to the office of a pastour in this church and ordayned at New Haven, by Zachariah Whitman, William Fowler, Edmund Tapp, designed by y^e church, to that work. Zach. Whitman being y^e Moderator for that meeting, in a day of solemn humiliation, upon y^e 3d Wednesday in April, 1640, being, I remember, y^e 18th day of y^e month.”

Mr. Prudden came from England in 1637, in company with Rev. John Davenport, first Pastor of the Church in New Haven, followed by a number of his people from Herefordshire and the adjacent parts of Wales, who had previously listened to his preaching, and were disposed still to enjoy his ministrations. He was a man, according to Cotton Mather, who “besides other excellent qualities, was noted for a singular faculty to sweeten, compose, and qualify exasperated spirits, and stop or heal all contentions:—whence it was that his town of Milford enjoyed peace with truth all his days, notwithstanding some dispositions to variance which afterwards broke out.” And Hubbard says concerning him, that “he had a better faculty than many of his coat, to accommodate himself to the difficult

circumstances of the country, so as to provide comfortably for his numerous family, yet without *indecent distractions from his study*." He continued Pastor of the church until his death in 1656, and was a man of approved faith, purity, and piety, and a distinguished preacher.

Contemporary with the election of Mr. Prudden as Pastor, Mr. John Sherman was chosen Teacher,—which office however, was declined. The difference between Pastors and Teachers, says the Cambridge Platform* framed in 1648, is this. "The Pastor's special work is to attend to exhortation, and therein to administer a word of wisdom: the Teacher is to attend to doctrine, and therein to administer a word of knowledge; and either of them to administer the seals of that covenant unto the dispensation whereof they are alike called; and also to execute the censures, being but a kind of application of the word: the preaching of which, together with the application thereof, they are alike charged withall." Mr. Sherman, declining the office, no Teacher was ever afterwards appointed. This Mr. Sherman was ancestor of the celebrated Roger Sherman, signer of the Declaration of Independence. He was a native of Dedham, county of Essex, England,—a graduate of the University of Cambridge,—which college he left with the character of a Puritan,† was a superior math-

* Chap. vi, Sec. 5.

† It was probably fastened upon him as a term of *reproach*; but he might "bind it as a crown unto him." Those who affect to despise the Puritans, are not deserving of pity, though they require it. A man who sees nothing in the puritan intellect, the puritan soul, nothing in their inflexible integrity, indomitable religious principle, ardent love for God's truth and institutions, indignant denunciation of corruption in high places, and unflinching support of constitutional right and personal independence;—he who sees nothing in these things but to despise those in whom they are found, is a *needful* object of pity, though he betrays such a perversity of mind and temper, as may properly exclude him from our commiseration. If there is anything commendable in moral courage, in deep-toned piety, in hatred of tyr-

ematically, and was much admired as an orator. It is testified relative to him, that "he had a natural and not affected loftiness of style, which with an easy fluency bespangled his discourses with such glittering figures of eloquence, as caused his ablest hearers to call him a second Isaiah,—the honey dropping and golden mouthed preacher."

The body of planters thus organized into a church in New Haven, proceeded with their families along the devious Indian footpaths to this town, piloted through the woods by the Moses of the expedition,—one Sergeant Thomas Tibbals,—"he having been there a number of times before." Here then we find them in a defenseless situation, possessed of few resources, exposed to the rigors of winter, to the incursions of ferocious beasts and ferocious men; but they have courage and fortitude, and glowing aspirations for liberty, erect their huts, places of temporary shelter for their cattle, and palisades, and plan and toil for the means of subsistence. Here, too, they worship the God of heaven, and are inspired and invigorated by His strength. It requires no great stretch of the imagination to see them fitly arranged in order under the boughs of some spreading tree, drinking in "the sincere milk of the word" as it came from the lips of the Pastor of their choice and love, and then lifting the voice of prayer and praise to Him, whose Bible was their rule of

any civil and ecclesiastic,—then should the Puritans, instead of being a derided and despised sect, be embalmed in the affections and reverence of every lover of liberty and of God. And so it will prove. The cloud which has been brooding over them, formed from the collected vapors of prejudice and interest, is fast scattering, and the more of these worthies which is brought to view, the more highly are they appreciated. If scars are found on them, these scars are ornaments, for they were received in battling for the truth. "Forget the Puritans," said Rufus Choate, as he stood on Plymouth Rock, "no, not as long as a piece of this rock is left as large as a gun-flint!"

moral action, whose service was their pleasure, whose favor was their life, and to maintain whose worship in simplicity and purity, they had dared the dangers of the ocean, and the privations of the wilderness. Heroic virtues are called forth by trials; and it is by encountering perils and hardships, that men are elevated, purified, and disciplined for high achievements. In such a stern school were they trained, and in it they acquired those robust qualities, that firm resolve and self-reliance, and that spirit of enterprise, which are the impelling forces of progress, and the earnest of success.

Their *first* "Meeting House" was erected in 1641. It was forty feet square, and had a turret. We find many votes recorded concerning it:—One, for the building of a gallery across the west end; another, for the elevation of the guard seats, and a convenient receptacle behind them for the muskets of the guard; (for something worse than "Canaanites were in the land," even savages with tomahawk and scalping knife; and they could never venture to come together without their guns; so that with a sentinel stationed in the turret, armed men keeping watch and ward at the door, and arms in the building, the congregation had the appearance of an assembly in a garrison :) another vote, for the removal of these guard seats to that part of the house occupied by the women; and another, for the seating of persons according to the list, and the imposition of a fine of five shillings payable into the treasury of the town, on every person who sat out of the seat thus assigned him; on the principle, not only that "there should be a place for everything," but for every *person* too, "and everything" and person "be in its place." Until a bell was procured, proclamation was given of the hour of

worship, by beating a drum or blowing a conch shell. Hence the quaint stanza.

"New England's Sabbath day
Is heaven-like, still, and pure.
Then Israel walks the way,
Up to the temple's door;
The time we tell,
When there *to come*,
By beat of drum,
Or sounding shell."

Such was the first "Meeting House." Could we draw it upon paper it would be worth looking at. No glittering dome, or high raised pinnacle, had it,—no grandeur,—indeed to the eye of taste,—to one seeking for an achievement of human skill,—for architectual beauty and effect, "no form or comeliness;" yet though thus humble and homely, it was the temple of the living God, and dear to the worshipers on that account. The walls of that rude structure echoed to many a fervent prayer, many a sound faithful sermon,—many a sob of penitence, many glad utterances of converted souls, and many psalms of praise. Methinks I hear their "tuned hearts," in that old stave of Sternhold and Hopkins:

"Go walke about all Syon hill, yea round about her go;
And tell the towres that thereupon are builded on a roe:
And marke you well her bulwarkes all, behold her towres there;
That ye may tell thereof to them that after shall be here.
For this God is our God, forevermore is hee;
Yea and unto the death also, our guider shall he be."

Their mode of conducting worship,—if we credit "Lechford's Plaine Dealing,"—was as follows. The Pastor being in the pulpit, which towered high, and was surmounted

by a huge sounding board,—the Ruling Elder* on an elevated seat before the pulpit facing the audience, and the deacons on their seat somewhat less elevated than his, the heads of families on plain seats in the body of the house, and the children and young people where they could most conveniently dispose themselves; the Pastor opened the services with a prayer of at least fifteen minutes long, which was followed by the reading and exposition of a chapter of holy writ, which was followed by the psalm given out by the elder, in singing which all the congregation who could sing, joined, which was followed by a sermon an hour or more in length, measured by the glass; with which, and another prayer, and the benediction, the meeting closed. The entire services occupied three hours. They met at nine o'clock in the morning, and two o'clock in the afternoon, and celebrated the Lord's Supper once a month, at the close of the morning service.

Every Sabbath there was a contribution; previous to the taking of which, one of the deacons, in turn, standing up, said, "Brethren of the congregation, now there is time remaining for contribution to the Lord, wherefore as the Lord has prospered you, freely offer." The box was not

* There have been but three Ruling Elders in this church. Zachariah Whitman, ordained June 26, 1645. John Clark and John Buckingham, ordained June 4, 1673.

"Why was this office so early dropped in the churches generally? The most cogent reason, doubtless, was, the difficulty of finding suitable men to sustain the dignity and perform the work of such an eldership. The fathers of New England carried their distinction between the Church and State so far, that no man who held any civil office was allowed to hold at the same time an office in the Church. Thus in 1669, Roger Alling having been inadvertently chosen town treasurer, when he stood under a nomination for the office of deacon in the Church, the election was set aside, and another treasurer chosen. And ten years later, Matthew Gilbert was not put in nomination for the magistracy, till he had ceased to be deacon." See Savage's Winthrop I, 81.—*Bacon's Historical Discourse*.

passed from seat to seat, as with us, but was placed on a stand or table near the pulpit, and those disposed to contribute, came forward and deposited their offerings in it. These offerings consisted not of money merely, but notes of hand, and any articles which could be profitably appropriated to the use of the church.

The *second* "Meeting House," the architect of which is said to have been Governor Jonathan Law,* was erected in 1727 and '28. It was twice the length of the old one, sixty-five feet wide, three stories high, with two tiers of galleries, the upper one of which was appropriated for the use of the slaves and free colored people. These two tiers of galleries gave to the house the sobriquet of "*double-decker*." The steeple which was at the west end, was ninety-five feet in height, and the house was entered by three doors, denominated the steeple door, the front door, and the east door. This east door was entered by a flight of semi-circular stairs, and within the house were originally no pews, but long steps: these however gave place to pews in 1775, and in 1803, the house was arched, improved in many other particulars, and the upper gallery closed. Though there was nothing inviting to the eye in a building so uncouth, no "long drawn aisle or fretted vault," it had a spiritual magnetism by which the affections of not a few were attracted towards it; so that even after "time's effacing fingers" had been busy with it, and in warring with the elements it had become shattered, and in violent winds and storms, uncomfortable and unsafe as a place of shelter, there was no little opposition to its be-

* His bones, and those of another Colonial Governor—Robert Treat—lie in the village grave-yard, which holds in its bosom in sacred trust, the ashes of many "forefathers of the hamlet."

ing demolished. It was however razed to the ground in 1822, and exchanged for a *third* edifice,—the spacious, commodious, and pleasant one, in which it is our privilege to worship this day. It was erected at an expense of about \$8000, and the Vestry adjoining, at an expense of about \$1000, exclusive of the land.

Mention has been made of the first Pastor of this church, Rev. Peter Prudden. The *second* Pastor was Rev. Roger Newton. He was a native of England, was said to have been a near connection of Sir Isaac Newton, and graduated at Harvard College, Mass. He was called hither from Farmington in this State, and was installed August 22, 1660, “with prayer and fasting by Elder Zachariah Whitman, Deacon John Fletcher, and Robert Treat, Esq., (though not a magistrate and deacon, but as appointed by the church to join the ruling elder in laying on hands in their name.)” He departed this life, June 7th, 1683. The following minute of the fact was made upon the Records.

“The Reverend Mr. Roger Newton, pastor of the Church of Christ in Milford, having continued in his office worke in y^e House of God, the space of twenty-two yeares and about six months, and then it pleased the Most High to disable him wholly as to his worke in y^e House of God, and being about three months in sore wasteing paines for y^e most parte by night and by day, Departed this Life June the seventh about two of the clock in y^e morning in y^e yeare of our Lord Christ, one thousand six hundred eighty and three.

Heare entered by mee DANIEL BUCKINGHAM.”

The *third* Pastor was Rev. Samuel Andrew. He, too, was a graduate of Harvard, and at the time he received his call, was a Tutor in that Institution. He was a ripe scholar, a close student, and passed most of his time in

his study; rarely visiting his people except in cases of sickness or bereavement; insisting on the strict construction and application of that injunction of the Apostle James, “Is any sick among you? let him *call* for the elders of the church.” There is no doubt that we are much indebted to him for the establishment of Yale College, which has been such a rich source of blessings to the church and commonwealth. He gave the subject much thought, concerted the plan, and was unwearied in his efforts until it was carried into effect. He was one of the famous eleven ministers who met at New Haven in 1700, bringing a selection of books from their respective libraries,—forty volumes in all,—and saying, “these books we give for the founding of a College in Connecticut.” He worked to an advantage over his coadjutors, Messrs. Pierpont of New Haven, and Russel of Branford, in that he had great influence with Governor Treat, who was his father-in-law. Upon the decease of the first President of the College, Mr. Abraham Pierson, he was appointed Rector pro tempore, was considered, called, and treated as standing Rector; moderated at Commencement, instructed the Senior Class in this town for several years, and was a member of the Corporation until his death, which occurred January 24, 1738. On the luminous disc of his character there were no spots. He came to the grave “as a shock of grain that is gathered in its season,” having lived to the advanced age of eighty-two years, fifty-two of which he exercised the pastoral office.

The fourth Pastor was Rev. Samuel Whittlesey, Jr. He was born in Wallingford, was educated at Yale College, and was officiating as Tutor there, when invited to settle as colleague Pastor with Rev. Mr. Andrew. He

was ordained November 8, 1738, and continued to perform the duties of his station until his death. He died October 22, 1768.*

His successor, the *fifth* Pastor, was Rev. Samuel Wales, D.D. He was a native of Raynham, Mass., and a graduate of Yale College. He was ordained December 19, 1770. He is represented as a man of superior mind, and of extensive and thorough theological attainments. Proof of this is afforded by the fact that he was called to the chair of Divinity in Yale College, for which he resigned his pastoral charge after a pastorate of twelve years. He was reluctantly parted with by his flock, who received a pecuniary bonus for the sacrifice of their shepherd, from the Board of Trustees. He died at New Haven, Feb. 18, 1794.

Following the resignation of Dr. Wales, the church was without a Pastor until March 17, 1784, when Rev. William Lockwood, a native of Wethersfield, a graduate of Yale College and a Tutor in that Institution, was installed. He was a man of many excellencies of character, and beloved by his people, but was constrained by ill health to leave them. He was accordingly dismissed April 28, 1796, and removed to Andover in this State. His health improving, he afterwards settled in Glastenbury. He resigned his charge there in 1805, and died in that town in 1828.

The *seventh* Pastor, was Rev. Bezaleel Pinneo. Fragrant still are the associations of that endeared name, for

* During his pastorate there was a secession from the Church and Society, by whom the Second Church and Society in this town were formed.—See *Trumbull's History*, Vol. II, p. 335. By another colony from the First Church in 1805, the Church in Orange was organized.

it is but recently that he left us for the spirit land. He was born in Lebanon (now Columbia,) Conn., July 28, 1769, and came of a good old stock. On the paternal side, he was a descendant of one of those Protestants who left France at the revocation of the Edict of Nantes; and on the maternal side, his lineage was of the Puritan line. In person he was tall and well proportioned, with a complexion of ruddiness, his eye benign and conciliating, and his head a model of proportioned development.

Good vigor in all his faculties, and good balance of them all, good sense, and a good amount of it, with humble piety, were his prevailing characteristics. These, with ordinary application, made him a sound theologian, a respectable preacher, and a valuable counselor. Though no metaphysician or dialectician, he had a jealous regard for truth, in opposition to whatever he conceived to be error, and dwelt with frequency and fondness on the cardinal doctrines of the Christian system, as held by Edwards, Bellamy, and Dwight. He had defects unquestionably; but they were overshadowed by attendant virtues. The church *ought* not soon to forget him, and *will not*, for he was faithful unto them till his latest breath; his last words to them being, "live in peace, and the God of love and of peace shall be with you."

Mr. Pinneo was graduated at Dartmouth College in 1791; studied divinity with Rev. Dr. Smalley of Berlin; in which pursuit, the late Dr. Porter, President of Andover Theological Seminary, was his intimate and much beloved associate; was ordained and installed Pastor of this church in 1796; retired in consequence of age and infirmity from all official duty in 1839, and died September 18, 1849. It was my mournful privilege to stand by the bed side, and

watch the last flickerings of the life of this venerable servant of Christ, in whose decease I lost a safe adviser, a sympathizing colleague, and a sincere friend.*

Rev. David Benton Coe, the eighth Pastor, was born in Granville, Mass., August 16, 1814; was graduated at Yale College in 1837, and at the Theological Seminary in 1840. He was called from the Tutorship in Yale College to the charge of this church, and was ordained as colleague Pastor with the Rev. Mr. Pinneo, October 14, 1840. Mr. Coe being invited to the Pastorate of the Allyn St. Church, New York, was dismissed at his own request, August 25, 1844. About three years since, his pastoral office was exchanged for district secretaryship of the Board of Foreign Missions. He is now one of the Secretaries for Correspondence of the Home Missionary Society.

The present incumbent was installed on the 24th of September, 1845, and is now in the *eighth* year of his official relation to this branch of Zion. He is happy to acknowledge the uniform kindness of his people towards him; and God's great goodness, in granting him such a measure of health, as has enabled him to preach continuously during this period, with the exception of but three Sabbaths.

The above ministers of the gospel were all blessed in their labors, and could tell of the "wonderful works of God."

The number of members received to the church during their respective pastorates, is, as far as can be ascertained, as follows:

* The character of Mr. Pinneo is set forth in a discourse published by the writer at his decease, and in a well-drawn article from the pen of Rev. John Mitchell, to be found in the N. Y. Observer, under date of November 24, 1849.

During the ministry of Mr. Prudden, sixteen years,—*one hundred.*

During the ministry of Mr. Newton, twenty-three years,—*one hundred and fifty-five.*

During the ministry of Mr. Andrew, fifty-two years,—*five hundred and thirty.*

During the ministry of Mr. Whittlesey, sixteen years,—*one hundred and eighty-eight.*

During the ministry of Dr. Wales, twelve years,—*one hundred and seven.*

During the ministry of Mr. Lockwood, twelve years,—*ninety-three.*

During the ministry of Mr. Pinneo, forty-four years,—*seven hundred and sixteen.*

During the ministry of Mr. Coe, three years,—*two hundred and thirteen.*

During the ministry of the present Pastor, up to November 7th, 1852,—*one hundred and forty-four.*

"For ninety years after the formation of the church, additions to it were more frequent, but in smaller numbers at a time, than in later years. In no case were there more than fifteen added in one year, or more than eleven at one time. From 1733 to 1770, accessions became more frequent, but this is to be attributed chiefly to the plan of receiving members on the half-way covenant. In the early part of Mr. Whittlesey's ministry commenced a general revival of religion throughout the New England churches; and it is probable that of the unusual number admitted to this church in the years 1738 and 1741, a large proportion were fruits of that revival."*

The church at the present time, is believed to be numerically, the largest in the State, comprising as it does since

* Church Manual.

the recent accession of *fifty-six* members,—*five hundred and seventy-three*.

The proceeds from the annual sale of slips, since 1845; have amounted in the several years, to the following sums, viz.:

In 1846,	.	.	.	.	.	.	\$1092 75
" 1847,	.	.	.	.	.	.	1173 00
" 1848,	.	.	.	.	.	.	1200 00
" 1849,	.	.	.	.	.	.	1175 00
" 1850,	.	.	.	.	.	.	1256 00
" 1851,	.	.	.	.	.	.	1262 00

The contributions for the different objects of benevolence during this period are*—

Year 1846,	.	.	.	.	.	.	\$686 13
" 1847,	.	.	.	.	.	.	681 75
" 1848,	.	.	.	.	.	.	753 55
" 1849,	.	.	.	.	.	.	722 74
" 1850,	.	.	.	.	.	.	808 02
" 1851,†	.	.	.	.	.	.	751 82
" 1852,	.	.	.	.	.	.	835 78

Prosperity,—growing prosperity,—do these statistics indicate.

Well then may we exclaim,—standing where we do this day,—“what hath God wrought!” and with ample reason can I say unto you, with a view of the past and the present before your eyes, what Moses said to the Israelites: Ye have seen what God did for you in days of weakness and peril, “and how *He bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto Himself.*”

* First and Second Churches united in Monthly Concert collections, and those for the Bible Society.

† This year about \$1000 in addition, was contributed for a Vestry.

The same Divine Being who was with Israel,—whose power chained up the raging billows of the sea till the last of the ransomed hosts had passed over, and then supernaturally sustained them,—“led them about, instructed them, and kept them as the apple of his eye,” till they entered upon and possessed the vine-clad hills and shady valleys of “the land flowing with milk and honey;”—this same God has been with this church in their trials and discouragements from year to year, refreshing their souls, invigorating their faith, and bearing them on to that elevated position, which through his abounding grace they now occupy.

The First Church in Milford has thus passed in rapid review before us. Of what appropriate lessons, is this brief sketch suggestive? We mention *three*.

1. *It should awaken a lively spirit of gratitude to the Giver of all good.*

How signally has this enterprise which once started in weakness, difficulty, and trembling, been advanced!

More than two hundred years have rolled away since the organization of this church: and when the feebleness of its first beginnings is considered,—the embarrassments and dangers through which it has passed,—the constancy with which it has held to “the truth as it is in Jesus,”—the union and harmony which has so generally prevailed among its members, and with their respective Pastors,—the high character and excellence of those ambassadors of Christ who have ministered here in sacred things,—the many and precious revivals which have been enjoyed, and its present remarkable size and prosperity;—we have an impressive illustration of the care and kindness of Almighty God, and should appreciate and acknowledge that kindness.

No subject, surely, can be more appropriate to this day of sacred festivity, than that which has engaged our thoughts. Our pious fathers had *their* seasons of Thanksgiving. They had one while the vessel which brought them across the waters was yet hovering on the coast, and before they disembarked: and as the sturdy beech, oak, and hemlock of the forest, fell before the axe of the settlers, let in the sun upon the virgin soil, and that soil waved with a plentiful harvest;—as the savage was restrained from assaulting them, and disease from invading them;—as they thought of their adopted home of liberty, their exemption from the espionage of kings, their written bill of rights which no executive could violate, and above all, the bounty of heaven in conferring spiritual gifts;—often were days of Thanksgiving appointed by them, and devoutly kept. But if *they* had occasion for gratitude, how much more have *we*,—who are strangers to their privations,—who have “entered into their labors,” and who enjoy that fair inheritance which they prayed, and struggled, and acted the part of Christian heroes to purchase! We should be grateful, and that in no stinted measure. We should “speak of God’s great goodness, and not hide it from our children; showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done;”—and from the altar of our hearts, the incense of thankfulness should constantly ascend.

2. *It should deepen, also, our sense of dependence upon God, and kindle salubrious hope.*

HE it is who has done it. Not fortuitous circumstances, not the might of human arms, not the shrewdness of human minds. “There’s a Divinity that shapes our ends.”

He gave us these worthy ancestors,—those choice spirits, who in religion, came from the feet of Latimer, Hooper, and John Rogers, and in politics, from the school of Hampden and Sydney; He guided them across the storm-vexed ocean, He provided for them in the howling wilderness, He guarded them from ferocious beasts and savages; “in the cloudy and dark day” His light rose upon their darkness, and in all their trials and perils proved Himself a gracious deliverer. He too kept them together, filled up their ranks thinned by death, and granted those times of refreshing, from which the saintly beauty of a Puritan civilization, and a Puritan Christianity arose. And He demeaned himself thus, because they owned Him as their covenant God, had faith in Him, extolled His goodness, and sought His aid. *We* should feel as they did;—say “not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy name be the glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth’s sake.” Far distant be the day when we shall forget where our true strength lieth. Far distant be the day when this church shall rely upon their numbers and resources, to the exclusion of the patronage and power of the Lord of Hosts. “Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord;” and cursed likewise are communities who do so. Their darling projects are dashed, their wisdom proved to be folly, and their counsels are carried headlong.

Thus nourishing a sense of dependence, we should be *hopeful* also;—believe that He who *has* blessed, will continue to bless,—that “He who transplanted, will sustain;” and deriving an argument for the future from the past, exclaim, “Because Thou *hast been* our help, *therefore* under the shadow of Thy wings will we rejoice.” Faith-

ful is he who hath promised: "Lo, I am with you alway." And

3. Once more: *This review should increase our attachment to this favored branch of Zion, and animate to renewed efforts for its prosperity.*

Why should we not love what God has loved? Why should we not be partial to a vine which is proved to have been of His own planting? Why should we not cherish what He has cherished? God grant that we may not be recreant to our high trust,—may not undervalue our precious privileges,—may not exhibit ourselves degenerate successors of those, to whom the interests of this Zion were dear, and who prayed and toiled for the promotion of these interests.

Bear in mind, that as the conduct of these sterling men of the past, affects us, so will our conduct affect those who come after us. "No man liveth unto himself," only. No man *can* so live. His life affects others; his influence is felt for good or evil, long after "ashes to ashes and dust to dust," has been said over his tabernacle. On his passageway to the tomb, he makes marks which no wave of time can wash out. The spiritual can never perish. See to it then, that you live righteously and piously. Labor to benefit the young, to elevate the standard of education, to spread the gospel, to purify public morals, to promote revivals of religion. Study so to live, that as through the personal sacrifice, Christian virtues, and stalwart energies of your forefathers, you have been blessed, others after you are gone, shall feel the benign action of those instrumentalities which you set in motion, while upon the earth, and praise God in turn for *your* existence and influence. We have spoken nobly of the acts of our time-honored

sires; may posterity speak as nobly of *our* acts. You have, all Christians have, one sacred cause in common. Let that cause be near your hearts, and your own "works praise you in the gates."

May this seed, planted more than two centuries ago, which has been watched and watered until it has grown into a goodly tree, under whose shadow we repose and whose branches are pendant with fruit,—may it continue to thrive, and bless those who come after us with its grateful shade and healing products. Upon its roots, branches, and leaves, may divine influences distill, "as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion,—for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore."